A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF

TEACHERS LIVED EXPERIENCES OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CLASSROOM

MANAGEMENT AND TEACHER ATTRITION

by

Trisha Hofmann

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand what meaning teachers ascribe to classroom management and teacher attrition in the lived experiences of teachers with less than 10 years teaching experience in U.S. public schools. Classroom management was defined as the process teachers use to ensure a safe learning environment for all students. The theory that guided this study was Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory, which posits that self-efficacy is the foundation of human motivation and well-being. The central research question for this study was: What meaning do teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience ascribe to classroom management and teacher attrition? Data was collected through written letters, semi-structured individual interviews, and focus group discussions. Moustakas' modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method was used for data analysis. Through manual and electronic coding, five themes emerged from the findings: classroom management strategies, building relationships, self-efficacy, classroom management preparation, and being human.

Keywords: attrition, burnout, classroom management, retention, self-efficacy.

Copyright Page

Dedication

To my brother, Brady, for all his love, support, and patience throughout this work, and especially his help with statistics.

To my parents and family, who have always believed in me and supported me.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Lisa Stone for all her time, help, support, and loving encouragement throughout each step of my dissertation.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Research shows that in the United States alone, 12% of novice teachers leave the profession within the first two years, and as high as 50% of teachers leave within the first five years (Burić & Kim, 2021; Farmer, 2020; Martin & Mulvihill, 2016; Ryan et al., 2017). Schools worldwide need help to retain highly qualified teachers (Carlsson et al., 2019; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Elyashiv, 2019; Farrell, 2016; Hammonds, 2017; Kelchtermans, 2017; Nguyen, 2020; Noordzij & van de Grift, 2020; Perryman & Calvert, 2019; Ramos & Hughes, 2020; Rosenblatt et al., 2019; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Van den Borre et al., 2021; Wyatt & O'Neill, 2021). The following chapter provides the background to the study, which addresses the problem of teacher attrition and how a lack of classroom management experience may contribute to the issue. The historical context provides a brief history of teacher attrition and teachers' difficulties when managing a classroom, and the social context section includes the effects of the problem and those who will benefit from this study. The theoretical context briefly highlights the research that has been completed and how this study can add to the literature. The chapter also includes an exploration of the problem statement that guides the research, the purpose statement, and the study's significance. Finally, the research questions that frame the study are outlined, followed by definitions that might clarify any terms used throughout the study.

Background

The rate at which qualified teachers leave the profession each year leaves many school districts in crisis mode to fill vacancies (Martin & Mulvihill, 2016), and districts are left scrambling for adequate class coverage (Ramos & Hughes, 2020). According to the Arizona Department of Education (2015), 50% of teachers leave their districts within the first five years.

Other research has resulted in various statistics; Elyashiv (2019) found that 20%-50% of teachers leave in the first five years, while Carlsson et al. (2019) estimated it was between 30%-50%. Maready et al. (2021) stated that as high as 40%-50% of teachers left within the first five years. Classes are combined and overcrowded without qualified teachers to start the school year, requiring school districts to hire substitute teachers or underqualified teachers to help fill the void (Martin & Mulvihill, 2016; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). According to Sorensen and Ladd (2020), teacher turnover can result in individuals being asked to teach subjects beyond their certification. Under the illusion that content knowledge is the only prerequisite for effective teaching, administrators may hire teachers with a degree in an area, even though they have had no teacher preparation courses. The need to fill the vacancies outweighs the need for highly qualified teachers.

Historical Context

Teacher shortages have been a problem for many years, both nationally and internationally (Burić & Kim, 2021; Martin & Mulvihill, 2016; Perryman & Calvert, 2019). As early as 1956, when teacher shortage was a problem, encouraging more students to enter teaching programs did not solve the problem of why teachers were leaving the profession (Charters, 1956). If graduates choose not to teach or do not stay in the profession long, then more students entering teacher programs do not solve the problem. In 1980, research showed that teachers were often left to manage a classroom without appropriate training (Doyle, 1980). Providing children a safe place to learn is a fundamental task of teaching, yet many teachers are not trained for the realities of the classroom (Anderson et al., 1979).

In 1998, the probability of a teacher teaching for more than five years was about 50%, which meant that schools were often looking for new teachers (Stinebrickner, 1998). Similarly,

in 1999 attrition rates were higher among teachers in the early stages of their careers and at

lower-income inner-city schools (MacDonald, 1999). Unfortunately, the rate at which 50% of

teachers left the profession continued well into the new century (Burić & Kim, 2021; Freeman et

al., 2013; Martin & Mulvihill, 2016). Schools that had challenging behavior problems, fewer

resources, and lower salaries made it even more difficult to keep teachers in the profession

(McCarthy & Benally, 2003).

Although teacher shortages had been a problem for many years, in 2003, teacher

shortages received more attention (Ingersoll, 2003). Finding highly qualified teachers to fill

classrooms became challenging (Ingersoll, 2003; Martin & Mulvihill, 2016). In the fall of 2015,

Las Vegas had 3,000 teacher vacancies; by midyear, they were still short 700 teachers. New

Mexico began the school year with 650 teacher vacancies in the same year, and Philadelphia had

800 teacher vacancies (Martin & Mulvihill, 2016). Without highly qualified teachers to fill the

vacancies, administrators were forced to combine classrooms, creating overcrowded classrooms

often staffed with substitute teachers who were not trained to be full-time teachers.

The COVID-19 pandemic added a new level of stress worldwide. As the world closed

and schools moved to a distance learning model, teachers had to quickly adapt to a virtual

classroom and learn technology rapidly to continue instruction (Stamatis, 2021). During the

2020-2021 school year, retention rates were stable. Research from Massachusetts (Bacher-Hicks

et al., 2023), Washington State (Goldhaber & Theobald, 2022), and Arkansas (Camp et al., 2022)

showed that the mobility and attrition of teachers increased during the second year of the

pandemic. With the added stress of a worldwide pandemic, it was feared that attrition rates

would soar, and while they have increased, it has not been the mass exodus feared at this point

(Camp et al., 2022; Will, 2022). However, some U.S. states may be struggling more than others

to keep teachers. In December 2022, Kentucky was still looking for 104 teachers to fill vacancies (Morris, 2023). Bryant et al. (2023) surveyed 1,800 U.S. educators and found that one-third did not plan to return. While research has shown that an increasing number of teachers have reported they do not plan to stay in the profession until retirement as originally planned, the exodus may still happen (Camp et al., 2022; Diliberti & Schwartz, 2023; Fullard, 2021).

Teachers have always been required to manage their classrooms, but in recent years, it has been recognized that teachers are not adequately trained to handle a classroom (Flower et al., 2016; Ramos & Hughes, 2020; Wolff et al., 2020), especially an online classroom during a pandemic (Stamatis, 2021). During COVID-19, teachers were required to teach online without any training. Virtual classroom management differs significantly from a physical classroom (Lathifah et al., 2020). Ryan et al. (2017) also noted the discrepancies between what teachers learn during training programs and the realities of classroom management. When new teachers are thrown into an overcrowded classroom and unprepared for classroom management, some quickly leave the profession (Martin & Mulvihill, 2016). In 2020, Ramos and Hughes stated that classroom management was a significant reason teachers were unhappy.

Social Context

A lack of control in a classroom can impact student learning (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019), add to teachers' stress (Bottiani et al., 2019), which leads to teacher attrition (Farmer, 2020; Ryan et al., 2017), increasing the financial strain on school districts (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). With a shortage of teachers, schools are forced to hire unqualified or inexperienced teachers, impacting student learning (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019) and decreasing student achievement (Ramos & Hughes, 2020). A noticeable disadvantage to teachers leaving the profession early in their career is that they have not developed their teaching skills,

and time in the profession indicates teacher quality (Ryan et al., 2017). As teachers leave the profession early, children are constantly taught by novice teachers who are still learning how to teach.

The high percentage of teachers who leave the profession has significant consequences for schools (Hillard, 2022). Financially, hiring new teachers each year adds to school districts' financial burden (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Without enough highly qualified teachers, schools often rely on alternatively qualified or underqualified teachers to replace them (Hillard, 2022). Staffing a school with a lack of qualified teachers allows student behavior and academics to suffer (Herman et al., 2022). If students are taught by less qualified teachers each year, they will fall further and further behind. Lower student achievement may have more significant effects in the long term, with more high school graduates not adequately prepared for university. Podolsky et al. (2019) found that teaching experience increases teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Therefore, teachers who stay in the profession can gain years of experience and increase student achievement.

Student academics suffer due to early career teachers learning to manage a classroom effectively (Toropova et al., 2019), and student achievement can also suffer from poor classroom management (Goss & Sonnemann, 2017). If students are distracted or disengaged, it results in a loss of teaching and learning time. When students are not in the classroom due to detention or suspension, they miss out on the learning. Disengaged students are often a year or two behind their peers (Goss & Sonnemann, 2017).

The current study may help university teacher programs understand the importance of adequately training teachers on classroom management skills. Classroom management is an essential part of a teachers' job (Egeberg et al., 2020; Freeman et al., 2013; Marzano & Marzano,

2003b; Wilkinson et al., 2020), and affects student behavior, student achievement, and school districts (Goss & Sonnemann, 2017; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Toropova et al., 2019). As previously mentioned, student behavior and academics suffer from a lack of strong classroom management, yet classroom management courses are seldom taught at universities (Zoromski et al., 2021). School districts may also benefit from the research. Gaining a better understanding of the difficulties early career teachers have with classroom management, school districts may decide to implement classroom management training for early career teachers. The current study may also help teachers struggling with classroom management to know that they are not alone.

Theoretical Context

Classroom management is essential to a teacher's job (Egeberg et al., 2020), and decades of research has been completed to study classroom management. Much research has been done through the lens of classroom behavior and discipline (Emmer & Hickman, 1991; Herman et al., 2022; Marzano & Marzano, 2003a; Valente et al., 2018; Wills et al., 2019). Early career teachers often recognize the complexity of classroom management (Alter & Haydon, 2017). Along with classroom behavior and discipline, research has been conducted for years on practical skills and strategies teachers need to manage a classroom adequately (Beaty-O'Ferrall et al., 2010; Bottiani et al., 2019; Brophy, 1986; Nagro et al., 2018; Oliver & Reschly, 2007; Shahzan et al., 2018; Simonsen et al., 2019). Classroom management is a constant challenge for teachers and is therefore frequently studied to learn more about best practices and the effects of classroom management.

In many schools and classrooms, the short-term answer to disruptive students is to give them a time-out or a suspension; however, removing students from the learning does not help them progress academically (Bell & Puckett, 2020). Implementing behavior supports or

strategies could be used by teachers to help manage a classroom. Skinner (1963) believed in a stimulus/response method where people do something and get a response. Teachers who understand this theory can implement it in the classroom to improve student behavior. When one student is recognized as doing something well or following a rule, another student may perform the same behavior to receive the same recognition.

However, Glasser (1997a) thought this was the wrong way to manage a classroom and instead believed in control theory, which he later renamed choice theory. Choice theory is the knowledge that each person has a choice in their behavior (Glasser, 1997b). He believed that the decisions we make in life are made by choice and not as a response to a stimulus. He taught that giving students an option in the classroom made learning fun and used choice theory as a classroom management technique. Teachers who effectively use this method allow students to make choices, allowing them to feel in control of their learning, and this can be an effective classroom management technique.

Other theories also support the idea of student choice. Sugai and Horner (2002) encouraged using Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) to help students set goals and understand the consequences of their choices. PBS has been used in schools to help alleviate classroom disruptions and make schools safer for students. Leung et al. (2011) found that cognitive-behavioral strategies can help lower teachers' stress levels in the classroom. Forman and Barakat (2011) stated that cognitive-behavior therapy can be effective in schools when implemented appropriately and with the support of the administration. Understanding classroom management theories can help better prepare teachers (Noel & Finocchio, 2022), thus decreasing their stress and desire to leave the profession.

Teacher attrition is another highly researched topic. Again, there are decades of research on teacher retention and attrition. Teacher attrition has been studied through the lens of various reasons teachers leave the profession, such as burnout, stress, salary, and job dissatisfaction (Capone et al., 2019; Farmer, 2020; Fontaine et al., 2012; Gonzalez, 1995; H. Lindqvist et al., 2021; Ryan et al., 2017; Torres, 2016; Zimmerman, 2018), as well as early career teacher retention and attrition (P. Lindqvist et al., 2014; Maready et al., 2021; Noordzij & van de Grift, 2020; Van den Borre et al., 2021; Van Overschelde & Wiggins, 2019; Voss & Kunter, 2019; Wyatt & O'Neill, 2021). Although each study provides research on teacher attrition, each is unique in how the research investigates teacher attrition.

Several theories used to study teacher attrition include the transactional theory of stress, self-efficacy theory, and social capital theory. The transactional theory of stress has been used to examine the level of work-related stress teachers feel (Collie & Mansfield, 2022; Harmsen et al., 2018). The transactional theory of stress looks at the individual's perceptions of the stress and whether they feel they have the resources to handle it (Collie & Mansfield). Classroom management and disruptive behaviors add to a teacher's stress, especially if they lack adequate classroom skills. Teachers who may not feel they have the skills to handle a classroom may lack self-efficacy. The self-efficacy theory is used to study how comfortable a teacher feels in their ability to manage a classroom (Slater & Main, 2020). Using the Teacher Self-Efficacy in Classroom Management and Discipline Scale, Valente et al. (2020) found that teachers with higher self-efficacy are better able to perceive the emotions in their students and are, therefore, better able to manage a classroom. A teacher with high levels of self-efficacy may be better equipped to handle a disruptive classroom (Holzberger & Prestele, 2021). Mason and Matas (2016) studied teacher attrition through social capital theory. They examined a teacher's ability to

connect with their students, parents, and peers, noting that a connection or lack of connection added to a teacher's desire to stay or leave the profession.

In recent years, teacher attrition has become a common research topic due to the various reasons that people leave the profession. Multiple studies have been used to study different aspects of teacher attrition. Likewise, classroom management has also been studied through various theories to explore better ways to manage a classroom. While these theories and studies have added to the available resources, they lack the connection between how self-efficacy in classroom management may affect a teacher's decision to stay or leave the profession.

Problem Statement

The problem is that early career teachers are under tremendous stress as they navigate the challenges of managing a classroom along with their other responsibilities, increasing stress and burnout and potentially leading to teacher attrition (Larson et al., 2020). Teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate, especially in the first five years of teaching (Freeman et al., 2013; Martin & Mulvihill, 2016; Perryman & Calvert, 2019). With a high teacher attrition rate, students are taught by novice teachers, and new teachers are mentored by teachers who are still learning themselves. Classroom management is essential to a teacher's job (Egeberg et al., 2020; Freeman et al., 2013; Marzano & Marzano, 2003b; Wilkinson et al., 2020), yet teachers receive minimal training in classroom management during their education (Zoromski et al., 2021).

While much research has been done on teacher retention and attrition over the years, more needs to be understood about the experience of classroom management and teacher attrition. The rapid turnover of teachers presents several problems. First, teacher attrition financially strains school districts that hire and train teachers yearly (Ellison et al., 2021). Second, chronic turnover can threaten the learning environment as teachers leave and the

organization of a school changes. Schools are generally not best served by an unstable, constantly changing teacher force (Perryman & Calvert, 2019). Third, and possibly the most important, is that rapid turnover of teachers affects student achievement (Zimmerman, 2018). Although teachers may understand that student behavior will be challenging, they often do not realize the impact student disruptions have on their self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Perryman & Calvert, 2019).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand what meaning teachers ascribe to classroom management and teacher attrition in the lived experiences of teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience in U.S. public schools. At this stage in the research, classroom management will be defined as the process teachers use to ensure a safe learning environment for all students. The theory guiding this study is Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986). During the early years of teaching, instructors face many challenges, including building relationships with their students, school responsibilities, curriculum and pedagogy, and classroom management (Akkas & Cephe, 2022). Managing a classroom is a skill that is not always included in teacher preparation programs (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019), so teachers enter the field without proper classroom management techniques.

Significance of the Study

This study will add to the abundance of research about teacher attrition, specifically if there is a perceived connection between classroom management and teacher attrition. The immediate effects of this study can help administrators understand the challenges and stress of classroom management on new teachers. Early career teachers are often quickly surprised by their job responsibilities, including classroom management (Farrell, 2016). During student

teaching, they are often in an experienced teacher's classroom where rules and classroom management are already established, giving student teachers a false sense of confidence in their ability to manage a classroom. Teachers who feel unprepared to enter the classroom need support from administrators (Collie & Mansfield, 2022) and training in classroom management techniques (Simonsen et al., 2019). Furthermore, this study could explain how a lack of classroom management adds to a teacher's stress, feelings of inadequacy, and thoughts about leaving the profession. Finally, informing teachers and administrators of these challenges might provide insight into the effects of classroom management on teacher attrition.

Theoretical

People who believe in their ability to perform their job duties successfully are more likely to stay in their chosen profession (Bandura, 2000). A lack of self-efficacy in education may manifest in the inability to manage a classroom well. When students are out of control, stress is added to teachers which leads to burnout (Vidic et al., 2021). The chaos of disruptive students may make teachers feel less capable, feeling a lack of purpose and achievement in their profession (Wink et al., 2021). With a classroom full of students, teachers constantly employ various techniques to manage the classroom actively. This study aimed to add to the literature on self-efficacy in teachers and how their classroom management ability adds to their decision to stay or leave the profession.

Empirical

Most teachers enter the profession ready to make a difference in students' lives. However, the stress and challenges of the first few years of teaching often discourage novice teachers from remaining in the profession. Understanding if classroom management affects teacher attrition will help teacher preparation programs know how to prepare teachers better.

When teachers enter their classrooms, their expectations and reality are often vastly different (Akkas & Cephe, 2022; Ryan et al., 2017). Even if they have followed a student teaching program, managing someone else's classroom during student teaching differs from managing their classroom. Learning about the effects of classroom management on teacher attrition will add to the empirical significance of learning how to help novice teachers remain in the profession.

Practical

Teacher shortages impose numerous burdens on school districts (Elyashiv, 2019; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). At the beginning of the 2015 school year in the United States, teacher shortages were at a crisis level (Ramos & Hughes, 2020). In 2016, the cost was estimated to be up to $8 billion nationally (Sutcher et al., 2016) and in 2022, costs were estimated at $8.5 billion (Hillard, 2022). Teacher attrition and teacher turnover are not only significant financial burdens in the United States, but children are also affected by the lack of experience and classroom management skills of new teachers (Akman, 2020). According to Nagro et al. (2020), establishing classroom management techniques may be the key to success for new teachers. This study aimed to help teachers, administrators, and teacher preparation programs understand how classroom management adds to the daily stress of teaching, and the importance of classroom management training through better professional development or classes.

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Research Questions

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Teachers receive minimal training in classroom management during their education (Zoromski et al., 2021). While much research has been done on teacher retention and teacher attrition over the years, research lacks a connection between the effects of classroom management and teacher attrition. According to Bandura (1979), most human behavior is goal-

oriented and self-reflective. In social cognitive theory, when people believe they do not have control over desired outcomes, they have little incentive to persevere in difficult situations (Bandura et al., 2001a). Many excellent teachers leave the profession each year, leading to the research topic: Teacher's experiences of classroom management and teacher attrition.

Central Research Question

What meaning do teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience ascribe to classroom management and teacher attrition?

Sub-Question One

How do teachers describe their experiences with classroom management and the belief that they can effectively teach their students?

Sub-Question Two

What meaning do teachers ascribe to self-efficacy and their decision to stay or leave the classroom?

Definitions

1. *Attrition* - A teacher who leaves a school to transfer to another school or leaves the profession before retirement (Fontaine et al., 2012; Kelchtermans, 2017).

2. *Burnout* - Feelings of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion, self-inefficacy, and overburdening one's responsibilities (Bottiani et al., 2019; Carroll et al., 2022).

3. *Certified Teacher* - A teacher who has completed a teacher certification degree before their first teaching contract (Noordzij & van de Grift, 2020).

4. *Classroom Management* - The process teachers use to ensure a safe and productive learning environment for all students (Akman, 2020; Egeberg et al., 2020).

5. *Novice teacher* - Teachers within their first five years of teaching (Rosenblatt et al., 2019).

6. *Retention* - The number of teachers who stay in the profession (Rosenblatt et al., 2019).

7. *Self-efficacy* - A person's belief in their ability to perform at a certain level (Bandura, 1977).

8. *Social cognitive theory* – The idea that individuals have the ability to shape their destinies through their actions and interactions, rather than being controlled by external factors (Bandura, 2001).

9. *Social-emotional competence* - Teachers with social-emotional competence (SEC) have a set of social, emotional, and interpersonal skills (Oberle et al., 2020).

10. *Teacher* - A person with a teaching contract for at least a year (Noordzij & van de Grift, 2020).

11. *Turnover* - The change in the number of teachers who leave a school each year (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

Summary

Teacher attrition has been a problem for many years (Barnes et al., 2007; Bottiani et al., 2019; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Goldhaber & Theobald, 2021; Ingersoll, 2003; Kelly, 2004). For decades, various aspects of teacher attrition have been researched. Stress and burnout are common causes for teachers to leave the profession (McIntyre et al., 2017; Ryan et al., 2017; Santoro, 2018), and a lack of classroom management skills may add to teacher stress. Several theories used to study teacher attrition have been discussed in this chapter, as well as the historical and social context of teacher attrition. The purpose of the study and its significance have been explained. The research questions that will be addressed in this study are

outlined, and the vocabulary used in this study has been defined. This study focuses on how classroom management affects teacher attrition and the eventual decision to leave the classroom. This study will be helpful for new teachers, administrators, and school districts in training and supporting novice teachers and helping reduce teacher attrition.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A systematic literature review explores classroom management and its effects on teacher attrition. This chapter presents a review of the current literature on this topic. First, social cognitive theory concerning self-efficacy is discussed, followed by a review of recent literature on classroom management, teacher attrition, and self-efficacy. Then, the literature illustrates how classroom management may affect teacher attrition. Finally, the need for the current study is addressed by identifying a gap in the literature regarding how classroom management may affect a teacher's decision to stay or leave the profession.

