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An Exploration of Public High School Teacher Dispositional Beliefs Regarding Teaching
in a National Pandemic Environment: A Case Study

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Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Public Administration

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Division of Online and Professional Studies

Department of Public Administration

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An Exploration of Public High School Teacher Dispositional Beliefs Regarding Teaching
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ABSTRACT

Understanding the beliefs that influence secondary public school teachers' decisions to stay in the profession presents areas of public policy concern for all stakeholders. The negative effect on taxpayers is an estimated \$8 billion annually. The COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in an unprecedented level of professional frustration for public secondary school teachers. An original desire to understand the beliefs that influence teacher attrition within two secondary public high schools in Southern California morphed into an eagerness to understand how beliefs undergird decisions to stay while in a pandemic. Methodology approaches for qualitative studies include questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. The effectiveness of these approaches was challenged as COVID-19 impacted our national education system and affected teachers both personally and professionally. The account of this researcher's exploration into the uncharted waters of the utilization of these methods during a pandemic was captured to glean answers to why teachers may decide to stay in the profession.

Keywords: Attrition, Beliefs, Methodology, Qualitative, Focus Groups, COVID-19

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Enjoy!

Dina Marie Schon M.C.C.P. LMFT

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DEDICATION

To my children Miles, Sarah, Tommie, Clemens, and Giovanni, my constant reminders of love, meaning, and purpose. I hope this milestone in my life becomes a benchmark for what is possible in your own lives. Dream big, work hard, surround yourselves with supportive loved ones, and live your lives with integrity. I believe in you all; you are my forever loves.

Mama

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in an unprecedented level of professional frustration for public secondary school teachers. Understanding the beliefs that influence secondary public school teachers' decisions to stay in the profession presents areas of public policy concern and more importantly, opportunity for all stakeholders. The negative effect on taxpayers annually of teachers' decisions to not stay in the profession is an estimated \$8 billion because of teacher replacement and district costs (Ware, 2016). Literature is sparse in this area of inquiry, yet understanding why teachers stay holds profound significance. Furthermore, identifying the potential underlying belief systems of teachers as to why they stay in the vocation may lead policy decision makers to effective support programs that keep our educators where they belong, in our classrooms.

Teachers and Public Policy

The topic of public education and the ways to improve policymaking related to teacher attrition has been a subject of political debate at local, state, and federal levels for decades, particularly since the 1983 release of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform Report* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). In tackling the problem of determining beliefs influencing whether a teacher stays, factors such as those regarding school leadership, teacher participation, salary levels, and organizational environments have become focal points. Teachers' decisions to stay in their positions have been viewed from several theories, most of which focus on function-based tasks and not on inter- and intrapersonal skills (Cheng, 1994; Lashway, 2001; Marzano et al., 2005; Mendez-Morse, 1992).

Following the No Child Left behind Act of 2001, interest from all stakeholders created a laser-focused intention toward developing public policy that was reflective of accountability-based measurement of representation and legitimacy. It considered policy decisions that operated within the boundaries of educational reform for all communities at local and national levels (No Child Left Behind, 2003). A crucial area of focus resulting from this policy was on teacher quality, which has been discussed by studying decisions to stay from within-year occurrences (Louis et al., 2010). The importance of maintaining quality teachers within secondary public schools (high schools) is without question an imperative for public policy decision makers as the losses to all stakeholders are significant.

A recent study suggested that today's teacher shortage crisis is in large part caused by attrition rates, which further intensifies the snowball effect and impact the loss of teachers has on society as well as its implications on public policymaking. The study suggested that an estimated two thirds of teachers make the decision to not stay in their jobs before they reach the age of retirement (Heubeck, 2020c).

COVID-19 Pandemic

SARS-CoV-2, more commonly known as COVID-19 is a virus that reportedly originated in Wuhan China in 2019 and quickly spread worldwide. It is multisymptomatic and often characterized by viral pneumonia-like congestion, shortness of breath, and chest pain. In addition to these symptoms, the medical community lists 20 others, which has made diagnosis of this disease as challenging as its cure (World Health Organization [WHO], n.d.). Testing for COVID-19 has been slow to build and riddled with concerns over reliability. COVID-19 has proven to be overwhelming on a global

level and has brought the world as we know it to a halt. Mandated isolation and quarantines, mask wearing, and temperature taking have become the norm.

The U.S. education system has been shaken to its core in responding to the need to educate its youth in safe and effective environments. At the same time, the safety and well-being of our teachers also had to be considered. In doing so, teachers and students were removed from an in-person teaching environment and onto a Zoom/computer environment. Understanding the full impact this necessity will have on student achievement, teacher decisions to stay, and society in general is yet to be determined.

Problem Statement

Teacher attrition is a decades-old problem historically in the United States that has a negative effect on taxpayers with an estimated cost of \$8 billion annually (Ware, 2016). Understanding the beliefs that influence teachers' decisions to stay in the profession present areas of concern for all stakeholders. The national pandemic forced the U.S. education system to develop educational platforms for continuing to educate our youth in a safe and effective manner in out-of-school environments. At the same time, the safety and well-being of our teachers also had to be considered. In doing so, teachers and students were removed from an in-person teaching environment and onto a Zoom/computer environment. Understanding the full impact this necessity will have on student achievement, teacher decisions to stay in the profession, and society in general is yet to be determined. At the same time, although dispositional attributions may be key factors in why teachers stay in the profession, the pandemic introduced the possibility for situational attributions to also impact such decisions.

Purpose Statement

This study intended to explore, understand, and potentially reveal beliefs that influence secondary public school teachers' decisions to stay in their profession. From an attribution theory perspective, this research explored how dispositional attributions impacted what teachers expected the profession would provide for them and helped to understand why they stay. An examination of the data collected related to focus group participation and survey completion of the study participants explored beliefs and personal interpretations as they related to teacher attrition.

It was the hope of this researcher that the findings from this study would add meaningful context to the ongoing discussion related to teacher attrition from an attributional beliefs system perspective and offer policy decision makers viable information necessary to support teacher retention. In terms of goal development, this study presents information that may be integral to tool building for more efficient processes in the implementation of teacher acquisition, retention, and needed support programs from a public administration perspective related to teacher expectations surrounding individual belief systems that influence the decision to stay in the profession. A major aim of the study was to identify dispositional attribution themes based upon participant responses, which will guide professional and personal development. The results of this study are intended to support teachers, administrators, and school districts by providing insight into interventions that offer educators sustainable benefits that result in long-term employment adherence, thus reducing the costly and disruptive consequences of attrition.

