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Administrator Perspectives on Teacher Recruitment and Retention During a Pandemic

Matthew Aaron Carr

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During a Pandemic
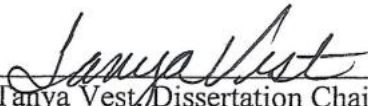
by

Matthew Aaron Carr

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A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University in

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Administrator Perspectives on Teacher Recruitment and Retention

During a Pandemic

by

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This Dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Lindenwood University, School of Education

_____
Dr. Tanya Vest, Dissertation Chair

_10/12/2023_
Date

_____
Dr. Danny Humble, Committee Member

10-12-23
Date

_____
Dr. Mike Evans, Committee Member

_10/12/2023_
Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

Full Legal Name: Matthew Aaron Carr

Signature: _Matthew Aaron Carr_ Date: _10-12-23_

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Abstract

The global COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally changed education across the United States leaving a shortage of highly qualified teachers to fill positions in classrooms (Nguyen et al., 2022; Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022). This research study utilized the theoretical framework of the Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Teacher Retention and Attrition (Mason & Matas, 2015). This qualitative study utilized open-ended survey questions and follow-up interviews to elicit the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and to determine effective strategies to the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers. Sixty-two public school administrators shared their perspectives through the survey, while eight administrators participated in follow-up interviews. Administrators identified negative changes in the recruitment and retention of teachers since the COVID-19 pandemic but could not identify the pandemic as the sole source of the struggles. The top factors impacting teacher recruitment and retention were identified as the school culture, support from administrators, and compensation. These findings validate previous research and are in line with the theoretical framework that guided the study. Additional research is recommended to study the perspectives of teachers on the factors impacting recruitment and retention as well as the need for qualitative research to better understand the relationships between factors. Additionally, research is suggested to determine the impact of state and local policies on teacher recruitment and retention.

Keywords: Recruitment, Retention, Attrition, Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Recruitment and Retention

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Chapter One: Introduction

"'Never seen it this bad': America faces catastrophic teacher shortage" (Natanson, 2022), read the eye-grabbing headline of an August 2022 article in the *Washington Post*, quoting Dan Domenech, executive director of the School Superintendents Association. Articles such as this tell the story of the state of education across the United States as state after state and district after district reported openings for certified teachers, indicating that many classrooms nationwide were without a teacher. A study by Nguyen et al. (2022) estimated that between 36,500 and 52,800 vacancies existed nationwide (p. 21), while underqualified teachers filled an estimated 163,000 positions (p. 1). Given that teachers account for the largest non-student variance in learning outcomes (Hattie, 2003), the alarming data highlights the importance of filling numerous classroom positions nationwide. Impacts from the global pandemic beginning in the spring of 2020 are still unfolding, especially in the education field. This study examines the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers following the COVID-19 pandemic through the lens of school administrators, who often serve as the primary talent managers within districts across the United States (Shell, 2023).

Chapter One begins with an explanation of the background of the study, followed by a description of the Four-Capital Theoretical Model (Mason & Matas, 2015) utilized as the theoretical underpinning of the study. Chapter One continues by outlining the problem and purpose of the study and presenting the research questions that guide the study. Key terms are defined, and a brief overview of the methodology, including population, sample, and instrumentation, is presented. Chapter One concludes with a summary of the information presented throughout the chapter.

Background of the Study

Many factors work in conjunction with student academic performance in the classroom. According to Opper (2019), many factors, specifically home, family, and community, are under little or no control of the professionals tasked with providing an education. However, of the controllable factors, one factor stands above the others as teachers are estimated to have two to three times the effect of any other school-related factor, including services, facilities, and leadership (Opper, 2019, p. 1). In many cases, teacher management, recruitment, and retention are primarily the building principal's responsibility. Given the level of impact teachers have on student learning (Hattie, 2003; Opper, 2019), recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers, and the principal's role in talent management (Shell, 2023), school administrators must work to improve their practices and understand the realities of the education system for teachers.

Theoretical Framework

Educational researchers and practitioners alike have long noted the impact of teacher attrition on society (Allen, 2002; Bielefeld, 2019; Cells et al., 2023; Eliassen & Anderson, 1945; Marshall et al., 2022; Natanson, 2022). Outside of what the students themselves bring to the table, the largest variance in student achievement lies with the classroom teacher and should, therefore, receive significant focus from educational administrators (Hattie, 2003). Hattie (2003) concluded, "Students who are taught by expert teachers exhibit an understanding of the concepts targeted in instruction that is more integrated, more coherent, and at a high level of abstraction than the understanding achieved by other students" (p. 15). Given the impact teachers have on student achievement and an administrator's role of "maintaining a highly qualified staff capable

of administering a rigorous course of study for all students" (Shell, 2023, p. 37), teacher recruitment and retention are often at the forefront of a principal's role in leading a school.

Outside the education field, human capital plays a significant part in providing a competitive advantage in organizational operations (Lim et al., 2010), meaning businesses other than education prioritize human capital within policy and management for the highest leadership levels within an organization. While human capital has also historically been a focus of educational leaders, Mason and Matas (2015) worked to develop a framework specifically for educational researchers examining teacher attrition and retention, to help provide a more holistic approach to the "complex set of interrelated factors" (p. 5) which contribute to the topic.

Mason and Matas (2015) addressed gaps in previous knowledge of teacher attrition causes, building consistency in studies involving teacher attrition and "the need for a theoretically informed framework that acknowledges the complex nature of teacher attrition" (p. 45). In the 2015 study, Mason and Matas reviewed 20 peer-reviewed studies analyzing various aspects of the articles, including:

> The time the study was conducted, the type of journal in which it was published, the nature of the studies and the participants, the theoretical framework underpinning the studies, the research design and methodologies, the data collection and analysis approaches and their findings, including recommendations for future research. (p. 48)

The researchers completed a thematic analysis, defining 13 themes and their relationship to four theories, visualized in Figure 1 of non-economic capital: human capital, social

capital, structural capital, and positive psychological capital (Karalis Noel & Finocchio, 2022; Mason & Matas, 2015)

Figure 1

The Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Teacher Retention
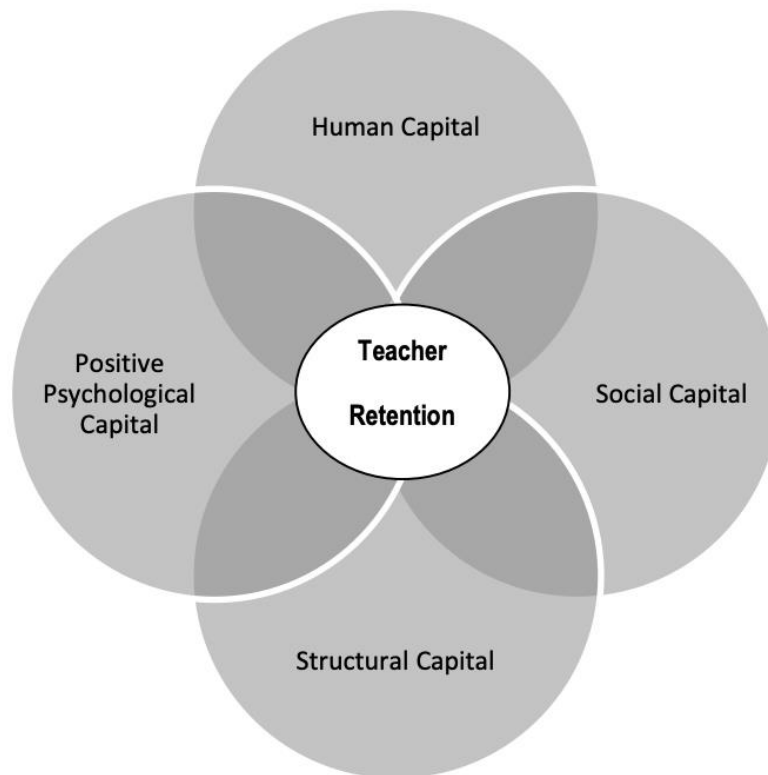
Note: Reprinted with permission from "Teacher Attrition and Retention Research in Australia: Towards a New Theoretical Framework" by S. Mason and C. P. Matas, 2015, *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 40*(11), 59.

The first of the four theories explored by Mason and Matas (2015) is human capital, which expands on the traditional definition of *human capital theory* and concludes that formal education is "highly instrumental and necessary to improve the productive capacity of a population" (Almendarez, 2013, p. 21). Of the 13 themes identified in the review leading to the four theories, three aligned with the human capital

theory, beginning with differences in teacher pre-service education (Mason & Matas, 2015). Additionally, the researchers identified teachers' specific skills and knowledge and the development and implementation of relevant professional development opportunities, all attributing to teacher attrition and retention.

The five themes identified by Mason and Matas (2015) under the theory of social capital were the greatest number identified under any of the four themes. Social capital, from a business perspective, "refers to many resources — information, ideas, business opportunities, financial capital, power, emotional support, goodwill, rust and cooperation — available to us in and through personal and business networks" (Akdere, 2005, p. 3). Mason and Matas (2015) clarified themes from the literature study, including the school culture, the perceived value of teachers and education, and the presence of quality leadership, impacting teacher attrition and retention. Additionally, Mason and Matas (2015) found that teachers' perceptions of the formal and informal support structure and the greater relationship with school community members identified as prevalent themes that supported the social capital theory.

Gogan et al. (2015) defined *structural capital* as "the structure that supports the human capital and includes organizational processes, procedures, technologies, information resources and intellectual property rights" (p. 1140). Mason and Matas (2015) identified four teacher attrition and retention themes when conducting the literature analysis. While some researchers view other forms of capital as teacher-centric, structural capital centers more on the direct actions and policies of the school itself. The themes identified included the specifics of the teaching role, employment structure, individual policies within the school, employment conditions, and retention methods,

such as short-term contracts. Additional highlights included the school facilities and resources, including technology, buildings, and access to other resources necessary to teach students.

The last of the four theories explored by Mason and Matas (2015) included positive psychological capital, containing only one central underlying theme from the literature analysis. Cavus and Kapusuz (2015) explored the components of positive psychological capital, identifying them as "constructs of self-efficacy/confidence, hope, optimism, and resiliency" (p. 245), while Mason and Matas (2015) also included motivation, satisfaction, commitment, and appropriate use of coping strategies. Although there was only one major underlying theme, Mason and Matas (2015) noted, "The inclusion of PsyCap [psychological capital] factors in the teacher attrition theoretical model developed is important because it acknowledges the fact that variables that are internal to the teacher also play a part in their career path choices" (p. 58).

Statement of the Problem

Teacher shortages are a known problem in the United States (Turner & Cohen, 2023). Furthermore, the events of the COVID-19 pandemic have greatly impacted classrooms, schools, and educators (Turner & Cohen, 2023). Administrators are the primary human capital and talent managers in many districts, and examining their perspectives on the impact of the pandemic on teacher retention will help shape decision-making for other school administrators and human resources personnel (Shell, 2023).

According to current research, the recruitment and retention trends in Missouri and nationwide may cause concern for many administrators, even if the shortage has not yet hit their local district (Bill et al., 2022). A Missouri survey showed that nearly half of

teachers consider leaving the field often or very often (2021 Missouri Educator Wellness Survey, 2021). Although the research included a sample of teachers across one state, the trend might impact administrators recruiting and retaining their staff, as teachers are the number one school-related factor in student learning (Opper, 2019). While recruitment and retention strategies are a part of daily operation for most administrators and other school leaders in hiring roles, there are few, if any leaders, up until now who have faced recruitment and retention following the impacts of a global pandemic of the scale of which society has experienced. Consequently, according to Bill et al. (2022), school administrators nationwide must examine and reevaluate recruitment and retention best practices and effectiveness and potentially craft new policies that guide successful staffing practices during a pandemic.

Much research exists concerning recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers (Mason & Matas, 2015), establishing a framework of best practices for educators to employ in their recruitment and retention efforts. Sensing a shortage of teachers in Arizona, a Morrison Institute for Public Policy report (Hunting, 2017) recommended best practice programs that provided salary bonuses for educators earning National Board Certification, working within Master Teacher Mentoring Programs, and partnering with businesses and non-profits who sponsor teachers and classrooms. Swanson (2011) detailed the successes and potential of additional recruitment tools used in Georgia, such as Grow Your Own (GYO) programs, while Beesley et al. (2008) have shown success in filling positions within rural central U.S. schools despite positions in mathematics, special education, and science still being more difficult to fill. In addition to GYO programs, Banghart (2021) establishes the success of rural Colorado schools in creating

partnerships with local and regional educator preparation programs to help encourage candidates to high-need positions (Garcia, 2020; Harris, 2020; Jackson & Wake, 2022; Jessen et al., 2020; Swanson, 2011; Trompeter & Garcia-Fields, 2022; Wood, 2022) . For this research study, Grow Your Own Program (GYO) is defined as any program or initiative that facilitates the development of educators from within a community by providing training, support, and resources to those aspiring to become teachers.

Using the framework built by decades of previous research and experiences, the researcher of this study aims to expand the knowledge base to include reflections and perceptions of recent additions to national, state, and even local climates in education. The results and analysis of administrator perspectives may lead to practical and theoretical changes. Administrators reading the data and analysis may reflect on their practices and adapt or recreate policies in their building or district. In theoretical practice, additional research may find inspiration to revise course structure, course materials, or other frameworks connected to the theory of teacher recruitment and/or retention following a change, such as the pandemic.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of administrators on the impact of the pandemic on teacher recruitment and retention and what changes should take place due to these perceptions. The survey may guide administrators on how to manage teacher retention and recruitment. A survey by Zamarro et al. (2021) found that teachers feel less certain about continuing their education career. From 2020 to 2021, the percentage of teachers responding to their intentions to work a full career in education decreased 5.2% from 74.2% to 69%, while the percentage of teachers unsure of this

question increased from 16.5% to 21.5% (pp. 5-6). The researcher of this study recognized that the response changes are only a short time after the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and that the full impact has yet to manifest. To help combat the problems the pandemic created, the researcher proposed to gain administrators' insights as the administrators are on the front line experiencing the repercussions of the effects of the attitude shifts found by the Zamarro et al. (2021) survey.

Following the revelation of the COVID-19 pandemic virus and the subsequent worldwide pandemic, many school districts suspended full-time, in-person learning, shifting toward remote or hybrid learning, requiring teachers to adjust the pedagogical methods with little notice (Pinter, 2021). Chan et al. (2021) described the increased workload due to the shift in methodologies and increased demands in role ambiguity and task stress. The constant shifts in methodologies, expectations, and governmental guidance and expectations added layers of stress, increasing burnout in educators across the globe (Chan et al., 2021).

For this study, a survey of Missouri school administrators provided an anonymous, open-ended forum for school leaders to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences on recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers. The survey allowed the researcher to compile collective perspectives and experiences, highlighting themes, successes, and failures. These themes and highlights might assist administrators and policymakers around the state and nation in guiding decisions surrounding needed strategies for recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers. The study aimed to give administrators more tools, allowing the leaders greater success in guiding Missouri students' education.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: What perceived impact has the COVID-19 Pandemic had on teacher retention in Missouri Schools?

Research Question 2: What perceived impact has the COVID-19 Pandemic had on teacher recruitment in Missouri Schools?

Research Question 3: What strategies have administrators found successful in the past when recruiting and retaining teachers?

Research Question 4: What strategies do administrators feel would be helpful in recruiting and retaining teachers going forward in the current environment?

Significance of the Study

Given that over 49 million children attend U.S. Public Schools (Riser-Kositsky, 2023, para. 13), recruiting and retaining quality teachers is imperative for successful schools nationwide. Teacher retention and turnover are problems in public education and show no signs of slowing in years to come (2021 Missouri Educator Wellness Survey, 2021; Church & Simmering, 2022; García & Weiss, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022). This study helps administrators understand the broader perspective of how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted teacher retention, allowing them to create better practices geared toward teacher retention while having a framework to see what has worked in other districts, a need highlighted by the Wallace Foundation (2021) in discussion of the role of principal leadership in a post-COVID society. While the pandemic is fresh in administrators' minds and the effects are continuing to unfold, a study examining the perspectives on recruitment and retention can hold invaluable data

for the future, allowing administrators to minimize both the financial cost and the hidden

cost associated with filling positions and training those in the new position while also

examining best practices utilizing others' mistakes and successes all help to fill an

administrator's toolbox (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

The study also helps provide a basis for future researchers examining hiring

practices, applicant preparedness, and strengths and weaknesses in administrator

programs. Significant changes to educators' roles, including remote instruction, role

ambiguity, and massive shifts in methodologies due to the pandemic, leave the field of

education vastly different than before the COVID-19 pandemic (Chan et al., 2021).

Educational leaders can examine changes in culture, climate, and best practices learned

by necessity and the 'school of hard-knocks' and effectively train those entering

graduate-level administration programs. The study gives insight into administrators'

current perceptions of hiring practices, applicant preparedness, and strengths and

weaknesses in the administrator program in Missouri (Wolf et al., 2021).

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

Administrator

Administrator refers to the Elementary or Secondary school leader(s) whose

duties of managing school staff include, but are not limited to, hiring, firing, evaluation,

and reassignment.

Grow Your Own Program

Grow Your Own is any program or initiative that facilitates the development of educators from within a community by providing training, support, and resources to those aspiring to become teachers.

Human Capital

"Human Capital consists of the knowledge, skills, and health that people accumulate over their lives" (World Bank Group, 2020, p. 1).

Teacher recruitment

Teacher recruitment is the process of seeking out and convincing qualified applicants to accept available teaching positions.

Teacher retention

Teacher retention is the process of keeping teachers employed within the same district from school year to school year.

The Pandemic

The pandemic refers to the COVID-19 pandemic as defined by the World Health Organization beginning on March 11, 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020).

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

The scope of the study was bounded by the following delimitations:

Time Frame

The researcher collected data during the Spring and Summer of 2023. Participants had access to the survey on April 19, 2023, and the survey remained open until May 5, 2023. Interviews began on July 14, 2023, and concluded on July 21, 2023.

Location of the Study

The location of the participants and the study varied, as surveys and follow-up interviews took place virtually using platforms such as, but not limited to, *Qualtrics*, Zoom, and telephone conversations. Only actively employed Missouri administrators participated in the study.

Sample

The sample for this study was comprised of elementary and secondary administrators in the Missouri Public School System.

Criteria

To participate in this study, administrators were active during the survey and had administrative experience during or before the 2019-2020 school year. Participants served in a role where recruitment and retention of teachers fell under their jurisdiction.

The following limitations were identified in this study:

Sample Demographics

There were 2,323 administrators from the Missouri Comprehensive Data System (MCDS) building report available from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education used as a basis for the sample.