Theoretical Framework

Teachers have the distinct challenge of motivating and engaging students daily. Early career teachers are often overwhelmed with lesson plans, meetings, curriculum planning, and classroom management. Teacher training programs prepare teachers for work pressures but frequently fail to prepare teachers to have the confidence to manage a classroom (Zimmerman, 2018). When teachers do not believe that they can effectively address classroom disruptions through a system of classroom management, these disruptions can eventually produce feelings of burnout (McIntyre et al., 2017). Teacher self-efficacy includes the belief in how well a teacher can manage a classroom and perform job-related expectations (Kim & Burić, 2020). As positive behaviors increase in the classroom, teachers' self-efficacy increases with their ability to manage a classroom. When teachers notice that students cannot learn due to interruptions, it lowers their sense of self-efficacy, possibly influencing their decision to leave the profession early in their careers (Hewett, 2019; McCullough et al., 2022; Wink et al., 2021). Teachers who cannot control their classrooms often leave the school day frustrated and worn out, wondering if they have what

it takes to be a teacher.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory is based on the idea that humans learn in a social context and can influence and be influenced by their environment (Bandura, 2001). Albert Bandura is the founding father of social cognitive theory, initially called social learning theory. One of the core features of social cognitive theory is the capacity for self-motivation (Bandura et al., 2003). Self-efficacy is a significant component in the foundation of human motivation and accomplishments (Bandura et al., 2001b). Bandura (1979) believed that most human behavior is goal-oriented and self-reflective. Social cognitive theory shares similarities to various theories, such as motivation theory, learning theories, and self-regulation theory. When people believe they do not have control over desired outcomes, they have little incentive or motivation to persevere in difficult situations (Bandura et al., 2001a). This lack of motivation during difficulties leaves them open to stress and depression (Bandura et al., 2001b, 2003). Perceived self-efficacy influences their motivation and vulnerability to stress. This study will examine two aspects of social cognitive theory: human agency, which aligns with the human desire to work collectively with others, and self-efficacy, which aligns with our personal agency to make our own choices.

Human Agency

Nothing is more important to a human being than to feel that they have control over events that affect their lives (Bandura et al., 1996). Control over our thought processes, motivation, and actions is a human characteristic (Bandura, 1989a). During the early years of life, parents help their child learn their abilities (Bandura, 2006). Once a child can reach a toy and play with it, the parent might challenge the child by putting the toy just out of reach of the child in their next attempt. This intentional guidance is adjusted throughout the child's life, and

the amount of assistance varies (Bandura, 1979). Infants learn that their actions can make things happen. From a young age, humans learn what they are capable of. Humans think about the future, set goals of what they want to obtain, and then work toward those goals (Bandura, 1989a). These goals, or future events, create the motivation to do what it takes to achieve the goals. A strong sense of personal efficacy adds to the belief that you can work with others to accomplish change (Bandura, 2000).

Human beings are social creatures who need each other. Working together toward a common goal is an aspect of collective agency (Bandura, 2000). For example, societal change often comes from collective agency. College students will join together to stand in a protest for change, or a politician will hold a rally to gather like-minded people together to support a cause. Together, they have the knowledge, skills, and resources to achieve their goal (Bandura, 2006).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to control their environment. A strong belief in oneself provides motivation and a desire to work hard to achieve a goal. Performing a task successfully early in a career will increase a person's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Likewise, failures early in a career can lower a person's belief that they are capable of the job responsibilities. Perceived self-efficacy plays a role in what challenges a person will undertake and how long they will persevere in difficult situations (Bandura, 1989b). We have little incentive to act without believing that our actions can produce the desired results (Bandura et al., 1996). Efficacy expectations determine how long a person will stay in a situation they cannot efficiently manage (Bandura, 1977). Humans will put in extra effort if they believe that they can achieve the expectation of success. However, if a person does not have the skills to perform the

required actions to achieve the expectations, motivation and desire will not be enough (Bandura, 1989b).

Low self-efficacy often leads to avoiding an activity or environment (Bandura, 1982, 1989a). People who do not think they can perform the desired tasks or reach their goals often visualize failure and how things can go wrong, draining their energy and motivation (Bandura, 1989b). Even if they know what to do, they need the perceived self-efficacy to do it to perform successfully (Bandura, 1982).

On the other hand, people with high self-efficacy believe they can control their environment. While someone with low self-efficacy may avoid the situation (Bandura, 1982), a person with high self-efficacy will continue to work hard through the extra effort to master the skill and then set loftier goals, bouncing back from any failures or setbacks (Bandura, 1982, 1989a; Bandura et al., 2001a). They believe they can complete the task and are determined to do so. They visualize success and solutions to the situation (Bandura, 1989b). Each little success gives them the motivation and confidence to push themselves toward a larger goal (Bandura, 1982).

A classroom is an ever-changing environment; it takes skills to see what needs to be done and act accordingly quickly. However, having the skills and the capability to manage a classroom is only as good as executing the skills (Bandura, 1982). Teachers need to believe that they can manage difficult classroom situations. When students display disruptive behaviors in the classroom, it can lower teachers' self-efficacy in managing a classroom. They leave the day feeling that they have failed to control their classroom. Disruptive behaviors also make it difficult for students to learn. When teachers manage disruptions, it takes their attention away from other children who may need help with their work. These disruptions make learning

difficult for all students in the classroom. Teachers who think they cannot manage a classroom effectively may avoid the classroom by leaving the profession (Bandura, 1989a).

The main aspect of social cognitive theory that frames this study is self-efficacy. Humans have the capacity to control their own thought processes and motivation (Bandura, 1989a). Self-efficacy, or personal agency, allows humans to make their own choices. Perceived self-efficacy affects how humans think they can perform or control a situation (Bandura, 1989b). Self-efficacy framed the study with the desire to better understand how self-efficacy affects a teachers' decision to stay or leave the profession. The research questions and interview questions helped guide the study based on the social cognitive theory and self-efficacy.

Related Literature

Teacher attrition is an issue that continues to plague the educational community around the world (Perryman & Calvert, 2019; Ramos & Hughes, 2020; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Torres, 2016; Van den Borre et al., 2021; Van Overschelde & Wiggins, 2019; Zimmerman, 2018). According to Rosenblatt et al. (2019), attrition rates in the United States (U.S.) have increased by 50% since 1989. However, teacher attrition is more than just a U.S. problem. In Canada, research from Perryman and Calvert (2019) showed a teacher turnover rate of nearly 30% in the first five years of teaching, and in Sweden, there is a 15% attrition rate of teachers in the first five years. Among physical education teachers in Finland and Australia, 40% have reported wanting to leave the profession (Ellison et al., 2021). Countries around the world are concerned about teacher attrition.

Researchers agree that teacher attrition is a problem, but there is no agreement on the leading cause or solution. Stress and burnout are often cited as reasons for leaving the profession (Collie & Mansfield, 2022; Ramos & Hughes, 2020; Wink et al., 2021; Zimmerman, 2018). The

high percentage of teachers who leave the profession within their early years of teaching has significant consequences for schools, including financial strain, including the time to hire and train new teachers (Maready et al., 2021; Nguyen, 2020), and the quality of education students will receive from younger, inexperienced teachers (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). The following section will synthesize the related literature on the causes and effects of teacher attrition, classroom management, and self-efficacy.

Teacher Attrition

Around the world, teacher retention is a growing problem (Perryman & Calvert, 2019; Torres, 2016; Van den Borre et al., 2021). Hiring highly qualified teachers is challenging, but keeping teachers in the profession has proven to be even more of a problem. Ellison et al. (2021) recently found a 30% turnover rate among U.S. teachers teaching for less than three years and a 70% turnover rate within the first five years in underserved schools. While not all schools have this high turnover rate, attrition is a problem in many schools, and schools with higher discipline issues report a higher teacher turnover rate (Ramos & Hughes, 2020). Keeping teachers in the profession continues to be an ongoing problem.

Definition

Attrition can be defined in several ways. A general definition of teacher attrition can be defined as teachers who leave the profession before retirement (Kelchtermans, 2017). Kelchtermans described teacher attrition and retention as "the need to prevent good teachers from leaving the job for the wrong reasons" (p. 961). Attrition can also be defined as teachers who leave a school to transfer to another school without leaving the profession (Fontaine et al., 2012). In short, attrition is associated with teachers leaving a school or leaving the profession.

Statistics

Research provides ample statistics on teacher attrition (Burić & Kim, 2021; Carlsson et al., 2019; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Elyashiv, 2019; Harris et al., 2019; Nguyen, 2020; Noordzij & van de Grift, 2020; Oberle et al., 2020; Reeves et al., 2022; Rosenblatt et al., 2019; Wyatt & O'Neill, 2021). However, the statistics are not always clear on whether teachers left the profession and later returned, left the school or district to teach elsewhere, or left the profession altogether. Research has shown that 24% of novice teachers leave within the first year (Farrell, 2016). Other research has demonstrated that approximately 3-5% leave every year, with rates up to 50% (Noordzij & van de Grift, 2020), and some research has estimated that yearly attrition is as high as 16% (Harris et al., 2019). Although the numbers may vary depending on the research, there is agreement that teacher turnover is most elevated among beginning teachers (Farmer, 2020; Farrell, 2016; Noordzij & van de Grift, 2020; Van den Borre et al., 2021; Van Overschelde & Wiggins, 2019). Statistics do not always agree on the exact percentage of teachers who leave the profession, but it is clear that teachers leave at an alarming rate (Mason & Matas, 2015).

Studies have also been conducted to examine educators' intentions to stay in the profession (Camp et al., 2022; Diliberti & Schwartz, 2023; Fullard, 2021; Will, 2022; Zamarro et al., 2022). As the world fell into a pandemic, schools worldwide were closed, classes moved to online learning overnight, and teachers' job responsibilities changed (Camp et al., 2022; Lathifah et al., 2020; Stamatis, 2021; Zamarro et al., 2022). Teachers were required to teach online, sometimes for months, and adapt to quickly changing expectations. Fullard (2021) studied teachers to determine if more were likely to leave the profession due to the pandemic. He surveyed 2,000 teachers across the United Kingdom (U.K.) to determine the effect COVID-19 had on teachers. His results showed that almost twice as many teachers were likely to leave the

profession than before the pandemic. However, his study was completed in August of 2021, so the results were those who reported they thought they would leave but did not show how many left due to the pandemic.

Roughly six months later, Zamarro et al. (2022) used a survey to determine if teachers were more apt to leave the profession due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They also found a higher probability of teachers considering leaving because of the stress and burnout the pandemic caused educators. Zamarro et al.'s sample also included teachers who left two years before the pandemic and those who left during the first nine months of the global pandemic. Almost half of the sample who left during March and December 2020 said it was because of the increased stress the pandemic caused. After Zamarro et al.'s March 2020 and 2021 surveys, they found that teachers were still determining how long they would stay in the profession. Zamarro et al. found that teachers reported that nearly 40% of their colleagues who considered leaving due to COVID-19 left. However, only time will tell how accurate the results are. Camp et al. (2022) studied teacher mobility and attrition during the pandemic in Arkansas. Like Zamarro et al. (2022), Camp et al. (2022) found an increase in attrition for teachers who were approaching retirement age but found little movement in early career teachers during the first year of the pandemic. However, in the second year of the pandemic, Camp et al. saw increased movement across schools, finding that the stress the pandemic caused added to teacher burnout.

Burić et al. (2021) studied instructional quality during the pandemic and found that school leadership also affected teacher burnout. With teachers needing to learn new online platforms and various teaching methods, quality leadership reduces teacher stress and increases teacher self-efficacy. Instructional quality during the pandemic has also been studied in relation to classroom management (Lathifah et al., 2020). Classroom management during remote learning

brought a new set of challenges. Motivating and engaging a student online differs significantly from a traditional classroom. For many students and school districts, online education was made difficult by a lack of technology or internet connections, and students needing help and support from parents working from home and busy with their jobs. Classroom engagement and instruction was a physical presence in a classroom where the teacher could walk around and supervise and support students as necessary (Stamatis, 2021). This quickly changed with the move to online learning, where students were isolated at home. Stamatis recognized the importance of classroom communication and was concerned that a new reality has been created with online learning. However, the stress and anxiety that teachers felt at managing a classroom was now the stress that parents had at making sure their child attended and participated in online classes.

While studying teacher turnover during the pandemic, in February 2022, Hillard (2022) found that teachers' non-retention rate grew to 16% in Kentucky in 2020-2021. Furthermore, while COVID was probably a factor for some, Hillard did not believe it was the sole factor. Also, in February 2022, the National Education Association surveyed 3600 members and found that 55% stated they would probably leave education sooner because of the pandemic (Will, 2022). While there was a fear of a mass exodus of teachers leaving the profession during and after the pandemic, the mass exodus has not panned out. This may be partly due to teachers needing to find another job before they quit, with concerns about the economy on their minds. By the spring of 2023, the Sixth American School District Panel Survey findings showed no mass exodus of teacher turnover due to the pandemic (Diliberti & Schwartz, 2023). They found an increase in teacher and principal turnover during the pandemic compared to pre-pandemic, and teachers and principals alike continued to state that they plan to retire earlier than anticipated due to the stress

of the pandemic. Many U.S. school districts have increased pay or incentives to help reduce the desire for teachers and principals to leave. The survey also found that some teachers and administrators decided to see the pandemic through before they left, which indicated that there could still be an increase in teacher and principal attrition.

It is estimated that teacher attrition costs an average of $1 billion annually (Elyashiv, 2019; Harris et al., 2019). This high teacher turnover is costly to school districts, which must interview, hire, and train new teachers (Maready et al., 2021; Nguyen, 2020). The high cost of teacher attrition increases the staffing challenge, as school districts try to replace teachers. Although the number of teachers leaving the profession and the number of teachers predicted to leave vary by study, these are staggeringly large numbers of teachers leaving the profession (Camp et al., 2022; Diliberti & Schwartz, 2023; Farmer, 2020; Farrell, 2016; Fullard, 2021; Noordzij & van de Grift, 2020; Van den Borre et al., 2021; Van Overschelde & Wiggins, 2019; Will, 2022; Zamarro et al., 2022).

Causes of Teacher Attrition

There are many causes of teacher attrition. Research shows that stress, burnout (Ramos & Hughes, 2020; Wink et al., 2021; Zimmerman, 2018), and financial reasons (Nguyen, 2020; Rosenblatt et al., 2019) are among the most common reasons teachers leave the profession. Various factors contribute to stress and burnout (Collie & Mansfield, 2022; Farmer, 2020; Harmsen et al., 2018; Lighston, 2021; H. Lindqvist et al., 2021; Oberle et al., 2020; Zimmerman, 2018). Teachers feel stress due to a lack of support from administrators (Rosenblatt et al., 2019), workload (Elyashiv, 2019), work conditions (Elyashiv, 2019; Harris et al., 2019; Kelchtermans, 2017), school climate (Torres, 2016), and student behavior management (Bottiani et al., 2019;

Elyashiv, 2019; Rosenblatt et al., 2019). When teachers are stressed or burned out, it is hard to

encourage them to stay in the profession.

Teacher Stress. Stress often contributes to why teachers leave the profession (Collie &

Mansfield, 2022) and can be manifested in various ways. Early career teachers often feel stressed

as they try to set up their classrooms, performing all the same duties as experienced teachers, but

feeling isolated and alone, like they have no one to talk to for guidance (Farrell, 2016). Early

career teachers must learn to manage the full-time workload, parent and colleague relationships,

and the school environment. Each of these new responsibilities adds to an early career teacher's

stress.

New teachers think they know what to expect when they enter the classroom; however,

the reality can be far different (Larson et al., 2020; McCullough et al., 2022; Ryan et al., 2017;

Sullivan et al., 2019). Voss and Kunter (2019) stated that the transition from college to the

classroom seems more complex than the transition in other professions, and teachers often feel a

collapse of ideals as they face the harsh realities of classroom teaching. This problematic

transition often manifests itself as a reality or transition shock. The perceived challenges of

lesson plans and curriculum planning differ from the reality of the workload, causing new

teachers to report a high-stress level.

According to Ramos and Hughes (2020), student discipline and classroom management

add to teacher's stress as student discipline and classroom management interfere with instruction.

If teachers are unprepared to manage a classroom, the classroom can become chaotic and

stressful for a novice teacher. Noordzij and van de Grift (2020) found that teachers who had

finished a teacher training program had lower attrition rates, therefore, stating that completing a

teacher training program helps prepare teachers to manage their classrooms. Teacher preparation

would help alleviate stress caused by a lack of classroom management skills (Larson et al., 2020).

  Teacher Burnout. When educators do not feel they can positively impact student learning, they exhibit burnout (Perryman & Calvert, 2019), shown by emotional exhaustion and a disconnect from students (Oberle et al., 2020). Zimmerman (2018) found that burnout was exhibited in teachers who felt a lack of purpose at school. Teachers want to feel that they are making a difference and that their work has a purpose. Burnout can also manifest itself as stress, inadequate achievement (Vidic et al., 2021; Zimmerman, 2018), decreased self-efficacy (Perryman & Calvert, 2019), adverse school climate (Ramos & Hughes, 2020; Zimmerman, 2018), or challenges in the classroom, such as student discipline problems, and classroom management issues (Akman, 2020; Oberle et al., 2020; Ramos & Hughes, 2020; Vidic et al., 2021).

  Schools with a positive climate helped decrease teacher burnout (H. Lindqvist et al., 2021). Working in a positive school climate can help teachers feel motivated to continue trying their best despite their feelings of burnout. School climate can range from the working conditions at the school to policy changes within the school district. According to Santoro (2018), many teachers became demoralized and burned out after years of teaching, as their morals and values no longer aligned with the policy changes schools have made. Teachers working in an environment where they are not included in the policy changes or feel that their voices are not heard feel demoralized, which can add to their stress and burnout. Teachers who are unhappy in their jobs are less likely to feel job satisfaction and see the positives of their work. Job satisfaction is a significant predictor of whether a teacher will remain in the profession (Vidic et al., 2021).

Feelings of burnout create distance between teachers and students (Vidic et al., 2021) and allow for discipline issues to prevail in the classroom (Ramos & Hughes, 2020). The added stress of handling disruptive behaviors adds to teacher burnout and stress (Granger et al., 2021), leading to low job satisfaction levels (Flower et al., 2016). Wink et al. (2021) found that teachers with lower levels of empathy tended to react negatively to classroom disruptions, which increased their stress and burnout. Oberle et al. (2020) studied the link between teacher burnout and students' perceptions of a teacher's competence. Their goal was to determine if teacher stress is noticeable to students, and they concluded that it is noticed among students. They stated that stress and burnout among teachers affect the students and school and are not merely an individual problem.

According to Kim and Burić (2020), teachers experiencing burnout are usually absent more often, putting financial strain on districts to pay substitute teachers or ask teachers to cover classes. Teacher absences also lead to low staff morale as teachers often must help cover duties and classes for absent teachers, increasing their workload and stress. Due to a teacher shortage, many school districts have had to increase class sizes, which becomes more challenging for teachers to manage, increasing their risk of burnout and lowering their self-efficacy (Sullivan et al., 2019). With a shortage of teachers, a teacher's workload is increased, adding stress and feelings of burnout.

Teacher Workload. Teacher workloads are unpredictable and can vary dramatically from day to day. This uncertainty makes it difficult for teachers to plan their day effectively, often leaving teachers to take work home in the evenings. According to Perryman and Calvert (2019), 71% of teachers surveyed said the workload was cited as why they left or are considering leaving the profession. Torres (2016) stated that one in three teachers who left their school noted

that the workload was unbearable, and research shows that teacher workload relates to job satisfaction and is a top reason teachers leave the profession (Hillard, 2022; Vidic et al., 2021). If teachers do not enjoy their jobs, they will leave.

School districts often change their policies, which creates a constantly changing workload (Perryman & Calvert, 2019), adding to the pressure and stress teachers feel to perform. Learning a new curriculum, changing school rules, and new workload requirements all increase teachers' uncertainty in their ability to perform their duties. DeMatthews et al. (2021) suggested that principals can help teachers feel satisfied and committed to their jobs by including them in decision-making and planning. This collaboration would allow teachers to feel a small amount of control over the changes and be more apt to support the changes, working together to build a strong school climate. Farmer (2020) found that how teachers perceive their ability to manage their workload determines the amount of stress they feel, stating that stress contributes to job dissatisfaction. Working together can help everyone feel included in the decisions.

Lack of Administrative Support. An unsupportive work environment also contributes to teacher attrition (DeMatthews et al., 2021; Van Overschelde & Wiggins, 2019). Beginning teachers enter the field with idealistic goals to make a difference in the lives of their students. Van Overschelde and Wiggins (2019) stated that, as the supply of teachers decreases over the next decade, states must ensure teachers are prepared effectively to teach. Preparing teachers will include having a supportive work environment in which teachers enter the field and are given the help and support they need. Stable leadership has been linked to teacher success, as teachers prefer to teach in a secure work environment with adequate administrative support (DeMatthews et al., 2021). The support of administrators can go a long way to help early career teachers manage their stress and not feel alone.

Principals play a significant role in the school climate by fostering favorable working conditions and supporting teachers (DeMatthews et al., 2021). Lack of connection between the administration and teachers fuels the feelings of an adverse school climate and higher teacher stress (Perryman & Calvert, 2019; Ramos & Hughes, 2020). Teachers who do not have the support of the administration can often feel more pressure to do everything alone, which adds to teachers' stress. The administration must cultivate a positive school climate (Zimmerman, 2018), support teachers, and celebrate their successes instead of dwelling on the deficits (Vidic et al., 2021). A study by Capone et al. (2019) stated the importance of having administrative support. In their research on burnout and depression, Capone et al. found that it was important for teachers to feel that they had support from administrators and that a lack of school discipline by the administration was a vital contributor to burnout and depression. According to DeMatthews et al. (2021), one in five principals leave their school yearly, and teacher turnover spikes with leadership turnover. The administration turnover makes it difficult for teachers to feel the support of their administrators, and without the administration's help, teachers must handle everything independently. These feelings of loneliness and lack of support can foster an adverse school climate.

Turnover has been associated with a lack of administrative support, and according to Hillard (2022), it is one of the top reasons teachers leave the profession. Unfortunately, many teachers are scared to state that they do not feel supported by their administration and, therefore, claim personal reasons for leaving the profession rather than administrative issues (Perryman & Calvert, 2019; Ramos & Hughes, 2020). Teachers reported that they do not feel they can go to the administration if there are problems in their classrooms because they are considered unable to properly manage them (Perryman & Calvert, 2019; Ramos & Hughes, 2020); therefore, teachers

prefer to handle classroom disruptions on their own, rather than asking for help (Vidic et al., 2021). If they need help, they often ask colleagues or parents before asking a school administrator. If teachers can express their concerns to the administration, perhaps the leaders could help take steps to prevent disruptive behaviors (Ramos & Hughes, 2020).