As the national pandemic changed the research landscape, an ancillary question was developed to explore and understand how measuring teacher attrition with appropriate methodology instruments during COVID-19 quarantine stands up against the ambiguous educational environment secondary public school teachers were experiencing. Specifically, this ancillary research explored the effectiveness of surveys and focus group instruments and discussed efforts that spanned 6 months of attempted contact with teachers during a pandemic. Communication with teachers began in July of 2020 with a qualitative approach focusing on secondary public school teachers (high school) from two Southern California districts using a survey and focus groups designed to explore their experiences and the beliefs contributing to their decisions to stay in their profession. Qualitative data were to be gathered from a series of focus groups with the participant population as well as from an online survey that was set up on Survey Gizmo (now named Alchemer). It was the hope of this researcher that the findings from this study would add meaningful context to the ongoing research related to teacher attrition and offer policy decision makers viable information necessary to support teacher retention. The pandemic, however, changed the landscape of use and dynamics of integrity that the methodological instruments ordinarily held and instead led this researcher on another course, which was to understand what instruments if any would be more appropriate to measure teacher attrition during a pandemic.

Original Research Question

The original research question for this study was “What belief(s) is(are) perceived to be attributed to influencing a high school teacher’s decision to stay in the teaching profession?”

Ancillary Research Question

The ancillary research question for this case study was “What methodological research approach was most effective in exploring teacher dispositional beliefs at Chaffey Joint Union High School and Chino Valley school districts during a pandemic?”

Attribution Theory

A qualitative research design provided the opportunity for commencing data collection that explored the extent in which *attribution theory* undergirds a teacher’s decision to remain in the profession. Extensive research has been conducted on the issue of teacher attrition over the last few decades; however, a teacher’s original expectations related to belief systems influencing the decision to stay in the profession has not been considered. Attribution theory explains participant beliefs, views, and experiences in a manner that serves to understand why a behavior occurs from an evaluative perspective that drives decision-making. Introduced by Heider (1958), behavior (to stay) is influenced by one’s capacity and motivation and does not exist without these two aspects. Further, the beliefs that influence what an individual attributes to outcomes are either caused by external issues that are situational or internal ones that are dispositional. In consideration of teacher attrition and the beliefs that lead educators to stay in their profession, an investigation into participant perceptions (dispositional) was central to understanding what attributed to these decisions.

Significance of the Problem

Understanding the belief systems that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in the profession has a far reaching and profound impact on communities in terms of achieving maximum benefits from public education. Identifying these factors that influence

secondary public school teachers' decisions to stay in their profession is imperative in helping to diminish the attrition policy problem, which is costly for all stakeholders. Special education teacher attrition rates are among the highest and are suggested to be an estimated 46%. General education teacher attrition rates are reported to be 10% to 20% depending upon the state (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017a). In the United States, stakeholders absorb up to \$8 billion annually in costs associated with teacher attrition (Ware, 2016). The American educational system continues to struggle with the problem of teacher retention. It is estimated that approximately 30% of new teachers abandon their profession within 5 years, with an increase to 50% in high-poverty communities (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). The historical problem of teacher attrition is a policy failure that extends into communities and affects them negatively in terms of increased education costs and decreases in student achievement, especially in urban areas (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017a).

Definitions

Attribution theory. Explains causes for an event or behavior through individual perceptions (Heider, 1958).

Attrition. According to the New Oxford American Dictionary (2001), attrition is the action or process of gradually reducing something.

Beliefs (2016). The tenets and or convictions that individuals within a society intrinsically hold to be true and on which they rely for decision-making (McKersie, 2016).

COVID-19 pandemic. An infectious disease caused by a newly and seemingly mutated coronavirus that is highly contagious and has spread throughout the world (WHO, n.d.).

Focus group. Research measurement instrument that enables a researcher to engage participants in a discussion related to the topic being studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Policy decisions. Decisions related to public laws and guidelines that impact citizens and in the context of this study, teachers (Congdon et al., 2011).

Qualitative study. Research that aims to understand and explore the common richness of the lived experiences within a particular participation group and is interpretive in nature (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Secondary public school. In California, secondary public school is defined as public high school that follows primary education (“Secondary School,” 2021).

Stakeholders. This research considers any individual who can affect or be affected by organizational standards and policy changes to be stakeholders (Corporate Finance Institute, n.d.).

Surveys. Stand-alone tools that are administered to study participants and capture demographic data and information specific to researcher inquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Zoom fatigue. A feeling of exhaustion following extended participation in virtual meetings (Tech Target Contributor, n.d.).

Organization of the Study

This qualitative study explored the beliefs of teachers in terms of their influence on decisions related to staying in the education profession. Methodology used focus group and survey instruments during a pandemic to explore teachers' experiences related to why they may expect to stay in the profession. The literature review presents information regarding why teachers stay in the profession and a historical background on teacher attrition. The aim of this research was the examination and exploration of the beliefs teachers have related to their vocation and how they relate to teacher decisions to stay in the classroom. A methodology section details the qualifications of the researcher, original study research design, population, sample size and characteristics, instruments used, and limitations. The methodology of gathering data through focus groups and surveys was driven by the goal of having increased credibility and dependability, a deeper sense of the individual experience of teachers, and the opportunity to focus on the information that may otherwise have been lost to the researcher (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). A results section is followed by the study conclusion and recommendations for future research. A complete list of references is provided, and an appendix includes a thorough list of all documentation relied upon in this research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding the beliefs that influence secondary public school teachers' decisions to stay in the profession presents areas of public policy concern and more importantly, opportunity for all stakeholders. The negative effect on taxpayers annually of teachers' decisions not to stay in the profession is an estimated \$8 billion because of teacher replacement and district costs (Ware, 2016). Literature is sparse in this area of inquiry, yet understanding why teachers stay as opposed to leave holds profound significance. Furthermore, identifying the potential underlying belief systems of teachers as to why they stay in the vocation may lead policy decision makers to effective support programs that keep educators where they belong, in their classrooms.

Dispositional Beliefs and Teachers

Dispositional beliefs are entrenched in human consciousness and are truths that may not have actual experiential proof of being reality based. Instead, dispositional attributions (beliefs) become judgments that individuals form and rely upon to make decisions in their lives. Unlike core beliefs that individuals have confirmed through experience, dispositional beliefs may be more easily altered according to research conducted by Indiana State University (2016). Individuals seek to understand why they behave as they do and because of that identified need try to make sense out of the relationship between actions and beliefs. These intrinsic judgments both exist and develop as individuals gather information. Dispositional beliefs are intrinsic and seek to explain a person's choices and behaviors in a manner that is related to a personal characteristic rather than an external factor (situational). The motives and beliefs of

individuals are viewed as the explanation for why they choose to do what they do and make the choices they make (McLeod, 2012).