Instrument

An original qualitative survey evoked answers to the research questions. The survey questions utilized themes from the literature review. The survey contained multiple choice, multiple select, and open-ended questions to gain insight into the participant's background and perspectives on recruiting and retaining high-quality

Missouri teachers. In addition, participants participated in voluntary follow-up interviews that utilized questions using themes identified from analyzed survey responses.

The following assumptions applied:

1. The participants willingly offered honest responses.

2. The sample was taken from the general population of educators with teaching certificates from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Summary

Teacher recruitment and retention have increasingly taken center stage in the field of education, leading to 45% of public schools in the United States beginning the school year with at least one teacher vacancy (Turner & Cohen, 2023, para. 1). While not new since the pandemic, teacher shortages impact education in a significant matter (Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022; Turner & Cohen, 2023). Mason and Matas (2015) explored the framework of four capital theories that impact teacher attrition and recruitment: human capital, social capital, structural capital, and positive psychological capital. By utilizing these framework theories, the researcher sought to obtain Missouri administrator perspectives on the current climate surrounding teacher recruitment and retention while exploring strategies used and the effectiveness of the strategies used.

Chapter Two begins with a comprehensive literature review of four capital theories applied to teacher recruitment and retention. The review expands on human, social, structural, and positive psychological capital theories and explores additional themes supporting the framework. Additionally, Chapter Two investigates the pandemic background, the educational response, and an in-depth exploration of recruitment and

retention, including but not limited to the literature on strategies and qualitative figures

better defining current teacher recruitment and retention nationwide.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The United States has long grappled with teacher shortages and the repercussions of how the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly exacerbated challenges faced by classrooms, schools, and educators (Bill et al., 2022; Henderson et al., 2021; Marshall et al., 2022; Pinter, 2021; Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022). In this context, school administrators play a crucial role as human capital and talent managers (Shell, 2023), making it imperative to examine their perspectives on the pandemic's impact on teacher retention. Such insights can inform decision-making for administrators and human resources personnel across districts, shaping effective recruitment and retention strategies.

Alarming trends in teacher recruitment and retention in Missouri and nationwide (Banghart, 2021; García & Weiss, 2019; Pawlewicz, 2021; Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022) warranted the attention of administrators, even if their local districts have not yet experienced the full force of the shortage. A 2021 Missouri survey revealed that nearly half of teachers frequently consider leaving the field (2021 Missouri Educator Wellness Survey, 2021), underscoring the situation's urgency. Considering that teachers are the primary factor influencing student learning (Hattie, 2003), administrators must reevaluate their practices and devise effective policies to address the staffing challenges brought about by the pandemic. Previous research has established a framework of best retention and recruitment practices, including salary bonuses, mentoring programs, and partnerships with external organizations (Banghart, 2021; Beesley et al., 2008; Mason & Matas, 2015). However, the unique circumstances created by the pandemic required administrators to reflect on and potentially revise their approaches. This study aims to expand the knowledge base by capturing the reflections and perceptions of administrators

in response to recent changes in the education landscape at national, state, and local levels. The findings of this study can potentially drive practical and theoretical changes, informing administrators' practices and policy development, and even revisions in educational frameworks (Banghart, 2021; Beesley et al., 2008; Cooley, 2013; Mason & Matas, 2015; Shell, 2023). By examining the impact of the pandemic on teacher recruitment and retention through administrators' lenses, this study seeks to provide valuable insights that can help combat the challenges faced by the education system.

Chapter Two begins with a review of the Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Teacher Retention and Attrition established by Mason and Matas (2015), which serves as the theoretical framework for the study, before exploring how the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded and the immediate ramifications for schools nationwide. The history of teacher shortages is explored, dating back to shortages in the early 20th century, during and following the two world wars (Eliassen & Anderson, 1945; Pawlewicz, 2021) continuing to the current state of teacher retention and the dwindling number of graduates from teacher preparation programs (Bill et al., 2022). Factors of teacher attrition are examined through the theoretical framework lens utilizing current literature under the umbrellas of human, social, structural, and positive psychological capital (Mason & Matas, 2015). Lastly, the origin and use of GYO programs (Garcia, 2020; Harris, 2020; Jackson & Wake, 2022; Jessen et al., 2020; Swanson, 2011; Trompeter & Garcia-Fields, 2022; Wood, 2022) as a method of teacher recruitment is examined.

Theoretical Framework

The framework developed by Mason and Matas (2015) addresses the gap in knowledge about the causes of teacher attrition. The researchers reviewed 20 peer-

reviewed studies and identified 13 themes related to four theories: human capital, social capital, structural capital, and positive psychological capital (Mason & Matas, 2015). The Human Capital Theory emphasizes teacher pre-service education, specific skills and knowledge, and relevant professional development opportunities (Mason & Matas, 2015). As Mason and Matas (2015) described, the Social Capital Theory focuses on school culture, the perceived value of teachers and education, quality leadership, and the support structure within the school community. Mason and Matas (2015) additionally explored structural capital, which encompasses organizational processes, employment policies, conditions, and resources the schools provide. Finally, positive psychological capital highlights factors like self-efficacy, hope, optimism, resiliency, motivation, satisfaction, commitment, and coping strategies, acknowledging the internal variables influencing teachers' career choices (Mason & Matas, 2015). The current literature on teacher attrition supporting various positive psychological capital theories and themes is examined later in Chapter Two.

COVID-19

In the early spring of 2020, a pandemic turned the world upside down as closed borders, restricted travel, and closed schools impacted communities, due to a new virus known as COVID-19 (AJMC Staff, 2021; CNN Editorial Research, 2023). As the virus spread from Wuhan, China, to people and countries worldwide (CNN Editorial Research, 2023), restrictions began appearing on travel and movement in an attempt to curb the virus' spread as its effects were largely unknown at the time. As the spread continued around the globe, a February 25 warning from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encouraged schools to be prepared for the coronavirus (as cited in

Lieberman, 2020). On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic, followed by President Donald Trump declaring COVID-19 a National Emergency on March 13, which he stated, "unlocks billions of dollars in federal funding to fight the disease's spread" (AJMC Staff, 2021, para. 17).

For most students and schools, the full impact of COVID-19 had yet to cause severe disruption in day-to-day education. Some schools had enacted limited closures at the district level, but by the middle of March 2020, these limited closures would no longer be the case. Following President Trump's national emergency declaration, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine announced a statewide closure of Ohio's "public, community and private K-12 schools" (DeWine, 2020, para. 2) for an extended three-week spring break. One day later, 15 additional states followed Ohio's actions, and all U.S. public school buildings closed by March 25 (Lieberman, 2020). Nationwide closures continued to impact policy and procedure in American public schools (Wolf et al., 2021).

In the immediate aftermath of the unprecedented closure of the public schools in the United States districts, administrators, and teachers scrambled to continue providing students a quality education. The 21st Century's technology increase had given many districts an advantage, but few educators could deliver lessons completely online (Chan et al., 2021). Preparation time given to initiate drastic changes varied from district to district with some having only a weekend (Leech et al., 2022) while others had roughly two weeks or more. To successfully pull off the switch in educational delivery methods, teachers and students quickly learned to utilize new programs, such as Zoom, Google Meets, Canvas, and Google Classroom. Teachers transformed kitchen tables, living room couches, or even bedrooms into classrooms, both for themselves and for students. Many

teachers ditched years of training and resources to create and deliver new lessons made of the virtual format (Chan et al., 2021; Wolf et al., 2021), all while living in the uncertain times of the pandemic.

Teacher Shortage

The current reach and infrastructure for public education in the United States date back to the early 20th century when state and federal labor laws were changed, sending children nationwide from the workhouses to the classrooms (Pawlewicz, 2021). World War I led to a strain on the number of teachers; "In Iowa, there were 160 schools with no teachers at all, and in Louisiana, the state superintendent worried that the state would have to shutter its schools" (Pawlewicz, 2021, para. 6). Pawlewicz (2021) continued to state that by 1920, following the end of that war, 143,000 teachers had quit leading schools to implement stopgap measures (para. 7), like lowering the standards for educator program entry and the issuance of emergency certifications to help weather the storm. Merely a few decades later, as the United States entered World War II, individuals from all backgrounds and walks of life were called upon to fill jobs previously held by soldiers entering the fray, including 280,000, or approximately one-third of teachers nationwide (Eliassen & Anderson, 1945, p. 119). Eliassen and Anderson (1945) described the impact of World War II, noting an increase in temporary teachers with emergency certifications, a decrease in the enrollment in state teacher colleges, and no conclusive evidence that educators leaving their positions following the attack on Pearl Harbor would return to classrooms at the war's conclusion. Similar patterns have occurred in the decades since and have repeated as various political and economic challenges impacted job markets, leaving education as a "revolving door profession, leaving new entrants vulnerable and

underpaid, and hurting students who suffer when teacher turnover is high" (Pawlewicz, 2021, para. 17).

Sutcher et al.'s September 2016 report within the Learning Policy Institute examined teacher supply, demand, and shortages across the United States. The researchers noted that on a national level, "the indicators of teacher supply and demand point to the potential for current and future shortages" (p. 15). Continuing, Sutcher et al. (2016), estimated 316,000 new teachers would be needed by 2025, while the supply of teachers available to fill those positions had been significantly lower than the value needed, showing no signs of increasing (p. 1).

Figures surrounding teacher shortages became even more alarming when considering teacher credentials and proper certification. For example, García and Weiss (2019) revealed that 22.4% of inexperienced teachers (five years of experience or less) did not have full credentials in the 2015-2016 school year, an increase of 2.1% since the 2011-2012 school year. (p. 4) The same study revealed that 9.4% of novice teachers, with two years of experience or less, increased from 6.8% only four years before (p. 6). Sutcher et al. (2016) also conceded that the data on a national stage indicates a growing trend of teacher shortages; the issue is more complex and may vary greatly based on the open positions' region, state, city, or even content area.

The concerns and prevalence of teacher shortages existed throughout the history of modern public education (Banghart, 2021; Eliassen & Anderson, 1945; García & Weiss, 2019; Mason & Matas, 2015; Pawlewicz, 2021; Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022; Sutcher et al., 2016), including during and after the worldwide changes that occurred during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Detailed in Figure 2, Schmitt and deCourcy's

(2022) report for the Economic Policy Institute shows that 45% of all reporting have at least one teaching vacancy as of January 2022.

Figure 2

Percentage of Public Schools Reporting Teaching Vacancies

| | >10% | >5% and ≤10% | >0% and ≤5% | 0% |
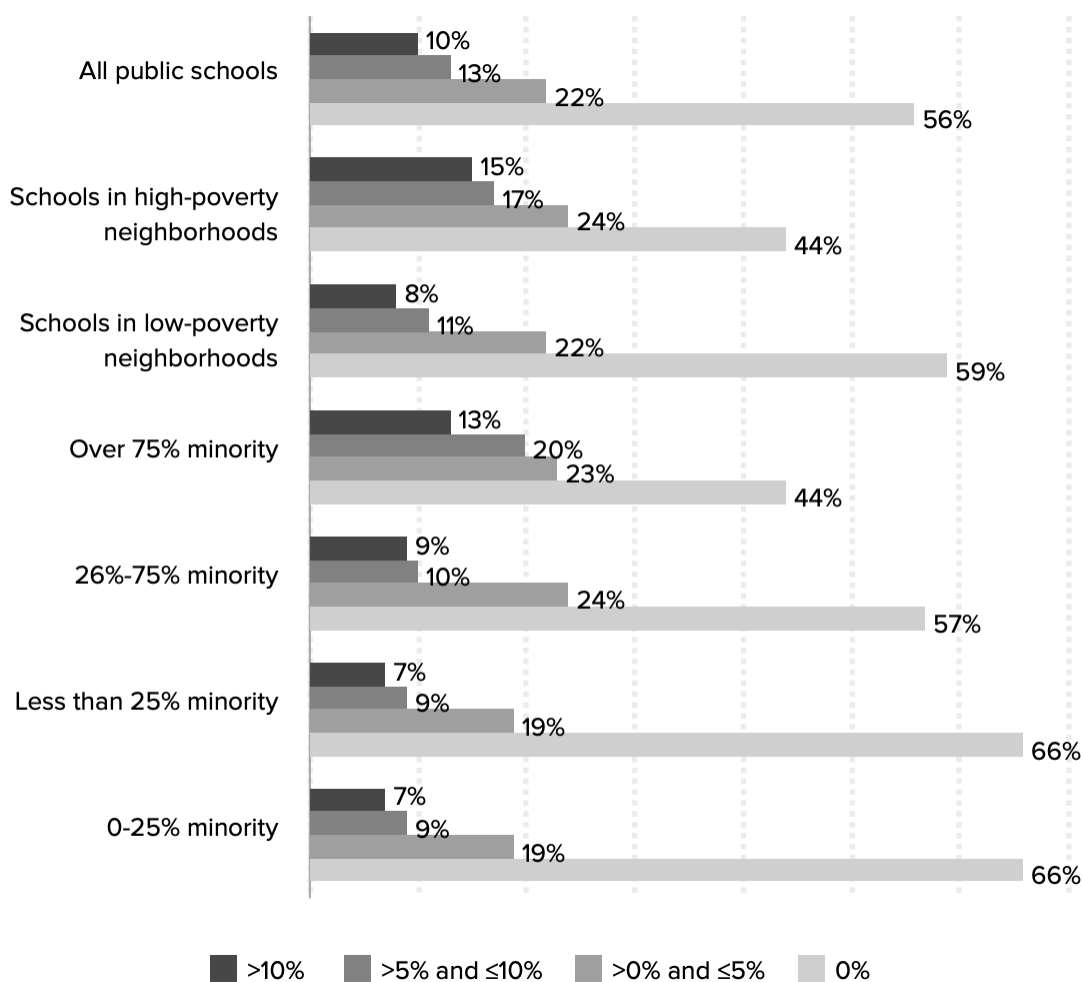
Note: Reprinted with permission from "The pandemic has exacerbated a long-standing national shortage of teachers," by J. Schmitt and K. deCourcy, 2022, Economic Policy Institute (as cited by Institute of Education Sciences (IES, 2022

The same report, detailed in Figure 2, shows that when broken down by socio-economic status, 56% of schools in high-poverty neighborhoods reported vacancies, in contrast to

41% of schools reporting vacancies in low-poverty neighborhoods. The differences in

demographic makeup of the schools also yielded significantly different results, including

a six-percentage point gap in the number of schools reporting a 10% or higher vacancy

rate when comparing schools with over 75% minority to those with less than 25%

minority.

An undergraduate survey added to administrators' concern, as one-third of the

study had elected to not enter teaching before the pandemic (Bill et al., 2022, p. 37). Bill

et al. (2022) also noted the perception that "the pandemic response did nothing to fix the

most unattractive features of teaching that had turned them away from the career in the

first place namely the low salary and public's lack of respect for teachers" (p. 38).

Concurring, Will (2022) reports concerns about low graduation rates from teacher

preparation programs in an article for Education Week. Will (2022) reported that between

2005-2006 and 2018-2018, there was a 22% decline in bachelor-level degrees awarded in

education, despite a 29% rise in bachelor's degrees awarded across all fields (para. 8).

Causes of Teacher Attrition

Typical daily life around the globe became augmented or entirely halted during

the heat of the pandemic. School districts, administrators, teachers, and support staff were

no strangers to this augmentation, as approximately 100,000 public schools closed for in-

person learning by late March 2020, affecting more than 50 million K-12 students

(Zviedrite et al., 2021, p. 1). Seemingly overnight, years of pedagogical training in in-

person classroom instruction became virtually obsolete. The new levels of virtual

learning, including online lessons, assessments, and planning, required teachers to

quickly research and implement entirely new strategies for use in the virtual classroom,

often with little time or training (Marshall et al., 2022). Such quick and overwhelming change left many educators questioning how long they could continue in the role of teacher, or if they could continue at all (Chan et al., 2021; 2021 Missouri Educator Wellness Survey, 2021).

Teachers are leaving the classroom in record numbers, including an estimated 300,000 between February 2020 and May 2022 (Smith, 2022, para. 2), a number that will likely continue to grow over the coming years. A 2022 National Education Association educators' poll determined that more educators, over 50% (Kamenetz, 2022), plan to leave the field earlier than their original plans, while 86% (para. 7) say the exit rate of their colleagues has been higher since the start of the pandemic. The trend of teachers leaving the classroom is additionally supported by the estimates of Sutcher et al. (2016), highlighting the increased number of teachers needed to fill open positions in the coming years.

Becky Pringle, president of the National Education Association (2022), discussed the stories told to her by educators following a stint of traveling across the country. Constant, similar stories describing teachers and educators as "exhausted, overwhelmed, feeling unloved and disrespected" (Kamenetz, 2022, para. 2). Marshall et al. (2022) backed these claims by describing factors leading to teacher exits, including increased workload, multiple roles, and a lack of support to perform their duties and responsibilities.

Mason and Matas (2015) established a framework that explores teacher retention and attrition, utilizing four capital types. The Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Retention and Attrition establishes human, social, structural, and positive psychological

capital by examining themes from synthesized ideas from various literature. Mason and Matas (2015) developed a new and improved framework that guides research, specifically for teacher attrition and retention. The discussion on the four capital theories guides this study's researcher in examining the current literature impacting teacher attrition and retention.

Human Capital

Human capital has long been a staple of training in human resource management. In education, a significant aspect of the human part of the human capital is the teachers, which account for 30% of the variance in student learning (Hattie, 2003, p. 2). This variance accounts for the largest single factor outside the student contribution. However, human capital is not simply the actual person but the skills, knowledge, education, and other factors the person contributes (Mason & Matas, 2015; World Bank Group, 2020). Mason and Matas (2015) also elaborated on the idea of human capital to include the quality and content of pre-service education and the opportunities for continuing development and education for teachers.

"The role of teacher preparation programs is to ensure that candidates are effectively prepared in the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to be an effective educator" (Cummins & Asempapa, 2013, p. 99). While not the only accreditor, from 1954 to 2016, The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Accreditation Council (TEAC) were major players working to provide accreditation to teacher education in the United States. Decades later, the two programs joined forces to form the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation [CAEP], 2020a). CAEP (2020b)

continues to strive for "excellence in educator preparation accreditation" (para 1) by providing, "evidence based accreditation that assures quality and supports continuous improvement to strengthen P-12 student learning" (para. 2). Evaluation of programs using CAEP standards raging from the effective teaching of pedagogical and content-specific skills to clinical partnerships and practice (2022) guide teacher preparation programs in curriculum development and policy implementation to increase the quality of teacher candidates. Traditional certification provided by such programs can lead to teachers staying in their schools longer than those utilizing alternative pathways into the classroom (Pivovarova & Powers, 2022).