  Classroom Behavior. Ramos and Hughes (2020) stated that challenging students has become a top concern, especially for new teachers. The stressors placed on teachers add to the instability in the classroom. Instead of focusing on teaching and making a difference in students' lives, new teachers find it challenging to manage classroom behaviors and engage students in learning, making classes difficult to teach and increasing teachers' stress and desire to leave. If teachers can not engage students in learning and instructional activities, class time will be wasted, and students may not learn as much as they would in a structured classroom. Students who are not invested in their education and are not well-behaved decrease teachers' job satisfaction (Farmer, 2020; Harris et al., 2019). When teachers do not have control in their classrooms, they lose their self-confidence as teachers (Akman, 2020), feel a lack of fulfillment and purpose (Zimmerman, 2018), and do not feel satisfied in their jobs (Vidic et al., 2021). These results lead to undesirable working conditions and attrition and could be a factor in why teachers leave the profession (Ramos & Hughes, 2020).

Effects of Teacher Attrition on Schools

  If beginning teachers continue to leave the profession, inexperienced teachers are hired to replace them (Hillard, 2022; Noordzij & van de Grift, 2020). Teachers gain knowledge and instructional effectiveness each year, becoming better teachers the longer they teach. A higher number of new teachers in schools leads to a lack of quality instruction and the building of long-term relationships among students, staff, parents, and the community (Maready et al., 2021).

Teacher turnover harms student achievement, and schools are destabilized by high staff turnover (Sullivan et al., 2019). Schools lose the benefit and excitement of newly graduated students (Torres, 2016) and highly qualified, experienced teachers in the future.

Classroom Management

Classroom management has been an issue since the beginning of educational classrooms; however, it has only recently been a focus of studies (Sanli, 2019). One of the first studies on classroom management was conducted by Anderson et al. (1979) to understand the relationship between what teachers do in the classroom and how well students learn. According to early research by Pearman and Lefever-Davis (2012), teachers who are unprepared to handle a classroom are more likely to leave the profession. In the U.S., teachers must be highly qualified in their teaching field, but being highly competent in classroom management should also be a priority. Highly qualified teachers must have the skills to manage their classrooms effectively (Flower et al., 2016; Herman et al., 2022).

Classroom Management Definition

Classroom management is the teachers' role in creating a safe learning environment by establishing and maintaining discipline (Akman, 2020; Shahzan et al., 2018) and creating an optimum learning environment (Dustova & Cotton, 2015; Wolff et al., 2020) by establishing rules to maintain class order (Alter & Haydon, 2017). When students feel they are in a safe, welcoming environment, they are more likely to participate in class activities, behave appropriately in the classroom, and be motivated to learn (Nilson & Goodson, 2017). Teachers' strategies to manage their classrooms and establish routines are considered essential aspects of classroom management (Herman et al., 2022; Lazarides et al., 2020). According to Valente et al.

(2020), classroom management is a set of actions a teacher carries out to develop and maintain a favorable learning environment.

Classroom management is rules and procedures to teach students how to behave in a classroom setting to reduce or prevent inappropriate behavior (Herman et al., 2022). A goal of classroom management is to be able to optimize class learning while minimizing events that are disruptive to learning (Wolff et al., 2020). Classroom management enhances behavior and encourages student engagement (Shahzan et al., 2018). A teacher's most important role is that of classroom manager and is one of the most critical topics in education (Sanli, 2019). Maintaining a positive and orderly classroom to optimize student learning is essential. The teacher is responsible for creating a safe learning environment for the students through instructional and non-instructional procedures.

Classroom management is essential to allow for the effective execution of curriculum, the creation of a positive learning atmosphere, and a positive impact on student learning (Gaias et al., 2019; Shahzan et al., 2018). Teachers significantly affect student growth and learning; therefore, teachers should be highly qualified in their subject area and trained in classroom management. It is not enough to be able to deliver a curriculum. If students cannot learn the curriculum due to poor classroom management, then the execution of the curriculum is ineffective. Maintaining a positive classroom setting will encourage student learning (Gaias et al., 2019), achieve positive outcomes for students (Wilkinson et al., 2020), and build positive relationships between teachers and students (Egeberg et al., 2020). Providing a positive classroom setting and a supportive relationship with the teacher allows students to be more engaged in learning (Dustova & Cotton, 2015).

Teacher Training

Unfortunately, not all new teachers begin with practical classroom management skills (Kwok, 2018; Simonsen et al., 2019), and many teachers feel unprepared for classroom teaching (Larson et al., 2020). In multiple studies, teachers reported that they received limited training in classroom management and, therefore, felt unprepared to enter the classroom (Egeberg et al., 2020; Nagro et al., 2018; Obee et al., 2022; Wilkinson et al., 2020). Teacher education courses usually focus on pedagogical skills and knowledge rather than classroom management skills (Zimmerman, 2018). Many elementary and secondary teacher preparation programs fail to adequately prepare teachers with essential classroom management skills and training (Wills et al., 2019; Zoromski et al., 2021), failing to offer a classroom management course, leaving new teachers pressured to be classroom-ready and expected to manage a classroom, as well as veteran teachers (McCullough et al., 2022; Sullivan et al., 2019). In a review of the literature on professional development in classroom management, Wilkinson et al. (2020) found that school districts continue to provide generic, one-time training for teachers rather than focusing on desired changes in teacher and student behaviors.

Obee et al. (2022) systematically reviewed classroom management in professional development opportunities. Obee et al. were interested in what classroom management strategies were being implemented and how behavior support strategies were taught in professional development. The researchers found that the most common strategy taught included positive reinforcement in response to positive behavior and strategies, such as rules or monitoring to set up the class expectations before a behavior occurs. The least taught strategy in professional development sessions was responding to negative behaviors. While learning classroom management strategies are important, regularly implementing the strategies is equally important

(Simonsen et al., 2019). It is also essential that professional development addresses everyday challenges that teachers face so that the professional development feels relevant to teachers (Wilkinson et al., 2020). Obee et al. (2022) found it odd that more professional development courses were not based on instructing teachers on handling disruptive students, as challenging behaviors are common in classrooms, and teachers should be equipped with strategies to manage such behavior.

Researchers agree that more time and effort should be spent guaranteeing that educators are well-prepared in classroom management techniques (Flower et al., 2016; Shahzan et al., 2018), and studies show an increased need to train teachers to understand students' needs better and to better prepare new teachers for the classroom (Hillard, 2022; Sullivan et al., 2019; Wink et al., 2021). However, according to Simonsen et al. (2019), not all states even require pre-service classroom management training, and many U.S. school districts lack classroom management training for their teachers. Without this training requirement, teachers may not know what knowledge or skills they lack until they enter the classroom. Once in the classroom, many novice teachers realize they have not been prepared to manage a classroom (Larson et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2017).

Teacher preparation programs are a vital part of retaining teachers. Decades of research show that teachers who attended strong preparation programs and received pedagogy and teaching methods training were less likely to leave the profession (Flower et al., 2016; Gonzalez, 1995; Ingersoll et al., 2014), and that teachers who graduated from a five-year teacher training program were better prepared than teachers who attended a four-year program due to the more extended student teaching experience (Pearman & Lefever-Davis, 2012). According to Kurt et al. (2014), the training of teachers during their education directly correlates to the quality of

teachers they become. Effective teachers will use effective classroom management techniques and have fewer behavior problems. More recently, Van Overschelde and Wiggins (2019) studied teacher retention in teachers trained in traditional preparation programs versus alternative certification programs. Van Overschelde and Wiggins found that teachers trained in traditional teacher preparation programs were likelier to stay in the profession. One of the biggest differences in the programs was that traditional teacher training programs are designed according to state law. They usually have a full-time semester or year-long student teaching experience. The researchers concluded that the traditional teacher preparation programs should be continually improved to staff U.S. schools with high-quality teachers who will remain in the profession. A year later, Noordzij and van de Grift (2020) found that attrition rates for those who had completed a teacher training program were lower than for those who had not and that those who had more inadequate classroom management skills had a higher chance of leaving the profession compared to teachers who finished a teacher training program. Thus, adequately trained classroom managers and proper student-teaching experiences may help with teacher retention, allowing teachers to practice what they have learned in their coursework (Noordzij & van de Grift, 2020; Van Overschelde & Wiggins, 2019).

In 2016, Flower et al. found that more than 50% of the programs they researched had some classroom or behavior management components within their courses. They also found that almost 90% of special education programs offered classroom and behavior management courses, showing the importance of training special education teachers in classroom management more than classroom teachers. Perhaps new teachers now have more training courses to prepare them better to enter the classroom socially and emotionally (Oberle et al., 2020), as there is more

concern about whether teachers can effectively manage a classroom (Sanli, 2019) and classroom management courses are becoming more well-known.

Although teacher preparation courses and training may improve, induction courses are also added in school districts to help train novice teachers. Akkas and Cephe (2022) interviewed novice teachers who had received an induction program and those who had not. For those who were not part of an induction program, they felt lost, alone, and overwhelmed as new teachers. They stated they did not feel a connection to the school or their peers and were surprised they had not received much guidance through the school. Those in an induction program felt a stronger connection to the school community and fellow teachers. They felt they were supported on classroom management techniques appropriate for the school and taught how to build relationships with students. Akkas and Cephe found that novice teachers who were not part of an induction program felt less confident in the classroom and questioned their ability as teachers.

A student teaching experience allows teachers to observe an expert teacher and apply the practices they learn. The length of student teaching may vary, but the quality of the experience is more important than the length (Wolff et al., 2020). Student teachers often walk into classrooms where classroom management techniques are already in place, limiting their exposure to classroom disruptions and lessening their opportunities to learn classroom management techniques (Larson et al., 2020). Although student teaching is essential, it does not guarantee that teachers will gain classroom management skills during this training. According to Wolff et al. (2020), there is no substitute for the practical, hands-on experience teachers receive in their classrooms.

Challenges of Classroom Management

Teachers face overwhelming challenges in the classroom. They are expected to know pedagogy and instructional strategies, create engaging lessons for diverse learners, and build relationships with students. Classroom management has been more prominent in research in the past two decades. Rather than assuming teachers will naturally acquire classroom management skills, it is important to formally teach early career teachers classroom management techniques (Oliver & Reschly, 2007). Instead, they often leave the profession. Early career teachers do not have the same skill set as experienced teachers due to their lack of hours in a classroom (Wolff et al., 2020). Experience comes from dealing with various students and practicing classroom management. As young teachers, students are more apt to argue with them, making classroom management more of a challenge than for experienced teachers (Wolff et al., 2020). Students often display unwanted behaviors when classroom management is weak (Gaias et al., 2019). As teachers become stressed, their relationship with their students suffers because they lack the patience and love to properly manage the classroom (McCullough et al., 2022).

Students with disabilities are often included in the general education classroom (Gilmour et al., 2021; Nagro et al., 2018); therefore, teachers not trained in classroom management struggle to maintain a productive and safe learning environment. Managing classroom disruptions detracts from teaching and increases teachers' stress (Granger et al., 2021). When teachers reprimand students, students often misbehave more, causing a cycle of disruptive behavior. These behaviors are disruptive to learning and challenging for novice teachers to manage. These inclusive classrooms have a range of students and a range of abilities (Gilmour et al., 2021). It is a difficult task to manage these different personalities inside one classroom (Sanli, 2019). A positive classroom environment allows students to learn while decreasing the

stress on teachers, resulting in happier teachers who are self-confident and satisfied with their jobs.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, physical classrooms became virtual classrooms almost overnight. At school, teachers decorated their classrooms and hung-up student work and posters to help create a feeling of safety and security for students (Stamatis, 2021). Moving to a virtual classroom brought a new set of classroom management concerns. As learning has moved back into physical classrooms, teachers are struggling with readapting students to a classroom environment. Gülmez and Ordu (2022) interviewed 16 teachers about their experiences with classroom management as they moved back into the classroom. Gülmez and Ordu's results showed that students struggled with attention, cognitive learning, social engagement, motivation, and rule-following. Classroom management is an ongoing aspect of a teacher's job, whether in a classroom or online.

Effective Classroom Management Strategies

There are a variety of classroom management strategies that teachers can use in the classroom. Teachers who make learning fun using games, activities, group discussions, or integrating technology into the lessons will often have fewer behavior issues (Shahzan et al., 2018). Other effective classroom management strategies include whole-group response, movement integration, visual methods, and student choice, as well as being prepared for class, using appropriate body language, engaging students in the lesson, and having strong communication skills (Nagro et al., 2018). Teacher training programs often encourage positive feedback and praise as effective classroom management techniques (Kwok, 2018; Sanli, 2019; Zoromski et al., 2021). Using various strategies throughout the class allows students to participate comfortably and can reduce destructive behaviors (Akman, 2020).

Experienced teachers are often skilled at recognizing what strategies are working and adept at modifying what is not working (Wolff et al., 2020). The awareness of classroom situations and the confidence to make quick changes are often developed over time. It can take time for novice teachers to be confident to make necessary changes in the classroom. While experienced teachers have created classroom management strategies that work for them, novice teachers often need help keeping up with classroom interactions (Farrell, 2016). Therefore, novice teachers need to be taught various classroom management techniques (Shahzan et al., 2018). What works for one teacher may not work for another. Teachers need to recognize what strategies work for them and make changes when appropriate.

Shank and Santiague (2021) found that teachers initially felt confident in their classroom management but then struggled once they taught independently. An in-depth study by Kwok (2018) provided a two-year teacher preparation program for first-year teachers. The teachers were required to work full-time in an urban K-12 school and were observed by a supervisor. They also attended a six-week summer training similar to a student teaching experience. Of the 124 teachers Kwok studied, 88% reported using behavioral actions to manage their classrooms. Teachers also reported using non-verbal behaviors, such as walking around the classroom, looking at a student to get their attention, or using touch or hand signals to get their attention quietly. Unfortunately, most teachers begin teaching with minimal classroom management training (Wilkinson et al., 2020). Without the proper training, novice teachers often lack the skills to effectively manage a classroom, which makes the transition from college to teacher challenging (Voss & Kunter, 2019).

Teachers can use many classroom management strategies to manage classroom behavior and maintain a safe learning environment for their students. Positive reinforcement is a typical

classroom management technique (Kwok, 2018). Many teachers reward positive behavior to encourage others to behave positively (Kwok, 2018; Sanli, 2019). Teachers often praise students who are focused or participating. When students see someone receiving praise, teacher praise usually encourages them to participate. Another common strategy begins with clear rules and expectations (Egeberg et al., 2020; Kwok, 2018; Sanli, 2019; Shank & Santiague, 2021).

Students must know what is expected of them and the consequences of breaking the rules. The classroom setup (Kwok, 2018) and the classroom flow (Shank & Santiague, 2021) are essential classroom management strategies that novice teachers often need to improve. Managing the classroom flow allows students to access their needed materials quickly and effectively, gather in partners or small groups, and move around the classroom without distraction. These strategies can be easily taught, but classroom management courses in teacher preparation programs are necessary for many novice teachers to walk into a classroom prepared.

Positive Effects of Strong Classroom Management

Strong classroom management techniques can positively impact student learning, growth, and academic outcomes (Gaias et al., 2019; Wilkinson et al., 2020). By creating an orderly classroom, teachers increase student success, allowing for the correct execution of the curriculum (Shahzan et al., 2018). According to a survey by Shahzan et al., effective classroom management can also help prevent behavioral challenges within the classroom, which can increase students' academic results.

Teachers who can address student concerns in the classroom can better manage disruptive behavior (Sanli, 2019; Wink et al., 2021). Kayikçi (2009) surveyed 40 elementary schools in Turkey and found that as classroom management increased, student misbehavior decreased. It was important for teachers to understand why students misbehaved and to manage the class in

line with student needs. Kayikçi results showed that as student rule violations increased, the teacher increased their prevention of undesirable behavior. A manager who increases the prevention of unwanted behavior found that student disciplinary behavior decreased. The author also found a correlation between positive student-teacher relations and a supportive classroom. More recently, Gaias et al. (2019) performed a similar study in the U.S. One of their goals was to see if negative student behaviors were less frequent in classrooms with a teacher with strong classroom management skills. Gaias et al. found that teachers with strong classroom management skills had fewer adverse behavior problems. Granger et al. (2021) found that students with a positive student-teacher relationship at a young age are more likely to continue behaving in class and, therefore, have a positive student-teacher relationship throughout their education. A relevant conclusion is that classrooms with lower levels of disruptive behavior are more manageable for teachers (Gaias et al., 2019); likewise, a well-managed classroom will have less disruptive behavior.

Applying classroom management strategies will offer students a safe learning environment. Well-managed classrooms allow students to be engaged in their work, succeed academically, and are less disruptive (Gaias et al., 2019; Wilkinson et al., 2020). A positive classroom environment allows students to learn while decreasing the stress of teachers, which will result in happier teachers who are self-confident and satisfied with their jobs. A caring, supportive teacher can help students develop self-regulation and social skills in a learning environment. As effective classroom management increases, disruptive behavior decreases, and as disruptive behavior decreases, teachers can more easily handle their classrooms, providing students with a better educational experience (Gaias et al., 2019).

Adverse Effects of Poor Classroom Management

Early-career teachers often enter the field unprepared for the challenges they face in the classroom (Zimmerman, 2018). New teachers are usually overwhelmed with managing student behaviors, learning curriculum, and teaching engaging lessons (Sanli, 2019). Not only do they have to learn content and curriculum, but they quickly realize that classroom management can be challenging. Disruptive behavior requires extra energy from teachers to manage the classroom. When teachers are exhausted from classroom disruptions, they quickly exhibit signs of stress and have difficulty establishing solid relationships with their students (Harmsen et al., 2018). Teachers spend time and energy focusing on disruptive students in an unmanaged classroom, preventing them from providing quality instruction to all students (Flower et al., 2016). Student learning should be the focus of the classroom, but students need a stress-free, safe environment to learn.

A lack of classroom management affects teachers and students and can adversely affect the school climate and teacher morale (Ramos & Hughes, 2020). Zimmerman (2018) found that an adverse school climate added to teachers' feelings of burnout, especially for early career teachers. Zimmerman suggested that teacher preparation programs work with school districts to address unhealthy school climates.

Similarly, H. Lindqvist et al. (2021) found that student teachers were already being exposed to talk about burnout, and the adverse school climate fostered concerns in their desire to pursue a career in teaching. The study showed that student teachers were concerned about emotionally challenging situations in the classroom and school and how the effects of managing a problematic classroom would add to feelings of burnout. Teachers trained to be reactive to classroom disruptions rather than proactive in preventing misbehavior will continue to feel job-

related stress, which can negatively impact student learning and the school climate (Flower et al., 2016). A teacher's confidence in the classroom can increase students' positive attitudes, therefore adding to a positive school climate (Akman, 2020).

Mawhinney and Rinke (2019) found that most teachers only have adequate classroom management abilities once they have been teaching for seven years; therefore, novice teachers need training in classroom management techniques and support from the administration in controlling their classrooms. With many teachers leaving the profession, young teachers are constantly teaching students. Likewise, new teachers are being trained by inexperienced teachers, which lowers their effectiveness in classroom management. Students who are well-behaved, quiet, or shy can often be left unnoticed and not receive the help or instruction needed. Flower et al. (2016) noted that poor classroom management can decrease learning. Classroom disruptions distract the teacher and fellow students, as it is difficult for teachers to teach in a chaotic classroom, and student learning suffers. Teachers who manage a classroom well will usually see better student behavior and learning than those who do not (Greenberg et al., 2014). Students learn best in a well-managed classroom, but classroom management takes work.

While teachers know that student behavior will be challenging, they often do not realize the impact student disruptions have on their self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Perryman & Calvert, 2019). According to Lazarides et al. (2020), classroom management is central to teachers' self-efficacy and professional competence. Wink et al. (2021) also found that teachers with lower levels of empathy tended to react negatively to classroom disruptions, which increased their stress and burnout levels. A teacher's compassion and social-emotional competence allow them the patience, love, and care to help each student. Classroom management

is often related to the self-efficacy of a teacher, their self-confidence, and the effect it has on students (Akman, 2020; Ramos & Hughes, 2020; Vidic et al., 2021).

Self-Efficacy

Teaching in the 21st century is different from previous years. Being an effective teacher is more than just knowing how to teach content; it also includes confidence in using digital technology and motivating students to work independently or collaboratively in a student-centered classroom (Kholifah et al., 2023). Teachers who lack self-efficacy cannot carry out the same responsibilities as those with high self-efficacy and are more likely to experience burnout (Kurt et al., 2014). The lack of self-efficacy and self-confidence can make it difficult for teachers to adapt to teaching responsibilities, doubting their ability to succeed.

Definition

According to Bandura (1982), self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to perform at a certain level. Self-efficacy is more than self-esteem. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to perform tasks and responsibilities effectively (Bandura, 1999). Teachers' self-efficacy can be linked to their belief that they can help the most unmotivated child learn (Perryman & Calvert, 2019). A teacher's self-efficacy can also be defined as their ability to successfully perform their responsibilities and classroom management tasks (Krasniqi & Ismajli, 2022). Teachers with strong self-efficacy have the belief and confidence that they can successfully manage a classroom and teaching responsibilities (Krasniqi & Ismajli, 2022). They believe they can produce the desired outcomes in student engagement and learning (Reeves et al., 2022). However, if they cannot teach well-planned lessons due to classroom disruptions, they cannot help students learn. While teachers need the skills to manage a classroom, their ability to manage confidently relates to their self-efficacy as teachers.

Characteristics of Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy can appear as self-confidence and the ability to make decisions and perform responsibilities. Toropova et al. (2019) stated that self-efficacy can provide higher instructional quality. However, research sometimes disagrees. While Toropova et al. found that quality of instruction was higher with teachers who had more self-efficacy when studying instructional quality in mathematics teachers, Lazarides et al. (2021) did not find that self-efficacy was linked to teaching quality. Lazarides et al. did see, however, that a teacher's enthusiasm can be portrayed as self-efficacy, which may resemble higher teaching quality. Teachers' beliefs about their capabilities are essential for the successful functioning of a classroom (Lauermann & Hagen, 2021). Teachers with strong self-efficacy report stronger classroom management abilities and increased motivation to stay in the profession (Holzberger & Prestele, 2021).

Teacher Self-Efficacy

One would think that self-efficacy would improve as teachers' experience improved. However, Lazarides et al. (2020) found that teachers' self-efficacy did not change throughout their careers but was stable. Those who had self-efficacy when they started continued to believe in themselves as teachers. Moreover, those who were negative, that negativity continued throughout their career. Thus, Lazarides et al. stated that teachers must have self-efficacy as they enter teaching. However, Krasniqi and Ismajli (2022) found that increased feedback increased self-efficacy and classroom management skills. The more feedback they received about their classroom management, the more their self-efficacy increased. Krasniqi and Ismajli studied the effects of feedback and self-efficacy on classroom management skills. They aimed to see if principal feedback increased self-efficacy and how that affected their classroom management

skills. Similar to Krasniqi and Ismajli, Vidic et al. (2021) also stated that teachers with more work experience felt they had higher self-efficacy.