The significance of beliefs directly affects behavior outcomes and therefore is crucial to understand when striving to determine why teachers choose to stay in the teaching profession. Research suggests that individuals with common values and beliefs get along better than those with conflicting ones, which may impact workplace harmony. Identifying beliefs commonly held by individuals allows leadership the opportunity to tailor support in the workplace in a way that may influence motivation and engagement in tasks as well as in retention. Intrinsic belief is expressed in behaviors, either directly or indirectly, and is central to decision-making (Mohan, 2018).

People's beliefs are formed from an array of stimuli, among them are their cultural traditions, religiosity, education, peer influencers, education, and heroes. These beliefs help to form individuals' values and attitudes, which together with beliefs drive their behavior (Immigration Advisers Authority [IAA], 2014). Decision-making is often the result of an individual making inferences related to an issue that are inspired by that individual's underlying belief system. The meaning derived from inferential thinking, which is belief-based, results in the individual forming conclusions on an issue and then acting on them via decision-making. Simply put, people's beliefs drive their thoughts, their thoughts inspire their feelings, and their feelings are expressed in their behaviors (McKersie, 2016).

There is no reason to suggest that belief mechanisms in teachers are any different than in all other individuals as related to decision-making. A study by Griffith and Groulx (2014) found that teachers in their study taught to their beliefs compared to

simply complying with mandated requirements. The finding suggested that despite outside influence, what was personally believed carried more importance to the individual teachers, so much so that they risked losing their position. This study illustrates the importance of belief systems that are intrinsic to teachers not only as they relate to how they teach but also regarding the decisions they make related to teaching.

Among mathematics teachers (Erens & Eichler, 2014) and reading teachers (Maloch et al., 2003), teacher belief systems influence not only how they deliver curriculum but also the personal understanding of why they care about educating students. Maloch et al. (2003) concluded that much of what teachers believe about the profession comes from preservice training and the education of the teachers. These data suggested that teacher preparation is essential in forming individual teacher perceptions as to what the vocation involves to best support teacher effectiveness and longevity in the position. Erens and Eichler's (2014) study indicated a direct relationship between teacher beliefs and goals for mathematics teachers. Such a relationship is integral to understand a teacher's sense of fulfillment as this information may provide further suggestions regarding teacher decisions to stay in the vocation.

In a study that compared multiple countries ($N = 23$) related to teacher beliefs, practices, and attitudes and how they relate to job satisfaction, Norwegian teachers scored considerably higher in relation to other countries in regard to believing they were effective teachers, which resulted in greater job satisfaction. Understanding teacher beliefs resulted in the development of improved educational processes and was more success in managing teacher conflict and challenges. The designed framework of understanding teacher beliefs about teaching established them as the foundation to

educator practices, which resulted in outcomes for classroom instruction and environment, professional activities, and job satisfaction (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD], 2009).

Why Teachers Stay

The literature is limited in terms of understanding why teachers stay in their jobs. From a dispositional attribution perspective, there seems to not be a consensus as to what belief systems create an underlying acknowledgement on the part of educators to remain in their vocation, thus resulting in a crisis within American communities related to teacher loss.

In 2019, Riano suggested that a teacher's decision to stay is related to satisfaction levels, which reflected how these educators believed their opinion to matter. The pressing need to meet testing standards was named as the reason educators struggled to remain connected to students in a positive manner, leaving both feeling not emotionally invested in the other—teachers feeling as if they do not make a difference in the lives of their students and students believing their teachers do not care to be that difference. The desire to make a difference in students' lives continues to be a motivating force behind why teachers stay in the vocation.

Literature is abundant in discussing teacher turnover statistics from a negative loss perspective. Flipping that viewpoint, although many teachers are leaving their jobs (an estimated 40 to 50%), 50 to 60% are staying. Studies suggest that a key factor in teacher retention is supporting the ability for educators to positively impact students in a manner that creates a sense of personal and professional autonomy fueled by decision-

making power, mentoring programs, and effective communication and respect from administration (Riggs, 2013).

Activist Nancy Bailey (2016) presented as the internal belief of teachers that despite challenging working conditions and a salary that is not desirable, staying and standing up for students is what the professional mindset of an educator is, and how this construct frames the decision to stay. In her research she suggested that teachers see themselves as key individuals in the lives of children and the adults who students will rely upon when life gets troublesome.

While exploring why teachers within urban communities stay in their jobs, Clarksen (2014) utilized a qualitative methodology to capture insight into the lived experiences of the teachers in her study as it related the intrinsic and extrinsic factors leading them to such decisions. Among the intrinsic influencers were the unique attributions (beliefs) teachers held, and the extrinsic influences were related to situational factors that impacted them. The author of this study found and suggested that the intrinsic factors such as “I make a difference in the lives of my students” were the prime motivating factors in the decision to stay in the teaching vocation (p. 92).

Why Teachers Stay During a Pandemic

Riley (2020) presented a follow-up with nine teachers who had previously discussed the situational issues they faced in teaching that created obstacles on the job yet were not enough of motivating factors to leave the vocation. The follow-up study regarded a discussion on what influences motivated them to stay in their jobs during the pandemic that plagued our nation. Consistently, the nine teachers shared the unprecedented pain each had felt in being separated from their students and the fear that

in some way they might be lacking academically in terms of being able to provide to students the attention that matched their intention. On a personal reflection, all the teachers found the virtual platform to be necessary to maintain safety for students, student families, and the teachers and their loved ones. Also unanimous was the fact that all of these teachers entered the profession with the goal of inspiring students through learning and touching their lives through academics.

A special report by *Education Week* strengthens the core theme among teachers who continued to teach throughout the pandemic in that it highlighted the teacher's commitment to building emotional bonds with their students (Heubeck, 2020b). While acknowledging the obvious challenges, all the teachers interviewed found solace in the original belief that they chose the profession to positively impact the lives of students, and the pandemic did not change their commitment to that motivation. Furthermore, most cited that although the pandemic created an abundance of both personal and professional challenges, the essential elements of education in terms of teaching remained constant—reading, math, writing, collaboration and so on. What most teachers also found to be a bright spot was that they collaborated much more with peers, and this continued support of each other was often a differentiator in improving upon one's effectiveness as a teacher as well as strengthening relationships between administration, peer groups, and student families. Throughout the pandemic, these teachers found new ways to communicate and connect with their students. Some reintroduced old standards such as letter writing so that they were able to communicate with students who may have had technology challenges. The consistent challenges were technology issues and difficulties in working with special education students. From California to Connecticut,

teachers reported having deeper empathy for students, in particular their home environments. The resilience of the teachers who participated in this discussion confirmed two messages: first, they teach because of their belief in making an impact on the lives of students, and second, they will continue to teach because of that motivation.