Despite the oversight of accrediting agencies, such as CAEP who work to create effective teacher preparation programs, no program can flawlessly produce teacher candidates or have a perfect curriculum. Research has suggested that some teacher education programs, in the eyes of graduates, are not always providing coursework and training in areas, such as behavior management (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Pearman & Lefever-Davis, 2012), a leading stressor among teachers leaving and remaining in the classroom (2021 Missouri Educator Wellness Survey, 2021; Kaiser & Thompson, 2021; Molyneux, 2021; Pearman & Lefever-Davis, 2012; Ramos & Hughes, 2020). Entering the classroom unprepared can leave teachers inadequate, resulting in potential attrition (Grant, 2017). Darling-Hammond's (2003) study found that 40% of teachers reported being poorly prepared in classroom management (para. 10), while Pearman and Lefever-Davis (2012) indicated some programs lack a dedicated course to classroom management strategies, instead dividing the topic among all education courses. Understanding the role of teacher education programs and the impact this has on teacher recruitment and

retention is essential to successfully managing human capital as part of the Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Teacher Retention and Attrition (Mason & Matas, 2015).

Another aspect of human capital in the Four-Capital theory's approach to teacher attrition and retention centered on the opportunities for and relevance of continuing professional development (Mason & Matas, 2015). Solomonson et al.'s (2018) study of Illinois agriculture teachers' effective teacher development opportunities ranked second closely behind personal factors in a complex list of factors impacting teacher attrition. Individualized professional development opportunities are necessary for teachers to fine-tune their craft. However, these opportunities are often limited to district initiatives and not centered around specific teacher needs or content areas especially in non-core subject areas such as agriculture and music (Cells et al., 2023; Lewis, 2022; Solomonson et al., 2018). Ensuring professional development opportunities are not only present but quality relevant can serve as a tool to reduce teacher attrition, especially in early career teachers who statistically are more likely to leave the role of teacher (Cells et al., 2023; García & Weiss, 2019). Supporting teachers by providing development opportunities for early in their career helps them stay in the field, providing the opportunity for building and expanding the toolbox of professional skills and knowledge, which serve as a major foundation of human capital, as established in the Four-Capital theory (Mason & Matas, 2015).

Social Capital

Social capital, the most expansive facet of the Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Teacher Retention and Attrition, considers many aspects outside the scope of control on individual teachers (Mason & Matas, 2015). Social capital explores the impact of school and community culture, including the value of teachers and teaching and the quality of relationships between stakeholders in the school and community. Social capital additionally considers the impact of quality leadership in a school and the presence, quality, and nature of the school's formal and informal supports. Simply, "Social capital is the value derived from positive connections between people" (Mask, 2019, para. 2).

School administrators are tasked with innumerable responsibilities, tasks, and other various duties to ensure the effective operations of their schools. As an example, Shell (2023) describes typical duties for school principals, which include "implementing the curriculum, promoting school safety, creating a positive and inclusive school culture, serving as community role models, and maintaining a highly qualified staff capable of administering a rigorous course study for all students" (Shell, 2023, p. 37). Chief among these responsibilities concerning teacher recruitment and retention is often developing a school culture that values and supports teachers (Buckman, 2021; Cells et al., 2023; Eginli, 2021; García et al., 2022; Shell, 2023), as "teachers' perception of administrative support has been found to be a significant work environment condition affecting teacher job satisfaction" (Eginli, 2021, p. 913).

On the surface, supporting teachers sounds like a fairly simple task. However, in reality, it is a complex process with many nuances and differences for each teacher, school, and district, mirroring the complexity of the role of teaching itself (Bielefeld,

2019.; Langdon & Alansari, 2012). For example, Shell (2023) highlights the differences between the roles of elementary and secondary principals, noting that elementary principals' perceived role is of an instructional leader and often viewed as an instructional expert while staying "relatively isolated from politics and community issues" (p. 40). On the contrary, Shell describes the secondary principal as having a more holistic role, being "far more involved with budgeting, human resource issues, district-level initiatives, sports programs, and fundraising than their elementary school counterparts" (p. 40). Shell (2023) continues:

> This is important because the extra stress incurred because of managing multiple, often competing demands on the principal's time impacts how the principal can address the needs of their staff and adequately recognize the efforts of those for whom they have responsibility. The job of the secondary school principal is more dynamic, and issues with human capital management are more visible as a result. (p. 40)

Despite the vast role, often containing many behind-the-scenes duties, an administrator's role in developing a culture of support is essential for increased retention of teachers and for teacher satisfaction (Eginli, 2021).

"Many factors contribute to thriving school cultures, but principals are the driving force behind them all" (*The Principal's Role in Shaping Education Culture at ESU*, 2021, para. 1). Administrators must work to ensure that teachers hear their voice, their questions are answered and supported in instruction, behavior management, and continuing professional development (2021 Missouri Educator Wellness Survey, 2021; Kaiser & Thompson, 2021; Molyneux, 2021; Pearman & Lefever-Davis, 2012; Ramos &

Hughes, 2020). Teachers not only want support in the building solely from their principal but also from their colleagues (Cells et al., 2023; Eginli, 2021). A culture of support provides opportunities for teachers to form collegial professional relationships, furthering collaboration by sharing instructional practices, strategies, successes, and failures (Cells et al., 2023; Eginli, 2021). To highlight the benefits of a fully supportive culture and teachers supporting teachers, note that "Professional isolation impacted new or struggling teachers the most as they were less able to balance job demands with life outside work" (Kaiser & Thompson, 2021, p. 4).

The role of a principal in teacher attrition and recruitment does not end with the confines of the school building or even with the school staff and students but extends to the community and external stakeholders (Grissom et al., 2021). Principals are often one of the most visible figures in a school, being present at not only school events but at community gatherings and sporting events throughout the school year and as a visible advocate for public education (Shell, 2023). This increased level of interaction with the community has tremendous impact on the view stakeholders have on teaching, teachers, and the public education system as a whole (Grissom et al., 2021). When administrators work to advocate for teachers and education, both inside and outside of the walls of the school, educators are more likely to feel supported, which is a major factor impacting teacher satisfaction and retention (Eginli, 2021; García et al., 2022; Grant, 2017).

Structural Capital

Within the traditional business community, "Structural Capital is defined as stocks of patents, trademarks, hardware, software, dataset, organizational culture and capability within the organization" (Shanthi, 2018, p. 740). Mason and Matas (2015)

established the theory of structural capital as one of the key components of the Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Teacher Retention and Attrition, adapting traditional structural capital to fit the field of education by identifying four central themes from previous literature, including the nature and complexity of the role and the employment conditions. Additionally, the policies and procedures within a district and the resources and facilities available round out the themes of structural capital impacting teacher attrition and retention.

Teachers' roles have greatly expanded over the years as teachers became not only content and pedagogical experts but also technology instructors and mediators (Mason & Matas, 2015). The Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM Report, 2022) agreed, stating, "The spectrum of responsibilities falling on teachers' shoulders often include having to design curriculum, undertake administrative tasks, participate in internal evaluations, help with extracurricular activities, support students' wellbeing and assist in the hiring process of other teachers" (para. 2). The expansive level of duties and responsibilities has been reflected with research showing teaching's place as one of the most stressful, even more so than nursing, for example (Molyneux, 2021), 84.38% of teachers reported frequently or almost always feeling stressed (2021 Missouri Educator Wellness Survey, 2021, p. 1).

Policies and procedures established in a school can have an immense impact on teachers' workload. Kaiser and Thompson's (2021) study found the level of workload was a significant source of attrition among teachers, stating:

Teachers often felt they had insufficient time to complete noninstructional activities such as documentation for special programs, parent contacts, or other

administrative tasks. For others, poor organization or classroom routines reduced

time for planning and preparation. Shifting student populations added complexity

to the issue as teachers worked to design and document more individualized

lessons. (p. 4)

Cells et al. (2023) find that increased planning and collaboration can benefit instruction,

student learning, and teacher satisfaction. Findings from the study by Cells et al.

concurred with studies from Kaiser and Thompson (2021) and Grant (2017) in

identifying a lack of time for teachers to perform non-instructional compliance tasks,

such as academic and behavior progress reports. The presence of effective policies and

initiatives working to provide proper workload balance is just one aspect of how

structural capital can have an impact on the attrition and retention of high-quality

teachers (Mason & Matas, 2015).

Additional structural capital key themes, as established by Mason and Matas

(2015), are the employment conditions, structure, and pathways. Sectors of this

overarching theme are extremely prevalent in current literature surrounding the state of

teacher attrition, retention, and recruitment (Blue Ribbon Commission educator survey

results summary, n.d.; García et al., 2022; Henderson et al., 2021; Morton, 2021; Turner

et al., 2019; Turner et al., 2018. Two specific topics, the alternative school schedules,

such as the four-day school week (Morton, 2021; Turner et al., 2019; Turner et al., 2018),

and the educators' compensation (Blue Ribbon Commission educator survey results

summary, n.d.; García et al., 2022; Henderson et al., 2021) are contributory factors of

teacher satisfaction, attrition, and recruitment.

Alternative school schedules, primarily instituted as four-day school weeks, have been implemented for decades across the United States with varying implementation goals, predominantly including financial savings and teacher retention and recruitment (Morton, 2021; Thompson & Morton, 2021; Turner et al., 2019; Wong, 2022). While originating primarily in rural communities in the western United States (Heyward, 2018; Wong, 2022), the model of a four-day school week has grown significantly in recent years, with the number of schools adopting the four-day school week increasing over 600% nationally since 1999 (Thompson & Morton, 2021, para. 1). In Missouri, for example the first four-day school week was implemented in 2010, granting "districts the flexibility during the middle of an economic downturn, as limited state funding for education prompted school officials to make tough choices" (Riley, 2023, para. 29). Meanwhile, by 2023 the state had 145 districts, around 27% of the state public schools had implemented the alternative schedule to recruit and retain teachers (Riley, 2023, para. 3).

Turner et al. (2018) examined staff perspectives on the four-day school week by surveying 136 teachers working in their first year on a compressed schedule. In this study, 87% of teachers surveyed either agreed or somewhat agreed that the four-day school week had a positive impact on what teachers taught in classes, compared to 4% who disagreed or somewhat disagreed (p. 55), data indicating a possible connection to the perceived benefit of "an extra day to work on grades in planning" (p. 59). Turner et al. (2019) also studied parents of students in district recently implementing a four-day school week finding 46.5% of parents felt a positive impact on what was being taught in class and 61% felt teachers had more time to prepare for the lessons (p. 5). Teachers in the

Turner et al. (2018) survey also indicated a perception of increased teacher morale with 91% of participants indicating that they agreed or somewhat agreed that an increase in morale had occurred under the four-day school week schedule, as well as 91% agreeing that they prefer to work in a district utilizing the four-day school week (p. 55). Turner et al. (2018) conceded that their study alone was not enough to indicate a trend and that additional long-term research is needed to study the full effects of a modified school week.

Despite broadly positive opinions of parents and teachers on the implementation of the four-day school week (Riley, 2023; Turner et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2019), the model educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders within the educational community implemented was not without concern. As the rise of the four-day school week occurred relatively recently, little is currently known about the long-term impacts of the model on students and learning (Riley, 2023). The Center on Reinventing Public Education reviewed some of the limited number of studies that yielded results for a negative impact on test scores, net neutral impacts, and a study from Colorado indicating that a "greater percentage of students were proficient in math and reading in four-day districts, although only in the first two years of implementation" (Heyward, 2018, p. 4). Likewise, the President of the Missouri Board of Education, Charlie Shields, expressed his concern on the lack of available data surrounding the impact of the four-day school week, stating "Rightfully so, there is a lot of concern. Is that the right thing for students and is there any data that shows that moves us in the direction of greater student achievement?" (Riley, 2023, para. 4). Margie Vandeven, the Missouri Commissioner of Education, also noted that the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is exploring a

statewide study examining the impact of the 4-day week in the state. However, a full study is complex as each district implemented the model in their own way (Riley, 2023).

Concerns about the impacts stemming from implementing condensed schedules, such as the four-day school week, extend outside the classroom and student learning. Questions about childcare for younger students, students facing food insecurities at home, and even some evidence of an increase in criminal activity (Riley2023, Thompson & Morton, 2021; Turner et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2019; Wong, 2022) highlight the broad spectrum of views on the four-day school week. Missouri Commissioner of Education, Margie Vandeven, echoed concerns surrounding the fifth non-school day, asking, "Are they shutting their doors on Monday so that families have to scurry to find other options . . . or are they providing options at school to do more intensive learning for children who need it?" (Riley 2023, para. 7). Clear answers surrounding the long-term impact of both the academic and non-academic aspects of the implementation of the four-day school week scheduling model are yet to be fully realized and studied (Heyward, 2018; Riley, 2022; Riley, 2023; Thompson & Morton, 2021; Wong, 2022). However, these impacts will likely continue to be the focus of continued research as questions and concerns continue to be raised by educational stakeholders nationwide.

Another major factor of teacher recruitment, retention, and attrition that falls under the umbrella of structural capital's theme of employment conditions is teacher compensation. According to the Collective Bargaining and Member Advocacy Department (2023) of the National Education Association, from the data available from 12,000 districts, the average starting salary of a teacher in the United States was $42,844, while the average top teacher salary was $77,926 (p. 1). These figures provide additional

reference when considering starting salary ranges nationwide. New Jersey maintained the highest average starting teacher salary at $55,143, while Missouri at $34,052 and Montana at $33,568 accounted for the lowest starting salaries among the 50 states, producing a difference of over $20,000 a year in starting salaries from the lowest to the highest paying states (p. 1). The National Education Association (2023) also reported that the average of all public-school teachers increased by two percent to $66,745 as of the 2023 report (para 4).

Understanding the reality of a teacher shortage, the Missouri State Board of Education established a Blue Ribbon Commission to "develop a set of recommendations and clear action steps that address teacher recruitment and retention solutions, incorporating feedback and perspective from a wide range of stakeholders and Missouri citizens" (BRC Final Report, n.d.). Given the impact compensation has on the recruitment and retention of teachers (Blue Ribbon Commission educator survey results summary, n.d.), compensation became the first phase of research and exploration for the Blue Ribbon Commission, where the commission recommended increases in the minimum teacher salary for the state, the continued use of baseline teacher salary grants, and funding of the Career Ladder Program, which allowed teachers to supplement pay using time and activities performed outside their contracted time (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2023). While not a direct recommendation of the commission, over 65% of Missouri Teachers supported the establishment of a state salary schedule to help close the gaps in salaries across the state (Blue Ribbon Commission educator survey results summary, n.d., p. 10), a concept echoed in a study of Kansas educators (Church & Simmering, 2022).

Outside of Missouri, researchers and educational leaders alike noted the impact of pay on recruiting and retaining teachers. In a study examining the evidence surrounding teacher retention and recruitment, Podolsky et al. (2019) found that around 13% of teachers leaving the field left solely because they needed higher pay (p. 6), leaving compensation far behind other reasons including personal family factors, dissatisfaction with administration, dissatisfaction with teaching in general or even student discipline. However, the same national study indicates various financial-related factors that teachers would consider before re-entering the field. These factors included the ability to retain retirement benefits (68%), increased salaries (67%), student loan forgiveness (25%), and housing incentives (23%) (Podolsky et al. , 2019, p.7), highlighting the importance of compensation packages in the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers.

Additionally, researchers should note that although many studies show compensation as a significant, if not driving, factor related to retention and recruitment, others show a more limited impact (Cells et al., 2023; Solomonson et al., 2018). The Solomonson et al. (2018) study of agriculture teachers' reasons for leaving the education field found a complexity of factors that impacted the decisions to leave led by personal factors, while compensation was found to be the least influential. However, Solomonson et al. (2018) also speculated that compensation's place as a less influential factor could be attributed to the nature of compensation of agriculture teachers which most often are employed on extended teaching contracts and receive additional stipends for organization sponsorships.

The concept of structural capital, which encompasses patents, trademarks, software, datasets, organizational culture, and organizational capabilities, has been

adapted to the field of education (Mason & Matas, 2015). Furthermore, structural capital plays a significant role in teacher attrition and retention, along with factors, such as expanded responsibilities, workload impact, and employment and compensation conditions (Cells et al., 2023; Kaiser & Thompson, 2021). The implementation of alternative school schedules, such as the four-day school week, has gained popularity as a means to address teacher recruitment and retention, but its long-term effects on student learning and non-academic aspects are still being studied (Turner et al., 2018, Turner et al., 2019, Riley, 2023). Teacher compensation is another crucial factor influencing recruitment and retention, with varying starting salaries across states and the need for competitive compensation packages to attract and retain high-quality teachers.

Positive Psychological Capital

The fourth form of capital Mason and Matas (2015) established for teacher attrition and retention is positive psychological capital (PsyCap), the most internal of the factors affecting teacher attrition. PsyCap examines the factors within an individual's makeup, including confidence, hope, optimism, and resiliency (Luthans & Youssef, 2004), impacting psychological states, including motivation, commitment, and the adopting of coping strategies (Mason & Matas, 2015). Although only containing the theme of personality and psychological factors, PsyCap highlights the importance of internal factors in career decisions despite often being overlooked in many studies on teacher recruitment and retention (Mason & Matas, 2015).

Molyneux (2021) examines the role of emotional labor in teaching and its influence on teachers exiting their positions and leaving the field. The study noted an increased toll on early career educators, primarily due to the lack of preparation in

handling such labor. Experiences in teacher preparation programs, primarily during demonstration teaching and practicums, can also reveal and build that psychological state in prospective teachers (Pearman & Lefever-Davis, 2012). In reflection after the conclusion of their practicum, all 12 participants in the Pearman & Lefever-Davis (2012) study expressed doubts of their ability to control a classroom, while 11 of the 12 doubted they could be effective public school teachers (p. 7). One participant with optimism going in noted, "After seeing what goes on in a classroom firsthand, I don't know if I will be able to do it. I've always wanted to be a teacher, but school wasn't like this when I grew up" (Pearman & Lefever-Davis, 2012, p. 8). These self-doubts, questions, and lack of preparation lead to attrition and a lack of qualified candidates willing to enter the teaching field.

Researchers often explore how lacking positive psychological capital impacts teachers (Molyneux, 2021; Pearman & Lefever-Davis, 2012) and should also explore how possessing positive psychological capital impacts teachers. Many long-lasting teachers have positive perceptions of teaching and their abilities based in supports from mentors and family members who were also educators (Cells at al., 2023) and show increased commitment to the profession leading manifesting itself as intrinsic motivation to perform tasks well (Egnili, 2021). Egninli (2021) goes on to note the importance of positive PsyCap stating:

> It bears emphasizing that while teachers with a high perception of self-efficacy beliefs seem to become inspired to work harder, and tend to become staying teachers, teachers with low sense of self-efficacy do not put too much effort when they face with challenging tasks. (p. 914)

While generally outside the control of school principals and other school leaders, the effects of positive PsyCap can have significant impact on their ability to recruit and retain the highest quality teachers (Mason & Matas, 2015).