Whether self-efficacy is stable throughout their career or if it improves over time, research agreed that teachers' belief in their ability to perform their responsibilities is essential (Capone et al., 2019; Kim & Burić, 2020; Valente et al., 2020; Wink et al., 2021). Teachers who feel competent in their abilities to perform their responsibilities as teachers and enjoy their jobs are less likely to experience stress and burnout (Wink et al., 2021). Teachers who reprimand students feel more emotionally exhausted and discouraged at the end of the day, adding to their feelings of doubt as teachers (Wills et al., 2019).

Teachers with Strong Self-Efficacy

Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy believe in their ability to handle classroom structure and discipline (Lazarides et al., 2020) and have been shown to have higher levels of job satisfaction (Reeves et al., 2022; Vidic et al., 2021). Teachers join the profession to influence children and help them succeed. Confident teachers believe they can control classroom disruptions and create a positive classroom experience, believing in their ability to maintain students' attention (Vidic et al., 2021). Teachers with strong self-efficacy can build caring relationships with students, teachers, and the community (Oberle et al., 2020; Wink et al., 2021). These relationships help students to be more engaged in their learning. Higher levels of self-efficacy allow teachers to be competent in classroom management techniques and develop stronger relationships with challenging students (Wink et al., 2021). With a strong relationship, they are more adept at handling challenging students and experience lower levels of burnout.

How Strong Self-Efficacy Impacts Classroom Management. Classroom management is often related to a teacher's self-efficacy and its effect on students (Akman, 2020; Ramos &

Hughes, 2020; Vidic et al., 2021; Wink et al., 2021). Lazarides et al. (2021) examined the effects of teachers' self-efficacy and changes in student-perceived classroom management. Their study of first-year secondary school classes showed that teacher enthusiasm and self-efficacy positively affected student-perceived classroom management. However, they did not find a relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and students' perception of teaching quality. It might be because self-efficacy is more challenging for students to recognize than classroom management. Their findings also indicated that students build stronger relationships with teachers throughout the year, which might explain a decrease in classroom misbehavior. According to Lazarides et al. (2020), teachers with higher levels of classroom management self-efficacy at the end of their teacher preparation courses had lower negativity early in their careers. Likewise, those with lower classroom management self-efficacy had more excessive demands during the early years of their careers. School environment also plays a role in a teacher's self-efficacy. Holzberger and Prestele (2021) found that a teacher's self-efficacy in classroom management was affected by the amount of teacher collaboration at a school. If teachers had low levels of self-efficacy and taught at a school with strong teacher collaboration, they could provide high-quality instruction, showing the importance of a supportive environment.

Valente et al. (2020) studied the relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and classroom management effectiveness. Their results showed that women had higher levels of emotional intelligence than men, allowing them to understand better and more easily express and manage emotions. Reeves et al. (2022) agreed that women reported higher levels of self-efficacy, as well as teachers with a master's degree. Similarly, Valente et al. (2020) found that teachers with higher levels of education had higher levels of emotional intelligence.

This ability to manage emotions allowed them to change the classroom pace according to their students' emotions when needed, providing better management of the learning space for students.

How Strong Self-Efficacy Impacts Teacher Retention. If the school does not have a system to manage student misbehavior, teachers are left to deal with it independently, which can decrease their self-efficacy as teachers (Capone et al., 2019). Teachers who exhibit high levels of self-efficacy demonstrate the ability to effectively manage the daily challenges and pressures (McIntyre et al., 2017). Many teachers join the field of education to make a difference in children's lives, and teachers who feel they can contribute to a child's growth remain motivated (Vidic et al., 2021). Teachers with strong self-efficacy believe they can help even the most challenging students learn, thus improving student achievement (Wink et al., 2021). This belief in their abilities strengthens their commitment to their profession and desire to remain in teaching.

While strong self-efficacy may impact teacher retention, it is unclear of the relationship between job satisfaction and self-efficacy (Burić & Kim, 2021). It is assumed that teacher self-efficacy would improve job satisfaction. If a teacher feels confident in their teaching ability and skills, they will find more satisfaction in their job. However, results showed the opposite; those who had a positive job experience and received positive feedback increased their feelings of self-efficacy. Krasniqi and Ismajli (2022) also found that receiving positive feedback increased teachers' self-efficacy. Thus, to help improve teachers' self-efficacy and desire to remain in teaching, teachers needed good working conditions, administrative support, positive feedback, and classroom management training (Burić & Kim, 2021).

Vidic et al. (2021) studied teachers in Croatia from both primary and secondary schools and found a positive correlation between the years of teaching and self-efficacy. Vidic et al.

found that student misbehavior is positively associated with teacher burnout, as teachers find

misbehavior extremely stressful, increasing their desire to leave teaching. Kim and Burić (2020)

performed a study to determine the effects of self-efficacy and burnout. They found that

experiencing burnout more strongly affected future levels of self-efficacy and that low levels of

self-efficacy and feelings of burnout have long-term consequences.

Teachers with Low Self-efficacy

Teachers unable to control disruptive behaviors feel a lack of fulfillment in the

classroom, which adds to a teacher's lack of purpose and decreases their self-efficacy

(Zimmerman, 2018). Teachers with weak self-efficacy find it hard to manage student

misbehavior in the classroom and build strong relationships with challenging students (Wink et

al., 2021). Teachers with low self-efficacy react negatively to classroom disruptions, which

increase teachers' stress (Kim & Burić, 2020; Wink et al., 2021). Teachers with low self-efficacy

tend to be less patient, understanding, and sympathetic, all essential qualities in a classroom

teacher. Wink et al. (2021) also found that teachers with low levels of self-efficacy reported

more burnout, as they felt incapable of handling situations in the classroom and felt more stress

when students misbehaved. Capone et al. (2019) studied the relationship between self-efficacy,

depression, and burnout. They found that with lower levels of teacher self-efficacy, burnout and

depression were higher. Likewise, with higher levels of teacher self-efficacy, teachers exhibited

lower levels of burnout and depression.

How Low Self-Efficacy Impacts Classroom Management. Low self-efficacy can

present itself in an inability to manage a classroom effectively (Vidic et al., 2021). A teacher's

adverse reaction toward behaviors can indicate poor classroom management and the failure to

manage a classroom competently (Lazarides et al., 2020). Wink et al. (2021) found that teachers

with low levels of self-efficacy had a more challenging time connecting with difficult students, became stressed when children misbehaved, and did not feel competent to handle difficult classroom situations. As a teacher becomes emotionally overwhelmed by a student's behavior, they worry about how the behavior might upset other students and often feel negatively toward the challenging student.

How Low Self-Efficacy Impacts Teacher Retention. Research has been done to determine the relationship between self-efficacy and burnout. Kim and Burić (2020) found that low levels of self-efficacy did not predict future levels of burnout, but that low self-efficacy was a consequence of burnout. For many teachers, the stress they feel each day eventually depletes their self-efficacy (McIntyre et al., 2017). Teachers experiencing high levels of emotional distress will feel less competent to handle problems in the classroom, which adds to feelings of burnout (Wink et al., 2021). Teachers reported lower problem-solving skills and the ability to find practical solutions, adding stress to their job. Capone et al. (2019) found that teachers with high levels of self-efficacy were less likely to suffer from burnout. Similarly, Elyashiv (2019) noted that teachers with a low sense of belonging and lacking efficacy were likelier to leave the profession. Self-efficacy helps teachers feel they can be effective, reducing their feelings of burnout and desire to leave the profession.

Classroom Management and Teacher Retention

Hewett (2019) recognized that classroom behavior and management are critical for teacher retention. Teachers who are confident in classroom management have fewer disruptions (Lazarides et al., 2020). To improve teacher retention rates, teachers must have classroom experiences and learn how to respond in different situations (Delamarre et al., 2021). When students feel they are in a safe, welcoming environment, they are more likely to participate in

class activities, behave appropriately in the classroom, and be motivated to learn (Nilson &

Goodson, 2017). Granger et al. (2021) found that teachers with low classroom management skills

contributed to teacher attrition due to the added stress of managing challenging students. While

much research has been done on teacher retention and teacher attrition over the years, the

research lacks a connection between the effects of classroom management and teacher

attrition. Teachers who are ill-prepared to manage a classroom consider themselves incapable of

being effective teachers (Fontaine et al., 2012).

Summary

Teacher attrition has been a longstanding issue in school districts around the world

(Perryman & Calvert, 2019; Ramos & Hughes, 2020; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Torres, 2016; Van

den Borre et al., 2021; Van Overschelde & Wiggins, 2019). Researchers have studied various

aspects of teacher retention and attrition. However, there are many possibilities on why 40-50%

of teachers leave the profession in the first three to five years of teaching (Bottiani et al., 2019;

Capone et al., 2019; Kim & Burić, 2020; McIntyre et al., 2017). A literature review has found

that many researchers agree that stress and burnout significantly contribute to teacher attrition

but that a lack of classroom management skills may also be a factor. Teachers might benefit from

more classroom management resources and training to gain classroom management skills to

reduce teacher attrition. With strong classroom management and coping skills, disruptive

behavior diminishes, lowering teachers' stress and burnout (Harmsen et al., 2018). Quality

classroom management skills may reduce teacher attrition (Hewett, 2019). The reviewed

literature discussed classroom management, lack of administrative support, teacher attrition,

teacher stress, and teacher burnout. While much research has been done on teacher retention and

teacher attrition over the years, research lacks the perceived connection between the effects of

classroom management and the decision to stay or leave the classroom. Social cognitive theory is

the framework that guides the study, using the aspects of personal agency and self-efficacy.

Perceived self-efficacy is the belief in oneself that they can control a situation (Bandura, 1989b).

The belief that a teacher can manage a difficult classroom may affect their decision to stay or

leave the profession.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

Hiring highly qualified teachers is challenging, but keeping teachers in the profession has proven to be a significant challenge (Farmer, 2020; Noordzij & van de Grift, 2020; Ryan et al., 2017; Van den Borre et al., 2021; Wyatt & O'Neill, 2021). Teacher retention is a growing problem worldwide, and this study aimed to better understand the lived experiences of classroom management and teacher attrition of teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience. The research design and questions are provided in this chapter, as well as the setting and participants, the researcher's positionality, procedures used in the study, data collection and analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness.

Research Design

A qualitative study is used to study a human problem (Creswell & Poth, 2017), which aligns with the study of teachers' perceived effects of classroom management on their decision to stay or leave the profession. Qualitative research can be called interpretive research, as a qualitative researcher aims to interpret a particular case rather than a population (Gall et al., 2007). This study was designed to understand teachers' perceptions of how classroom management affects their decision to stay or leave teaching. Teacher attrition has several causes, including workload, stress, and burnout (Perryman & Calvert, 2019). Teachers face the task of teaching challenging students under high workload pressure, which creates stress that pushes new teachers out of the profession (Ellison et al., 2021). Educational research aims to contribute findings to improve academic knowledge (Gall et al., 2007), and this research aimed to contribute to the research on the effects of classroom management on teacher retention and attrition.

A phenomenological approach is used to understand teachers' perceptions of the effect of classroom management on a teacher's decision to persevere and stay or leave the classroom. According to van Manen (2014), a phenomenon is a "lived experience" (p. 812), one that someone lived through, and almost always begins with a problem to be solved or wondering how to answer a question. This study began with wondering if a lack of classroom management skills affects teacher attrition. This study seeks to understand teachers' stress when managing a classroom and how classroom management affects stress, burnout, and self-efficacy, potentially adding to teacher attrition. There are several types of phenomenological research. This study used a hermeneutic approach. Husserl initiated phenomenology, and hermeneutics came from the writings of Martin Heidegger, who was a disciple of Husserl (Kafle, 2013). Hermeneutic focuses on the experience of the participant to help see the world through their eyes. This study attempts to understand what managing a classroom was like for teachers in their early years and how it affected their decision to stay or leave education using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

Research Questions

Teachers receive minimal training in classroom management during their education (Zoromski et al., 2021). While much research has been completed on teacher retention and teacher attrition over the years, research lacks the perceived connection between the effects of classroom management and the decision to stay or leave the classroom. According to Bandura (1979), most human behavior is goal-oriented and self-reflective. In social cognitive theory, when people believe they do not have control over desired outcomes, they have little incentive to persevere in difficult situations (Bandura et al., 2001a). Many excellent teachers leave the profession each year, leading to the research topic: Teacher's perceptions of the connection

between classroom management and teacher attrition.

Central Research Question

What meaning do teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience ascribe to classroom management and teacher attrition?

Sub-Question One

How do teachers describe their experiences with classroom management and the belief that they can effectively teach their students?

Sub-Question Two

What meaning do teachers ascribe to self-efficacy and their decision to stay or leave the classroom?

Setting and Participants

Keeping teachers in the profession has proven challenging worldwide. Harmsen et al. (2018) found that early career teachers feel significant psychological stress due to the pressures of workload and task demands. In the U.S. alone, 25% of new teachers experience burnout in the first year (Zimmerman, 2018). Research by Ellison et al. (2021) showed a 30% turnover rate among United States (U.S.) teachers teaching for less than three years and a 70% turnover rate within the first five years in underserved schools. Early-career teachers in secondary schools are more likely to leave the profession than elementary teachers (Wyatt & O'Neill, 2021). Although the year at which a teacher may decide to leave the profession varies, research agrees that keeping early-career teachers in the profession is a challenge (Harmsen et al., 2018; Kelchtermans, 2017; Maready et al., 2021; Van den Borre et al., 2021; Voss & Kunter, 2019). Therefore, the criteria for participants for this study are early career teachers who have less than

10 years of experience teaching at a U.S. public school. Participants have experience teaching at elementary or secondary levels and in various states around the U.S.

Setting

Creswell and Poth (2017) suggested finding an uncommon field site and using a range of school districts and experiences to create a unique perspective. A field setting was used for this study. A field setting could be individual homes, community centers, or offices (Gall et al., 2007). A field setting is best for this study because the participants will be from various states in the U.S. Generally, the administration structure of a U.S. public school district has a superintendent who oversees all the schools in the district. U.S. public school districts may also have a curriculum director and other district leaders, such as a math or literacy coach. These coaches could also be on a school level, depending on the size of the district. Each district will vary in size, but most all U.S. schools will have a principal at each school, and larger schools will have an assistant or vice principal. Each school often has middle-level leaders, such as department heads or grade-level leaders. Then there are teachers, and some schools offer a teachers' aid for teachers depending on the specialty or design of the school. A typical organizational structure for a U.S. school district is to have an elementary school for kindergarten to grade five or six. If the elementary school ends at grade five, then a middle school for grades six through eight is common. If grade six is included in the elementary school, the district will often have a junior high for grades seven and eight. High school often has grades nine to 12, but some districts may include grade nine in junior high. Participants live in rural and urban areas, which determines the administration and organizational structure they experienced and provides a unique perspective. Data was collected through personal interviews and focus group discussions online so that participants were in their homes or individual spaces around the

U.S. The individual interviews and the focus group discussions took place on Zoom. Using Zoom allowed a range of participants from various states to participate in the study and the discussion groups. The study aimed to understand the perceived effects of classroom management on teacher retention and attrition, and a field site was used for the research study.

Participants

The goal was to find 10-15 teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience in a U.S. public school. A sample size of 10-12 is the recommended sample size to receive saturation for qualitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2017). As an international teacher, recruitment for the study was unique, as I do not have access to a U.S. public school system. This means that I was unbiased when choosing participants, as I do not have an affiliation with their school. I was also unfamiliar with their setting and had no prior knowledge or experience of working with their administration. Participants were selected from various school districts in the United States who taught in multiple school settings and grade levels. The goal was to find participants who had less than 10 years of teaching experience, with closer to five years in the field being ideal. As having a range of experiences is optimal, recruiting both male and female participants is best. Having teachers who have taught or are teaching at multiple grade levels is also ideal. Participation was voluntary, and participants offered consent to participate in the study. Not narrowing down the location or grade level of the participants allowed the analysis to have a range of experiences to provide a unique perspective.

Recruitment Plan

A qualitative study seeks to understand the meaning of a phenomenon from participants who have experienced the phenomenon (Merriam, 2002). Criterion and snowball sampling were used to gather participants for the study. According to Merriam, criterion sampling follows

specific criteria to determine who will participate. Criterion sampling is important in a phenomenology study to ensure all participants have experienced the same phenomenon. This study's criterion was teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience in a U.S. public school setting.

Snowball sampling allows people to recommend friends and family who may fit the study's criteria (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Participants were recruited through word of mouth and social networking. Snowball sampling is beneficial for this study because it is designed for teachers who have left the field of education and those currently in their careers' early years, so locating participants may be difficult. Once participants were recognized as having experienced the required criteria, they could speak to friends and acquaintances who have also had the same experience. As friends, family, or acquaintances recommend people for the study, some names may come up multiple times, making them a credible sample and a sound sampling technique (Gall et al., 2007). This snowball technique allowed me to find enough participants who have taught in the United States public schools and left teaching within the first ten years, including those who are still teaching within their first ten years either nationally or internationally.

Once the participants were identified as having met the criteria, I sent each participant a letter outlining the study and their involvement. A sample of the recruitment letter can be found in Appendix 4. The requirements were precise, and participants could opt out of the study if they did not wish to participate. At this stage, purposeful sampling also helped select participants. According to Gall et al. (2007), purposeful sampling is choosing the best participants for the study. If a participant is reluctant, they may not be the best participant for the study. I reminded each participant that participation was voluntary and allowed them to withdraw without pressure to continue. Purposeful sampling aims not to achieve population validity but to find information-

rich participants who will benefit the study (Gall et al.). The number of participants who volunteered for the study was within the desired range of participants; therefore, there was no need to adjust the criterion to a specific location or grade level.

Researcher's Positionality

There are many reasons that teachers leave the profession. Research on teacher burnout often mentions stress and workload (Perryman & Calvert, 2019). Teachers leave the classroom because of a lack of administrative support (DeMatthews et al., 2021), low salaries (Nguyen, 2020), and challenging students (Bottiani et al., 2019; Elyashiv, 2019). While teachers do not have control over the workload, administrative support, or low salary, teachers control how they handle difficult children in the classroom. Learning classroom management skills can help alleviate new teachers' stress.

Four other first-year teachers were hired simultaneously in the district when I was hired for my first teaching position. Within our first five years, two of them left the profession. One knew by year five that he would not stay in the profession but waited until year seven to leave due to family obligations, with two of us are still teaching. Over the years, I have watched many new teachers struggle with the stress of the first years of teaching.

While working toward my bachelor's degree in college, I knew I wanted to teach high school. I loved my high school experience and wanted to help students succeed during their high school years. However, during a year of substitute teaching, I mainly taught at the middle school level and fell in love with middle school students. After working in the middle school for five years, I was hired as a high school teacher, and I was excited to teach at this level. However, the realities of high school teaching were much different than I had anticipated. Many students were not interested in learning and were just there to participate in athletics and do the minimum

requirements to pass a course. I was teaching in the center of Wyoming, and many students' parents were oil field workers, making a lot more money without a college education than I was with a master's degree. Many students planned to follow in their parent's footsteps and make money in the oil field, not seeing the need to attend college and, therefore, did not feel education was important.

I found classroom management challenging during those three years of high school teaching. I had yet to realize the importance of classroom management, as it had come easy to me at the middle school level. However, motivating the students and encouraging them to engage in the lessons took a lot more work at the high school level. I came home each night exhausted and burned out, dreading going to school the next day to do it all again. At that point, I realized that if I had immediately taught at the high school level, I would have thought teaching was not for me, and I believe I would have left the profession. However, because I had had a middle school teaching experience that I had enjoyed and that came easy to me, I realized that I was a middle school teacher and that managing a classroom made a considerable difference in feelings of stress, burnout, and feelings of self-efficacy.

I have often considered some of my first colleagues and wondered if they left the profession because of difficulties managing a classroom. Maybe if they had tried teaching a different grade level, they would have found a good fit. If I had started my teaching career as a high school teacher, I do not believe I would still be teaching today. Having found that classroom management is easy for me in middle school, I continue to teach at the middle school level. After working in the U.S. public school system for eight years, I moved overseas to teach. I have taught middle school social studies in China and Bulgaria and teaching at Hong Kong International School in Hong Kong at the time of this study. Every day, as I work with middle

school students, I am grateful to have had a middle school teaching job first so that when high school teaching was stressful and difficult for me, I knew it was not the teaching I did not enjoy but the age group that was difficult for me to manage. As I walked around my classroom daily, I wished every teacher could find an age group that is easy to manage and brings them the joy I have felt while teaching. I have seen many excellent teachers leave the profession throughout my years of teaching, both nationally and internationally. I have always wondered if classroom management was part of their leaving decision. For this reason, I chose this topic for my study and the question, what is the perceived connection between classroom management and the decision to stay or leave the profession from teachers' lived experiences?

Interpretive Framework

In today's classroom, many teachers are expected to use a constructivist approach to learning. Constructivism is a vague concept and can have a variety of meanings for teachers (Powell & Kalina, 2009). However, it is commonly understood that knowledge is not automatic but is an active process, either individually or socially (Liu & Matthews, 2005). There are two main types of constructivism: cognitive and social. Jean Piaget (1973) and Lev Vygotsky (1978) are known for their studies of constructivism. Piaget is known as the founding father of cognitive constructivism, in which lies the belief that learning cannot be passed from person to person; instead, each needs to learn and discover knowledge independently (Liu & Matthews, 2005), and Lev Vygotsky is known as the founding father of social constructivism which believes in the social interaction of collaborative learning (Powell & Kalina, 2009).

Many schools believe a social constructivist learning approach is the best teaching method (Powell & Kalina, 2009). Social constructivism allows for collaboration and social interaction among students. Working together, people construct artifacts through social

interactions. Learning about other people's experiences will help others construct their knowledge about a similar situation. Therefore, the theoretical framework that I used in my research was social constructivism. This allowed me to work with people who had experienced a similar phenomenon and learned from their experiences.

Teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. While there are many reasons for teacher retention and attrition, this study focused on researching the perceived connection between classroom management and a teacher's decision to stay or leave the profession in the early years of their career. Teachers work in a social setting, surrounded by students and other teachers. A teacher's decision to stay or leave the profession may be based on multiple reasons and experiences. Listening to how people respond to questions and how people live and work can influence a social constructivist's research, which aligns with my study. My knowledge and cultural background also affected my research, as I interpreted how others view their classroom management skills and their desire to stay or leave the teaching profession. Human behavior is complex, and knowing how and why people choose to stay or leave the profession early in their career sparked the desire for this study.

Philosophical Assumptions

Researchers will bring personal views of themselves and others into their research (Creswell & Poth, 2017). According to Creswell and Poth, there are three stances that a researcher will take based on their views of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows reality (epistemology), and the value stance taken by the inquirer (axiology). As the researcher, my beliefs in each stance will influence the study.