Teachers and COVID-19 Reflections

The COVID-19 pandemic ushered in an unprecedented level of professional frustration for public secondary school teachers. The pandemic of 2020 created a global health, economic, and educational crisis. Because the pandemic struck during the latter part of the 2019/2020 school year, educators scrambled to pull together programs that addressed academics in a manner that supported student learning to the best of everyone's abilities. The toll this unprecedented event took on administrators, policymakers, educators, and community members will continue to reveal itself in the years ahead; however, immediate insights have emerged, and they may provide opportunities in better understanding the beliefs related to a teacher's decision to stay in the profession providing access to teachers is achieved.

Heubeck (2020c) identified an essential teacher trait that strengthened in its role within the school sector during the pandemic and presented more visibly to be a differentiator in teacher connectivity to the personal joys teaching provides. This trait is empathy. Teachers reported that during the months the pandemic altered the educational environment as all have known it, becoming more empathic toward students has deepened connection, which has resulted in increased satisfaction. When more positive academic outcomes occur with a greater teacher-to-student connection, teacher satisfaction also increases. Accordingly, 43% of teachers agreed that teaching social-

emotional learning to teachers creates a transformational positive change in public education (Heubeck, 2020c).

Researching Why Teachers Stay While in a Pandemic

The global pandemic created a scenario of change in terms of how standard research activities are conducted. For teachers, educating students took on new stressors in that most moved to remote learning platforms. The daily constraints created by the pandemic taxed our nation's teachers emotionally, physically, and in some cases financially. Superfine (2020) suggested that the pandemic presented an opportunity for researchers to think outside of the box in terms of identifying new ways to collect data in research. Specifically, Superfine that new configurations of collaboration be developed to replace or in some cases augment existing tools, such as teacher notes and lesson plans.

Historical Problem of Teachers Not Staying

There has been extensive research conducted on the issue of how best to retain teachers with teacher attrition and the negative influence it has on secondary public school education in the United States being the driving force behind the studies. Current research suggests the potential for multiple causes of why teachers do not stay in their jobs. What has been missing in the body of research is an understanding of the problem from the perspective of teacher experiences and beliefs in terms of original expectations. Research conducted by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017b) suggests that teacher shortages in the United States are a considerable problem, with teacher attrition rates mainly contributing to this concern. As those impacted by education move into the future, the authors suggested that policymakers should focus on improving teacher

compensation, supports, and working conditions. The most frequently communicated reasons for teachers leaving the profession were dissatisfaction (accountability pressures, administrative support levels, and teaching conditions)—55%; family/personal reasons—43%; retirement—31%; pursuit of another job—31%; and financial reasons—18% (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017b). What has not been discussed or understood is how these issues relate to the teachers' original expectations in terms of what they thought the profession would offer.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics claimed that the overall job prospects for high school teachers from the time of this study to 2028 will only increase by 4% (Heubeck, 2020c). Driving the dried-up market for teachers is the reality of teacher attrition rates continuing to threaten public education, which continues to highlight the administrative policy needs and drawbacks that are costing communities dearly in both financial and societal aspects. Also reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is the fact that two thirds of teachers who do leave the profession do so before retirement (Heubeck, 2020c). The study suggested teachers should consider the environment they wish to be in and are going into and enter it with the confidence that there will be sufficient support and allowance for policy collaboration to ensure a higher degree of expected satisfaction (Heubeck, 2020c).

As presented previously, the problem of teacher attrition surfaced decades ago and continues to spiral in an accelerated manner despite the significance of public policy development aimed at curing the issue. One angle of understanding is to examine the perceived problems that teachers face. Research conducted by Lynch (2012) suggested that the reasons for teacher dissatisfaction were similar across the board; however, those

factors were significantly increased in high-poverty schools. As problems build, teachers become dissatisfied with their roles and either leave the school for another position or leave the profession entirely (Lynch, 2012).

Glazer (2018) approached the study of teacher attrition qualitatively through the lens of resistance theory. His dissertation examined the experiences of 25 teachers whom he labeled “invested leavers,” with the intention of identifying why they left from a mindset perspective related to the factors most often suggested as reasons why teachers leave the profession. After highlighting classroom management, student engagement, workload and curriculum development, and bureaucracy uncertainty as key factors that impacted teacher stress and dissatisfaction, Glazer then asserted that the 25 teachers he followed had developed a resistance to continuing to tolerate them as realities of their jobs. Succinctly put, he suggested that teachers’ decision not to stay is related to a decision to no longer obey and as a refusal to comply with what is required of them in their job. Of interest is that 13 of the 25 invested leavers left on or before their 5th year as a teacher, which is in line with when most attrition occurs. Additionally, 15 of the 25 teachers worked in high-poverty schools. A resistance lens theory can be viewed as being more related to the actual stress a teacher experiences that increases to an unmanageable level, resulting in the decision to leave teaching.

Dove (2004) explored teacher attrition as being the greatest single cause of a shortage in qualified teachers within the United States and examined the reasons teachers decide to leave as well as the hard costs associated with doing so. Dove’s study did not analyze influences through a particular theory but does conclude that teacher attrition is a

public policy issue that continues to gain momentum as a problem and remains on the increase with no relief in sight.

A deeper look into the historical problem of teacher attrition within the United States by Kelly (2004) examined research that investigated teacher attrition over one's teaching career. Several observations Kelly made included higher teacher salary did in fact influence teacher attrition rates, but not significantly. Socioeconomically more advantaged communities did not necessarily endure higher teacher attrition rates, implying that the better served localities had lower teacher attrition rates.

To further validate the initiative for this study and continue the conversation on uncovering the beliefs of why teachers stay in their jobs as opposed to leave, documented public policy factors that undergird the importance of teacher attrition previously analyzed were considered. Multiple factors are viewed as important to the teacher attrition problem facing the American educational system including teacher dissatisfaction, insufficient pay structures, weak management/leadership, poor working and community conditions, and the influence of perceived social responsibilities. These issues were the focus of a study in the Pacific Northwest of the United States of America (M. Lee et al., 2015).

When studying what makes a teacher decide to stay in a teaching position, understanding one's original commitment to the profession supports a level of evidence that encourages discussion into potential solutions in the management and prevention of further escalation of the problem. Chapman and Green (1986) explored how a teacher's original commitment to the profession affected attrition rates and the overall importance it had as a contributing factor in staying or leaving.