Grow Your Own (GYO) Programs

While many programs and initiatives exist nationwide to help recruit high-quality educators to the classroom, one major initiative for many states and districts is the implementation of GYO programs (Garcia, 2020; Harris, 2020; Jackson & Wake, 2022; Jessen et al., 2020; Swanson, 2011; Trompeter & Garcia-Fields, 2022; Wood, 2022). GYO programs are "partnerships between school districts, community-based organizations and colleges" (Wood, 2022, para. 3) designed to "recruit community members to teach in local pre-K-12schools" (para. 3). Many programs are led by universities, or school districts, while others are led directly by a state-level department of education, school buildings, or even by partnerships between educational institutions and community organizations (Jessen et al., 2020).

Despite being implemented in 47 states (all but North Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming) (Garcia, 2020, p. 12), the design and strategy of the GYO program vary from state to state, with some implementing a single strategy and others implementing five program types (Garcia, 2020; Wood, 2022). The variability in the implementation speaks to the flexible nature of GYO programs, allowing states, districts, and communities to implement programs designed to meet their needs (Garcia, 2020; Wood, 2022). For example, Ready, Set Teach, a Texas program geared toward high school students, programs at the district level in major metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles and

competitive grant cycles (Garcia, 2020), provide multiple ways and examples of the implementation of GYO programs.

The success of GYO programs requires much planning, research, and thoughtful design that includes one key factor for the program's success: Funding. Funding for GYO Programs varies drastically nationwide, but only 15 states provide direct funding for program development, implementation, and sustainability (Wood, 2022, para. 7). Many more states provide funding for aspects of the GYO concept, including seven that fund grant programs (p. 11) and others that fund scholarships or other areas as designated by state law (Garcia, 2020). The disparity in funding has led at least one rural district in Missouri to combine several forms of funding, including "local scholarships, A+ scholarships, and an educational internship program" (Harris, 2020, p. 98) to help provide financial assistance to students looking to pursue a degree in education.

Researchers reviewed many successful GYO Program implementations nationwide. One aspect of success has been in the diversity of the potential teacher workforce. A study of Arkansas programs showed higher rates of black and Hispanic students were enrolled in programs in both the high school and collegiate levels (Jackson & Wake, 2022), while 88% of participants in a Miami-Dade County Paraprofessional to Teach program were of color (Trompeter & Garcia-Fields, 2022, p. 49). The Arkansas study also highlighted positive student experiences, providing potential educators with "authentic teaching situations, allowing them to transition theory to practice and operationalize their inherent altruistic reasons for considering the profession in the first place" (Jackson & Wake, 2022, p.125). The partnerships forged in Grow Your Programs

can also lead to increased retention rates when used with other mentoring and induction programs (Trompeter & Garcia-Fields, 2022).

Summary

Chapter Two began by reviewing the Four-Capital theory established by Mason and Matas (2015), which serves as the theoretical underpinning of the study examining administrator perspectives on teacher recruitment and retention following the COVID-19 pandemic. The nature and global impact of the pandemic were detailed, along with the history and current state of teacher shortages in Missouri and the United States. The literature on factors affecting teacher attrition and retention was explored using the framework and underlying themes of human, social, structural, and positive psychological capital, as established by Mason and Matas (2015). Lastly, the current state of GYO programs used as a method of teacher recruitment was discussed. Chapter Three takes an in-depth look at the methodology behind this qualitative study, including the instrumentation, data analysis, and ethical considerations taken throughout the process.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter Three contains information on the methodology used to gather and analyze data on administrator perspectives on recruiting and retaining teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. An explanation and background of the significance of the study are provided in the Problem and Purpose Overview. The research questions are defined, and the design of the study is explained illustrating the research methods. Additionally, details of the population, the participant sample, and instrument, including its reliability and validity are also described. Lastly, methods of data collection and analysis are discussed, including special discussion of the ethical considerations and actions taken to protect the study participants.

Problem and Purpose Overview

Teacher shortages are a known problem in Missouri and the United States (Turner & Cohen, 2023). The events of the COVID-19 pandemic have greatly impacted classrooms, schools, and educators (Chan et al., 2021; Pinter, 2021). Administrators are the primary human capital and talent managers (Shell, 2023) in many districts, and examining their perspectives on the impact of the pandemic on teacher retention will help shape decision-making for other school administrators and human resources personnel.

Recruitment and retention trends in Missouri and across the nation should be alarming to many administrators, even if the shortage has not yet hit their local school or district. A Missouri survey showed that nearly half of teachers consider leaving the field often or very often (Missouri State Teachers Association, 2022). Although the survey was just a sample of teachers across the state, the trend should be on administrators' minds in recruiting and retaining their staff, as teachers are the number one school-related factor in

student learning (Opper, 2019). While recruitment and retention strategies are a part of

daily operation for most administrators and other school leaders in hiring roles, there are

few, if any leaders, up until now who have faced recruitment and retention following the

impacts of a global pandemic of the scale of which we have recently lived through.

Consequently, school administrators nationwide need to examine their practices,

reevaluate their effectiveness, and potentially craft new policies to guide their buildings

to successful staffing practices during the pandemic (Bill et al., 2022).

Much research exists concerning the recruitment and retention of high-quality

teachers (Adams & Woods, 2015; Allen, 2002; Banghart, 2021; Beesley et al., 2008; Bill

et al., 2022; Bradley & Loadman, 2005; Buckman, 2021; Cells et al., 2023; Church &

Simmering, 2022; Darling-Hammond, 2003; García et al., 2022; Guarino et al., 2006;

Hunting, 2017; Marshall et al., 2022; O'Doherty & Harford, 2018; Pawlewicz, 2021;

Pivovarova & Powers, 2022; Will, 2022), which has led to the establishment of a

framework of best practices for educators to employ in their recruitment and retention

efforts. Sensing a shortage of teachers in Arizona, a Morrison Institute for Public Policy

report (Hunting, 2017) laid out a set of best practice programs to utilize, including the

implementation of salary bonuses for National Board Certification, Master Teacher

Mentoring Programs, and partnerships with businesses and non-profits to sponsor

teachers and classrooms. Swanson (2011) details the successes and potential of additional

recruitment tools used in Georgia, such as GYO programs, while Beesley et al. (2008)

have shown success in filling positions in rural central United States schools despite

positions in mathematics, special education, and science still being more difficult to feel.

In addition to GYO programs, Banghart (2021) establishes the success of rural Colorado

schools in creating partnerships with educator preparation programs to help encourage

candidates to high-need positions.

Research Questions

> **Research Question 1:** What perceived impact has the COVID-19 Pandemic had
>
> on teacher retention in Missouri Schools?
>
> **Research Question 2:** What perceived impact has the COVID-19 Pandemic had
>
> on teacher recruitment in Missouri Schools?
>
> **Research Question 3:** What strategies have administrators found successful in
>
> the past when recruiting and retaining teachers?
>
> **Research Question 4:** What strategies do administrators feel would be helpful in
>
> recruiting and retaining teachers going forward in the current environment?

Research Design

A qualitative design was chosen to study administrator perceptions on teacher

recruitment and retention during a pandemic because of its "origins in descriptive

analysis" (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 13). That origin allows the dissemination of

perspectives and experiences (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019), given the qualitative approach's

"belief that the particular physical and social environment has a great bearing on human

behavior" (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 14). Butin (2010) summarizes descriptive research,

stating it "is primarily concerned with explaining a phenomenon clearly through the

construction of categories and order that can, in turn, support later action" (p. 81). The

impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are still felt worldwide and in educational fields

(Garver, 2022). Understanding the perceptions of those on the frontline of teacher

recruitment and retention allows a better holistic understanding of the phenomena in place which are best served by a qualitative study.

Population and Sample

Bluman (2018) defined the population as "the totality of all subjects possessing certain common characteristics that are being studied" (p. 805). The targeted population for this study included the 2,329 individuals listed in the MCDS Building Report who were active building-level principals for the 2022-2023 school year and had administrative experience before the 2020-2021 school year. The target population was crafted to include those administrators, namely building principals, whose duties and responsibilities included recruiting and retaining teachers, to allow those individuals to compare recruitment and retention before and after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Wiersma and Jurs (2009) defined a *sample* as "a subset of the population under study" (p. 479). Although much smaller than the targeted population, the sample for this study was 62 administrators from around the state of Missouri who met the above criteria. The smaller nature of the sample in a qualitative study is acceptable "due to the depth and breadth of data collected" (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019, p. 147). The sample comprised administrator responses from each of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's regions and represented buildings with all grade levels from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. The sample also represented school administrators leading schools in rural, suburban, and urban demographics. The target sample size for the follow-up interviews was five due to the limited availability of willing administrators to participate in such a process. For the interviews, convenience sampling was chosen based on the availability and convenience of participants (Thomas, 2003). Convenience

sampling is undoubtedly less advantageous; the participants' lives and time constraints were considered. The selection of participants in the follow-up interview was based on a first-come, first-served basis.

Instrumentation

For the qualitative study into administrator perspectives on teacher recruitment and retention, an original online survey (see Appendix A) was created. The survey contained five open-ended response questions, two multi-select questions, and various questions to gain generic background information on the participants, such as the number of years in education, school district setting, and grade levels under their leadership. The short answer and multi-select questions were crafted using the themes established during the review of the existing literature surrounding recruitment and retention and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, original interview questions (see Appendix B) were created, utilizing the themes established during the review of existing literature surrounding recruitment and retention as well as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reliability

Steps were taken to ensure *reliability*, which is defined by Wiersma and Jurs (2009) as "the consistency of the research and the extent to which studies can be replicated" (p. 9). The survey and interview questions were written in concise language at an appropriate grade level and provided open-ended opportunities to elicit maximum responses from the participants. A small group of former principals also reviewed questions to anticipate questions or concerns, familiar with the duties of administrators. These concerns were addressed before administering the survey.

Validity

Procedures were in place to ensure the validity of the survey and interview responses. The survey and interview questions were developed utilizing data and themes from the literature review and the teacher recruitment and retention framework established by Mason and Matas (2015). Responses from the survey were also utilized in developing the follow-up interview questions.

Data Collection

The data collection process for this study began after receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board at Lindenwood University (see Appendix C). A list of public school buildings in Missouri was obtained from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Missouri Comprehensive Data System (MCDS), which contained the names and email addresses of building principals. Principals were sent a request for participation in the study as well as a secured *Qualtrics* link connecting participants to the survey instrument via email (see Appendix D), which also included the Survey Information Sheet (see Appendix E) and the Research Study Consent Form (see Appendix F). Through the Survey Information Sheet and the Research Study Consent form, the participants were informed of measures being taken to ensure ethical research, privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. The Administrator Perspectives on Recruitment and Retention of Teachers Survey (see Appendix A) collected Missouri Administrators' responses through the use of the web-based survey tool *Qualtrics*. The survey also included a question asking for voluntary participation in follow-up interviews on the topic.

Following the collection of the open-ended survey results, follow-up interview questions were crafted using participant responses (Appendix B). Follow-up interviews were conducted after the questions were reviewed by a small group of former principals. The follow-up phase of the study began after an email was sent to participants who agreed to participate in the interview. The email contained the Research Information Sheet and detailed information, including informed consent. A second email was sent confirming the time and date of the individual interviews, including a link to the virtual meeting space. Upon the conclusion of the follow-up interviews, an analysis of the results was completed. The data was then interpreted, and themes were established for each question based on the collected responses.

Data Analysis

First, a survey to determine Missouri public school administrator perspectives on teacher recruitment and retention during a pandemic was conducted. After the analysis of the results, interview questions were finalized and used to ask more in-depth questions to administrators on the identified themes from the survey results, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and perspective on strategies for the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers.

Following the collection and analysis of the survey data, follow-up interviews took place. Significant points and key themes of responses were noted during the interviews, which were also recorded for reflection. Following the conclusion of the follow-up interviews, responses were reviewed and coded for themes. Interview results were analyzed by question and were synthesized and reported as descriptions and themes utilizing quotations from the participant responses.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary. No pressure was applied to the participants to complete the informed consent. Participants who completed the survey could volunteer to participate in virtual follow-up interviews via Zoom meeting software. To ensure participants in the follow-up interviews were voluntary, the primary investigator obtained each interviewed participant's signature. Additionally, responses to the survey were anonymously returned in *Qualtrics*, ensuring the research team did not know the identity of the survey respondents.

Identities were kept anonymous in accordance with the Safe Harbor Method (Office of Civil Rights, 2022). First, surveys did not collect identifying information, such as name and the specific school district where the participant works. The only time a respondent's name appeared in a survey was if they agreed to participate in a follow-up interview. No names were released after the interview, and the notes and audio of the interviews were secured for three years on a password-protected device to ensure security. Additionally, no names will be mentioned in the published study. Participants were described, beginning with S1 for survey participants and F1 for follow-up interview participants, and also by using other descriptors, such as "the principal of an urban middle school" or "one principal of a rural high school" to describe the participant's background while still ensuring anonymity.

Administrators performed a task not part of their daily routine by responding to a survey or participating in an in-person or teleconference interview. There was minimal risk as these types of tasks are common among administrators. However, full risk could not be eliminated. To mitigate risk, participants were allowed to participate at their

convenience with no time limits. Interviews were purely voluntary using the participants' chosen method, limiting the participants' risks.

Summary

Chapter Three provided a detailed overview of the methodology employed in the study, which focused on gathering and analyzing data on administrator perspectives regarding recruiting and retaining teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter began with a problem and purpose overview, highlighting the significance of examining administrator perspectives in addressing teacher shortages and informing decision-making processes. The chapter then presented the research questions and described the chosen research design, which involved a qualitative approach to capturing and understanding administrator perceptions. The population and sample for the study were outlined, including active building-level principals in Missouri who had experience in teacher recruitment and retention before and after the pandemic. The instrumentation section discussed the development of an online survey and interview questions based on existing literature and established frameworks. Reliability and validity measures were addressed, ensuring consistency and accuracy of the collected data. The data collection process was explained, including using a secure online survey tool and follow-up interviews via virtual meetings. The chapter concluded with a data analysis methods discussion, ethical considerations, and measures taken to protect participant anonymity and privacy. Overall, the chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the methodology employed in the study, highlighting the rigorous approach taken to gather and analyze data on administrator perspectives related to teacher recruitment and retention during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter Four begins with the presentation of the problem and purpose of the study and review of the instrument used for the study, and how the data is presented. The remainder of Chapter Four is dedicated to an in-depth analysis of the qualitative data collected through the original survey instrument and the follow-up interview questions. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the themes that emerged following the data analysis and a summary of the results.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

This study explores how administrators perceive the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher recruitment and retention and the subsequent efforts needed to address these issues. Recent survey data shows that teachers are becoming less certain about pursuing a full career in education (Zamaro et al., 2021) due to the pandemic's effects, which have yet to be fully understood. The sudden shift to remote or hybrid learning during the pandemic (Pinter, 2021) has led to increased workloads, role ambiguity, and task stress for educators, resulting in high levels of burnout (Chan et al., 2021). To understand the challenges that school administrators face in recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers, an original survey was conducted in Missouri to gather anonymous open-ended feedback, and additional follow-up interviews were conducted to gain further insights regarding themes from the surveys. The study compiled these perspectives to identify themes, successes, and failures, which administrators and policymakers can use nationwide to develop strategies for teacher retention and recruitment and ultimately improve the quality of education across the country.

Chapter Four begins by presenting the background demographics collected on the survey participants, such as their administrator status, current role, school and community classifications, and experience levels in education, administration, and their current role. Survey question responses are then broken down by themes utilizing quotations from survey responses that were appropriate to support the identified theme. Lastly, responses to the semi-structured follow-up interview questions are also broken down by theme, using quotations where appropriate to support the identified theme.

Survey Data Analysis

The Perceptions of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teacher Retention and Recruitment Survey was distributed to 2,323 school administrators and accumulated a total sample of 63 active public-school administrators for a 2.7% response rate. The Perceptions of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teacher Retention and Recruitment Survey included several questions designed to gain background information from the participants. Tables 1 through Table 4 show descriptive statistics for the categorical variables within the Perceptions of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teacher Retention and Recruitment Survey.

Administrator Status

Table 1 shows that 66 of the 68 participants responded that they were active elementary or secondary administrators in Missouri. Two respondents indicated they were not currently an active administrator. Table 2 shows that two of the 66 respondents who *were* active administrators, 63, or 95.5% were *also* active administrators during or before the 2019-2020 school year. The remaining three respondents were not in an active administration role during or before the 2019-2020 school year. Both active status and experience during or before the 2019-2020 school year were necessary to continue as participants of the study.

Table 1

Active Administrator Status

Active Administrator	Responses	%
Yes	66	97.1
No	2	2.9

Note. N=68

Table 2

Active Administrator Status Before the COVID-19 Pandemic

Active Administrator Before 2019-2020 School Year	Responses	%
Yes	63	95.5
No	3	4.6

Note. N=66

Current Role

Participants in *The Perceptions of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teacher Retention and Recruitment Survey* were asked to identify the best description of their current role in education. The multiple-choice selection provided the responses of *Principal, Assistant Principal*, *Superintendent*, and *Assistant Superintendent*. Additionally, the *Other* category was provided, giving participants an option to describe their role using their own words. Detailed in Table 3, 93.6% of participants in the survey indicated *Principal* as their role. Five participants indicated a role other than *Principal*, including two as *Superintendent*, one *Assistant Superintendent*, and one *Other* clarifying their role as a "Special Education Director."

Table 3

Participants' Current Roles

Current Role	Responses	%
Principal	58	93.6
Assistant Principal	0	0.0
Superintendent	2	3.2
Assistant Superintendent	1	1.6
Other	1	1.6

Note. N=62

Community Classification

Participants in The Perceptions of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teacher Retention and Recruitment Survey were asked to describe the school location based on the type of community. Three options were provided: rural, suburban, and urban, along with an option to describe the community in their own words. Responses to this multiple-choice question, detailed in Table 4, show a sizable majority of 56.5% of respondents indicated they lead a rural school. Meanwhile, 33.9% indicated suburban, and 9.7% described their school as being in an urban community.

Table 4

Community Classification

Classification	Responses	%
Rural	35	56.5
Suburban	21	33.9
Urban	6	9.7
Other	0	0.0

Note. N=62

Building Grade Levels

Administrators responding to The Perceptions of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teacher Retention and Recruitment Survey were asked to identify all grade levels which were present in the building in which they were administrators. The multi-select question provided categories of Pre-Kindergarten/Early Childhood Education, Kindergarten, and grades one through 12, with responses detailed in Figure 3 Over half of respondents indicated the presence of kindergarten through sixth grade, while just over 20% indicated the presence of grades nine through 12. Middle levels and early childhood education were in between, ranging from just under 31% for grades seven and eight to just under 42% for early childhood education.