Ontological Assumption

My ontological assumption is in line with a Christian belief that there is one reality, and

that is based on God's Truth. In 2 Timothy 1, we learn that God has not given us the spirit of fear but of a sound mind (*King James Bible*, 1979/2006). We should use the sense and knowledge He has given us to learn and study the gospel and our world. Studying His truth gives me strength through the challenges I have faced and will influence my research as a qualitative researcher. As a Christian, I believe that each person is a child of God. In my classroom, I try to treat each child with the knowledge that they are children of God, and I try to be a Christian example to those around me. My Christian belief and ontological assumption of the belief in one reality guide my daily decisions and actions. Knowing that God is a God of love, I treated each person with love and respect. As I interviewed each participant, I remembered that each one is a child of God, and that God loves them. Their experiences may differ, but it does not diminish who they are. I listened to them with an open mind, without judgment about the decisions they have made in their life. My study reflected my ontological assumption, as I know God lives and loves each of His children.

Epistemological Assumption

My epistemological assumption aligns with qualitative research in that studying the participants and conducting studies in the field will produce quality results (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Understanding the participant's background helped provide adequate context to the research. As Christians, we should show love and kindness to all people and be an example to others. We can do this by getting to know others. To understand why so many teachers leave the profession in the early years of teaching, I needed to spend time with teachers who have left the field, trying to understand the stress and burnout they felt during the early years of their careers. Likewise, I spent time with teachers who were still in their early years of teaching and learned how they managed stress and burnout and why they decided to stay in the profession. Learning

about their background and experiences helped provide quality research. Understanding why people do what they do draws me to qualitative research in the hopes of better understanding teacher retention and attrition, helping to find a way to improve teacher retention.

Axiological Assumption

The third philosophical assumption is the axiological assumption, which refers to the values known in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In qualitative research, we know the participants and are immersed in the culture and setting. As a teacher, I have experienced the first years of teaching and understand how stressful the first years can be. As I research teacher retention and attrition, my teaching experiences will affect how I research the topic. Most teachers have considered leaving the profession at one time or another, and these feelings of burnout and stress impacted my research. As a high school teacher, I felt teachers' stress and burnout, being ready to leave the profession. Having found my love of teaching middle school, my experiences of staying in teaching and wanting all teachers to love teaching as much as I do also influenced how I researched and reported on teacher retention. Each of these experiences may affect the values of the study.

Researcher's Role

I will be the primary researcher for this study. I have a bachelor's degree in history and a master's in education focusing on curriculum and instruction. As I prepared to become a teacher, I saw several university classmates burned out of teaching and ready to leave the profession. I did not understand how this could happen to novice teachers who had only been teaching for a few years. As I concluded my university studies and began teaching, I fell in love with teaching and continued to watch excellent teachers leave the profession early in their careers. I have seen those with poor classroom management skills quickly become burned out, and I would like to

understand how classroom management affects teachers' decisions to stay or leave the profession.

In phenomenology, the researcher must be a good listener, ask good questions, stay adaptive, fully grasp what is being studied, and conduct research ethically (van Manen, 2014). Most of these qualities are general, and I am a good listener, have a firm grasp of what is being studied, and conduct research ethically. The participants for this research included teachers who left the profession early in their careers and teachers who chose to stay in the profession. I invited those I know who have left the profession to participate in my study and early career teachers I know who are currently teaching. I also networked to find friends of friends who would be willing to participate in my study, either as a current teacher or a previous teacher. As a teacher at an international school outside the U.S., I did not compromise school relationships and had no authority over participants. However, I have taught in a U.S. public school district before moving overseas to teach, so I do understand the U.S., but I do not believe it impacted the study. I have some biases and assumptions about teaching and classroom management as a teacher. Because classroom management played a role in my experience of enjoying or not enjoying teaching, I assume it has played a role for others. However, this is just my assumption, and I am curious whether this is true with others. Because I genuinely want to know if others have had the same experiences and do not want my bias or assumptions to deter the research one way or the other, I did my best to ask open-ended questions that were not leading and allowed the participants to provide their own experiences.

Procedures

The first step was to obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. The IRB approval letter is found in Appendix A. Participants were selected through criterion sampling. Participants

needed to meet specific criteria to be considered for the study. The researcher spoke to friends

and acquaintances with less than 10 years of teaching experience to see if they would be willing

to participate in the study. Next, snowball sampling was used to obtain more participants.

Friends and family members asked their friends and acquaintances if they knew anyone who fit

the criterion and would be willing to participate in the study. Through the criterion and snowball

sampling, enough participants were selected. Participants were given a consent form with the

details of the study and were required to sign it before participating. The participant consent form

can be found in Appendix B. The first data collection was through letter writing. Participants

were asked to write a letter to themselves with information they wished they had known as a

beginning teacher. Next, recorded interviews were completed via Zoom or orally. Professionals

in the field reviewed the questions used for the interview to ensure that the questions were

straightforward. Based on the data collected, a focus group discussion was held where

participants were encouraged to discuss their teaching and classroom management experiences

together. All data was analyzed to find shared experiences and themes.

Data Collection Plan

When completing a qualitative research study, there are three primary data sources:

interviews, observations, and documents (Merriam, 2002). According to Creswell and Poth

(2017), there are many computer-mediated formats to collect data, including web-based

interviews via e-mail, text-based chat rooms, and social media. Other sources may include focus

group interviews, journal entries, and surveys. Many sources complement the others, and no

source has a higher advantage over the others. The three data collection forms for this study were

letter writing, personal interviews, and focus group discussions. Qualitative data analysis does

not have a fixed formula or recipe to follow (Merriam, 2002; Moustakas, 1994). These three data

sources were used to provide adequate data on the perceived effects of classroom management on teacher retention and attrition.

Letter-Writing

The first form of data was collected via a personal letter. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that personal letters allow the researcher to obtain information from the participants about their life experiences. Participants were prompted to write about what they wished they had known before they began teaching, similar to a letter to their younger self. They were encouraged to share their classroom management experiences and preparation to manage a classroom. They were also prompted to share their feelings of self-efficacy as a young teacher and what they wished they had known before overseeing their classroom. Participants were asked to write a letter before participating in the interviews or focus group so the interview questions or experiences of other focus group members would not influence their experience and advice. Participants were notified about the letter at the beginning of the study and had ample time to complete the letter. The prompt for the written letter is in Table 1.

Table 1

Written Letter Prompt

Please write a letter to your former self about what you wish you had known before you became a teacher. Please use any questions from the following prompt to guide you, and feel free to add anything else you wish you had known.

When you reflect on your early years as a teacher, what do you wish you had known? What would you tell yourself about teaching and managing a classroom now that you have had some classroom experience? If you were to talk to a new graduate preparing to go into teaching, what advice would you give them about classroom management? Please share some classroom

management experiences you have had, both positive and negative situations. In these situations, did you feel you were prepared to handle them? What would you have done differently? Self-efficacy can be defined as a person's belief and confidence that they can successfully manage a classroom and teaching responsibilities. Please share your feelings of self-efficacy as a young teacher about managing a classroom.

Individual Interviews

The second source of data collection for this study was personal interviews. The participants had already written a personal letter to their younger selves, allowing the interview questions to be more specific to each participant. The individual interviews were conducted one-on-one virtually due to the various locations of the participants. Interviews were completed via Zoom, Google Classroom, or Facetime. The participants chose the platform that made them the most comfortable and at a time that was convenient for them. With the permission of each participant, interviews were audio and video recorded. Recording the interview provided more accurate details (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam, 2002). The video recording was completed through a screen recording, and the voice memo app on an iPhone was used as a backup audio recording. An iPad voice memo app was also used to record the interview as a backup in case the iPhone or computer recording did not work. The recorded data was not a replacement for the interviewers' notes and firsthand observations but was used to add detail to what was observed or noted in real time (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

As the second form of data collected, the interview helped build a rapport with the participants. the interview allowed the researcher to learn about their backgrounds, teacher training programs, classroom management strategies, and teaching experiences. Building a relationship with the participant is essential to help them feel safe (Gall et al., 2007).

Participation is voluntary; if participants do not feel safe or connected to the researcher, they may drop out of the study; thus, building a safe rapport with the participant is essential. During individual interviews, the researcher is the primary instrument, observing verbal and non-verbal communication (Merriam, 2002), adding to the dimension of the data collected. Therefore, it is essential that interviews are completed in person, when possible (Moustakas, 1994), or at the least, through video conferencing, where the researcher can see the participant and view the non-verbal communication throughout the interview.

Interview questions are designed to build a rapport between the researcher and the participants, which will help them feel safe and willing to share their experiences, allowing for data collection about the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam, 2002; Moustakas, 1994). The semi-structured interviews consisted of 21 open-ended questions, and follow-up questions were used to clarify the participants' statements. The interview questions are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about yourself and your educational background.

2. Why did you choose to become a teacher?

3. Describe your typical day as a teacher. CRQ

4. What classroom management classes did you take in your university teacher preparation program? CRQ

5. What kind of classroom management training did you find most useful? Lease useful? CRQ

6. What professional development or training in classroom management did you have while teaching? CRQ

7. How did student behavior affect your attitude throughout the day? CRQ

8. How were student behaviors what you expected? CRQ

9. Describe a behavior challenge you faced when teaching students. Describe the steps you took to control the situation. CRQ

    What would have helped you handle it better?

10. Describe your classroom management technique. SQ1

11. What kind of classroom management system did you use in your classroom? SQ1

12. Describe a classroom management skill or technique that you feel is a strength. Describe a skill or technique that you could improve. SQ1

13. Self-efficacy can be defined as a person's belief and confidence that they can successfully manage a classroom and teaching responsibilities. Considering self-efficacy, how did classroom management affect your self-efficacy as a teacher? SQ1

14. How prepared did you feel to manage a classroom when you entered education? SQ1

15. How did disruptive students impact your ability to manage the classroom? SQ1

16. If you could talk to new teachers beginning their careers, what would you tell them that you wish you had known about the difficulties of managing a classroom? SQ2

17. How do you think your ability to manage a classroom affected your decision to leave teaching? SQ2

18. Describe the support administrators have given you concerning classroom management. SQ2

19. What advice would you give administrators about supporting teachers in classroom management? SQ2

20. Is there anything else you want to tell me about classroom management's effects on you as a teacher? SQ2

21. Is there anything else you want to add to our discussion on your experiences with classroom management and self-efficacy that we have not discussed?

The first two questions were general questions about the participants' background and desire to become a teacher to help the participants feel safe and relaxed. Questions three through nine helped answer the central research question by better understanding their classroom management training and experience. Questions ten through 14 were designed to answer the research sub-question one. Each question aimed to learn more about the participants' classroom management skills and the effect of managing a classroom as an early career teacher had on their self-efficacy. Questions 16-20 were related to the research sub-question two in finding out how classroom management and administrative support impacted their decision to stay or leave the profession. The final question was whether there was anything that we had not discussed that they wanted to add to the interview.

Focus Groups

The third form of data for this study was focus group discussions. A focus group was established after personal interviews and built a rapport with the teachers. Focus groups allowed the participants to meet and hear about other participants' teaching experiences, enabling participants who may have hesitated to share their experiences one-on-one to participate in a group experience. The focus group also helped participants to share experiences that did not come up in the individual interviews. Focus groups were scheduled at a time convenient for the

participants. Performing the individual interviews beforehand provided the researcher with background knowledge of the participant's educational, career, and classroom experiences. The researcher took notes throughout the focus group discussion, particularly noticing the participant's classroom management experiences and their decision to stay or leave education.

With permission from the participants, the focus groups were audio and video recorded. Like individual interviews, focus groups were held virtually via Zoom. Recording the focus group discussion will provide more accurate details (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam, 2002). As with the individual interviews, recordings only took place with the participant's approval. The recording could be stopped immediately if, at any time, any participant was uncomfortable with the recording during the group discussion. The recording was completed through Zoom with permission to record the group discussion. The voice memo app on an iPhone was used to record the interview as a backup in case the computer recording did not work. The recorded data is not a replacement for the interviewers' notes and firsthand observations but was to be used to add detail to what was observed or noted in real time (Creswell & Poth, 2017). All participants agreed to be video or audio-recorded.

Several questions were provided to prompt the discussion. The interviewer prepared questions to help with the discussion. The questions provided were modified after the personal interviews based on the participant's responses and areas where more research or details could be used. Mostly, the interviewer was a non-participant observer observing the focus group discussion (Merriam, 2002), using the questions to prompt discussion and participation as needed. The focus group questions were meant to be prompts if the discussion lagged or got off-topic. The researcher provided ten discussion questions, and the prompts are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Focus Group Questions

1. Please introduce yourself and tell the group where, how many years, and grade levels you taught.

2. What classroom management courses were included in your university education program? (CRQ)

3. What classroom management has been provided to you through professional development? CRQ)

4. When you reflect on your first year of teaching, what surprised you about managing a classroom? (SQ1)

5. Could you tell me about a time when you had a classroom situation you felt unable to handle? (SQ1)

6. Did you ever feel disruptive students prevented you from effectively teaching your class? (SQ1)

7. During your first years of teaching, what was your classroom management experience? How did it help you to feel capable of handling a classroom? (SQ2)

8. Why did you decide to leave teaching? (SQ2)

9. How did classroom management factor into your decision to stay or leave teaching? (SQ2)

10. In the early years of teaching, how confident did you feel in managing a classroom? (SQ2)

Question one was used at the beginning of the focus group for each person to introduce themselves so the group could get to know each other and be comfortable discussing. Questions

two and three helped answer the central research question to learn the background information of each teacher's classroom management training. Questions four through six helped answer sub-question one. Learning about other teachers' classroom management experiences helped the researcher understand their belief in their abilities to handle a classroom. Questions seven through 10 helped answer sub-question two in understanding how confident teachers felt in classroom management during the early years of their careers.

Data Analysis

Data was collected through a written letter, individual interviews, and focus group discussions. Recorded data was transcribed and then coded, looking for themes that arose among the data. Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen analysis method was used for this study. The following sections detail how the data was analyzed.

Letter-Writing Data Analysis Plan

Once each letter was received, each letter was analyzed using Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. Each nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statement was listed. Then, each sentence in the letter was analyzed, and a code was given. Coding helps make sense of the information collected, organizing it into categories (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Once the letters were coded, the codes were grouped to form emerging categories or themes. The themes were then synthesized into a description of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). This description of the experience was compared to the description of the experience found in the individual interviews and focus group discussion analysis. The advantage of letter writing is that it does not need to be transcribed.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

When collecting data through individual interviews for qualitative research, data analysis can happen both synchronously and asynchronously (Merriam, 2002). Analyzing the data during the interview allowed the researcher to adjust and ask follow-up questions to clarify information or gain a deeper understanding of the experience. The interviewer paid attention to verbal and non-verbal cues from the interviewee and asked follow-up questions as appropriate. Each interview took its course through this process, as each participant was an individual, and their teaching experiences guided the interview. This synchronous data analysis approach allowed for an inductive strategy, allowing the interview to follow a natural course based on the participants' responses. Interview questions were revised depending on the direction of the interview. The researcher took notes during each interview about the reactions to the questions and their observations of the participant, as well as while watching the interview recording.

An asynchronous approach to data analysis was used after the interview. With the consent of the participants, each interview was recorded. Once the interview was complete, the recorded interview was transcribed. After transcription, each interview sentence used the same data analysis method as the written letter.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

After the focus group discussion, the recording was transcribed and coded using the same data analysis method as the written letter. Once the focus group discussion was coded and common themes emerged, the themes were compared to those found in the individual interviews and the written letters. Data was analyzed using a comparative method approach (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The comparative approach allowed data comparisons between the participants' written letters, individual interview responses, and focus group discussions. The data from the

focus group discussion was added to the themes and descriptions that emerged from the written letters and individual interviews. The themes that arose from the classroom management experiences of the participants and their perceptions of how it affected their decision to stay or leave the profession in the early years of their careers were compared.

Data Synthesis

Three data collection approaches were used in this study to form triangulation. Each data collection was analyzed using coding and then merged into collective themes. A spreadsheet was created to synthesize the data and collect the codes used in the data analysis. The themes from the codes were then added to the spreadsheet. The spreadsheet was first organized by the data collection method: written letters, individual interviews, and focus group discussions. The codes that emerged in each process were added to the spreadsheet, followed by the themes from each method. The themes were noted, and a synthesis of all data was viewed on the spreadsheet. These themes were used to answer the central research question and sub-questions.

Trustworthiness

This section describes measures to ensure a rigorous study through the lens prescribed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Efforts to establish credibility in this study included triangulation and peer debriefing. Lincoln and Guba conceptualized these terms, highlighting the rigor and reliability of qualitative research. This section describes measures to ensure a rigorous study using credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility is how accurately the findings describe reality from the participant's view of their experiences and the truth of the study's findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is the extent to which the research is believable (Nassaji, 2020). Credibility is the truthfulness of the

findings and how they reflect the reality of the experience. I achieved credibility in two ways: triangulation and peer debriefing.

Triangulation

In this study, I aimed for data triangulation to explore the effects that novice teachers feel classroom management had on their decision to leave education. Triangulation increases the reliability of the findings to achieve an accurate and complete understanding of the experience (Nassaji, 2020). Source triangulation was conducted by coding the data and recognizing common themes. Data collection methods triangulation was achieved through written letters, individual interviews, and focus group discussions.

Peer Debriefing

In this study, I used peer debriefing to preview the interview questions for clarity and discuss the findings with middle school colleagues to ensure the data analysis was valid and understandable (Marshall et al., 2021). Ideally, I would have collaborated with U.S. educators. Still, as an international teacher, I have easy access to international teachers with whom I asked to preview the interview questions and findings. However, most international teachers started their career teaching in a U.S. public school district, so they have experience being a novice teacher in the U.S. I also corroborated my findings with available research and peers who have lived the experience of being a teacher.

Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained transferability as the applicability of showing the findings in other content. A thorough and rich description of the research activities and assumptions is necessary to allow the transferability of the interpretations or conclusions to similar contexts (Nassaji, 2020). The descriptions I used to describe the feelings and experiences

of the novice and veteran teachers provided the study with a robust picture of whether classroom management influenced them to stay or leave the profession. The conditions of this study have transferability, but transferability is not assured. Only the reader can make this judgment.

Dependability

Dependability shows consistent findings and could be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) through compelling study descriptions. By reviewing the data, others could arrive at similar interpretations (Nassaji, 2020). The procedures are detailed and could be replicated in another school district or country. An inquiry audit was performed by thoroughly reviewing the process and the research products by the dissertation committee and the Qualitative Research Director at Liberty University.

Confirmability

Confirmability is a degree of neutrality of the extent to which the respondents shape the findings of a study and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Three techniques were used to ensure confirmability in this study. First, I created audit trails of the procedures' raw data and analyzed data so they could be easily tracked. Second, I employed aspects of triangulation described above, including the triangulation of source and data collection methods. Finally, I was reflective throughout the study while learning about the participants' experiences. Being reflective involves reflecting on our values and experiences that shape our identity (Ben-Ari & Enosh, 2010). Having been a novice teacher, I understand the strains and workload pressure on early career teachers, keeping an open mind to hearing about their experiences. I was open to including new experiences when they were presented in the data collection.

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative ethics has many aspects, from choosing an adequate site, keeping participants confidential, and securing the data (van Manen, 2014). Protecting participants' information and data is essential in qualitative research. According to the Oxford Dictionary, ethics is the moral principle that governs a person's behavior (Stevenson, 2010). In qualitative research, participation is voluntary, and participants were given clear information regarding the study and their right to withdraw at any time. Participants were asked if they would be willing to join the study, and they were given details about the research and explained that they would be interviewed and recorded. Possible risks were explained on the participant consent form. For this study, the expected risks were minimal, which means they are equal to the risks encountered in everyday life. Participants did not receive any benefits or compensation for participating in the study. They were asked to sign an informed consent letter and reminded they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Permissions

I needed consent from the participants and the IRB to perform my study. Once the participants were identified as having met the criteria, I sent each participant a consent form outlining the study and their involvement. No specific site was required for this study. The participants for the study were individuals who taught at a U.S. public school district and left the profession within their first ten years of teaching. Participants also included national or international teachers in their first ten years of teaching. Participants were asked to sign an agreement form, which is in Appendix B. The final permission needed was approval by the IRB, which is in Appendix A.

Participant Protections

Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants could drop out of the study at any time. Pseudonyms were used for participants, and site names were used to provide confidentiality. Sites with no vested interest in the study's outcomes were chosen, and pseudonyms were used for the school districts and schools where participants worked or were working during this study. Electronic data is password protected, and physical data is secured in locked filing cabinets outside the country and will be destroyed after three years. Qualitative research involves real people and real lives; all information must be protected.

Summary

This chapter provided detailed information about the study. A phenomenological design was chosen to better understand how classroom management affects teachers by adding to teacher stress and how that stress affects their self-efficacy as a teacher, adding to their decision to stay or leave the profession in the early years of their career. Data was collected through written letters, individual interviews, and a focus group discussion. The collected data from the letters, interviews, and discussions were analyzed through a coding process, and codes were organized into themes. All themes were compared between the written letters, the individual interviews, and the focus group discussions to ensure data triangulation and answer the central research question.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand what meaning teachers ascribe to classroom management and teacher attrition in the lived experiences of teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience in U.S. public schools. The theoretical framework for this study was Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), emphasizing human agency and self-efficacy. This chapter begins by describing the 13 participants and continues with a narrative result of the data presented thematically. The chapter includes answers to the research questions and concludes with a summary of the findings.

Participants

A combination of convenience and snowball sampling resulted in 13 participants for this study. Participants had to have less than 10 years' experience as a classroom teacher in a United States (U.S.) public school district. Table 4 presents the participant information, including the years of teaching experience, grade levels taught, and whether they obtained their teaching license through a traditional or non-traditional route. Pseudonyms are used for each participant.

Allison

Allison is from the East Coast. She studied environmental and ecological science at university. As an undergraduate, she was specifically looking at conservation and herpetology, which is the study of snakes, turtles, and other reptiles and amphibians. Then, she said, "I had a summer where I was working in a lab, and I found that I was more excited about telling people about science." So, in her final year of university, she pursued teaching. Her first job was working at a school in her home state while she did a lateral entry teaching program to gain full teacher licensure. After teaching high school for three years in her home state, she moved

overseas, where she completed her master's degree in STEM education and just completed her eighth year of teaching.

Chloe

Chloe is from the Midwest. She attended a university near her hometown where she majored in elementary education. Her university required a double major, so she also majored in psychology, which she says has come in handy as a teacher. She has a K-six license for elementary education and is currently working on a K-12 reading license and a master's degree. At the age of five, she decided she wanted to be a teacher and, for the most part, never veered from that dream except for a quick moment as a student at university, where she wondered, "Is this really what I want? Or is this just what I wanted and said for the last 20 years?" She has always loved working with children, and it felt natural for her to become a teacher. She taught third grade for three years before moving overseas to teach second grade at an international school in Europe, eventually moving back to the Midwest, where she currently teaches fifth grade and is finishing her eighth year of teaching.