In furthering the conversation, Harrell et al. (2004) explored an interesting angle into the teacher attrition public-policy problem by investigating how the hiring of nonqualified teachers influences the phenomenon. This was a 5-year study that tracked those who were perceived to be qualified to teach in the individual's specific position versus those who were not qualified and the influence that reality had on the teacher's decision to leave the job.

Holloway (2011) investigated teacher absenteeism because of reported dissatisfaction by examining factors that had been previously suggested to be root causes of the problem and measuring them by core content and their influence on what is taught. The data suggested teacher absenteeism and attrition cost school districts and their community's significant amounts of money. Holloway's research suggested that teacher absenteeism and attrition in secondary education public schools is a problem that exists throughout the United States and has a negative influence on many factors, including but not limited to teacher attrition, and these expenditures were reportedly highest in November and May (Holloway, 2011).

Jacobson (2011) studied the causes and effects of teacher burnout and attrition in a qualitative study designed to understand their perceived causes and the effects they had on the educational institution in which they took place. The study looked at contributory factors as well as teacher perception regarding the problem. Exploring the lived experiences of teachers from a perception perspective is one aim of this research.

In recent years, teachers have voiced that ongoing policy changes have made their job increasingly more difficult although many continue to stay in their jobs. At both the state and national level educational policy reforms are continually changing. Most policy

changes result in affecting factors that are significant to teachers, for example, salary and job security. Recent increases in school violence have influenced how teachers feel about safety while at school and have been considered as a potential reason why they decide to leave the profession (Will, 2019).

Will (2020) explored the effects mandated testing had on a teacher's decision to stay. The author cited reported levels of frustration related to having to administer the tests as a major factor that influenced a teacher's decision to leave. A distinction was found between veteran teachers and relatively new teachers in terms of how the expectations regarding the testing played out in teacher decisions to leave. Veteran teachers were less likely to have testing influence them overall, and in general, they were less negatively persuaded by changes in policy. Of those teachers who decided to leave their profession because of high-stakes testing, their dissatisfaction was stress-level related and linked to individual perceptions as to what was at stake once the results were presented. Will's study, however, concluded with the findings that overall high-stakes tests did not create scenarios in which teachers decided to quit their jobs (Will, 2020).

Additionally, as 2020 arrived closing a turbulent decade in terms of policy reforms, decision makers investigated several factors related to teachers and the teaching profession, including but not limited to the perceived problems teachers face in today's U.S. educational system. The public outcry for holding teachers accountable for substandard practices was an often-heard narrative, and at the same time it became known that many teachers need to hold two jobs just to make ends meet because of inadequate salary structures (Blad & Ujifusa, 2019).

Gewertz and Schwartz (2020) explored the perceptions teachers have related to a personal obligation to self-care and how that understanding translates into taking sick days when needed. The authors' research suggested that in many cases teachers often felt conflicted about taking needed time off to heal because of fear of leadership retaliation, inability to find capable substitute teachers, and even the concern that the teacher may have to pay for the sub out of his or her pay. These perceived concerns many times result in a teacher going to work ill out of a sense of duty or fear of negative consequences, thus increasing dissatisfaction that then challenges intrinsic beliefs.

Argyle (1989) sought to show correlations among absenteeism, productivity, and general employee attrition. The author expressed that previously there had been no research conducted that looked at how life satisfaction influences productivity, but instead it had been focused on job satisfaction and work performance. His study examined the results of job redesign intent to enhance the five proposed features suspected to influence productivity: (a) task identity, (b) task significance, (c) skill variety, (d) autonomy, and (e) feedback. Argyle found that low satisfaction in one's position resulted in higher degrees of absenteeism and employee attrition; what he was not able to suggest was a clearer connection as to causality.

A more intensive research approach would provide a robust understanding of descriptive metrics and themes that emerged and support their meaning from the participant's perspectives. Framing these features as they relate to job satisfaction would have supported Argyle (1989) in uncovering the key factor(s) that influence dissatisfaction/satisfaction, which may lead to an employee, or in this case, teacher attrition issue. Ayala (2016) continued the conversation by studying teacher

dissatisfaction from the lens of leadership influence with the intended understanding being the determination of whether leadership style influenced teacher satisfaction levels directly or indirectly and how satisfaction then related to an educator's decision to stay.

Compelling research analyzed when teachers leave the profession within the year or at the end and whether they leave the profession altogether or for positions within their facility or another within the district. Redding and Henry (2018) studied within-year teacher attrition in North Carolina schools and examined the differences in early career attrition versus the reasons more seasoned teachers leave the profession. In another study also in 2018, they compared high-performing teachers to lower performers and connected them to the specific times during the school year in which they decide to leave their position. Findings suggested that the lower performing teachers tended to leave within the year, but high-performing teachers who decided to leave did so at the end of a school year.

Although the following findings occurred in 1993, the research of Kirby and Grissmer helps to provide a solid foundation for the public problem of teacher attrition. Their study developed a theory on teacher attrition that was designed toward determining the reasons for teachers leaving their jobs as well as for understanding the life cycle of a teacher. Patterns were observed that provided insight into why teachers were leaving their positions at certain times in their careers.

Jackson (2012) in her research explored the relationship between a teacher's decision to stay and principal leadership. The study focus revolved around the perceptions each teacher had related to policy decisions and the commitment to stay in

the profession. It viewed these decisions through the lens of three distinct theories of leadership, each within the framework of a construct of influence.

Research designed by Sparks (2016) to examine teacher's perceptions related to expectancy of administrative support and its influence on overall satisfaction as a factor that reduces attrition suggests that there was a direct link to positive reactions to administration when feeling supported. This reaction results in a teacher's decision to stay in his or her vocation. Interestingly, the study found that rates for this level of satisfaction were higher among private school teachers than in the public sector (Sparks, 2016).

In comparison to Sparks's (2016) study, Garcia and Weiss (2019) found that there was a 25% greater likelihood of a teacher quitting his or her position when feeling supported in the teaching environment. However, supported was defined differently insomuch as it was not only related to the teacher's perceptions (dispositional beliefs) of administrative advocacy but extended to experiences (situational beliefs) within the environment itself and was framed in a larger worldview lens. For example, over 71% of teachers reported frustration over the fact that they have little influence over such responsibilities as content selection and the skills and techniques they use in teaching, yet they continue to stay (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Gemeda (2015) suggested teachers' motivation to teach recognizes four distinct theories of understanding: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, expectancy theory, and equity theory. The author discussed Vroom's position that individuals make assumptions regarding certain behaviors they view will lead to positive rewards. In terms of those beliefs, individuals then frame a commitment to the

level of effort(s) they are willing to put into work and performance within a given organization. Teachers, for example, were regarded in Gameda's (2015) study to see that their efforts did not result in rewards that were measurable in terms of meeting expectations, resulting in overall motivation and job satisfaction being diminished.