Figure 3

Grade Levels Under Survey Participant Leadership
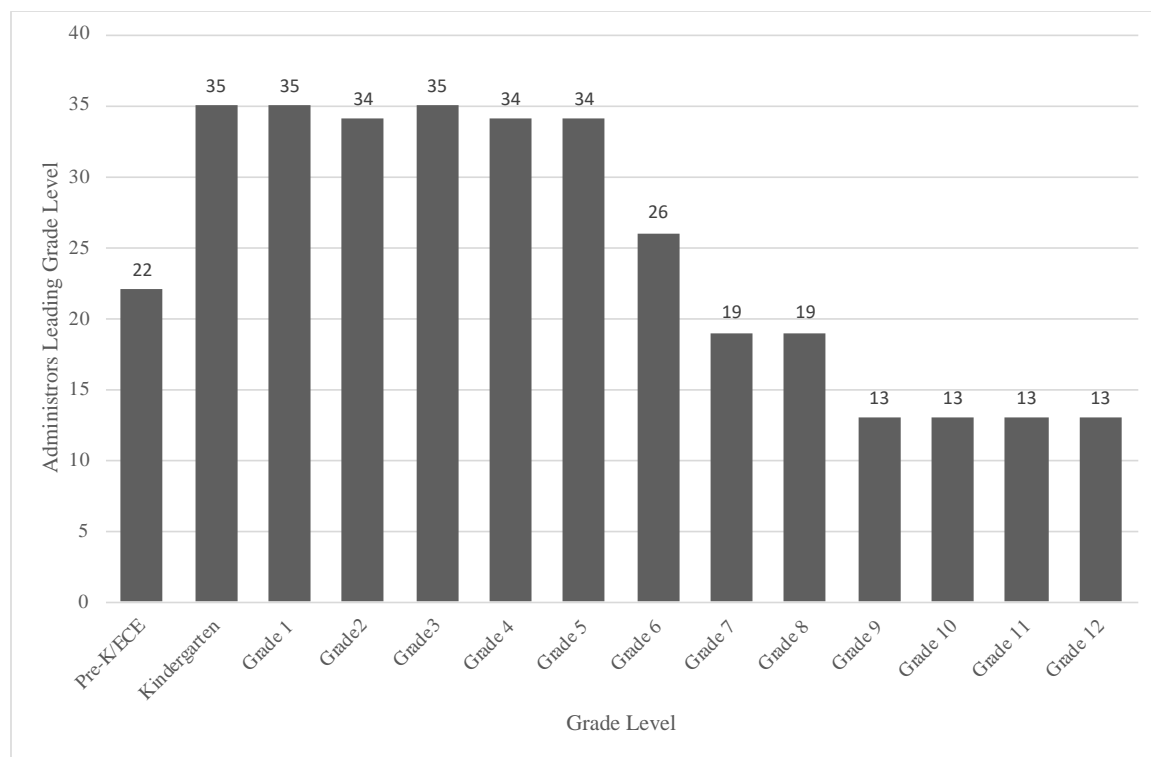
Note. N=62.

Experience

Participants in The Perceptions of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teacher Retention and Recruitment Survey were asked to share their years of experience in various roles during their career in education. Using a numerical slider participants shared their years of experience in the field of education, years in administration, and years in their current role. Responses are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Education Experience

Years' Experience In...	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Education	22.2	9	37
Administration	12.0	4	30
Current Role	7.0	1	20

Note. N=62.

Survey Question One

Participants in the survey were asked what, if any, impact the COVID-19 Pandemic has had on the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers in their schools. This open-ended survey question was designed to gather various administrator perspectives based on their experiences during and following the COVID-19 Pandemic. Participant responses to the open-ended question were analyzed to identify prevailing themes. After the analysis of the responses, six themes were identified.

Theme One: Shift in ability to recruit and retain teachers. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a notable shift in most Missouri public school administrators' abilities to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. Respondents highlighted the challenges faced in their school, such as the disruptions caused by the

crisis, which have led to a decline in the number of teachers applying for open positions. Participant S11, a principal from an urban school district with six years of administrative experience, shared "It has fundamentally changed the way recruiting, hiring, and retention work in my district." Additional respondents cited difficulty in filling open positions, as well as retaining the staff currently in place, including Participant S38, who had approximately 25% of the teachers leave in their building.

Theme Two: Pandemic is not solely responsible for recruitment and retention concerns. While administrators across the state of Missouri have noted difficulties in recruiting and retaining of teachers, many were unwilling or unable to identify the cause as the COVID-19 pandemic fully. Respondent S4 noted an increase in resignations to pursue careers outside the field of education. This administrator added, "Whether that is directly related to COVID I am unable to say, but there has been a definite increase in the number of teachers from our district leaving the profession altogether since the beginning of the Pandemic." Participant S30, a principal with 12 years in administration, including five in their current rule, "Finding high quality teachers at the moment is difficult," but could not say if this was 100% the result of the pandemic.

Theme Three: Decrease in qualified applicants. The responses from the participants in the study indicated a significant decrease in the total number of qualified applicants for teaching positions following the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondent S23, a principal with 18 years in their current role, noted:

> This school year 2022-23 is by far the least number of applicants and the least
> number of highly qualified applicants we have received for open teaching
> positions in our building. We are in the top 3 for starting pay, master's pay, and

overall top salary in central Missouri. We have secondary positions that have

posted for 7 months with only two applicants.

Participant S52, another administrator, described the decline in qualified applicants,

stating "We no longer have a pool of candidates to hire from. We have a puddle."

Additional respondents described the applicant pool as having "dropped significantly"

(Participant S27) and being "thin compared to pre-pandemic levels" (Participant S12),

with positions such as SPED having only a handful to choose.

Theme Four: Shift in attitudes and priorities regarding education. While

possibly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a shift in attitudes and

priorities from students, parents, community, and other stakeholders. Participant S60

expressed concern, stating:

While the families were overly supportive and appreciative of what schools and

teachers do (while we were in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic), that

appreciation and importance that was once placed on education and educators is

almost completely absent.

"Teachers feel they are being asked to do much more than teach," added Participant S61.

Teachers are battling the shift in outside perspectives while also facing the added

challenge of the emotional and educational impacts following the pandemic, impacting

the administrator's ability to recruit and retain high-quality teachers.

Theme Five: Political climate's impact on recruitment and retention. The

political climate across the state and country also impacts teacher recruitment and

retention. Administrator S17 highlighted the issue of political discord, stating, "Covid

isn't the major issue," while citing the major issue as "the political discord and the desire

to make everything in contentious in education." Participant S12, a Suburban Kansas City area administrator with 16 years of educational experience, also noted the political culture, stating "public education is constantly under attack by politicians in Jefferson City and Washington. This has also had an equal or even higher impact on recruitment and retention of quality staff." Administrator responses indicate that the increasingly hostile discourse and attacks against public education have negative impact on the effective recruitment and retention of teachers.

Theme Six: Teacher workload and compensation. The workload and low compensation have impacted the ability to recruit and retain high-quality teachers in Missouri. In the words of Participant 63, "Retention is becoming a larger problem as teachers leave the field because of exhaustion or more money in a less stressful environment." Participant S15 observed, "Many teachers have found online work that provides them with a better work-life balance." The expanded workload and expectations have combined to impact retention. Participant S34 shared the impact of compensation on retention in their rural district, stating, "It seems like since the pandemic, teachers realize they can make more money in larger districts, and the emphasis on money is high, therefore, they cannot stay for too long." Additionally, recruitment to districts implementing a four-day school week was noted as a factor impacting teacher retention.

Survey Question Two

Study participants were asked to describe the recruitment and retention strategies before the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were also asked to analyze the effectiveness of the provided strategies. This open-ended question was designed to obtain an overview, including a description of the effectiveness of recruitment and retention strategies across

Missouri. Participant responses to the open-ended question were analyzed to identify prevailing themes. After the analysis of the responses, six themes were identified.

Theme One: Building a supportive and engaging workplace. Participants in the study responded that one strategy used to recruit and retain high-quality teachers is to build a supportive and engaging workplace environment. Administrator S69 responded, "Giving teachers autonomy, opportunities for growth, teacher voice and representation, and generous classroom budgets were all helpful with retention." Building a culture through servant leadership was also referenced, with Participant S39 stating that "simply treating teachers like the professionals they are" was an effective strategy for retention. From seemingly small acts, such as a relaxed dress code, mentioned by Participant S53, to more substantial initiatives such as the four-day school week cited directly by eight different participants, creating a supportive and engaging workplace can be an effective strategy to recruit and specifically retain high-quality teachers.

Theme Two: Compensation. Respondents emphasized the significance of offering competitive compensation and benefits to recruit and retain high-quality teachers for their buildings. Participant S23 noted their district's priority to be one of the highest starting salaries in their region, with additional administrators citing their compensation package as a tool for recruitment and retention. While making the salary schedule competitive was a priority in many districts, there were other direct and indirect benefits. Participant S64, a 32-year veteran educator from a Southwest Missouri district, highlighted the use of "small class sizes and tuition reimbursement for graduate classes" as methods to counteract the "improved" but still "low side" salary schedule.

Theme Three: Establish strong relationships with higher education teacher preparation programs. The responses to the survey indicate that one strategy by numerous Missouri school districts used before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic was to establish strong relationships with colleges and universities with teacher preparation programs. Hosting student teachers, attending "job fairs throughout the region" (Participant S44), and attending "teacher education fairs at the local colleges and universities" (Participant S19) allows building leaders to recruit recent college graduates into their buildings. Additionally, a strategy used by Participant S20 was to place a table at university career days, leading to connections with potential applicants and university leaders. While also acknowledging that "more could be done to recruit staff," Participant S20 found the use of career days to be an effective strategy to recruit teachers.

Theme Four: Creative advertisement. Recruitment in the current climate, and even the educational climate before the COVID-19 pandemic, requires creative advertisement. Simply put you get applications if the vacancy is not known. There are many methods of advertising positions mentioned by the respondents, including "advertising on MoTeachingJobs" (Participant S49) and in local newspapers. Additional job boards, such as those hosted by colleges and universities all provide a locale for digital advertising. One district used online forums as a method of advertising a position in addition to posting "anticipated vacancies on our website" (Participant S12) and social media.

Theme Five: Four-day school week. Many responses from administrators participating in the survey indicated that the implementation of alternative school scheduling, specifically the four-day school week has had a significant impact on the

recruitment and retention of teachers in Missouri. Participant S4 stated, "We adopted the four-day school week as a means of recruiting and retaining teachers." The administrator continued, "For the first several years of implementation it was very effective as we had a much smaller rate of teacher turnover and saw an increase in our number of certified applications for open positions." Participant S55, a high school principal from Southwest Missouri, highlighted the ability to "hire teachers away from other high-paying districts because they are attracted to the four-day work week." Participant S23, who has spent 18 years in their current role, added "I believe the 4 day school week to be one of the most effective strategies in retaining our staff in these turbulent times in the field of education." It should also be noted however, as the number of schools adopting a four-day school week has risen it has "lessened the impact of that as a recruitment/retention tool" (Participant S4), leaving questions for administrators on the long-term effectiveness of the strategy.

Theme Six: Teacher support systems. Administrator's responses highlighted the impact that teacher support, or lack thereof had of teacher recruitment and retention in Missouri. Participant S68, a middle level principal from rural St. Louis shared their experience stating:

> We do a solid job of supporting our staff around disciplining students, building relationships with parents, and holding our students accountable to expectations. Our surveys show that teachers feel supported. When teachers feel supported, they tend to stick around unless financial needs come into play.

Additional support strategies that yielded positive impact included new-teacher programs, including a "New Teacher Academy" (Participant S25), mentoring programs, and high-quality professional development.

Likewise, a lack of teacher support negatively impacted teacher retention. Participant S48, an elementary principal from Northwest Missouri, noted the negative impact stating, "We also lack behavior support making teaching very difficult for teachers, as the pandemic also hindered relationships in families" leading to a "lack of support" and "follow through" at home. It was also evident that even strategies that can be effective must be done with thought. Participant S67 noted the use of a mentoring program that was not effective, citing the reactionary nature of its formation.

Survey Question Three

Survey participants were asked to describe the state of recruitment and retention policies following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents were asked to identify strategies that were retained, revised, or replaced and the factors that went into those decisions. This open-ended question was designed to gather data on the current state of recruitment and retention practices for administrators in Missouri. Participant responses to the open-ended question were analyzed to identify prevailing themes. After the analysis of the responses, five themes were identified.

Theme One: Compensation. Responses to the survey question undoubtedly highlighted the use of increased salary schedules and other financial benefits and incentives to recruit better and retain high-quality teachers. Participant S68, a middle-level principal from the rural St. Louis Region, elaborated:

According to the state, we have increased our base pay, and the district has

elected to pay more than the recommended base pay of 38,000. The board has

elected to pay 100% of our certified staff's insurance. We also moved the teacher

sub rate from $25 a day to $35 a day when a teacher has to cover another

teacher's class during their plan period.

Other responses echoed the theme of salary and financial incentives as an implemented

strategy. Participant S4, a 7-12 principal from Southwest Missouri, indicated the revision

of salary strategy following the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically "the increase of our

base salary and the increase of the overall steps within our salary schedule for teachers

with advanced degrees." Likewise, the ability to import more years into a new district's

salary schedule was cited by Participants S42 and S67 as revisions to the previous

compensation policy. Lastly, some districts offered stipends to all staff members during

the aftermath of the pandemic, with one district offering two different "one-time stipends

to all staff for their extra effort during the pandemic" (Participant S14).

Theme Two: Increase focus on health and wellness. Administrator responses

indicated an increased focus on health and wellness, including mental health, during and

following the COVID-19 pandemic. With a post-pandemic focus on teacher retention,

Participant S63, a suburban Kansas City administrator, stated, "We have spent the last

three years focusing on health and wellness for our staff which includes wellness

committees, challenges and prizes." Additional strategies shared by Participant S10 echo

the focus on health and wellness, including implementing "a free staff wellness room"

with workout equipment, "free virtual health visits for all employees," and adding

insurance coverage for mental health services and counseling.

Theme Three: Ensure teacher's voices are heard. One significant strategy that became the focus of many respondents following the COVID-19 pandemic was ensuring teachers' voices were heard. A process that led to strategies aimed at a better work-life balance. Four different administrators referenced surveys or interviews completed with their staff. Participant S69, an elementary principal from urban Kansas City, cited the implementation of a "teacher retention committee" to discuss steps that can be taken to address concerns, including "changing the calendar, adding a late start day, more teacher voice, and other items," all of which were identified from a district survey. Participant S60 shared efforts including, offering "less duties for teachers," with administration taking on those roles to help "lessen the stress level." To alleviate stress and financial hardship, some districts have also begun offering in-house childcare for teachers and staff or reimbursing 75% of the cost of childcare.

Theme Four: Four-day school week largely helps recruitment. While in place in many districts across the state before the COVID-19 pandemic, implementing alternative calendars, namely the four-day school week has continued to be a relevant strategy for recruitment and retention across Missouri. Participant S55 responded, "We have been able to keep the teachers we have and hire really good ones because we are a four-day school week." The four-day school week in this district was also met with community support, with Participant S55 highlighting how the "community loves the schedule and does not want it to change," while they "will continue to be a four-day school week," provided the local school board and community maintain the control of the decision. Participant S2, a Northwest Missouri principal, noted that "The 4-day has helped recruit teachers," but conceded that as "more and more surrounding schools have

either increased their pay or went to a four day themselves," the impact may be limited as time goes on.

Theme Five: Employ creative measures to recruit and retain teachers. One word mentioned by several respondents and implied in the strategies, methods, and discussion is creativity. Three participants indicated that administrators facing unprecedented challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers must continually think outside the box, adapting their thinking to identify creative and unique solutions to help attack the specific problems and needs in their building. Participant S36, an administrator from a suburban school, described a spin on traditional hiring utilizing a "walk-in style" job fair to recruit new teachers and fill positions. Participant S21, an elementary principal from the Suburban Kansas City area, explained a recently implemented recruitment team whose role is "to better showcase the district to a younger generation," continuing the theme of new creative takes on recruitment and retention strategies.

Participant S12, a high school administrator from the Kansas City region, noted an added long-term strategy used in their building to hopefully increase the number of graduates interested in entering the education field. This administrator stated:

> We had to get creative. We created our grow your own program, teacher cadet program and future teacher clubs so we could work to funnel interested students into these. We are hoping by creating these opportunities we will get graduates that go to college and come back to our school district due to their great experiences in these programs. We also have some incentives within these programs that would allow students to at least gain an interview for an open position if they come back to our school district.

While primarily linked with recruitment, the mention of creative strategies also applied to retention. Participant S63 administrator described strategies such as paying for "healthy lunches and shakes from local businesses," adding they work to show staff appreciation significantly at least once a quarter.

One great idea is not enough on its own, however. Participant S12 later stated, "We are constantly trying to come up with new ways to engage students and future teachers to come to our district." Participant S32, an elementary principal from the northeast region, noted "We continue to brainstorm ideas for recruiting and retaining teachers." Administrators around the state continue to adapt and revise strategies to better meet the specific recruitment and retention needs and challenges faced in their role as a building leader.

Survey Question Four

Survey participants were asked to describe strategies they would like to implement to recruit and retain high-quality teachers if budget was not a factor. Participants were also asked to provide a rationale for why they believe those strategies are effective for recruitment and retention. This open-ended question was designed to identify strategies and potential solutions for administrators who are responsible for recruitment and retention, and also additional topics for further research and exploration. Participant survey responses were analyzed for prevailing themes. After analysis six, themes were identified.

Theme One: Increase salaries and related benefits. Despite mentioned efforts to increase salaries in districts across the state, participants overwhelmingly cited a desire for increased salary and incentives across the board. The expanding role of teachers was

cited by Participant S63 as a leading need for salary increases by stating, "We need to increase salaries to reflect the jobs educators are fulfilling." Participant S63 later added that paying teachers "what they are worth" would be an ideal strategy. The desire for increased compensation for teachers did not only include direct salary increases but also extended the increased compensation to the "stipends associated with work beyond the assigned day" (Participant S61), such as coaching, club sponsorships, committee work, and curriculum development. In addition to a "dramatic increase in teacher pay," mentioned by Participant S4, an increase in indirect compensation, such as the benefits package, including full insurance coverage were described by respondents. Six participant responses also indicated support for bonus programs to recruit and retain teachers, including a signing, attendance bonus, and even a bonus based on years of service with a district, for example at the conclusion of every five years of service.