DeEtte

DeEtte is also from the midwestern United States. She attended a state university and taught middle and high school math in a rural town in the Midwest. When asked why she wanted to become a teacher, she said, "I didn't think I was going to be a teacher, but after an experience as a summer camp counselor, I realized that I like working with teenagers and think they're pretty cool, so maybe I should consider teaching." Her experience includes teaching remedial and credit recovery math courses, AP statistics, and AP calculus courses in the U.S., and International Baccalaureate math in Europe. After teaching middle and high school math in the

Midwest for five years, she moved to Europe, where she continues teaching high school math at an international school and is finishing her eighth year of teaching.

Hailey

After completing an associate's degree from a university in Hawaii, Hailey transferred to a university in the Mountain West. She completed her bachelor's degree in English and has a teaching licensure. Hailey was inspired to become a teacher when her grandma said she would be a good teacher. Hailey realized, "I love English. I would love to teach. I would love to be a teacher." She feels she was led to teach and loved it once she started. After four years of teaching, she stays home with her young children and has recently finished a master's degree in educational leadership.

Janet

Janet found herself majoring in special education at a university in the Mountain West. She has always loved children, especially those with special needs. She never considered herself a special education teacher but said, "My dream job was to be a marine biologist. I wanted to be a dolphin trainer and use dolphins to work with handicapped children." But somehow, she found herself led to teaching. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in special education and immediately began teaching in an elementary classroom of students with severe disabilities. She taught for four years before leaving the profession to have her own family.

Kaitlyn

Kaitlyn grew up in the south-central United States and attended university in her home state, where she majored in mathematics education. After teaching high school math for three years, she moved cities to attend a state university where she received a master's degree in finance. She then returned to the classroom to teach high school mathematics for another four

years before deciding to stay home and start a family. Kaitlyn has always loved math and explained, "I tutored younger kids, and I loved it and felt like I could be good at explaining math in a relatable way. So, it was really tutoring that made me want to be a math teacher."

Kinlee

Kinlee is another participant who grew up in the Midwest. She received her bachelor's degree in English education and a minor in middle school. After student teaching, she was accepted into a master's program for curriculum and instruction. She does not feel like there was an outstanding moment when she realized she wanted to be a teacher. But she says, "I just like to read. And I thought teaching kids to read and write would be fun." After teaching for one year in the Midwest, she moved to the Mountain West, where she just completed her sixth year as a middle school English teacher.

Kylie

Originally an athletic training major, Kylie decided, "I didn't like hurting people because you had to make them do things they didn't want to do." Since most of her credits were toward biology, she started taking education classes and graduated with a Biology Education degree from a university in the Mountain West. She has taught middle and high school students in various school districts. She began her teaching career in a district near her university and then moved to an inner-city school where she taught high school. After taking some time off to have a family, she has returned to the classroom in a rural area of the Mountain West.

Lori

A Mountain West native, Lori graduated from university with a bachelor's degree in elementary education and then pursued a master's degree in administrative leadership. She taught sixth grade for six years before leaving the classroom to become an instructional coach.

When asked why she decided to leave the classroom, she stated, "I felt myself getting very comfortable where I was, and that's not good because comfortable means I'm not putting in all the same effort, and I didn't want to become complacent." Although she loves being a classroom teacher, she also enjoys her new instructional coach role.

Madalyn

Madalyn has a mathematics education degree and a physics education minor from a university in the Mountain West. She wanted to become a teacher to "help kids know and understand the importance of math." She also wanted a career that would allow her to drop it and pick it back up, depending on family life. She taught high school for five years before leaving the classroom to stay home with her children.

Makenna

Makenna was a born teacher. Having been raised in the West by parents who were both teachers, she said, "Teaching is something that I've always gravitated toward and loved. I used to teach my stuffed animals and dolls. I would line them up and teach reading lessons daily when I was just a little kid." She has a bachelor's degree in elementary education and accepted a long-term sub position before becoming a stay-at-home mom. After 14 years of raising her children, she wanted to return to the classroom. She was a Title 1 teacher for three years and just completed her seventh year as a fifth-grade classroom teacher.

Paige

With a degree in music education K-12 from a Mountain West university, Paige wanted to be a choir director. Since her university did not offer a choir major, she took it upon herself to attend all the choir conferences and workshops she could. Her first job was teaching elementary children general music, instruments, and choir. She then taught high school choir and is currently

teaching community chorus instead of classroom teaching. She said, "During the spring break of my first year teaching, I knew I wanted to be doing community chorus. And now, almost 16 years later, I am doing it and absolutely love it."

Tilly

Tilly is another Midwest native who graduated from a Mountain West university. She started taking French classes when she was 14 and loved them. She wanted to become a French teacher. In her interview, she said, "I became a teacher because I really admired my French teacher, and French just opened my world and my eyes and gave me a new perspective, which was incredible." She graduated with a bachelor's degree in French education and a minor in psychology. She is currently pursuing an MBA with an emphasis on certified financial planning. She taught French for one year at a junior high and then four years at the high school level. She also had other private teaching opportunities, such as teaching English for a semester in Mexico and providing private tutoring.

Table 4

Teacher Participants

	Teacher Participant	Years Taught in U.S. Public School	Grade Level	Traditional or Non-Traditional Licensure
1	*Allison*	3	HS	Non-Traditional
2	*Chloe*	8	Elementary	Traditional
3	*DeEtte*	8	MS/HS	Traditional
4	*Hailey*	4	MS/HS	Traditional
5	*Janet*	4	Elementary	Traditional
6	*Kaitlyn*	7	High School	Traditional
7	*Kinlee*	6	Middle School	Traditional
8	*Kylie*	6	MS/HS	Traditional
9	*Lori*	6	Elementary	Traditional
10	*Madalyn*	5	High School	Traditional
11	*Makenna*	10	Elementary	Traditional
12	*Paige*	2	K-12	Traditional
13	*Tilly*	5	MS/HS	Traditional

Results

Data was collected via a personal letter, individual interviews, and a focus group discussion. Each participant responded to the written letter prompt either by typing a letter to themselves or responding to the prompt orally. The oral messages were recorded and transcribed using Restream (*Transcribe Video to Text - AI Transcription Software | Restream*, n.d.), an audio-to-text transcription website. The individual interviews lasted 30-45 minutes. The

interview questions were specifically open-ended to allow participants to provide any information or experiences they felt were pertinent. Ten individual interviews were conducted on Zoom, being audio and video recorded for accuracy. The remaining three participants preferred to have an audio conversation, which was recorded and transcribed using Restream. The focus group discussion was conducted on Zoom and was audio and video recorded for accuracy. To ensure trustworthiness, participants were asked to review the transcriptions for accuracy, after which the recordings were deleted.

Participant responses were manually analyzed which resulted in 25 codes. Taguette (Rampin & Rampin, n.d.), a qualitative research tool, was used to confirm the frequency of each code to provide another layer of trustworthiness. All data was entered into the Taguette program and was manually coded again using the Taguette system. Themes and sub-themes were then determined based on the frequency of the codes. The following table provides each code's frequency, sub-themes, and themes. From this process, five themes and seven sub-themes emerged. The emerging themes were Classroom Management Strategies, Building Relationships, Self-Efficacy, Classroom Management Preparation, and Personal Well-Being.

Table 5

Theme Development

Codes	Code Frequency	Sub-Themes	Themes
Admin Advice	44	Maintaining Discipline with Respect	Classroom Management Strategies
Ask for Help	11		
Classroom Management	67		
Consistency	16		
Discipline	9		
Disruptive Students	30	Consistency in Rules and Routines	
Expectations	16		
Routines	15		
Strategies	80		
Communication	9	Effective Communication	Building Relationships
Love	12		
Relationship	38	Build Trust	
Respect	9		
Trust	5		
Challenges	41	Challenges	Self-Efficacy
Exhaustion	5		
Self-Efficacy	22		
Stress	2		
Time	13		

Planning and Preparation	19		Classroom Management Preparation
Apathy	3	Professional Development	Be Human
Bad Day	5		
Be Human	17		
Confidence	20	Be Confident	
Courses	37		

Classroom Management Strategies

Early in the data collection phase, classroom management strategies were a dominant theme. While most teachers could not identify a specific classroom management technique or strategy they used, they stated that they used various methods depending on the students and the class. Throughout the interviews, a variety of strategies were brought up numerous times. Teachers mentioned formal strategies taken from ENVoY training, Harry Wong, Kagan Strategies, Love and Logic, Positive Discipline in the Classroom, and Teach Like a Champion, as well as basic strategies like standing near the student, walking around the classroom often, and removing students when necessary. The data revealed that teachers usually had their own classroom management strategies, which may also differ from student to student or class to class. Several participants mentioned the importance of being authentic when managing a classroom. In a letter to her former self, Kinlee mentioned, "I think trying to fit yourself into a mold is kind of the worst thing you can do because then you are not being authentic, and kids catch that. And so, just be confident in yourself." In her interview, she expanded on that thought by saying, "It

might not work for you the way it does for another teacher, and it kind of has to fit your personality." Chloe shared a similar thought in her letter,

> The personality that they won't respect is the one that isn't real. Use the strategies that work for the best teachers but make them your own. It might work for the teacher down the hall, but if it feels inauthentic coming from you, it's useless.

She found that students can often tell when a teacher is not authentic, which she says can cause a feeling of mistrust between the teacher and the student.

While doing student teaching, many participants learned some classroom management techniques from their mentor teachers. An elementary teacher, Chloe, credited her mentor teacher with providing her with some quality classroom management strategies she still implements. In a letter to her former self, she said, "In the beginning, managing the room will take awhile, but heed the advice you have heard repeatedly, 'Go slow to go fast.'" She found that setting clear expectations and boundaries is essential, even if it means getting behind in lessons at the beginning of the year. Still, the expectations and boundaries will allow them to move faster throughout the year. In her letter, Hailey reminded herself of similar advice she received as a new teacher. She recalled,

> A teacher once told me about the rule of 20-80. If you spent the first 20% of the year building routines, boundaries, and expectations, the last 80% will be smooth. The opposite is also true. If you don't do this in the first 20%, the last 80% will be a battle.

For several participants, managing a classroom as a student teacher was easy. The mentor teacher already had their strategies and routines in place, and they just had to continue them. In her interview, Kinlee mentioned the challenges of setting up a classroom after moving from her mentor's classroom to her own. She said, "What worked didn't exactly transfer over, but I felt

like I had ideas. I didn't know how to set up the ideas, so the systems worked. I felt like I knew the systems but didn't know the setup." Because she was not in the classroom at the beginning of the year to see how the teacher set up her classroom, Kinlee did not feel like she knew how to set it up. Seeing classroom management in place is much different than setting up and implementing classroom management. Participants agreed that it is not always as easy as it looks, and it takes time and willingness to try new things. Allison might have stated it best in her interview when she said, "Classroom management is an ongoing journey."

Maintaining Discipline with Respect

A large part of classroom management is setting up discipline procedures while remaining fair and respectful to all involved. Every student should feel important. DeEtte mentioned, "As far as managing a classroom, I always think back to a very cheesy (but accurate) quote: 'No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.'" When Kaitlyn reflected on what she wished she knew as a first-year teacher, she told herself, "The biggest thing I wish I knew back in your shoes was that building a relationship with your students based on mutual respect is the first thing you should focus on." Students need to respect the teacher, but students also need to be shown respect. Mutual respect makes classroom management much more manageable. Students want to behave and learn from a teacher they trust and respect.

Maintaining discipline is a large part of classroom management. Participants regularly said that they would encourage new teachers to ask for help. They wished they had asked for help from administrators and other teachers more often. When classroom discipline became difficult, Madalyn advised her younger self, "Go ask questions. Don't sit in your classroom going, woe is me, or I can't do this. Ask other teachers questions; they are there to help you. They're not all beginning teachers like you are." Kinlee reiterated this by saying, "If you are not

getting help, bother people for it because you should have it." Asking for help can be difficult, as teachers do not want to appear unable to handle a situation, but new teachers all need help and support as they learn to manage a classroom.

In her interview, Paige stated, "One of the big lessons I learned that first year was that misbehavior signals unmet needs." Students are often disruptive when their needs are being unmet. However, some students just want to be allowed to move around, doodle, or be off task for a few minutes before rejoining the lesson. In her interview, Chloe shared some advice that she received from her mentor teacher that has been paramount in helping her manage disruptive behavior. She said,

> Ask yourself: is it disrupting learning? There are a lot of behaviors that can be corrected throughout the day, and not all of them are worth your time. When you choose which behaviors to address, consider whether or not those behaviors are disrupting learning. Are you the only person annoyed by the pencil tapping? Let it go. Are other students distracted by the doodles on their classmates' papers? Intervene.

As the teacher, she felt that it was easy to see the disruptive behavior and immediately try to fix it. However, she learned that if it does not bother anyone else in the classroom, it may be more disruptive when she stops the lesson to correct the behavior. However, Hailey mentioned the difficulties of managing a classroom with several disruptive students during the focus group discussion. "When one teacher is trying to meet the needs of all the kids, especially those children with difficult behaviors, it definitely makes a difference in my ability to teach everyone else effectively."

When dealing with highly disruptive students, participants repeatedly found that the administration needed to be more helpful. In her letter, Hailey stated, "I had all the policies and

management plans in place in my room, but none of them could really be 100% effective without the admin who supported them." During the interviews, each participant was asked what advice they would give administrators to help support new teachers with classroom management. Kaitlyn said, "Back the teacher. Trust that they are professionals who have done everything they can and are now coming to you. It's so humiliating to send a kid to the principal and have them return with a lollipop." Makenna offered similar advice, "Do what you say you will do. Have the teachers' back so the kids know that when they get sent down to the office, it's serious business. It's not, okay, be nice, here's a sucker." Kinlee mentioned the importance of having "a clear support system in place." and Kylie said, " If they need help, get in there." Paige felt administrators should check in with teachers more often to see what help or support they need. Tilly said, "There should be a lot of listening. A lot, a lot, a lot, of listening." Lori reiterated the importance of having school-wide rules and procedures and supporting the teachers in reinforcing them. When this topic came up in the focus group, Hailey told the group what her administrator had said. "'If you send a kid out, I will never return them back that day.' The next day, they will come back, but he said, 'You need a break from them. They need a break from you. I will never send a kid back.'"

Aside from discipline issues, Allison had different advice for administrators, "I would say allowing opportunities for teachers to go into classrooms and see how other teachers are doing it, as well as offering support." Although many teachers dread being observed, both Madalyn and Tilly mentioned that administrators should do more observations and have administrators teach classes. They both agreed that this would provide more opportunities for discussion and collaboration about how to help the difficult students best.

Consistency in Rules and Routines

Nearly all participants mentioned the importance of being consistent with classroom rules and routines in their letters or interviews. They mentioned that students need to know what the expectations are and what the consequences will be if they misbehave. Being consistent sounds easy, but in the focus group discussion, Janet said, "I had this belief that you needed to be consistent 100% of the time, and that would make a difference. I was taught that and believed it, but I had no idea how hard it was to be consistent." Several participants mentioned that teaching a classroom full of students is demanding, and consistency in everything is equally challenging. But Chloe said, "Consistency matters. Follow through on what you say through good times and through bad." Teachers can develop trust and respect in their classroom by following through on what is said. Students need boundaries and will respect the teacher for holding to the rules.

In her letter to herself, Allison made an excellent point. She said, "Students thrive when they know what to expect. Set clear expectations from day one, establish routines, and use recognizable vocabulary (like noise levels) to communicate effectively." As a special education teacher of students with severe disabilities, Janet wrote in a letter to her earlier self, "These children rely on familiarity and routine. To change that routine may cause outbursts and behaviors that may be difficult to manage." Allison emphasized that stability allows students to feel safe and secure and reminded her younger self that setting up routines and procedures was time well spent. During Kinlee's interview, she reflected on a year when she had a challenging class one period and then,

My next class walked in, and they were angels and just, like, the cutest group of kids. And so I think it's one of those things [classroom management] that can make you feel like you're not doing anything, and you feel like you just, like, can't manage a classroom

and like you don't know how to do your job because no one seems to be learning or

doing what they're supposed to be doing even with, x, y, and z in place. Even if it's not

your systems in place, they just happen to be a really good group of kids. It can make you

feel like you're doing better.

Building Relationships

Several participants mentioned that building relationships is an essential part of being a

teacher because teachers are in the classroom daily with their students, and if they do not have a

strong relationship with them, it will be a very long year. When asked about classroom

management in her interview, Kylie said, "If they respect you, then your management is not as

hard as other teachers, who have just started and don't realize how important it is to build those

relationships early on in the first couple weeks of class." When reflecting on her first year of

teaching, Kaitlyn mentioned that she set her expectations on the first day of school, but she found

that the students were looking at her like, "'We don't know you. You don't know us. We don't

care about your expectations.' So that was, I think, where I failed in my first year. And

eventually, we built that relationship, but definitely not at the start."

Participants repeatedly stressed the importance of building a respectful relationship with

the students before setting up their routines and expectations. In her interview, Kaitlyn

emphasized the importance of building a relationship, and once the relationship is built, students

are more willing to do what you ask and follow your rules. In a letter to her earlier self, DeEtte

wrote,

You must tell them you believe in them even when it's hard. Just like you can't measure

your worth as a teacher by your students' performance, you need to help kids see that

their contributions to the classroom are so much more than just answering questions

correctly.

As Hailey worked on building relationships with her students, she expected herself to

"intentionally have a positive interaction with every single student, ideally every day, but not

daily, then at least weekly." She feels that if every teacher interacted positively with every

student daily, students would know they were loved and cared for and would be less apt to act

out during class. So, to her, building relationships may be the most essential part of classroom

management.

Effective Communication

Both Janet and DeEtte mentioned the importance of effective communication. Janet

pointed out that communication does not always have to be done through words. She wrote in

her letter, "The most important thing for you to do in your time with them is to love them and

help them feel loved." Showing students they are loved and cared for is as important as

communicating expectations. DeEtte expressed the importance of communicating expectations in

her letter to her former self. She reminded herself to, "Clearly communicate your expectations. It

will literally save you hours of time later." After eight years of teaching, she understands the

importance of clear communication in the classroom.

Other participants also mentioned the importance of effective communication in their

letters, advising their younger selves that having a strong relationship with students and parents

will allow effective communication throughout the year. Tilly said, "Building relationships is

what should come first to try and work through any problems that could arise later. It's better if

you maintain a relationship with the student and the parents," alluding to the fact that if you have

already had positive interactions with the students and parents, it is easier to communicate with

them if a behavior challenge arises. When describing a situation with a difficult student, Kaitlyn wrote, "Once you have built that relationship of trust, understanding, and compassion, you will be able to have those discussions positively." As an elementary school teacher, Chloe found it beneficial to bring students into the conversation when possible. In her letter to her earlier self, she reminded herself, "Bring students in on the conversation. 'If _____ doesn't feel fair, what do you think would be fair?'" She has learned that even elementary-aged students appreciate effective communication and being given a voice in what is happening in their classroom.

In the interviews, three participants brought up effective communication concerning the administration. Hailey wanted to remind the administration, "You can't effectively lead a group of people you don't know." She then explained by sharing what her administration does.

> He would do five-minute walkthroughs, he called them, which sometimes were five
>
> minutes and sometimes 10 minutes or longer. He'd just pop in. He had a little iPad with
>
> five or six categories. He would do just a quick, hey. 'This is what I observed. This is
>
> what could be improved. Do you want to come to chat about it?' Then, the teachers could
>
> converse with the principal, which allowed for open communication between the teachers
>
> and the administration.

This open line of communication, according to Hailey, allowed teachers to build a relationship with their administration, and therefore, they could work together more effectively when challenging situations arose. Paige also mentioned in her interview the importance of being comfortable with administration. She advised the administration, "The more you can talk to the teachers, the more comfortable they feel. I just think the administrators have so much experience and can help a lot. Just keep those communication lines open so they feel comfortable." Both

Hailey and Paige highlighted the importance of effective communication with the administration.

Build Trust

Several teacher participants mentioned the importance of building trust in a relationship to allow for open communication. Kinlee reminded herself, "You know more than you think and should trust yourself." She has learned that trusting herself and others is difficult, but with trust will come respect and care. DeEtte has learned that caring for her students will open the lines of trust and communication. Lori also mentioned the importance of caring for her students. She noticed that as she builds a relationship of trust, she can allow students more autonomy over their learning. In her interview, Lori mentioned, "When they know you love them, care about them, and want what's best for them, then they can understand why you're asking them to do the work, and they'll do just about anything for you." She believes that building a trusting relationship allows for effective communication, which helps students, parents, teachers, and administrators work together to benefit the child.

Self-Efficacy

Elements of self-efficacy appeared in the participant letters, interviews, and the focus group discussion. Several participants felt that they had high self-efficacy when they began teaching and others mentioned that their self-efficacy increased as they gained experience. In the focus group discussion, Hailey mentioned that she felt better prepared to handle changes as her self-efficacy increased. "Now I feel like maybe I really can do anything, but there's always going to be another change, another group of kids that test every ounce of everything in you." Over the years, Lori also felt capable of handling the changes thrown her way. She states, "As a teacher in the classroom, knowing that, hey. I got this, and if it's not working, I can change it. I can adjust.

If this isn't working, I can change it." Knowing she could adjust to various situations increased her self-efficacy and allowed her to handle more situations.

During university, Makenna wanted to be a teacher, but those around her kept trying to talk her out of it because of the politics involved in education. In her interview, she said, "No matter what job you have, there are always parts of it that you love and parts of it that you hate. So, I might as well be doing something I love that makes the politics worth dealing with." She knew that no job would be perfect, and no school district was perfect. She knew every classroom would have its own challenges, but she wanted to be doing something she knew she would love.

In her letter and interview, Chloe mentioned the importance of having a well-managed classroom to be an effective teacher. She said,

> I have such a mindset that you can't be successful at teaching until your classroom is well-managed. So, in terms of self-efficacy as a teacher, I included this in the letter, but the management piece, I think, is absolutely crucial to self-efficacy because I'm not going to do what my actual job is as a teacher if I can't manage the room first.

Similarly, DeEtte brought up how managing a classroom can affect her self-efficacy and confidence as a teacher by saying, "I think the belief and confidence of classroom management is related to how many 'easy' days and 'hard' days you have. If the easy days feel like they outnumber the hard days, that builds your self-efficacy as a teacher." Although Kinlee mentioned that classroom management can chip at her confidence, she also recognized the advantage of a good class by adding, "But it can also make you feel really good when you have a good class."