Policy Implications

Present concerns regarding problems with the U.S. teaching environment, shortages, and attrition create opportunities to improve upon public policy. In the state of California specifically, teachers are in high demand as supply is significantly insufficient. The challenge is on both sides of the equation, attracting new teachers and retaining existing ones. In this state, nearly one third of the teaching force is nearing retirement, which creates to a natural form of attrition. Teaching recruitment has many challenges, among them the fact that the teaching occupation does not compensate teachers at a level that is on par with or above other professions that require the same credentials. Studies suggest that this has been an ongoing challenge and not just in California. As recruitment barriers increase, it appears that the need for qualified teachers has also been at a steady climb, especially in low-income communities (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017b).

Importance of Staying: Teacher Accountability

From a public administration perspective, the pillar of accountability is a relatively new concept that renders its focus on administrative responsibility (Rohr, 1978). The pillar of accountability was not addressed in the classical and neoclassical eras of public administration. With his understanding of regime values, Rohr applied the measure of accountability within the NPA era seemingly on the shoulders of the political

party that happened to be in power and viewed those decisions and policies as normative. He presented the essential question that one must ask when aligning with a particular political party, “Is this party fundamentally just?” (Rohr, 1978, p. 362). Rohr also suggested that regardless of the specific party affiliation, all individuals must be committed to upholding the U.S. Constitution (Rohr, 1978). In the postmodern era, accountability falls onto the individual managing the processes and implementation.

Concisely worded, Lewis and Gilman (2012) presented a commonsense approach to accountability and asserted that thousands of years of philosophical debate over ethics and ethical decision-making defines reasoning and not actual choice making. Accountability and informed reasoning and decision-making are the responsibility of the individuals carrying out the action (Lewis & Gilman, 2012). Research by Boyd et al. (2008) that investigated the teacher attrition rates in the New York City Department of Education framed an understanding of teacher accountability as it relates to retention and specific teacher attributes, among them years teaching and performance levels. Boyd et al.’s study found that teachers who felt a stronger sense of accountability to policy mandated outcomes were influenced when those goals were not met, which reflected in increased attrition rates. A direct link was considered regarding teacher attrition and effectiveness, with low performers more likely to leave their positions within the first 2 years.

Aligned with the understanding that novice teachers appear to leave the profession more than accomplished ones, Eggen (2002) examined the topic in South Carolina public schools and learned that teacher perceptions among those who did leave the profession were that accountability failures on the part of administration both within

the school and at the district level were lacking and led to a disconnect with perceived expectancies.

Perryman and Calvert (2019) found that a teacher's sense of accountability and performativity influenced his or her decision to leave the profession within the first 5 years of working. Underscoring this study are data that suggest that for these teachers, the reality of teaching, specifically the workload expectancy, was far worse than imagined, specifically the accountability measures that were informed by the policies they were to adhere to within their districts.

A study conducted across multiple states investigated the connection between test-based accountability within district policy to teacher attrition (Ryan et al., 2017). It evaluated retention with consideration of the number of years a teacher practiced his or her vocation. Of particular interest was how teacher stress led to burnout, which resulted in the turnover. Findings revealed that the differences in policy in terms of difficulty standards resulted in higher retention for experienced teachers who met the expected scores (Ryan et al., 2017). For those newer teachers, stress and burnout led to higher attrition rates. This accountability to federal policy mandates may not have been fully understood in terms of the stress-induced emotional influence it would create on the new teachers, both for the teachers as well as administrators who are able to support staff through the process. Furthermore, von der Embse et al. (2016) found that using test scores and performance as an accountability measure for teachers led to greater stress and attrition as it directly influenced a teacher's ability to increase pay and achieve tenure goals.

Importance of Staying: Teacher Representation

Goodnow (1900) and Wilson (1887) spoke of separation of power within the government as being a necessity. Representation, the sixth pillar of public administration, was viewed to be a function of the American legislature in terms of execution of government policies. The American political system was created to discharge the will of the people. In the classical era, the individuals executing policies were expected to be subordinate to authority who in this case was the people (Goodnow, 1900). In the neoclassical and new public administration eras, Krislov (1974) addressed the new face of representation bureaucracy growing in America. He stressed the challenges of representation in terms of American politics being able to shift from a biased elitism to a model that supports diversity and from those who, despite the Constitution, were considered human outliers. Krislov also found that the treatment of Black and Native Americans, as well as the conduct toward women, needed to change.

As society was changing, the concept of representation was expanding (Krislov, 1974). Both Stivers (2012) and Thomas (1990) explored and reframed the essence of representation in America during the postmodern era. Stivers, from a feminist perspective, pushed for equality for all individuals in policy, the workplace, home, educational institutions, and so on. She waved a flag of concern regarding the White male bias that appeared to be running our politics and urged movement toward change. She concretely affirmed that representation as intended by the Constitution cannot become a reality until all Americans are viewed equally (Stivers, 2012).

Thomas (1990) explored how American society could have possibly outgrown affirmative action. His position was that affirmative action was successful in terms of

ramping up minority access to jobs that were once held from them because of prejudicial stereotyping. Thomas expressed that much ground was covered because of the affirmative action policy, but now managing the diversity within organizations is crucial and the next logical step in the process. Thomas pushed for policy to inspire the full potential of all human beings (Thomas, 1990).

A meta-analysis that included the review of over 25,000 scholarly records resulting in 120 of them being used for purposes of a study suggested that teacher attrition appears to be a greater issue in lower socioeconomic public school districts. It was found that within these districts, teacher attrition rates are higher, and this analysis resulted in strong evidence to support the understanding that inequalities in representation negatively influence effective instruction as well as a teacher's decision to leave the profession (Nguyen & Springer, 2019).

Furthering the conversation of representation in public education, the Learning Policy Institute claimed, "In particular, when turnover contributes to teacher shortages, schools often respond by hiring inexperienced or unqualified teachers, increasing class sizes, or cutting class offerings" (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019, p. 3). Research suggests that teacher inexperience and rates of turnover negatively influence learning and puts schools and districts at an educational disadvantage. An additional issue is that teacher turnover is higher in lower socioeconomic districts and with teachers of color (Varathan, 2018).