Theme Two: Importance of appropriate professional development opportunities. Administrators responding to the survey identified changes to teacher collaboration and professional development as essential policies for change. Respondents advocated primarily for increasing time for professional development and collaboration, with one elementary principal responding with a desire for more professional development days placed on the school calendar which, according to Participant S67, "would allow more time for teachers to collaborate and for teachers to learn district initiatives." Participant S42, a rural junior high school principal from Southwest Missouri, also proposed adding more classroom coverage for teachers to "provide every teacher an additional hour of collaboration in their schedule in addition to plan time." Additional desired changes regarding professional development include incorporating

learning coaches inside each building and allowing "more differentiation and choice in professional development" (Participant S69) opportunities available to teachers and staff.

Theme Three: Importance of formal and informal supports for teachers.

Responses to the survey led to a recurring theme of an increased need for support and assistance in the school. Administrators highlighted various areas of concern, chiefly assisting teachers by providing support for students and removing layers of responsibility that have been added over time. Participant S69 recommended hiring "more staff for supervision" for lunch and recess to "make the school day less busy and stressful." Jointly with professional development, providing "Consistent coaching to help teachers improve" their craft, as recommended by participant S4, is key to recruitment and retention. Additional assistance to "help students with challenging behaviors" (Participant S69), such as on-site therapists and behavior specialists, could impact teacher recruitment and retention. Participant S63 additionally noted that these positions are "often first to be cut in financial crisis." Keeping state and local funding for these positions to support students and teachers would play a key role in the wish list of administrator recruitment and retention efforts.

Theme Four: Providing an environment which supports a healthy work-life balance. Ensuring a work-life balance and teacher well-being emerged as a significant factor for administrators working to increase teacher recruitment and retention. Respondents stressed the importance of promoting teacher well-being through added measures, such as mental health days, reduced workload, and more "family-friendly" (Participant S61) policies. Participant 42, a middle school principal from Southwest Missouri, added that reducing stress by providing "more time for teachers to address the

many components of developing quality curriculum, assessment and data analysis" were desired strategies to relieve stress if budget were not a factor. Additionally, Participant S14 shared the idea of creating a "full-time daycare for staff children at minimal cost to" teachers, improving financial stability and mental well-being. Administrators feel that districts can create a supportive atmosphere that attracts and retains talented professionals by prioritizing a work-life balance and teacher well-being.

Theme Five: Need for additional recruitment strategies. Responses from administrators who participated in the survey indicated the need and desire for additional recruitment strategies that meet the needs of the current educational climate. In addition to increased participation in job fairs, creating "partnerships and pipelines to local universities" (Participant S11) and teacher preparation programs were highlighted by respondents as potential strategies for future implementation. Six different participants cited the use or exploration of a "Grow Your Own" (see defined term) program working to invest in education graduates who will pursue jobs teaching in their hometowns.

Theme Six: Need for broad changes in educational policy. While predominantly out of educators' and administrators' control, broad changes to educational policy, climate, and other reforms to the system and culture were viewed as recommended changes to recruit and retain high-quality teachers more effectively. Participant S19 summarized their thoughts, stating, "I don't know that there is anything we could do to help the situation at a local level. The problem causing the teacher shortage is mostly related to the state of education in our state and country." Participant S29 also shared the idea of shifting strategy to "focus on teaching to mastery" while describing the current state of curriculum as "an inch deep and a mile wide. Participant

S29 concluded, "Our kids are not getting what they need." Participant S12, a 10-year administrator from the suburban Kansas City area added comments on the current state of the educational climate noting:

> Pumping money into community engagement activities and educating the public on why public education is the most equipped and best tool to prepare our students for post-secondary success. Education is the way to make our society better and finding an immersive and comprehensive way to get this word out the public to gain further support from them and silencing the loud minority who hate public education should be a focus.

Participant S12 later stated they felt schools should be "working to improve public sentiment about public education through community engagement and outreach." These suggestions reflect the administrator's recognition that systemic changes are likely necessary to address the broader challenges teachers face thus impacting efforts to recruit and retain the best and brightest, the need to create an environment in which teachers can thrive.

Survey Question Five

Survey participants were asked to select the top five factors they believe would cause teachers to stay in the district. This multiple-select question provided 10 factors which were selected by the researcher after reviewing literature, as well as an option for participants to include their own factors. This question was designed to obtain the perspective of administrators on which factors were most likely to retain teachers in their district.

Fifty-two survey participants completed the multi-select question, selecting factors they deemed essential for teacher retention. Responses shown in Figure 4 show compensation, selected by 86.5% of participants, narrowly surpassing school climate, with an 84.6% selection rate, and receiving support from principals at 78.9%. Making up the top three factors selected by participants, these responses create a top tier of responses. A second tier of factors selected in participants top five include teachers being trusted as professionals (55.8%), the school schedule (48.1%), the benefits package (46.2%), and the presence of family and community support (40.4%). The lowest tier of factors included support from the school board, support from the central office, the school location, and the collective of other unique responses, each selected by less than 17.3% of total respondents as a top five-factor.
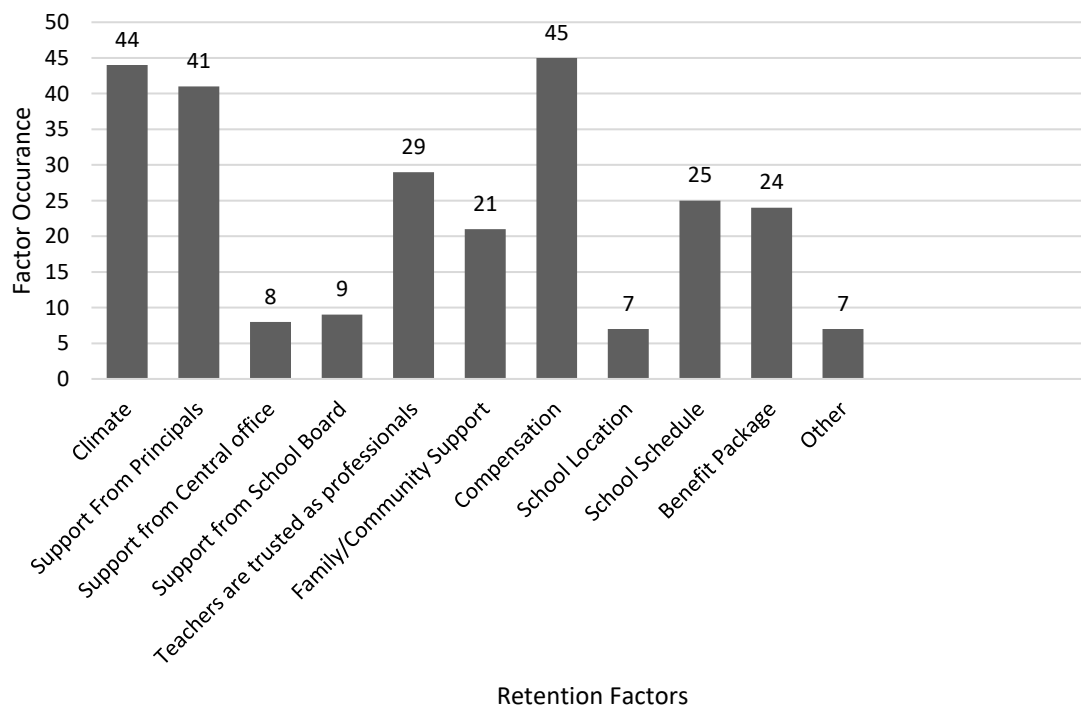
Figure 4

Top Factors for Teacher Retention

Note. N=62.

Survey Question Six

Survey participants were asked to select the top five factors they believe would cause teachers to accept employment in their district. This multiple-select question provided 10 factors the researcher selected after reviewing the literature, and an option for participants to include their own factors. The researcher designed this question to obtain administrators' perspectives on which factors were most likely to recruit teachers in their district.

Fifty-two of the participants completed the multi-select question by selecting the top five factors they believed help teacher recruitment in their district. Responses shown in Figure 5 show that a school's climate takes the top spot and was chosen by 86.5% of survey participants as the top five. The top three factors, including school climate show clear separation from the remainder of the factors. Rounding out the top three factors for recruitment chosen by participants are compensation, chosen by 78.9% of respondents, and support from principals, included by 69.2% of participants in the top five. Following these three factors are five factors with similar selection rates. Teachers being treated as professionals was selected by 44.2% of participants, while family/community support, school schedule, and benefit packages are all selections of 42.3% of participants, and the school's location rounding out the middle pack at a 40.3% selection rate. Lastly, of the provided factors are support from the central office and support from the school board, selected by 13.4% and 11.5%, respectively. Other factors, listed individually by administrators accounted for 26.92% of factor selections with regard to teacher recruitment.

Figure 5

Top Factors for Teacher Recruitment
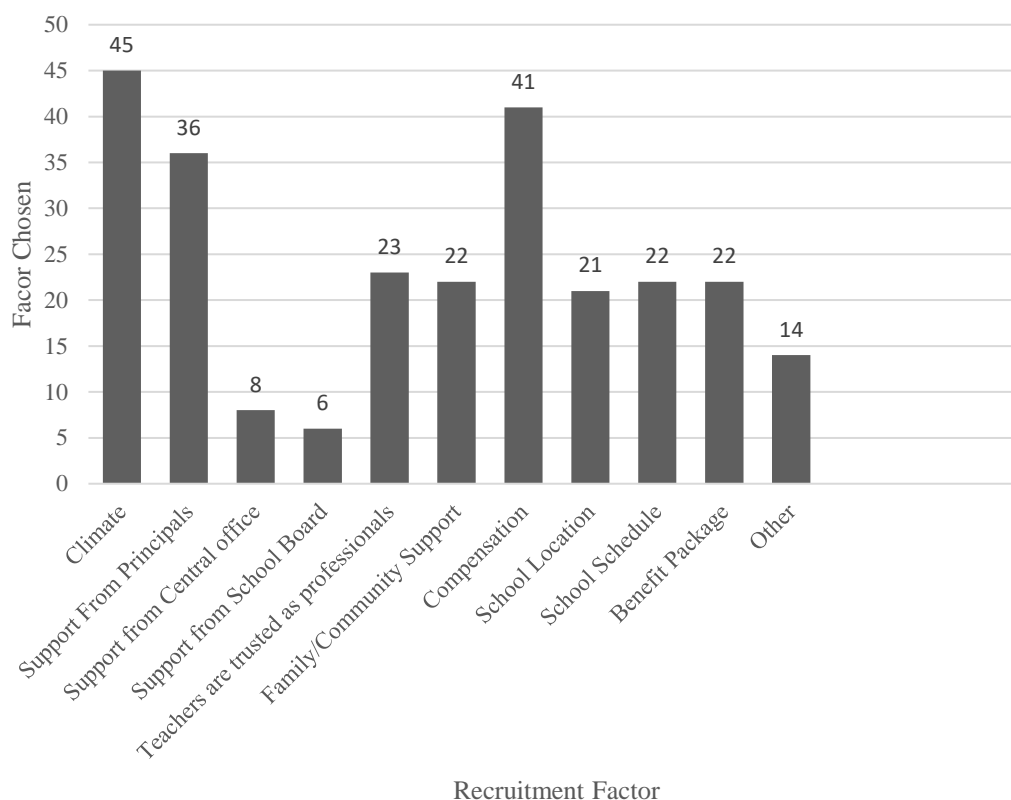
Note. N=62.

Survey Question Seven

Survey participants were asked to describe if they believe a four-day school week would have an impact on teacher recruitment and retention. Respondents were also asked to expand on why they feel the way they do. This open-ended question was designed to gather data on the current perceptions of the four-day school week on recruitment and retention in Missouri. Participant responses to the open-ended question were analyzed to identify prevailing themes. After the analysis of the responses, three themes were identified.

Theme One: Four-day school week's positive impact on recruitment and retention. Responses to the survey show the concept of a four-day school week is viewed

as having a positive impact on teacher recruitment and retention. Participant S19, a rural high school principal from southwest Missouri, commented on the impact of the four-day school week:

> Yes! I have seen the positive impacts that the four-day work week has on our teachers and school community. The State wants to argue that it is not best for kids, but they have not shown any data to prove that statement. My district cannot afford to pay teachers what other surrounding districts can, so we have to find other ways to hire and retain high-quality teachers. Offering teachers more time to spend with their family because of being employed at a four-day work week is one thing we can offer that other high-paying surrounding districts cannot.

Participant S22, a southwest Missouri high school principal, also noted the positive impact the four-day school week has had in their district and teachers' work-life balance, stating, "Our teachers love having the extra time with their families." Retention has also been affected in districts not adopting the four-day school week. Participant S30, from south central Missouri noted the impact, stating "Many districts around us have adopted a 4 day week and teachers are leaving for positions in those districts." Participant responses indicate the four-day school week is an effective strategy for recruitment and retention.

Theme Two: Minority perceive diminishing impact of the four-day week. Despite a large response from administrators stating they feel the four-day school week would be effective for recruitment and retention, there was a sizable minority of responses indicating either the opposite, or mixed opinions of the effectiveness of the scheduling model. Participant S37, an Assistant Superintendent from West Central Missouri, cited the complexity of teacher recruitment and retention, stating, "I believe

there is more to it than just a 4 or 5 day week." Participant S53, a high school principal

from urban Kansas City, noted, "I am not convinced that a four-day week would have the

impact many people think it would." Participant S51, an elementary principal from south

central Missouri noted, "because a 4 day school week is going to make the school day

longer," they believe that the modified schedule would not positively impact teacher

recruitment and retention.

In addition to those who felt the four-day school week would not be an effective

policy for the recruiting and retaining of high-quality teachers, six participants indicated

their view that the policy may have been effective in its infancy but may lose that

effectiveness as time passed. Participant S4, a rural seventh through 12th-grade

administrator from southwest Missouri, noted the four-day week would be effective

overall. However, the participant conceded "as more and more districts have adopted the

four-day school week in the past few years it is becoming less of a recruitment tool."

Participant S10, an elementary principal in a rural district with 15 years in administration,

echoed the sentiment, stating the decreased appeal of the four-day week as the levels of

policy adoption increase, adding "Small schools will have to find a different strategy" to

recruit and retain teachers effectively.

Theme Three: Concern for student learning, well-being, and behavior.

Without regard for the impact of the four-day school week on the recruitment of teachers,

seven participants questioned what impact the implementation of the four-day week had

on student learning and behavior. Participant S5, a sixth through 12th-grade principal

from Southeast Missouri, noted their belief that a four-day school week would help

recruit and retain teachers but added, "I am still not sure of the effect that it could have on

student achievement." Likewise, Participant S12 stated, "Yes," that the four-day school week schedule would help recruit and retain teachers but added simply, "It is not what is best for kids." Participant S60, an elementary principal from rural central Missouri stated, "No. Our teachers feel that our students already miss so many learning opportunities. Having the majority of them home, free to be on technology, which adds to sensory needs, isolation, and mental health issues, would make issues worse educationally," highlighting the concerns of teachers for the well-being of students attending schools with the four-day week.

Follow-up Interview Data Analysis

Following the collection and data analysis of the Administrator Perspectives on Teacher Recruitment and Retention During a Pandemic Survey, the researcher developed questions for and conducted follow-up interviews with eight administrators. These questions were designed to gather further information from participants utilizing various themes identified in the survey results.

Interview Question One

Interview participants were asked to identify what other factors, if any, they perceived to have a significant impact on the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers. This open-ended question was designed to gather data on the current perceptions of non-pandemic related factors impacting recruitment and retention. Participant responses to the open-ended question were analyzed to identify prevailing themes. After the analysis of the responses three themes were identified.

Theme One: Positive school culture key to recruitment and retention. Administrators participating in the follow-up interviews indicated the presence or lack of

a positive school culture and environment were key factors in the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers. Through their experiences and staff surveys, participants noted that teachers were more likely to stay when they felt supported by their administrators. Participant F1, a middle school principal from Northwest Missouri, noted a low turnover rate, while ensuring he was present in the classroom and providing support and quality feedback. Participant F2, a principal from a rural southwest Missouri elementary school, concurred, noting teachers' desire for collaboration and collegial support, which is often hard to come by in small districts and has impacted her ability to retain teachers.

Theme Two: External attitudes and perceptions impact recruitment and retention. External factors outside the control of the school itself were identified by participants as having significant impact on the recruitment and retention of teachers. Participant F8, an administrator with 15 years of experience, noted, "There's always been a little bit of a lack of respect for educators" and the current political climate "continues to impact that [respect]." Participants F3, F4, F6, and F8 all mentioned the frustration for teachers when working with parents who are increasingly apathetic, unsupportive, and uninvolved in their student's education. Participant F6, a middle school principal from southwest Missouri, stated, "There's just not a core family unit at home anymore, and it's really creating problems" for teachers having to meet an increasing number of non-educational needs for students. Additionally, participants cited an overarching lack of respect throughout society at large for teachers as professionals and the job which they are hired to do.

Theme Three: Compensation increases are essential for increased

recruitment and retention. Participants in the follow-up interviews indicated that

teacher compensation was a significant factor in teacher recruitment and retention. Six of

eight interviewees quickly listed salary and/or compensation as a whole as a factor that,

in their mind, hinders their ability to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. Participant

F8, a principal from southwest Missouri, noted that even given a starting pay of $38,000

per year, "you can make more money doing other things, and for a lot of people, that's

the major factor" when making decisions on rather to enter or remain in the field of

education. Participant F7, a superintendent and principal at a rural K-8 school in Central

Missouri, commented on the current education job market stating:

> It is a teacher's market, not a school market. The way it was when I graduated, it
>
> was hard to find a teaching job. Now they're everywhere and no one wants to do
>
> it because it doesn't pay very well.

Participant F5 also noted that many potential applicants resent private sector roles, which

often have greater pay and a more flexible schedule than a traditional public school

teaching position.

Interview Question Two

Interview participants were asked to describe any impact the political culture has

had on the recruitment and retention of teachers. Additionally, if negative impacts were

noted, participants were asked to identify strategies used to mitigate those impacts. This

open-ended question was designed to gather data on the current perceptions of the

political culture affecting recruitment and retention. Participant responses to the open-

ended question were analyzed to identify prevailing themes. After the analysis of the responses, two themes were identified.

   Theme One: Mixed views on the impact of political climate. The impact of the current political climate saw answers split down the middle, with four participants indicating the political climate was a significant factor, while the four others did not see it as a current factor for their districts. Participant F1 noted, the current climate seems to leave schools in a position where they are "dumbing down" behavior expectations in order to pacify parents, community members, and other stakeholders in the education world. Participant F1 continued, "we have to do what's best for kids" but if we are not also doing our "best for our adults, the teachers, we're not keeping the teachers around the kids." However, when asked if the political climate impacted teacher recruitment and retention Participant F6 stated, "I don't think so. No." Participant F6 continued, saying that they do feel it will likely be an issue in the future as social problems continue to get politicized and filter the country's school systems.