Challenges

Nearly every participant brought up some of the challenges they have faced in their letter, the interview, or the focus group. The most common challenges mentioned were difficult students, inadequate preparation time, and exhaustion. Each challenge they faced added to their stress; for some, it affected their confidence and self-efficacy. After facing a tough year, Kylie said,

> My self-efficacy in classroom management was low. I was this close to quitting because I wasn't supported by the administration. That was a rough year, and now, the year after that, it was heaven. So, my self-efficacy went way up because I'm like, this is easy. This is a cakewalk. I'm loving this.

Due to various challenges, some teacher participants reached a point in their careers where they wondered if they would continue teaching. In her third year of teaching, Chloe felt the pull to make a change. She said, "I reached a point where I was like, I can't be at this school anymore. It's draining everything out of me." Knowing that she loved teaching, she made a move to teach internationally for three years. This change in school and life reiterated her desire to continue teaching, and she returned to her hometown with a renewed desire to continue in the profession amidst the challenges. In her interview, Kaitlyn expressed the following,

> A lot of times, I've thought, 'I've got to get out of here.' But I just kept coming back to it. I think I just really love the students. I really do. Even though there are hard days and they are hard to manage and, you know, there's just so much work, they're, like, good kids. And a lot of them need a stable, consistent, loving person in their life and don't have it. I think that was what made me keep coming back.

Having built relationships with the students, she could not imagine leaving them for a different profession, even through the difficult times. After being a classroom teacher for six years, Lori decided to move into an instructional coach position. When asked why she left the classroom, she stated, "I felt myself getting very comfortable where I was, and that's not good because comfortable means I'm not putting in all the same effort, and I didn't want to become complacent."

When asked how classroom management affected her self-efficacy, Kinlee responded,

> I think it depends. I think that there are days where I have no control of this class. And it's even period to period. Where it's kind of, like, I'm doing everything. I've pulled out all my tricks. I've gotten parents in. I've had admin in. Me and this kid just can't get it together, and he derails the whole class. And every time I walked in, I was like, this sucks. No one's learning. I am not doing well as a teacher. It just is not going well.

As Tilly reflected on her classroom experiences and challenges, she shared, "So, I eventually learned that my classroom was my responsibility, and getting anybody else involved wasn't helpful. It hurt the situation, and I was responsible for creating and maintaining the relationship to have good classroom management."

Teacher participants complained about not having enough time to properly prepare lessons, provide feedback, and communicate with parents. In the letter, seven experienced participants offered advice about time to their younger, less experienced selves. Chloe reminded herself, "Take the time you need to set expectations upfront; it will pay off." Similarly, Allison reminded herself to "invest time in setting up routines and predictable structures." As an experienced educator now, she knows that the routines and structures will make her life easier in the end. DeEtte also reminded herself to take care of the little things. "These things seem trivial,

but it will literally save you hours of time a year. These hours can then be spent on the important things." Kylie reminded herself to sleep. "Because you wake up at, like, four in the morning and think, oh, this is how I'm going to do that lesson. Oh, I'm going to get up right now and grade." She learned that with inadequate sleep, it was difficult to have the patience to deal with children all day. Hailey reminded herself, "My first year, I spent hours planning every single night. Each year after that, I got so much faster and realized I didn't have to script it all out." Although teachers want each day to be perfect, Madalyn reminded herself, "Take your time. You don't have to be perfect on day one." Paige was the most vocal about time being a challenge. In both her interview and letter, she mentioned that the schools she worked for wanted teachers to have great lessons, but they were not given adequate time to prepare. Participants mentioned teaching multiple courses each day but only one prep period to prepare the multiple lessons, grade, provide feedback, answer emails, have meetings, and prepare themselves mentally and emotionally for the next day. For Paige, a lack of time became her breaking point. In her interview, she stated, "The biggest reason I left teaching was inadequate planning time. Great planning takes time and collaboration."

Classroom Management Preparation

Across all three sources of data, participants mentioned whether they had had classroom management courses in university and how prepared they felt to manage their own classroom. Of the 13 teacher participants, six said that they received no classroom management courses in their university teacher preparation program, five said, "Not really," and two said they did. Of the five who said they did not really have any courses in classroom management, they thought there was some classroom management built into one or more of their courses but not a specific course on classroom management. Hailey described her experience in the following way, "I don't

remember it being like an entire course. I remember we had multicultural education as a course and adolescent development. And I think that one of those two, I remember hitting on some behavior management strategies." Similarly, Madalyn described her experience as follows: "There was teaching with technology and teaching for diversity. And, like, the exceptional students, so, special education. I'm pretty sure somewhere in one of those classes, they did talk about classroom management." Allison also could not remember taking any specific classroom management courses. She explained, "I didn't really take any classroom management classes for my university, or at least not any that I remember."

Both Lori and Kinlee said that they did have classroom management courses during their university coursework. By far, Lori had the most classroom management courses. She explained, "Every semester when you're in the program, so two years, you had a classroom management class. So, we got one every semester, like classroom management 1, 2, 3, and 4." When asked if she thought they helped her manage her classroom, she responded,

> Absolutely. And if nothing else, it keeps the level of importance high when you continue
> to come back to it. We would go into a classroom to observe a little, teach a little, and
> always you're connecting: What have I learned? What am I seeing the teacher do? And
> how can I implement what I've learned?

After six years as a classroom teacher, Lori moved to an instructional coach position, where she still implements the learning she has gained. As she helps with the onboarding of new teachers in her district, they have a classroom management module that all new teachers must complete. Kinlee also remembers taking a classroom management course as part of her university program. She thought it was something similar to classic classroom management.

Like, you do this and this. And we got to observe a teacher, which was helpful that they

paired it with, like, an observation thing so you could see things in real life. But, it was

strictly observation. There's no, like, practical approach in that. And it was kind of nice

to have ideas, but I feel like it was hard to learn specifically from them.

However, seven of the 13 participants took classroom management classes as part of their

professional development or onboarding at their school districts. Some of the courses that they

took are ENVoY, Teach Like a Champion, Positive Discipline, Harry Wong's "First Day of

School," Kagan Strategies, CAMT Seminar, Discovery Training, PBIS Training, 4-to-1, and

Love and Logic.

The majority of the teacher participants did not feel prepared to manage a classroom.

When asked in the focus group discussion about what surprised her about managing a classroom,

Hailey shared, "I think just how different each class was, like, you come out thinking, oh, this

strategy is just gonna work for everyone, and it doesn't. Every class period was different and how

individual it really had to be." Although leaving university, they did not feel prepared to manage

a classroom. Nearly all participants recognized that student behavior affected their attitude

throughout the day. DeEtte explained it this way in her interview,

If I'm struggling with student behavior, it affects my attitude. I get frustrated and short.

It's challenging as a teacher because you sort of need to "absorb" this behavior and not

"bounce" the attitude back to the kids, but absorbing it isn't always great either. It takes a

lot of mental and emotional energy to not let student behavior affect your outlook on the

day. Some days, you [teachers] just don't have that energy to give, so on those days, you

have to be really careful.

Chloe said that student behavior affects her differently each day, including how she arrives at the

room and how patient she is feeling. She said, "There are some days that it's like, fine, I can

ignore it, we can keep going. And there are some days if I'm particularly frazzled or short on

sleep, that it can really alter my own approach to what happened." Kinlee shared some

experiences she had with student behavior that really weighed on her. "Student behavior really

did impact my attitude throughout the day. I felt so heavy whenever students would act out or

have a bad day or anything. I just took it very personally that I was doing something wrong."

Allison shared similar experiences about how student behavior affects her both negatively and

positively.

> Throughout the day, student behavior can definitely affect my attitude, which is
>
> something that, of course, I try to avoid. However, I can, you know, sense myself getting
>
> frustrated or disappointed or feeling discouraged if students aren't doing what they're
>
> supposed to be doing. But at the same time, if I have really good connections with
>
> students, and if we are working through procedures really seamlessly and we have
>
> routines set in place, then I can feel a lot calmer, and I feel more ready to be in the
>
> classroom.

Be Human

Throughout the letters, interviews, and focus group discussion, nearly every participant

mentioned the need for teachers to remember that they are human. They recognized that they will

make mistakes and the importance of showing their students that they are human, and apologize

when needed. During the focus group discussion, Janet shared her experience of being

interviewed for her first teaching job as a special education teacher. When the principal asked her

how she would handle a certain situation with a special needs child, she said she remembers

pausing and thinking about it before saying, "You know what? I'm not sure. I'd like to believe I would do this. But I really feel like it would depend on the child, their personality, and the situation. I think I'd have to handle each situation differently." Although she thought she had "blown the interview" because she did not have a strong answer, she believes she was offered the position because she recognized that every child and every situation is different. Kaitlyn reminded herself in her letter that, "We are all human, and we all have bad days. You are going to mess up, and you are going to excel, take them both in stride and remember that you are doing your best, and it's enough."

As the participants reflected on what they wished they had known when they first started teaching, several participants reminded themselves of some basic human characteristics. Allison reminded herself to be patient, "It's about trial and error, adapting to each class's unique dynamics, and being patient with yourself." Chloe reminded herself to take time to stop and breathe, "Before you address big behaviors or talk to a student whose tone could send you through the roof, take a breath." Kylie's reminder to herself was, "Remember, there's no way you're going to please everyone at the same time," and Hailey wrote,

> You will grow as a person and as an educator every day. It's okay to admit that
>
> something isn't working and change it! It's a good thing to show students that as well.
>
> It's good to model change as a result of learning a better way to do something. You will
>
> continue to be yourself and do your best.

Janet reminded her younger self of the importance of apologizing and showing the students that she is human as well. She wrote, "Apologize to the students when you make a mistake. It is important for them to see that when we adults make mistakes, we can own up to them and try to fix them." Kinlee and Allison both had similar advice for their younger selves. Kinlee reminded

herself to "Try things out," and Allison advised herself to "Try new things. When you hit an obstacle, learn from your experiences and know that each day is an opportunity to refine your strategies." Overall, Janet might have summed up the thoughts best when she wrote,

> We might have this idea that we come in with thinking, oh, this is going to be perfect, and this is the way I handle everything, but recognizing that, you know, there's going to be times we just really don't know, and we're going to have to figure it out on the spot.

Be Confident

Self-confidence is another theme that was discussed by several participants. During their interviews, Makenna and Kaitlyn both mentioned confidence. Makenna said,

> I'm pretty confident as a teacher, and I think that if you don't have good classroom management skills, you're not gonna be as effective as a teacher, and you're not gonna be as confident as a teacher. Because if you can't, I don't even like to use the word control. If you can't redirect those behaviors into positive behaviors or help the kids to understand why that behavior is not acceptable, but this behavior is, I think it affects your ability to teach, and I think it affects the kids' confidence in you as well. So, I don't think they feel safe either.

When sharing with me her thoughts on confidence, Kaitlyn said that her confidence took a hit during the first few years of teaching while learning to manage a classroom,

> Yeah, not gonna lie. The first few years were rough. The classroom management aspect, it took a big hit to my, like, thinking, I can do this. Especially because everywhere is different, but the admin did nothing where I started. So, classroom management was literally all on me. A little bit on my other teachers, like, we would help each other, like I'm sending a student to you. But you can't send the student to the administrator because

they'll just send them right back to you. So, yeah. It hit my confidence big time. And I'm

a very confident person. I, like, went into this thinking like, yeah. I got this. I can do it.

But especially because I started out so young. I started at 22, and the high schoolers are

like 17, 18. So, it definitely took a hit. The older I got and the more experienced I got,

obviously, the more I was like, ok. I can handle this.

Allison also mentioned the difficulties of being a young teacher. "I was 22 years old and very insecure about my ability to control students." Both Kaitlyn and Allison were young teachers, and both mentioned the challenges of teaching high school while barely being older than the high schoolers. However, they both felt that with time and experience, they became more confident. In her interview, Allison said, "I think that just through more and more years of experience, I think every year, I get more confident in my ability to manage a classroom."

As Hailey reflected on her teaching, she wrote about a group of particularly difficult boys she had in class one year. She explained that they would often derail the lesson and make it difficult for her to teach the class. Eventually, another teacher took them into her class, where she could work with them in a small group setting. From this experience, Hailey said, "If I had been more confident in my abilities, I could have helped them learn, and they could have succeeded with me." Now, several years later, she knows she has the confidence and ability to handle a situation if it should happen. In her letter, Janet reminded her younger self where her confidence came from. "I had confidence given through my Heavenly Father, who led me to teach these children. Know that He has led you here, and with Him, nothing is impossible!" At the end of her letter, Hailey summed up her feelings about being a teacher,

Teaching is the best job there is. I don't know how many other jobs give you the chance

to learn so much from your mistakes each day and give you an entire new day to try

again. Each year brings more knowledge and understanding. Each student brings a new perspective and often a new challenge. So, don't be afraid of the things that seem scary now. You will continue to be yourself and do your best.

Outlier Data and Findings

This section highlights a specific outlier that was found through the letters, individual interviews, and a focus group discussion. While most responses aligned with the themes and sub-themes, one outlier was revealed, offering a unique perspective. Two participants expressed that they did not think that classroom management could be taught. Therefore, if classroom management cannot be taught, then it would not matter if teachers had classroom management preparation courses. Neither participant knew about the other participant; one mentioned it in their individual interview, and the other mentioned it in their letter to their younger self. As DeEtte reflected on her teaching experience, she advised her younger self in her letter,

> Nothing from your teaching program will prepare you explicitly for managing a classroom. I've wondered if it's something that can be 'taught.' As a teacher, I have to believe that you can learn anything, but in practice, I feel like you either have it or don't. And just because you 'have it' one year doesn't mean you'll automatically have it the next. You need to keep practicing. You can't be complacent.

Makenna said a similar thing in her interview,

> Classroom management is something that I think people can either do or can't do. Does that make sense? You can learn strategies, but if you don't intuitively know how to do it, I don't think you can really learn to do it. I think it's something that has to come naturally.

Research Question Responses

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand what meaning teachers ascribe to classroom management and teacher attrition in the lived experiences of teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience in U.S. public schools. This section presents findings addressing the central research questions and two sub-questions. The findings yielded five themes and seven sub-themes that aligned with the research questions.

Central Research Question

The central research question asked: What meaning do teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience ascribe to classroom management and teacher attrition? The themes of classroom management preparation and being human answered this question. None of the teacher participants mentioned that classroom management was why they did or would leave the profession. Most participants did not feel prepared to manage a classroom straight out of university, and several participants mentioned how student behavior affected them throughout the day. They all shared experiences with difficult students, but none of them mentioned that it would have, or did, cause them to leave the profession. Six of the participants are still in education. Seven have left the profession. Five left when they decided to start a family and wanted to stay home, of which three believe they will return to teaching when the timing is right with their family, one has already returned to teaching, and one is unsure if she will return. The last two left teaching and do not have any plans to return. Paige said, "The biggest reason I left school teaching was inadequate planning time." At the moment, she has no plans to return to the classroom. In her interview, Kylie said, "Do I think colleges prepare you for classroom management? Absolutely not. Oh, no." However, none of the participants left the classroom due to classroom management issues.

During the interview, when teachers were asked if they felt their classroom management courses helped prepare them to manage their classroom, Allison said, "I think that, honestly, all of my classroom management has been just through experience. I wouldn't credit anything that I use on a daily basis to any of those courses." DeEtte said, "I felt pretty prepared. I had experience as a camp counselor and a tennis coach, so I was used to working with groups of teenagers." Kylie responded emphatically, "No. No. And I interned, so I never did student teaching. I went straight from college into the classroom. I only got paid half my salary because that's what they did at United School District. And yeah, I was so not prepared. No." Madalyn answered, "Really, do I think those classes were really good? No. I think they were very much geared to elementary school teachers, and there was never anything that helped out the high schoolers or junior high teachers."

Paige had a bit of a different response. She reflected on her experience of studying for the Praxis and preparing to teach and remembered thinking,

> Why are they making us do this? Like, we have to learn how to wrangle 60 kids in a chorus at one time and try to teach them something. I mean, it's like, they didn't teach all that stuff. None of that. So no. No real preparation besides student teaching.

So, although the teacher participants did not feel they were adequately prepared to manage a classroom, they persevered and knew that they loved teaching, and classroom management became easier with each year of experience.

Sub-Question One

The first sub-question asked: How do teachers describe their experiences with classroom management and the belief that they can effectively teach their students? The themes of classroom management strategies and building relationships answered this question. Without

exception, all participants agreed that poor classroom management would hinder their ability to teach their students effectively. Chloe believed, "You can't be successful at teaching until your classroom is well-managed. A well-taught lesson doesn't mean much when taught in a chaotic learning environment." Makenna said, "I think classroom management is one of the most important things in teaching." DeEtte recognized the importance of knowing the content but stated, "You cannot rely on your expertise/content knowledge to manage your classroom."

Participants described their experiences with classroom management during the interview by describing a skill or technique that they felt was a strength to be able to teach their students effectively. For several, this was easy to share. For other participants, it took some reflection time to think of a classroom management skill or technique that they used. Makenna found it hard to name a classroom management technique that she uses. She said, "People ask, 'What kind of classroom management do you use?' And I was like, I don't know. I just tell the kids what I want them to do, and they do it. I don't know." Later in the interview, she shared that at the beginning of each year, she has her elementary class write a classroom Constitution and Bill of Rights for their classroom rules. "And whenever they get mad about something, I'm like, oh, those aren't my rules. Remember, this is your classroom, and these are the rules that you decided you wanted to have for your classroom."

As a high school teacher, Madalyn starts each year by being upfront and honest with the students, saying, "Do you want me to treat you like adults, or do you want me to treat you like kids? If you want me to treat you like adults, you will be treated like adults. I will talk to you like adults." Two of the participants mentioned their classroom management strategies as consistency, routine, and organization. They feel that with consistency, students know the expectations and what will happen in the classroom. Kylie shared that her classroom

management technique is having a positive atmosphere. She said, "If you show them kindness, they'll show you kindness back. And if you have that relationship with them, they'll do anything for you." Each of the skills or techniques the participants described helped them better manage a classroom and increased their belief that they could manage a classroom. All participants agreed that strong classroom management allows them to teach their students effectively.

Sub-Question Two

The second sub-question asked: What meaning do teachers ascribe to self-efficacy and their decision to stay or leave the classroom? The theme of self-efficacy answered this question. Chloe and DeEtte both expressed the importance of self-efficacy and classroom management. Chloe said, "So the management piece, I think, is absolutely crucial to self-efficacy because I'm not going to do what my actual job is as a teacher if I can't manage the room first." DeEtte expressed her belief that classroom management is "related to how many 'easy' days and how many 'hard' days you have.

When Allison was asked how classroom management affects her self-efficacy as a teacher, she said, "I think that classroom management has helped me feel more confident and has made me a better teacher because I don't have to think about student behavior as much and I can focus on things that I think are important." Hailey requested to do her student teaching at an alternative high school. She taught students who had been expelled from other high schools and were often difficult to manage. However, as she began her first teaching job, she felt that student teaching at an alternative high school increased her belief in herself that she could handle a classroom.

Many participants noted that they may not have started believing they could manage a classroom, but their self-efficacy increased with experience. Tilly said, "So with regards to self-

efficacy, yeah, I think it took me a while to have confidence about classroom management, and I eventually did." Paige also felt that her self-efficacy increased, and she learned better classroom management methods. In her interview, she shared, "I guess I didn't feel super confident with a big class, but I felt confident with children in general. I didn't feel like I had a good system, especially discipline. But I ended up finding ways to make it work." Lori also felt that knowing she could make changes throughout the day based on what was working and what has not increased her self-efficacy as a teacher. She said, "I could make the changes that I needed to make, knowing that whether it's management or math instruction or language arts instruction, it just spreads in all content areas that, like, okay, if this isn't working, I can change it."

However, as DeEtte mentioned, if you have a lot of hard days, your self-efficacy can really take a hit. After teaching for a couple of years, Kylie took time off to have a family. When she returned to the classroom, her first year back was a group of exceptionally rough students. She shared her experience in her interview.

> So that year, my self-efficacy in management was like, I was this close to quitting because I wasn't supported by the admin. I was kinda like left on my own. That was a rough year, and now, the year after that was like heaven. So my self-efficacy went way, way up because I'm like, this is easy. This is a cakewalk. I'm loving this. I'm enjoying this. But, yeah. If your management is not where it needs to be, it eats you up to see. It's just it's draining, and I can see why a teacher would definitely quit within the first three years if they had to nonstop deal with it.

DeEtte reminded herself of a similar thought in her letter to herself, "Nothing from your teaching program will prepare you explicitly for managing a classroom. And just because you 'have it' one year doesn't mean you'll automatically 'have it' the next. You need to keep practicing. You

can't be complacent." Nearly every participant mentioned that classroom management can be challenging, but it did not affect their decision to leave the classroom. Although there were hard days, Kaitlyn said that she loved the students. Her love for them and desire to help kept her in the classroom.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the results from the letter, individual interview, and focus group discussion. The chapter began with a detailed description of each participant, including the geographical area they are from, where they attended university, and why they became a teacher. The data analysis revealed five themes and seven sub-themes, which were classroom management strategies with the sub-themes maintaining discipline with respect and consistency in rules and routines, building relationships with the sub-themes effective communication and building trust, self-efficacy with the sub-theme challenges, classroom management preparation, and be human with the sub-theme profession development, and be confident. After the themes were explored, one outlier was noted regarding whether classroom management could be taught. The chapter concluded by answering the central research question and sub-questions based on the data analysis from the letters, individual interviews, and focus group discussion.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

This phenomenological study aimed to understand the lived experiences of teachers with less than 10 years of experience and how classroom management affected their decision to stay or leave the profession. Data analysis followed Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological approach of extracting codes and synthesizing them into themes and sub-themes. This study collected data from 13 teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience through a letter to their formal self, individual interviews, and a focus group discussion. The following chapter discusses the interpretation of the thematic findings, the implications for policy or practice, theoretical and empirical implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study.

Discussion

Data was collected through letters to their former selves, individual interviews, and a focus group discussion. The data analysis revealed the following five themes: classroom management strategies, building relationships, self-efficacy, classroom management preparation, and being human. This section discusses the summary of thematic findings, interpretations of findings, implications for policy and practice, empirical and theoretical implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The following five themes emerged from the data analysis: classroom management strategies, building relationships, self-efficacy, classroom management preparation, and being human. These themes reflected how the teacher participants ascribed their classroom

management experience. The themes and sub-themes provided a response to the central research question and sub-questions.

The first theme was classroom management strategies with the sub-themes of maintaining discipline with respect and consistency in rules and routines. Teacher participants unanimously agreed that teachers need to be consistent. Most participants shared rules and routines they use in their classroom and the importance of consistency with these rules. One participant was especially adamant about how important routines were in her special education classroom because a slight change in routine was difficult for special education students to handle. In the letters, individual interviews, and focus group discussion, classroom management strategies and consistency were discussed by numerous participants.