One study conducted from Brigham Young University in 2019 compared the perceptions of three different stakeholders—parents, administration, and teachers—in determining the cause of growing attrition rates and found that working conditions

presented the best indicator for teachers leaving their positions (Harris et al., 2019). Just over 50% of teachers felt that representation by key stakeholders did not provide an adequate sense of security for them, and 80% felt that it resulted in teachers wanting to leave their jobs (Harris et al., 2019).

Teacher Beliefs and Student Achievement

Low salaries and strained working conditions resulted in 2018 being described as the year that teachers across America reached a major professional crossroads and began to peacefully assemble at their state capitol. It has not been uncommon to turn on the news and see teachers protesting failed policies and mandates that cut into teacher supports, income, and quality working environment. Such conditions have left their mark and resulted in higher teacher attrition rates and diminished student achievement as measured by lower test scores. However, given these challenges, most teachers chose to stay in the profession because of their beliefs rooted in the desire to positively impact their students' lives.

Student populations have an expected growth of three million new students filling the pipeline within the next decade. The growing challenge of identifying and supporting the beliefs of teachers that result in them staying in their jobs is essential, and the need for districts to ramp up human resources in this regard is vital. Research by the Learning Center suggests that teachers remain the foremost component in student achievement (Greve & Sun, 2018).

Because of the need to support teachers staying in the workplace and remaining key influencers of students, the topic of education and ways to improve upon student performance has been a subject of political argument and policymaking at local, state,

and federal levels for decades and became radically focused upon following the release of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* report in 1983 (Moody, 2007).

In tackling the problem of determining factors impacting student performance, school leadership and the influence of teachers became a focal point.

Ashworth (2013) considered the impact the presence of emotional intelligence skill sets among the student influencers (teachers) in secondary schools has on the educational environment and how those skill sets relate to higher scores for students. Such knowledge is a potential area of development within the school sector when addressing necessary activities as assessing candidates for hire, training leadership, and developing the emotional skills of all related administration support staff to support effective and efficient performance outcomes (Ashworth, 2013).

Ashworth (2013) analyzed research on her topic by separating data into distinct and organized parts: (a) An analysis containing an overview of the breadth of intelligence was studied, followed by (b) an exploration into the meaning of emotional intelligence, (c) a detailed presentation on student educators, (d) the construct connection between educators and school performance, (e) the impact emotional intelligence has on education, and (f) a comprehensive summary of all points coalesced. The literature review in its entirety suggests that the presence of emotional intelligence in educational leaders translates into increased student performance.

In an extensive examination of over 25,000 scholarly research documents and studies, the issues of teacher mobility, attrition, and retention (decisions to stay) resulted in establishing teachers as the most significant influencers in student success (Nguyen & Springer, 2019). Meta-analytics suggested that teachers were more likely to leave their

profession when dissatisfied and that disruptive student behavior, lack of professional development opportunities, and administrative failures drive satisfaction levels. High rates of teacher turnover are connected to student achievement failures, increased expenditures at the district level, and educational inequities (Nguyen & Springer, 2019).

The impact of a teachers' decision to stay on student achievement is multifaceted and affects more than academic scores. Research suggests that the emotional well-being of students and the teachers who decide to remain teaching are negatively impacted by an array of reasons (Sawchuk, 2012). Ronfeldt et al. (2013) suggested that in scenarios when teacher effectiveness may not be impacted, for example, peer cohesion is, and this reflects in lower student achievement. Increases in teacher attrition are hardest on students in underserved communities and for those who already struggle academically. A lack of educator continuity, lower peer morale, substitution with lesser qualified instructors, and strained resources are all contributing factors to diminished student achievement resulting from teacher attrition.

An examination of the impact of educator attrition suggests that teachers have the most significant influence on student achievement, motivation, individual self-efficacy, and academic outcomes (Coleman et al., 1966; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006). Teachers are a valuable resource to communities, and when they leave the vocation, they take tangible and nontangible professional assets with them, leaving deficits in the schools that accumulate and divert resources from programs that improve schools. The impact on lower socioeconomic schools in urban areas is disproportionate in terms of the affect attrition has on the students. Analysis of high-poverty schools indicates that attrition may even change the culture within these schools, increasing student disciplinary problems

and leadership turnover. Educator collaboration for learning instruction improvements is harmed when attrition increases within a school year or at the end (Guin, 2014). Teacher attrition negatively impacts student learning and achievement as well as functioning within the schools and districts in part because of the higher financial costs related to turnover (Simon & Johnson, 2015).

Research Question

The original research question for this case study was “What belief(s) is(are) perceived to be attributed to influencing a high school teacher’s decision to stay in the teaching profession?”

Ancillary Research Question

The ancillary research question for this case study was “What methodological research approach was most effective in exploring teacher dispositional beliefs at Chaffey Joint Union High School and Chino Valley school districts during a pandemic?”

Summary

This body of research was intended to understand the belief systems that impact why teachers in the two districts (Chino Valley and Chaffey Joint Union High School District) stay in the profession. The issues surrounding and impacting why teachers stay in their vocation is a costly problem for communities and taxpayers in the United States. Overall teacher attrition rates throughout the United States range from 10% to 20% depending upon the state. Special education teachers’ turnover rates are as high as 46% as reported by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017a), with teacher attrition costing U.S. citizens up to \$8 billion annually because of teacher replacement and district

costs (Ware, 2016). This means that 80 to 90% of general education teachers remain in their positions, and 55-60% of special educators decide to stay.

This body of research was intended to understand the beliefs that undergird why teachers in the two districts (Chino Valley and Chaffey Joint Union High School District), stay in the profession and introduced the unique opportunity to study this occurrence during a national pandemic.

Factors originally considered but not limited to in terms of influencing a teacher's beliefs and decision to stay in his or her vocation were leadership, district mandates, salary, student behavior, teacher absenteeism, and family/personal issues. In beginning to frame an understanding of why teachers make the decision to stay in their jobs, research conducted by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017a) suggested that teacher shortages in the United States are a considerable problem, with teacher attrition rates largely contributing to this concern.

One angle of understanding is to look at the perceived problems that teachers face in their profession, which was a focal point of research conducted by Lynch (2012). Lynch (2012) suggested the reasons for teacher dissatisfaction are similar across the board; however, those issues are influenced in a significantly increased manner in high-poverty schools. As problems build, teachers become dissatisfied with their roles and either leave the school for another position or leave the profession entirely (Lynch, 2012). Additionally, when looking at what makes a teacher decide to stay in a teaching position, understanding one's original commitment to the profession supports a level of evidence that encourages discussion into potential solutions in the management and prevention of further escalation of the problem (Chapman & Green, 1986).