   Theme Two: Importance of transparency. Participants in the follow-up interviews indicated that transparency was a key factor in keeping the political climate from impacting the recruitment and retention of teachers and mitigating damage of the perceived impacts. Participant F2 noted that the school board of their small rural district is very conservative and transparent about what they will and will not tolerate within the schools. Participant F2 had not perceived any significant impact from the political climate but noted that this clarity from school leadership has effectively set the expectations within their district. Participant F4 also spoke on the transparency in their district noting the superintendent's role in inviting parents and community members with

concerns into the school to witness what is actually happening. Participant F4 continued to note that those concerned individuals often do not find what they think they will find and instead find teachers and other educators simply doing their job.

Interview Question Three

Interview participants were asked to describe the impact of the state minimum salary grants and Career Ladder program on recruitment and retention. This open-ended question was designed to gather data on the current perceptions specifically on the effectiveness of current programs in place to increase compensation for teachers in the state of Missouri. Participant responses to the open-ended question were analyzed to identify prevailing themes. After the analysis of the responses, two themes were identified.

Theme One: Actions by the Blue Ribbon Commission (2023) provide minimal aid for recruitment and retention in most districts. Despite acknowledging some benefits and slight positive impacts, participant perceptions of the actions taken in response to the Missouri Blue Ribbon Commission recommendations remained largely negative. Administrators agree that the programs do not do enough to raise teacher pay, especially in the current economic environment where the cost of living continues to rise. Participant F2, an elementary principal from southwest Missouri, noted that the state is trying to help, and that the minimum salary grants and career ladder will be implemented in their district. However, Participant F2 continued, "There are little schools without deep pockets, that [implementation of programs] can be strenuous for them," before stating, "Funding is key." Administrator participants also noted that the Career Ladder program is more pay, but it is more pay for more work, adding to the stress and workload of teachers

who are already overworked. Participant F7, ardently expressed their opinion of the measures taken to increase pay stating:

> It's asinine because it is not mitigating anything. It is a band-aid because the school districts, if we could afford to pay them that money to begin with, we would pay them. It is not the school districts that don't that don't believe that teachers deserve more money. It is the fact that I'm not a business. I can't generate profit. I have 'X' amount of dollars to deal with and you still have to provide me with the money to pay them that [increased wages from state programs].

Participant F7 continued to note on the Career Ladder program that if additional money were available, their goal would be to increase pay for the work teachers already do, not increase the workload to get a small bump in pay.

Theme Two: Minority find commission recommendations effective. Although a large majority of participants indicated that the state programs implemented after the Missouri Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations did not have a great impact and did not do enough to mitigate teacher pay as a concern in recruitment and retention, a small minority of participants felt that the program was a positive impact or indicated that pay was not a major impact in their school. Participant F6, a middle school principal with 16 years of administration experience, noted that the programs meet their district's needs. They additionally noted that other factors, including breaks, class size, and even the four-day school week, have significantly more impact than base salary. However, both Participants F4 and F5, who were not overly impressed by the impact of the state programs, indicated the process of seeking voter approval for tax levy adjustments had already been completed (F4) or was under consideration (F5).

Interview Question Four

Interview participants were asked if strategies, policies, or initiatives were in place in their district to help foster a culture of teacher support. This open-ended question was designed to gather data on the current practices used to develop a culture that values increasing teacher retention. Participant responses to the open-ended question were analyzed to identify prevailing themes. After the analysis of the responses four themes were identified.

Theme One: Importance of communication and relationships. Participants in the follow-up interviews indicated that effective communication and teacher trust were effective strategies for creating a supportive culture. Participant F3 noted a goal of frequent, transparent communication with teachers was key to retaining teachers in their roles. Responses indicated that communication was two-way, and administrators utilize strategies such as open-door policies, daily or weekly check-ins, and even frequent surveys to attain valuable feedback and concerns from the front-line teachers in the classroom. Participants F3 and F6 commented on the use of effective two-way communication to build relationships of trust between administrators and teachers, leading to teachers feeling valued and supported throughout the school year.

Theme Two: Valuing teachers as professionals is a key strategy for retention. Responses from participating administrators revealed that valuing the role of teacher as a professional was an effective strategy to retain high-quality teachers. Participant F8, an upper elementary principal in a rural district, commented on strategies in their district stating:

I think working hard to establish a culture that trusts professionals as

professionals, [and] that they have some autonomy within boundaries is a huge

piece. I talked to teachers in other districts, and I've worked in other districts

where teacher feel ultra-micromanaged all the time and they don't stick in those

types of cultures.

Participant F3 echoed the concept, noting that teachers appreciate having time to do their

jobs, including necessary activities, such as planning, grading, and collaborating.

According to these administrators, providing time for teachers to complete these activities

without micromanaging each moment proves to be an effective strategy.

Theme Three: Necessary supports include mental and physical well-being.

Another theme that emerged from participant responses surrounding a culture of support

was the creation of additional support for mental and physical well-being. A wide variety

of strategies designed to ensure teachers were supported both inside and outside of the

classroom were mentioned in responses by participating administrators. Participant F4

described using a Social Emotional Learning Survey that is administered at intervals

throughout the year, designed to ask about teacher well-being. This participant indicated

that data was used at the district and building level to measure the sense of belonging

while establishing trust, vulnerability, and respect; concepts that have helped retain

teachers in this school district. Participant F5 commented on the use of free or low-cost

clinics, wellness centers for staff and families, and even daycare reimbursement as

strategies currently used to support mental and physical well-being. Additionally,

Participant F4 desired to add on-call therapy services for staff members, but the cost for

the district was too great.

Theme Four: Classroom support is key for teacher satisfaction. Responses from participating administrators indicated that support inside the classroom and other educational-centered supports are an essential strategy for recruitment and retention. The supports offered are wide-ranging and often dependent on the administrator and the makeup of the staff. One strategy of classroom support mentioned by multiple administrators was behavioral support, including support with parent contact when addressing behavioral concerns. Participants F2 and F5 directly discussed hiring more academic coaches, such as content instructional coaches and behavioral coaches as an effective support strategy. Additionally, Participants F2 and F5 discussed utilizing dedicated teacher mentors as primary mentors, who could more efficiently provide peer support than a traditional peer mentor who also needed to maintain their classroom in addition to performing mandated peer mentoring of new teachers.

Summary

Chapter Four provided an analysis of data collected in the study, beginning with an overview of the purpose of the study. The first phase included qualitative data from the Perceptions of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teacher Recruitment and Retention Survey. Participant responses were analyzed, and themes were established from this response analysis. The study's second phase included conducting semi-structured follow-up interviews with original questions created to gain a more in-depth look at themes identified in the survey responses. The responses were analyzed and presented in Chapter Four, with responses to questions also being broken down by themes. Quotations from participant responses were used when appropriate to support the identified themes.

In Chapter Five, the findings and conclusions of the qualitative study of administrator perspectives on teacher recruitment and retention during and following the COVID-19 pandemic are presented. Following the findings, conclusions and implications for practice based on this research are presented. The final chapter concludes with recommendations for future research on teacher recruitment and retention following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Implications

Concerns of teacher shortages have been present in American schools for decades (Banghart, 2021; Eliassen & Anderson, 1945; García & Weiss, 2019; Mason & Matas, 2015; Pawlewicz, 2021; Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022; Sutcher et al., 2016) throughout a multitude of nationwide crises, including World War I and World War II. The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic was no exception, as national concerns of teacher shortages dominated headlines and the talk of the education field as educators fled the field, as pedagogy, expectations and governmental guidance and expectations (Chan et al., 2021) were shifting continuously. One study by Schmitt and deCourcy (2022) revealed that 45% of American public schools had at least one vacancy in January 2022 (p. 8).

The purpose of this qualitative research study was composed of two parts. The first purpose was to use survey and interview responses from administrators to determine what, if any impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on administrator abilities to recruit and retain high-quality teachers in Missouri Public Schools. The second purpose of the qualitative study was to examine the strategies used by administrators to recruit and retain high-quality teachers, while also examining the strategies administrators perceive to be effective going forward.

Chapter Five begins with a review of the findings and analysis presented in Chapter Four. Conclusions, suggested by the synthesis of the findings, analysis, and previously available literature are presented in Chapter Five. Potential focus areas for administrators, school boards, legislatures, and teacher preparation programs are explored as Implications for Practice. Recommendations for future research are also suggested. Chapter Five concludes with a final summary of the study.

Findings

Administrator perspectives on teacher recruitment and retention during and after the COVID-19 pandemic were gathered and analyzed. Four research questions were used to guide the study and were answered with the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The first phase of the study utilized The Perceptions of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teacher Retention and Recruitment Survey to collect qualitative data from a wide array of administrators in Missouri who had experience both before and after the pandemic. The qualitative data gathered in the survey was used to develop interview questions for the study's second phase. The second phase consisted of follow-up interviews designed to gain an additional administrators' perspective on themes identified in the analysis of the first phase. Data from both the survey and interviews were used to identify the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on recruiting and retaining teachers and strategies used by administrators for the recruitment and retention of teachers.

Research Question One

What perceived impact has the COVID-19 Pandemic had on teacher retention in Missouri Schools?

The analysis of the qualitative data revealed a notable change in the ability of administrators to retain high-quality teachers during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. While the pandemic was often cited in survey responses as a significant factor regarding these changes in attrition and retention rates of teachers, it was far from the only factor that received mention from participating administrators. A shift in attitudes and priorities from students, parents, community members, and other stakeholders towards teachers and education played an additional role in the administrator's abilities to retain highly

qualified teachers. Additionally, the ever-expanding workload and expectations combined with comparatively low pay to the private sector led many teachers to leave the field, realizing they could make more money in better conditions outside the field of education. These factors further impacted the participants' abilities to retain high-quality teachers in their schools.

Research Question Two

What perceived impact has the COVID-19 Pandemic had on teacher recruitment in Missouri Schools?

The analysis of the qualitative data revealed a notable change in the ability of administrators to effectively recruit high-quality teacher during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as with retention, the data revealed that COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on recruitment, but the current challenges in recruitment cannot be blamed on the pandemic alone. However, in recent years, school administrators noted expansive decreases in the number of applicants for open positions, notably in special education positions, which may only receive two or three applicants. Administrators expressed concerns stating that the current political climate and changing attitudes of parents, students, and the public at large may contribute to an increased polarization of the nation following the COVID-19 pandemic. Concerning recruitment, data also highlighted teachers' expanding roles on impacting administrators' perceptions. This expanding role is often viewed as causing potential candidates to choose jobs outside of education that may provide more income and a greater work-life balance. Additionally, data indicated that the initial implementation of the four-day school week helped increase recruitment in

those districts; however, the effect has dwindled as the number of districts implementing the schedule has increased across the state.

Research Question Three

What strategies have administrators found successful in the past when recruiting and retaining teachers?

Examination and analysis of qualitative data revealed numerous strategies being used by administrators in an effort to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. Participants indicated that building, maintaining, and promoting a school culture that is engaging and supportive were essential strategies to increase recruitment and retain teachers. Likewise, data indicated the schools that do not possess a supportive and engaging culture struggle with recruitment and retention. Secondly, the data highlighted competitive compensation and benefits packages, including tuition reimbursement, as a necessary strategy for effective recruitment and retention. Concerning recruitment, the qualitative data revealed that using traditional and modern advertising and building and utilizing relationships with local teacher educator programs.

Research Question Four

What strategies do administrators feel would be helpful in recruiting and retaining teachers going forward in the current environment?

Analysis of the qualitative data revealed a wide range of potential recruitment and retention strategies that administrators feel would be effective moving forward in the climate after the impacts of COVID-19. First, the data revealed administrators' perspectives that increases in compensation, including salaries, extra-duty pay, and benefits packages will be necessary for recruitment and retention going forward.

Qualitative data also highlighted a desire for an increased focus on health and well-being with programs, such as on-site clinics, staff wellness rooms, including gym access, and mental health services, all making the list of suggestions to improve teacher recruitment and retention going forward. While already used in many areas across the state, modified school schedules, such as the four-day school week continue to be viewed as an effective strategy for districts regarding recruiting and retaining teachers. Among all strategies revealed in the qualitative data, administrators cited the need to be creative with implementation of policies and initiatives by thinking outside the box and altering or reimagining previous strategies used in recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers.

Conclusions

The research questions guiding this study were developed to elicit administrator perspectives regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher recruitment and retention and gain administrators' perspectives on effective strategies used for recruitment and retention purposes. Mason and Matas (2015) proposed the Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Teacher Retention and Attrition. The theory focuses on the non-economic forms of capital: human, social, structural, and positive psychological capital. Investigating administrators' real-life experiences provided understanding and direction for other school administrators in their role as human capital managers (Shell, 2023) and provides perspective and potential strategies for use in effectively recruiting and retaining teachers in the current environment.

Research Question One

What perceived impact has the COVID-19 Pandemic had on teacher retention in Missouri Schools?

In line with current research (Banghart, 2021; Bill et al., 2022; García & Weiss, 2019; GEM Report, 2022; Henderson et al., 2021; Kamenetz, 2022; Marshall et al., 2022; Pawlewicz, 2021; Pinter, 2021; Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022), participant perspectives indicated that teacher retention has been significantly impacted during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. However, also consistent with previous research (Eginli, 2021; Kaiser & Thompson, 2021; Kamenetz, 2022; Marshall et al., 2022; Mason & Matas, 2015; Molyneux, 2021; Morton, 2021; Pearman & Lefever-Davis, 2012; Sutcher et al., 2016; Turner et al., 2018) in establishing teacher retention as a complex topic with many intricacies which may vary from district to district or even teacher to teacher. In addition, administrator perspectives shared in the study align closely with the theoretical framework utilized throughout the study. The four types of capital, human, social, structural, and positive psychological (Mason & Matas, 2015), all appeared as responses and perceptions of participating administrators.

Despite most participants agreeing that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their ability to retain high-quality teachers, they admitted it was not the sole factor responsible for those changes. Teacher shortages existed long before the pandemic (Banghart, 2021; Eliassen & Anderson, 1945; García & Weiss, 2019; Mason & Matas, 2015; Pawlewicz, 2021; Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022; Sutcher et al., 2016) and the factors that impact them are vast. The pandemic fundamentally changed many aspects of education (Education Week, 2020; Leech et al., 2022), but these changes were likely only a final nail in the proverbial coffin. The pandemic highlighted and exacerbated the complex web of conditions and factors affecting teachers' decisions to remain in the education field, which were already present and impactful long before the beginning of the pandemic.

Research Question Two

What perceived impact has the COVID-19 Pandemic had on teacher recruitment in Missouri Schools?

Similar to administrator perspectives on retention during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, participant responses align with current research on the subject (Banghart, 2021; Eliassen & Anderson, 1945; García & Weiss, 2019; Mason & Matas, 2015; Pawlewicz, 2021; Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022; Sutcher et al., 2016) that recruitment of teachers is an area concern for schools and administrators both before and after the pandemic. Additionally, also in line with current research (Eginli, 2021; Kaiser & Thompson, 2021; Kamenetz, 2022; Marshall et al., 2022; Mason & Matas, 2015; Molyneux, 2021; Morton, 2021; Pearman & Lefever-Davis, 2012; Sutcher et al., 2016; Turner et al., 2018) the recruitment of teachers is a complex issue, of which the COVID-19 pandemic is only a single factor of many impacting the issue. Likewise, the research data aligns with the Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Teacher Retention and Attrition (Mason & Matas, 2015) with factors encompassing human capital, social capital, structural capital, and positive psychological capital.

Recruiting high-quality teachers has long been a key aspect of the role of administrators (Shell, 2023). However, the role has taken new importance following the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Administrators are forced to fill positions from pools of fewer and fewer applicants as the number of graduates with education degrees decreases (Bill et al., 2022). In addition, those who complete their degrees in education question their ability to effectively teach in the public school system (Pearman & Lefever-Davis, 2012) and often choose not to enter the field at all (Cells et al., 2023;

Molyneux, 2021). In the current environment, administrators must get creative in marketing their positions and creating positions and a culture that aligns with the factors that impact applicants' decisions most (Mason & Matas, 2015) in accepting a teaching position.

Research Question Three

What strategies have administrators found successful in the past when recruiting and retaining teachers?

The process of effectively and efficiently recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers requires using many strategies. While the COVID-19 pandemic has since exacerbated concerns of a teacher shortage, the shortages have existed long before COVID (Banghart, 2021; Eliassen & Anderson, 1945; García & Weiss, 2019; Mason & Matas, 2015; Pawlewicz, 2021; Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022; Sutcher et al., 2016). Because of the long-standing concerns of teacher shortages, administrators have often developed extensive tools and strategies designed to help recruit and retain teachers. The strategies employed by administrators before the pandemic largely align with the Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Teacher Retention and Attrition established by Mason and Matas (2015), utilizing themes of human, social, structural capital, and seeking candidates with positive psychological capital, to recruit and retain high-quality teachers.

Research revealed that administrators used strategies that included the creation and marketing of developing a positive school culture in which teachers were supported in the classroom, a key component of structural capital. Likewise, structural capital (Mason & Matas, 2015) was the focus as administrators worked to offer the best compensation and benefits packages, as they found competitive compensation to be a

significant recruitment and retention strategy. Administrators utilized networking and relationships with teacher preparation programs to connect their district with teachers who possessed the skills, knowledge, and experiences necessary to be a high-quality teacher, a key component of the human capital and positive psychological capital aspects of the Four-Capital theory (Mason & Matas, 2015).

Research Question Four

What strategies do administrators feel would be helpful in recruiting and retaining teachers going forward in the current environment?

Participant perspectives on future strategies for recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers largely mirrored strategies used before the pandemic. However, suggestions for future strategies used the underlying framework (Mason & Matas, 2015) behind the strategies and expanded the strategies to encompass of the factors and issues teachers and teacher candidates consider when continuing or pursuing a teaching position. Desired increases in teacher pay and educational support systems to proper levels highlight the strategies utilizing the structural capital aspect of Mason and Matas' (2015) Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Retention and Attrition. Likewise, increased opportunities for networking and collaboration highlight social capital's role in revised strategies to meet the needs of the current environment. Data additionally revealed the expansion or creation of physical and mental wellness programs, including counseling, therapists, and even fitness centers, all as strategies in line with various aspects of the Four-Capital theory (Mason & Matas, 2015).

Implications for Practice

The findings of this qualitative study have significant implications for administrators fulfilling their duties of recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers in their districts. The first implication is that administrators can utilize themes and factors under the Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Teacher Retention and Attrition as a framework for developing strategies to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. The second implication is the actions that need to be taken by boards of education, legislators, and other policymakers to address aspects of structural capital, such as teacher compensation and school schedules. The final implication is the adjustments needed in teacher preparation programs and teacher support and professional development organizations to better prepare educators for success in the classroom.