The second theme that emerged was building relationships. This came up regularly from each participant as they spoke about their classroom management strategies and the importance of building a relationship first with their students. They felt that establishing rules and routines was more difficult if they did not have a relationship with the students first. Several participants mentioned that once they had built a strong relationship with their students, the rules and routines were easy to enforce because the students wanted to behave. The sub-themes to building relationships were effective communication and building trust. When teachers effectively communicated expectations and rules and were consistent with the expectations, students' confidence in the teacher increased. With effective communication and trust between the teacher and students, they were able to build a strong relationship.

The third theme was self-efficacy with the sub-theme of challenges. All teacher participants mentioned the challenges they have faced with difficult students over the years. Managing student behavior was a difficult challenge for some participants, yet for others, it was

similar to what they had expected. Some of the challenges came from a lack of support from the administration, which made several teachers feel like they were on their own in managing a classroom. One teacher even expressed her surprise when she was hired as a first-year teacher, and the administration said there were no standard rules or routines for the school, and each teacher could create their own. As a new teacher, she had no classroom management experience but was told to figure it out independently. Other teachers expressed similar frustrations when working with their administration and managing their classrooms.

The fourth theme was classroom management preparation. Most teacher participants did not feel that their university teacher preparation programs adequately prepared them to manage a classroom. Many participants participated in some form of classroom management learning through professional development within their school district. Some participants felt this professional development training was practical, and others thought it was a waste of time. The findings indicate that classroom management is personal and a "one size fits all" approach in courses or training is ineffective.

The fifth and last theme was to be human, with professional development and confidence sub-themes. Several participants expressed the importance of being authentic to themselves. One teacher shared that as an early career teacher, she tried to use classroom management strategies she had learned from various trainings and other teachers she had observed. Unfortunately, what worked for one teacher did not necessarily work for her. She realized it was because it was not authentic coming from her. She learned she had to do what worked for her personality and students. As she did, her self-efficacy and confidence increased.

Interpretation of Findings

This section provides an interpretation of the study findings. There are three interpretations of the findings. All participants shared experiences with classroom management and dealing with challenges. For many participants, the challenge was having disruptive students in the classroom. The first interpretation discussed is the support teachers receive from administrators in classroom management. The second interpretation is that classroom management is an ongoing journey. Furthermore, the third and final interpretation is that a well-managed classroom has variations.

The central research question for this study was: What meaning do teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience ascribe to classroom management and teacher attrition? The literature review showed that difficulty in classroom management increased along with teacher attrition (Lazarides et al., 2020; Perryman & Calvert, 2019; Wink et al., 2021). However, the findings of the study did not confirm that classroom management contributes to teacher attrition, but all participants did report that classroom management was difficult in their early careers; however, as their years in the classroom increased, so did their self-efficacy, their strategies, and their ability to control the classroom. The study revealed some important findings about what early career teachers need to be successful. The following is an interpretation of the findings.

Support From Administration

The teacher participants in this study provided clear examples of the lack of support they received from the administration when learning to manage a classroom. Although their experiences varied, most participants expressed at least once that their administration did not support them. Several teachers expressed the same thought: the principal would send students back with a lollipop if they sent their students to the office because they were disrupting class.

Participants said how humiliating it is to send a student out of the classroom for misbehaving, and then they end up right back in your class. With better support from the administration, early career teachers could gain more confidence in their classroom management abilities. As they gain confidence, they can manage their classrooms better and need less administrative support.

Some participants had the advantage of having a mentor teacher in their early years of teaching. The mentor teacher observed them and was able to help and support them as they navigated their way through the early years of teaching. This additional support helped these teachers better manage a classroom, resulting in their needing less help and support from the administration.

Ongoing Journey

The findings in the study showed the value of continually adjusting classroom management skills and strategies. What works for one class might not work for another class. Moreover, even what works on one day might not work the next day. Teachers expressed the need to be adaptable to learning and trying new skills and techniques. After several years away from teaching to focus on raising her children, a participant returned to the classroom and realized how different classroom management was. Between the increase in technology and the changes during the COVID-19 pandemic, classroom management felt new to her. Although many strategies she had used in the past still worked, she also had to adjust her rules and routines to keep up with the changes in the world. Several participants also mentioned that ongoing learning and training in classroom management took energy and motivation. When something is not working, and you spend all your energy on classroom management, trying something new the next day is difficult. However, trying new things also brought new results, increasing the participants' confidence and self-efficacy in handling a classroom.

Variations of a Well-Managed Classroom

Throughout the data collection from these teachers, it was clear that they understood the challenges of managing a classroom, but they also understood that not every classroom would look the same. One participant mentioned that her classroom might look different than the class next door. Although her classroom is not always quiet, with students sitting at their desks and raising their hands to participate, it does not mean her classroom is unmanaged. Students can be up, moving around, talking to other students in the class, and collaborating with partners or groups. If an administrator walks in, it may look like chaos, but it might be controlled. Her point was that every classroom looks different. Teachers do not need to judge their classroom management abilities based on how the class 'looks.' It is acceptable to have a different classroom setup that, at times, is loud and chaotic and, at times, is quiet and thoughtful.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings from this study offer several implications. This section will present the implications for policy and practice. The policy recommendations include developing a mentor program at the school district level to allow early career teachers to have someone to learn and collaborate with. The second policy recommendation would be to offer specific classroom management courses in teacher preparation programs at the university. The implication for practice would be to have universities collaborate with their student teacher programs to ensure that mentor teachers can support early career teachers with classroom management set-up.

Implications for Policy

The first policy recommendation would be for U.S. school districts to develop a mentorship program for new teachers. Some districts currently have such programs, but many do not. A recommendation would be for the school districts with a mentor program to partner with a

school district nearby and share their model. As school districts are independent in the U.S., having a U.S. concentric mentee program might not be possible, but starting at the district level would be something. Similar to the "No Child Left Behind" policy, it would be supportive if the U.S. eventually had a "No Teacher Left Behind" policy. The study participants expressed the need to be supported through their early years of teaching. The participants who had a mentor teacher and went through a one-to-three-year mentorship program had a much more successful entry into teaching and managing a classroom.

The second recommendation would be to provide at least one specific course on classroom management during university teacher preparation programs. Most participants in the study reported having limited or no classroom management courses. However, one participant had four classroom management courses during her teacher preparation program, which was far above any other participant. Not only did this allow her to feel prepared to manage a classroom, but she also moved into an instructional coach role in her school district to help mentor early career teachers. If all teachers had this training before entering the classroom, perhaps they would enter the classroom with more confidence and higher self-efficacy.

Implications for Practice

Universities, specifically the teacher preparation programs, are responsible for supporting their young teachers. When teachers pass the content courses at university and succeed in student teaching, they feel ready to tackle their classroom. However, student teaching is often done in a classroom with classroom management in place because they are teaching in a veteran teacher's classroom. As one teacher participant mentioned, new teachers dream of setting up their classrooms, decorating the bulletin boards, and then having the perfect smiling students walk into their classrooms on day one, ready to learn. Unfortunately, very few teachers experience this

ideal scenario. One participant had a great experience in student teaching. She could see that the mentor teacher had a great classroom management system in place, and she wanted to replicate it. Unfortunately, she did her student teaching in the spring, so the students already had a routine and were easy to manage. In the fall, when she set up her classroom, she had no idea what the teacher had done to set up her classroom management at the beginning of the year. This made it extremely difficult for the new teacher to replicate. Since she was not teaching at the same school where she had completed her student teaching, she could not walk down the hall to watch how her mentor teacher had set up her classroom management and quickly found herself drowning in an uncontrolled classroom. She knew what she wanted to happen but was not familiar with the steps to receive the outcome she expected.

Unfortunately, this scenario is common among early career teachers. Most of the participants in the study had similar experiences. It would be helpful if universities could collaborate with student-teacher programs and have mentor teachers guide teachers during their student teaching on how to set up a well-managed classroom. Similarly, when administration hires early career teachers, they should be available to help and support new teachers in classroom management. They could partner the novice teacher with a veteran teacher to help guide them and give the novice teacher someone they could reach out to. If this is not done, early career teachers could implement this themselves by connecting with their department head or grade level leader and ask for a recommendation of a veteran teacher on the team that would be willing to be their mentor and support. This would help increase early career teachers' self-efficacy in classroom management, and they could enter their first classroom confident that they would succeed.

Empirical and Theoretical Implications

This section addresses the study's empirical and theoretical implications. The study built

on the literature on classroom management and teacher attrition, and the findings support the

related literature. The themes that emerged from the study described the lived experiences of

classroom management in early career teachers and are aligned with Albert Bandura's Social

Cognitive Theory (1986), specifically human agency and self-efficacy, which framed the study.

Empirical Implications

Numerous studies have helped identify the challenges with teacher attrition worldwide,

including stress, burnout, and financial reasons (Nguyen, 2020; Ramos & Hughes, 2020;

Rosenblatt et al., 2019; Wink et al., 2021; Zimmerman, 2018). This section compares the

findings with the literature review. The themes that emerged from the study that align with the

literature are classroom management strategies, preparation, and self-efficacy.

Classroom Management Strategies. The literature suggests that effective classroom

management allows for a positive atmosphere, encourages student learning, and builds a positive

relationship between the students and teacher (Egeberg et al., 2020; Gaias et al., 2019; Shahzan

et al., 2018). A significant theme from the study was the importance of building a relationship

with the students based on trust and respect. This aligns with the research, which says that a

strong student-teacher relationship makes students more engaged in their learning (Dustova &

Cotton, 2015). The participants unanimously agreed that once they built a strong relationship

with their students, classroom management was straightforward, as students want to obey and

behave for a teacher they respect. Once a relationship is built, participants stated the importance

of setting clear rules and expectations, aligning with previous studies on classroom management

strategies (Egeberg et al., 2020; Kwok, 2018; Sanli, 2019; Shank & Santiague, 2021).

Classroom Management Preparation. The study confirmed that teachers do not feel their teacher preparation courses prepared them to manage a classroom effectively. The study's findings concur with the literature, which showed that teachers had limited training in classroom management and therefore felt unprepared for their classrooms (Egeberg et al., 2020; Nagro et al., 2018; Obee et al., 2022; Wilkinson et al., 2020). Two of the participants reported having classroom management courses at university. Five participants said they vaguely remembered discussing classroom management but not as a dedicated course. One participant shared that the classroom management she did receive was geared toward elementary teachers. As a high school teacher, she felt it did not apply to her, which aligns with a study by Wilkinson et al. (2020), who found that school districts often provide a generic one-size-fits-all approach to classroom management training. Akkas and Cephe (2022) reported that teachers who were part of an induction program felt better support versus those who felt lost and alone without an induction program, which was also true of the participants in this study. The study's findings align with previous research that there is an increased need to prepare teachers better to manage a classroom (Hillard, 2022; Sullivan et al., 2019; Wills et al., 2019; Wink et al., 2021; Zoromski et al., 2021).

Self-Efficacy. Throughout the literature, there was an emphasis on teachers' self-efficacy and how it affects teacher stress and burnout and if it changes over time (Capone et al., 2019; Kim & Burić, 2020; Valente et al., 2020; Vidic et al., 2021; Wink et al., 2021). Wink et al. (2021) studied teacher empathy toward students with behavior problems. Wink et al. found that teachers with higher cognitive empathy had a more positive mindset about student behavior and were better equipped to problem-solve and manage a classroom. In the current study, participants reported struggling with too much empathy. Although they could problem-solve behavior in their

classrooms, their students' problems wore them down as they could not solve the challenges they faced through their home life or other aspects of their lives.

The literature showed that teachers with strong confidence and self-efficacy are linked to their long-term commitment to the profession (Lauermann & Hagen, 2021). This study also found that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy had the confidence to continue trying, even when managing a classroom was difficult. The teacher participants in the study each mentioned that their confidence in being able to manage a classroom increased throughout their careers. For some, it increased daily or weekly as they learned new strategies, increasing their self-efficacy each year. This aligned well with the research that self-efficacy was positively linked with teaching experience (Toropova et al., 2019).

Other literature showed that self-efficacy also increased for teachers who had a mentor teacher or could collaborate with other teachers (Holzberger & Prestele, 2021). Finally, the study aligned with research that showed that teachers with self-efficacy were less likely to feel burnout, as they felt capable of handling the problems that arose in their classroom (Wink et al., 2021). However, one difference between the study and the literature was that participants felt that their self-efficacy increased with experience, while Lazarides et al. (2020) found that teachers' self-efficacy remained stable.

Theoretical Implications

This study utilized Albert Bandura's (2001) Social Cognitive Theory as its theoretical framework to address human agency and self-efficacy in early career teachers. This theory suggested that human behavior is often goal-oriented (Bandura, 1979). When people believe they can achieve their desired outcomes, they are motivated to work hard and achieve their goals (Bandura et al., 2001a). Of course, the opposite is also true: When people believe they cannot

achieve their goals, they lack the motivation and desire to persevere in difficult situations. The study's themes of self-efficacy, challenges, classroom management preparation, being human, and being confident align with the Social Cognitive Theory of human agency and self-efficacy.

Teachers work in a social environment with classrooms full of students. Human beings are social creatures who often work together toward a common goal (Bandura, 2000). Several participants had strong mentor teachers who helped train them and supported them as they began their teaching careers. This collaborative work gave the early career teachers much-needed support and helped them not to feel lost or alone. As humans, we need to believe that we can reach our goals (Bandura et al., 1996), either alone or with the help of others. With each month and year of experience, the participants believed they could achieve their goal of having a well-managed classroom. Although many participants considered leaving the profession at one time or another, no one left due to a lack of self-efficacy. As they persevered and made changes and improvements, their self-efficacy increased.

The findings from the study showed that teachers who believed they could handle a classroom persevered through the challenges. When performed early in a career, this self-efficacy will increase a person's confidence (Bandura, 1977). This is shown throughout the study, as those who adequately managed their classrooms early in their careers believed they could manage a classroom. One participant completed two years of high school teaching at an inner-city school right after her student teaching. Although the students were challenging at times, she believed she could manage a classroom and was able to persevere. After taking several years off to have a family, she returned to a middle school classroom in a small rural town. She expected classroom management to be easier than she had experienced early in her career. However, she had a tough year as the students were unruly and difficult to manage.

Throughout that year, she often wondered why she struggled to handle the classroom. Her colleagues were also struggling with this particular set of students, which helped her not to feel alone. While she sometimes questioned her decision to return to the classroom, she believed that if she could handle the inner-city students, then she could handle these students. The following year was much more manageable. Her self-efficacy continued to increase, but starting at a difficult inner-city school gave her the self-efficacy to believe she could sufficiently manage any classroom. Other participants shared similar experiences, which aligned with the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory based on human agency and self–efficacy.

Limitations and Delimitations

While conducting the study, limitations and delimitations were found. Limitations are potential weaknesses that were out of the researcher's control. The study revealed three limitations: solely female participants, only one teacher from a non-traditional route, and a lack of participation in the focus group discussion. Delimitations are the boundaries the researcher sets for the study, including teachers with less than 10 years of experience who have taught in a U.S. public school district. The following section will discuss the above-mentioned limitations and delimitations.

Limitations

Three limitations arose throughout the study. The study aimed to have male and female participants from various grade levels. However, participation was voluntary, and only female participants volunteered. This could limit the study's results, as male teachers may have had different experiences as early career teachers. Male teachers may or may not have had more confidence in teaching, or students may have responded differently to a male teacher than a female teacher, giving them different challenges in classroom management and a different level

of self-efficacy early in their career. Several female participants who left teaching did so to start a family. Having male participants might also adjust the findings on whether any would have left the profession and why.

Another limitation of the study was that of the 13 participants, only one teacher had a non-traditional route to teaching licensure. This could potentially limit the study, as a non-traditional route to licensure may have involved different teacher preparation courses and a different type of student teaching experience. These differences may have altered their responses to the letter and interview questions.

The last limitation of the study was the need for more participation in the focus group discussion. As the timing of the study happened to be at the end of the school year, many teachers were busy and unable to attend a focus group discussion. Having more participation as a group may have brought up different responses from the participants as they discussed their experiences as a group. These limitations are potential weaknesses in the study and were beyond the researcher's control.

Delimitations

The delimitations for the study were the boundaries set by the researcher. This included only allowing teachers with less than 10 years of experience to participate, and participants had to have taught at a U.S. public school. Teachers with more than 10 years of experience would have had more classroom management experience, and therefore, their self-efficacy might have been higher, resulting in different outcomes. The delimitation of having taught in a U.S. public school was set to understand teachers with similar experiences better. Private or international schools may cater to a different clientele, allowing teachers to have a different classroom

management experience, which could have altered the findings. These delimitations were set to understand teachers' lived experiences in their early years of teaching at a U.S. public school.

Recommendations for Future Research

After conducting the study, several recommendations for future research are suggested. This study was limited with a small sample size of 13 and only female participants. A future study should include participants with both male and female participants and a larger sample size. Most females in this study who left the profession did so to start a family, and including male participants may have drastically altered results. Another recommendation would be to perform a similar study with teachers in private and public-school settings rather than only public schools to provide more specific data. This could provide insights into the differences between managing private and public classrooms. Third, the study had a majority of participants who attended a university in the Mountain West, so a recommendation would be to have a more geographical representation of the universities the participants attended.

Lastly, a recommendation would be to explore the differences between traditional and non-traditional teacher licensure programs. This could involve a quantitative study with participants of both routes to licensure. Comparing different routes to licensure may provide information about courses and programs that better prepare teachers, adding to the research on whether teachers are prepared to manage a classroom after their teacher training programs.

Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand what meaning teachers ascribe to classroom management and teacher attrition in the lived experiences of teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience in U.S. public schools. The framework for this study was Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), examining two aspects of the theory:

human agency and self-efficacy. Criterion and snowball sampling were used to obtain the 13 participant volunteers for the study. Participants emerged from various U.S. states and attended private and state universities. Data was collected through letters, individual interviews, and a focus group discussion. After the data was transcribed and member-checked, codes were extracted. The codes were then categorized into five themes, seven sub-themes, and one outlier was recognized. The themes included classroom management strategies, building relationships, self-efficacy, classroom management preparation, and being human, and an outlier that emerged was that classroom management could not be taught. Three implications were discussed from the themes: support from administration, ongoing classroom management, and variations of a well-managed classroom. Considering the findings, implications for policy and practice have been outlined, calling for school districts to provide a mentor teacher for early career teachers and for universities to provide at least one classroom management course during the teacher preparation program. The implication of practice would be to have universities collaborate with their student teaching program to ensure that student teachers are supported in learning how to set up a well-managed classroom. Additionally, recommendations for future research have been provided, including a study with a larger sample size to include both male and female participants and participants from a broader range of universities, studying the differences between U.S. public and private schools, and comparing traditional and non-traditional routes to teacher licensure.

Although the study did not show that classroom management affected the decision to stay or leave the profession, all participants did express their difficulties with managing a classroom and their consideration of leaving the profession at one time. While the study did not give insight into the central research question, it did give specific insight into the difficulties with classroom management and teacher perspectives.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

May 17, 2024
Trisha Hofmann
Lisa Stone

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-1723 A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS LIVED EXPERIENCES OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND TEACHER ATTRITION

Dear Trisha Hofmann, Lisa Stone,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application per 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 described in your IRB 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).

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study Details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents, **which you must use to conduct your study,** can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

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

Participant Consent Form

Title of the Project: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study of the Perceptions of Teachers Lived Experiences of the Connections Between Classroom Management and Teacher Attrition.

Principal Investigator: Trisha Hofmann, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a U.S. certified teacher who has taught a maximum of 10 years. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

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

The purpose of the study is to understand the experiences of classroom management on early career teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:
1. Write a letter to your former self about what you wish you had known before you became a teacher. A prompt will be provided.
2. Participate in an individual interview that will take place virtually and will last no more than 1 hour. The interview will be video, and audio recorded. Participants will be given the interview questions before the interview.
3. Once the individual interview is transcribed, participants will be asked to review the transcript for accuracy.
4. Participate in a focus group discussion that will have a maximum duration of 1 hour. Two focus group discussions will be held, and participants will be asked to participant in 1 of the 2 discussion groups at the time that is most convenient for them. Focus group discussions will be held virtually.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

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

Benefits to society include helping administrators understand the challenges and stress of classroom management on new teachers. This study aims to help teachers, administrators, and teacher preparation programs understand how classroom management adds to the daily stress of

teaching, and the importance of classroom management training through better professional development or classes.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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.
- Data collected from you may be used for future research studies or shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you will be removed beforehand.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then the recordings will be deleted. The researcher is the only person who will have access to these recordings.

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.

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 Trisha Hofmann. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ████████████████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Lisa Stone, 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/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix C

Recruitment Email

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 PhD degree. The purpose of my research is to understand how classroom management affects teacher retention and attrition in early career teachers, and I am writing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must have less than 10 years of teaching experience in a U.S. public school. Participants will be asked to write a letter to their former self, take part in a one-on-one video recorded virtual interview, and participate in a video recorded virtual focus group discussion. Once the individual interview is transcribed, participants will be asked to review the transcript for accuracy. 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 contact me at ███████████████████. If you meet my participant criteria, I will work with you to schedule a time for an interview.

A consent document is attached to this email. 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 via email.

Sincerely,

Trisha Hofmann
Doctoral Candidate
███████████████

Appendix D

Recruitment: Follow Up Email

Dear Potential Participant,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University I am conducting research as part of the requirement for a PhD degree. Recently, an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to sign and return the attached consent form if you would like to participate.

Participants must have less than 10 years of teaching experience in a U.S. public school. Participants will be asked to write a letter to their former self, take part in a one-on-one video recorded virtual interview, and participate in a video recorded virtual focus group discussion. Once the individual interview is transcribed, participants will be asked to review the transcript for accuracy. 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 contact me at ███████████████. If you meet my participant criteria, I will work with you to schedule a time for an interview.

A consent document is attached to this email. 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 via email.

Sincerely,

Trisha Hofmann
Doctoral Candidate
████████████████

Appendix E

Recruitment: Social Media

ATTENTION FACEBOOK FRIENDS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to understand how classroom management in early career teachers affects teacher retention and attrition. To participate, you must have less than 10 years teaching experience at a U.S. public school. Participants will be asked to write a letter to their former self, participate in a virtual individual interview (45-60 minutes), and participate in a virtual focus group discussion (45-60 minutes). Once the individual interview is transcribed, participants will be asked to review the transcript for accuracy (15-30 minutes). If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria or would like more information, please direct message me. A consent document will be emailed to you before you begin the study.