Administrator Focus on Themes of the Four-Capital Theory

Participants in this study highlighted a myriad of factors impacting teacher recruitment and retention, which align with factors within the Four-Capital theory of teacher attrition and retention. Although administrator actions do not cover the entirety of the Four-Capital theory, factors primarily under the social capital and structural capital umbrellas fall squarely within the purview of administrators and their role as human resource managers. Administrators' abilities to develop and implement policies and procedures provide an excellent mechanism for change in strategies for recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers (Shell, 2023).

The development of a positive school culture that values and supports teachers was highlighted by participants in both the first and second phases of data collection for the study. Administrators can utilize a wide range of incentives and procedures to

implement a structure of formal and informal support for teachers (Beesley et al., 2008; Kaiser & Thompson, 2021; Shell, 2023). Strategies revealed in the study included structured mentoring opportunities, teacher autonomy, effective communication, purposeful professional development, and ample opportunities for collaboration and collegial support. Principals can combine their understanding of school, district, and regional culture with these factors valued by current and prospective teachers to develop a culture that retains the highest quality teachers available (Beesley et al., 2008).

In addition to factors impacting social capital, school administrators can play a pivotal role in consideration of factors supporting the structural capital theme of the Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Teacher Retention and Attrition. School administrators often directly impact the nature of a teacher's role in their school (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). Developing roles that provide teachers with proper resources and opportunities for collaboration and minimizes 'other duties as assigned,' is a significant way administrators can impact teacher recruitment and retention in their schools. Although not under the direct control of school principals, school administrators can effectively lobby for competitive compensation and benefit packages (Shell, 2023), which, according to the study's results have a significant impact on teacher recruitment and retention.

Policymaker Focus on Structural Capital

Compensation was one significant factor affecting the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers which was revealed in the study. While it is often in the scope of administrator duties to advocate for increases in compensation and benefits packages (Shell, 2023), the ability to implement such changes officially lies with local school

boards and lawmakers who have the power to allocate funds and vote increases into reality. Current steps by the Missouri Board of Education and local school boards, including the minimum salary grants and return of the career ladder program (Recruitment and retention, n.d.), were revealed by participants to be programs heading in the right direction to address compensation, but nonetheless did not curtail the impacts of the current state of teacher compensation in Missouri. To avoid further struggles in filling classroom positions with highly qualified teachers, legislators, through funding, and local school boards, through the adoption of salary schedules, should act to improve the compensation of teachers (Blue Ribbon Commission educator survey results summary, n.d.), bringing the public-sector teacher pay more in line with the private-sector counterparts.

Another factor revealed in the study that aligns with the structural Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Teacher Retention and Attrition (Mason & Matas, 2015) is the implementation of modified school schedules, such as the four-day school week. The number of school districts implementing the four-day week in Missouri has increased drastically over the last decade (Riley, 2022), leading many participants to a decreased impact on recruitment and retention over time. Although participants in this study perceived decreased impacts as the trend has become more popular, they still perceive the modified schedule as an important tool for school districts to utilize in recruiting and retaining teachers. While research revealed that administrators largely see the effect of general recruitment to be in decline, the lack of a four-day school week has impacted retention in many five-day school-week districts, where teachers and staff will often choose to leave for one of the many four-day school week districts. School districts

should evaluate their needs and consider the four-day school week as a potential tool for improved recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers, given the perceived positive impacts revealed in the literature (Turner et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2019).

Educator Preparation and Support Programs Focus on Human Capital

Both recent literature (Banghart, 2021; Eliassen & Anderson, 1945; García & Weiss, 2019; Mason & Matas, 2015; Pawlewicz, 2021; Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022; Sutcher et al., 2016) and study results indicate the job of the teacher has shifted drastically since the beginning of the pandemic. As the role of teachers evolves, teacher preparation programs and teacher support organizations offering continuing education and professional development must adapt to the changes to provide schools with high-quality candidates who are prepared to enter the classroom. Curating programs to train upcoming teachers to possess the necessary knowledge and skills are crucial elements of human capital, as established by Mason and Matas (2015). Proper preparation for teachers likewise helps develop positive psychological capital (Mason & Matas, 2015), addressing the final aspect of the Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Teacher Retention and Attrition. In curating such degrees and professional development programs developers should collaborate with active teachers, administrators, and other schools to learn first-hand what skills are needed for success in the current environment while staying current on research and best-practices made available through that current literature.

Recommendations for Future Research

This qualitative study focused on administrator perspectives on teacher recruitment and retention during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of

this study confirm previous research and add to the knowledge bank of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the factors and strategies of recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers. However, further research is needed to fully understand the many complexities of the current state of teacher recruitment and retention. Specifically, the examination of teacher perspectives on recruitment and retention, a qualitative examination of the factors influencing teacher recruitment and retention, and the impact of state policies on teacher recruitment and retention.

Teacher Perspectives on Recruitment and Retention

The role of school administrators as human capital managers (Shell, 2023) provides these school leaders with valuable experience in understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher retention and the strategies that have been effective in recruiting and retaining teachers. However, to gain a full perspective on the subject, it is essential to conduct research on the perspectives of teachers themselves. Although respected for their knowledge and skills, their perceptions are still just perceptions. Hearing the factors, reasonings, and potential solutions of those in the role of classroom teacher could provide a more complete picture of the current landscape of teaching, recruitment, and retention, including which strategies prove to be most effective.

Qualitative Examination of Recruitment and Retention Factors

The qualitative perspective on the myriad of factors influencing teacher recruitment and retention undoubtedly provides a personal touch to the complex subject matter. However, a qualitative approach to the factors influencing teachers' decisions to stay in their current positions, seek a different position, or leave the field altogether holds merit. A qualitative approach could examine the relationship between factors and identify

which factors have the most influence on teacher decisions. Additionally, qualitative data could be collected from teachers and administrators to compare and contrast the factors cited by both categories and determine if administrator views of the factors align with those of the teachers.

Impact of State and Local Policies on Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Schmitt and deCourcy (2022) suggested that not all teacher shortages are created equally and that shortages vary from state to state as well as based on the demographics of the school itself. Data from this study concurred that not all schools faced shortages and revealed the political climate and compensation both served as significant factors affecting teacher recruitment and retention. Given both the political climate and funding for compensation are often influenced or directly controlled by legislatures and school boards, examination of their policies seems a logical expansion of the current knowledge bank. Both qualitative and quantitative research could be conducted to determine which of these factors are impacting recruiting and retaining teachers and the level of impact the identified factors are producing.

Summary

The background of teacher shortages and the current state of the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers was presented in Chapter One. The Four-Capital Theoretical Model of Teacher Retention and Attrition (Mason & Matas, 2015), which examines the factors of teacher attrition and retention through the lens of human capital, social capital, structural capital, and positive psychological capital, was presented as the theoretical framework that will guide the study. This study's focus was to explore administrators' perceived impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the recruitment and

retention of high-quality teachers. Additionally, the researcher focused on the strategies used to recruit and retain high-quality teachers before the pandemic and administrators' perceptions of what strategies will be effective going forward in the post-pandemic environment.

Chapter Two presented a review of the literature surrounding the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers and the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and its immediate impacts on education. The history of teacher shortages was examined, beginning with shortages in the early 20th century and the United States' involvement in World War I and World War II and continuing to the modern day (Banghart, 2021; Eliassen & Anderson, 1945; García & Weiss, 2019; Mason & Matas, 2015; Pawlewicz, 2021; Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022; Sutcher et al., 2016). Additionally, the factors of teacher attrition and retention were examined in depth utilizing the four-capitol theory established by Mason and Matas (2015). Lastly, an overview of the increasingly popular GYO programs was presented as a significant tool in the recruitment of high-quality teachers.

Chapter Three presented the methodology of the study. A qualitative approach guided by the four research questions was established in Chapter One. The qualitative approach was selected to examine administrator perspectives on teacher recruitment and retention during and following the pandemic. Original qualitative instruments were developed in the form of a survey and follow-up interview questions to answer the research questions. Both the survey data from the first phase and the interview data from second phase were used to gain a deeper understanding of the realities of teacher recruitment and retention following the pandemic.

After the data were collected, analysis occurred and was presented in Chapter Four. First, the qualitative data from administrator responses to The Perceptions of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teacher Retention and Recruitment Survey were analyzed and presented using themes. Second, the qualitative data from administrator responses in the follow-up interviews were analyzed and presented using themes.

Chapter Five presented a review of the results, as well as well as key findings and conclusions of the qualitative study. Administrators identified impacts since the COVID-19 pandemic and strategies used in the recruitment and retention of teachers, aligning with the theoretical framework guiding this study. Implications for practice were presented, identifying actions that can be taken by administrators, legislative bodies, and school boards, as well as teacher preparation programs. Lastly, recommendations for future research were presented, including the research of teacher perspectives, the use of a qualitative methodology, and research on the impact of state and local policies on teacher recruitment and retention.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

BG1. Are you an active Elementary or Secondary Administrator in the State of

Missouri?

a. Yes

b. No

BG2. Were you an active Elementary or Secondary Administrator during or

prior to the 2019-2020 school year?

a. Yes

b. No

BG3. Which of the following best describes your current role?

a. Principal

b. Assistant Principal

c. Superintendent

d. Assistant Superintendent

e. Other (Please Specify)

BG4. Which grade levels are present in your budling/under your administration?

a. Pre-Kindergarten/Early Childhood Education

b. Kindergarten

c. 1

d. 2

e. 3

f. 4

g. 5

h. 6

i. 7

j. 8

k. 9

l. 10

m. 11

n. 12

BG5. Which of the following describes your school location?

a. Rural

b. Suburban

c. Urban

d. Other

BG6. To which region of the state does your school belong?

a. St. Louis Region

b. Kansas City Region

c. Southwest Region

d. Central Region

e. Southeast Region

f. West Central Region

g. South Central Region

h. Northwest Region

i. Northeast Region

    j.   I'm Not Sure

BG7.   How many years have you spent……..?

    a.   In the field of education

    b.   In administration

    c.   In your current role

1. What impact, if any, has the COVID-19 pandemic had on the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers in your school?

2. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, what strategies were in place in your district to recruit and retain high-quality teachers and staff? Do you consider these to be effective strategies? Why or why not?

3. Following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, how have the strategies used to recruit and retain high-quality teachers and staff been retained, revised, or replaced? What factors were considered in the decision making process?

4. If budget were not a factor, what strategies would you like to implement to recruit and retain high-quality teachers and staff? Why do you feel these strategies would be effective?

5. What are the top 5 factors that you believe would make teachers stay in your district?

    a.   Climate/Culture

    b.   Support from Principals

    c.   Support from Central Office

    d.   Support from School Board

    e.   Teachers are trusted as professionals

    f.   Family/Community Support

    g.   Compensation

        School Location

    h.   School Schedule (4-day, School Hours, Breaks, etc.)

    i.   Benefit Package (PTO, Insurance, etc.)

    j.   Other (Please Specify)

6. What are the top 5 factors that you believe would make teachers seek employment in your district?

    a.   Climate/Culture

    b.   Support from Principals

    c.   Support from Central Office

    d.   Support from School Board

    e.   Teachers are trusted as professionals

    f.   Family/Community Support

    g.   Compensation

        School Location

    h.   School Schedule (4-day, School Hours, Breaks, etc.)

    i.   Benefit Package (PTO, Insurance, etc.)

    j.   Other (Please Specify)

7. In the post-COVID-19 environment do you believe that a 4-day school week would help recruit and retain high-quality teachers? Why or why not?

Appendix B

Preliminary Follow-up Interview Questions

1. Data collected from the survey indicated most administrators noted impacts on teacher recruitment and retention during and following the pandemic. However, not all of those administrators identified the cause as solely the pandemic. What other factors, if any, do you feel have impacted recruitment and retention?

2. One additional factor mentioned by administrators in the survey was the current political climate and seemingly constant attacks of public education, which according to literature has had a negative impact on teacher satisfaction and attrition. Do you see the political climate as an issue that affects recruitment and retention? If so, what strategies are being used to mitigate any negative impacts?

3. Compensation is often cited as a significant factor in the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers. The Missouri Blue Ribbon Commission identified raising pay as a top priority, and programs such as the minimum salary grants and Career Ladder have been made available across the state. What impact do you feel these programs have? Does this do enough to meet the concerns of compensation as it pertains to the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers?

4. What strategies, policies, or initiates do you and/or your district have in place to create a culture of teacher support? If you could make any changes, would those be and why?

Appendix C

Apr 18, 2023, 2:47:15 PM CDT

RE:
IRB-23-83: Initial - Administrator Perspectives on Techer Recruitment and
Retention During a Pandemic

Dear Matthew Carr,

The study, Administrator Perspectives on Techer Recruitment and Retention
During a Pandemic, has been Approved as Exempt.

Category: Category 2.(i). 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).
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that
the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or
through identifiers linked to the subjects.

The submission was approved on April 18, 2023.

Here are the findings:

Regulatory Determinations

- This study has been determined to be minimal risk because the research
  is not obtaining data considered sensitive information or performing
  interventions posing harm greater than those ordinarily encountered in
  daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological
  examinations or tests.

Sincerely,
Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board

Appendix D

Dear Prospective Participants,

My name is Matthew Carr, and I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program for Educational Administration at Lindenwood University. The focus of my dissertation research is to determine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers in Missouri Public Schools.

I have obtained your email address from the Missouri Comprehensive Data System's Missouri School Directory. To conduct my research, I would invite any active administrators who were also active administrators prior to the 2020-2021 school year to participate in the completion of an online Recruitment and Retention Survey found at the following link: xxxxxxxxx. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

Additionally, I may look to conduct a limited number of follow-up interviews to discuss the impact more in depth. These potential follow-up interviews will take place in a virtual meeting space using Zoom. The purpose of the follow-up interviews will be to explore the impact of the pandemic on the recruitment and retention of teachers more in depth. If you are interested in a potential follow-up interview, please provide your name and contact information at the link near the end of the survey.

All information obtained through this research will be presented anonymously and will be coded to maintain the privacy of all individual participants. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and subjects may withdraw at any time. Please see the Informed Consent notice attached for further information.
I would like to thank you for supporting this study. It is my hope the results of the study will provide valuable knowledge and resources for administrators in recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers following the COVID-19 Pandemic. If you have any questions regarding this process, please do not hesitate to contact me at (417) 527-6343 or via email at mc818@lindenwood.edu, or Dr. Tanya Vest via email at tvest@lindenwood.edu.

Follow this link to the Survey:
xxxxxxxxxx
Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
xxxxxxxxxx
Follow the link to opt out of future emails:
xxxxxxxxxx

Sincerely,
Matthew Carr

Appendix E

LINDENWOOD

Research Information Sheet

You are being asked to participate in a research study. We are doing this study to better understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher retention and recruitment. During this study you will be asked to respond to a survey regarding your perceptions of the impact the COVID-19 has had on teacher recruitment and retention. You will have the option to agree to a follow-up interview where the themes of the survey will be explored further. It will take about 20 minutes to complete this study.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time.

There are no risks from participating in this project. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

We will not collect any data which may identify you.

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. We do not intend to include information that could identify you in any publication or presentation. Any information we collect will be stored by the researcher in a secure location. The only people who will be able to see your data are: members of the research team, qualified staff of Lindenwood University, representatives of state or federal agencies.

Who can I contact with questions?

If you have concerns or complaints about this project, please use the following contact information:

Matthew Carr, Student Researcher | mc818@lindenwood.edu

Dr. Tanya Vest, Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership | tvest@lindenwood.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or concerns about the project and wish to talk to someone outside the research team, you can contact Michael Leary (Director - Institutional Review Board) at 636-949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu.

Appendix F

LINDENWOOD

Research Study Consent Form

Administrator Perspectives on Teacher Recruitment and Retention During a
Pandemic

You are asked to participate in a research study being conducted by Matthew
Carr under the guidance of Dr. Tanya Vest at Lindenwood University. Being in a
research study is voluntary, and you are free to stop at any time. Before you
choose to participate, you are free to discuss this research study with family,
friends, or a physician. Do not feel like you must join this study until all of your
questions or concerns are answered. If you decide to participate, you will be
asked to sign this form.

Why is this research being conducted?

We are doing this study to better understand the impact of the COVID-19
pandemic on teacher retention and recruitment. We will be asking about [insert
number of participants] other people to answer these questions.

What am I being asked to do?

During this study you will be asked to respond to a survey regarding your
perceptions of the impact the COVID-19 has had on teacher recruitment and
retention. You will have the option to agree to a follow-up interview where the
themes of the survey will be explored further.

How long will I be in this study?

The survey should take around 20 minutes to complete. Voluntary follow-up
interviews will vary but should last around 20 to 30 minutes. All parts of the study
will be concluding in the Spring Semester of 2023.

What are the risks of this study?

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will be collecting data that could identify you such as email addresses. Every
effort will be made to keep your information secure. Only members of the
research team will be able to see any data that may identify you.

What are the benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefits for completing this survey. We hope what we learn may benefit other people in the future.

Will I receive any compensation?

There will be no compensation to participate in this research.

What if I do not choose to participate in this research?

It is always your choice to participate in this study. You may withdraw at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions or perform tasks that make you uncomfortable. If you decide to withdraw, you will not receive any penalty or loss of benefits. If you would like to withdraw from a study, please use the contact information found at the end of this form.

What if new information becomes available about the study?

During the course of this study, we may find information that could be important to you and your decision to participate in this research. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

How will you keep my information private?

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. We do not intend to include information that could identify you in any publication or presentation. Any information we collect will be stored by the researcher in a secure location. The only people who will be able to see your data are: members of the research team, qualified staff of Lindenwood University, representatives of state or federal agencies.

How can I withdraw from this study?

Notify the research team immediately if you would like to withdraw from this research study.

Who can I contact with questions or concerns?

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or concerns about the study, or if you feel under any pressure to enroll or to continue to participate in this study, you may contact the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board at (636) 949-4155 or irb@lindenwood.edu. You can contact the researcher, Matthew Carr directly at 417-527-6343 or mc818@lindenwood.edu You may also contact Dr. Tanya Vest by email at tvest@lindenwood.edu.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

Vitae

Matthew A. Carr completed his undergraduate studies in Management while attending Missouri State University in May of 2015. He furthered his education by completing a post-baccalaureate teacher preparation program at Western Governors University in December 2016. After beginning his career in education, Matthew received a Master of Arts in School Administration from Lindenwood University in December 2019.

Matthew began teaching at Southwest R-V School District in 2017 where he taught seventh and eighth grade mathematics. In 2018, Matthew accepted a position at his alma mater, Galena R-II School District to teach secondary mathematics. In addition to teaching at Galena, Matthew has coached Scholar Bowl, Cross Country, and Track & Field while also sponsoring the Galena High School Student Council.

Currently, Matthew has professional affiliations with the Missouri State Teachers Association, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the Missouri Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the Missouri Academic Coaches Association, and the Missouri Cross Country and Track & Field Coaches Association.