The ancillary question in this study was designed to explore and understand how exploring teacher retention with appropriate methodology instruments during a pandemic stood up against the ambiguous educational environment secondary public school teachers experienced. Specifically, ancillary research explored the effectiveness of surveys and focus group instruments and discussed efforts that span 6 months of attempted contact with teachers during a pandemic. Communication with teachers began in July of 2020 with a qualitative approach focusing on secondary public school teachers (high school) from two Southern California districts using a survey and focus groups designed to explore their experiences and the factors contributing to their decisions to leave their profession.

Qualitative data were to be gathered from a series of focus groups with the participant population as well as from an online survey that was set up on Survey Gizmo. It was the hope of this researcher that the findings from this study would add meaningful context to the ongoing research related to understanding why teachers decide to stay in their positions and the underlying beliefs that keep them rooted in the experience. In terms of goal development, this study may present information that may be important to the development of more efficient programs that support teacher retention through identifying how original and ongoing dispositional beliefs impact a decision to stay in one's career even as challenges emerge.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This body of research was intended to understand beliefs related to why teachers in the two districts (Chino Valley and Chaffey Joint Union High School District) stay in the profession. However, difficulties related to the COVID pandemic significantly altered this researcher's ability to meet with teachers and implement the full and intended methodological approaches for data capture. The COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in an unprecedented level of professional frustration for public secondary school teachers. An original desire to understand the beliefs that influence teacher's decisions to stay within two secondary public high schools in Southern California morphed into an unanticipated need to understand the methodological instruments best utilized for the study while in a pandemic.

Technology has supported researchers with ample tools and instruments with which to study participants and gather information. The most often used instruments in qualitative research are interviews, surveys, focus groups, and in-person observation. Although under normal circumstances these instruments have advantages and disadvantages, the impact of a pandemic related to their use, especially upon the teaching profession, is presently not understood. The effectiveness of these instruments came into question as COVID-19 impacted our national education system and affected teachers both personally and professionally. The account of this researcher's exploration into the uncharted waters of the utilization of these methods during a pandemic was captured to glean answers to why teachers may decide to stay in the profession. A desire to understand the beliefs that influence a teacher's decision to stay within two secondary public school (high school) Southern California districts developed into an eagerness to

also better understand the methodological approach best used to study the issue while in a pandemic.

Purpose Statement

This study intended to explore, understand, and potentially reveal beliefs that influence secondary public school teachers' decisions to stay in their profession. From an attribution theory perspective, this research explored how dispositional attributions impacted what teachers expected the profession would provide for them and helped to understand why they stay. An examination of the data collected related to focus group participation and survey completion of the study participants explored beliefs and personal interpretations as they related to teacher attrition.

An ancillary question was designed to perhaps reveal how exploring teacher beliefs with appropriate methodological approach while in a pandemic stands up against the ambiguous educational environment secondary public school teachers were experiencing. Specifically, this ancillary research question explored the effectiveness of surveys and focus group instruments and discusses efforts that span 6 months of attempted contact with teachers during a pandemic. Communication with teachers began in July of 2020 with a qualitative approach focusing on secondary public school teachers (high school) from two Southern California districts using a survey and focus groups designed to explore their experiences and the factors contributing to their decisions to stay in their profession.

Qualitative data were to be gathered from a series of focus groups with the participant population as well as from an online survey that was set up on Survey Gizmo. It was the hope of this researcher that the findings from this study would add meaningful

context to the ongoing research related to teacher attrition and offer policy decision makers viable information necessary to support teacher retention. The pandemic, however, changed the landscape of use and dynamics of integrity that the methodological instruments ordinarily hold and instead led this researcher on another course which was to understand what instruments would be more appropriate to measure teacher attrition while experiencing a pandemic.

In terms of goal development, this study presents information that may be important to the development of more efficient processes in the architecture of instruments and combinations of such that will more efficiently capture relevant data related to understanding teacher attrition while in a pandemic.

Throughout the United States of America, educators continue to research and examine the costly challenge of teacher attrition. Approximately 30% of new teachers abandon their vocation within 5 years and are replaced by less credentialed educators. High-poverty communities experience an increase to 50% above the national standard, and that is reflected in student academic achievement (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Additional research suggests that the reasons for the problem of teacher attrition nationwide are similar in scope and that as problems build, teachers become dissatisfied with their roles and either leave the school for another position or leave the profession entirely (Lynch, 2012).

Research Question

The original research question for this study was “What belief(s) is(are) perceived to be attributed to influencing a high school teacher’s decision to stay in the teaching profession?”

Ancillary Research Question

The ancillary research question for this case study was “What methodological research approach was most effective in exploring teacher dispositional beliefs at Chaffey Joint Union High School and Chino Valley school districts during a pandemic?”

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research approach that explored teachers’ experiences within two different educational settings from the perspective of governance and analyzes why they would anticipate staying in the profession. An examination of how the realities of teaching have met teacher’s original expectations helps to develop a greater understanding of teachers’ needs and areas of focus for policymakers that may be necessary to improve teacher retention and reduce the increasing percentage of attrition. The data, therefore, are an analysis of how the experiences of teaching met teachers’ expectations and beliefs and what each understands to be the attributed factors of influence. This qualitative methodology offers data with increased credibility and dependability, a deeper sense of individual experience, and the opportunity to focus on the information that may otherwise have been lost to the researcher (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019).

Qualitative design protocol was strictly followed to further ensure the integrity of the research results. Efforts included but were not limited to submitting of letters to the decision makers at each district to allow solicitation of high school teachers for research purposes, drafting of informed consent document for participants, coding of focus group transcripts, and scrubbing questions for consistency and credibility of the instruments used for assessments. A pilot test was utilized to assess intended questions by running a

focus group with participants from the two high school districts that were drawn from for this research.

A qualitative research design provided the opportunity for commencing data collection that produced a new opportunity to understand educator attrition from a dispositional perspective based on the data shared by participants. Extensive research has been conducted on the issue of understanding the impact of beliefs, why teachers stay in their jobs, why they stay during a pandemic, and the historical impact of teachers' decisions to not stay. Attribution theory expresses participant beliefs, views, and experiences in a manner that produces an explanation for the inquiry, and in this study it served as the framework through which to understand why teachers stay in their profession.

Sample and Population

Participants were organized from two districts into separate focus group sessions and contained an estimated eight to 11 teachers per session. This number of participants was chosen to maintain the ideal size for a noncommercial topic research project while still accommodating the impacted teachers' schedules because of the COVID-19 outbreak. Smaller groups are easier to manage in terms of allowing participants the opportunities to share information in a comfortable setting. Additionally, smaller participant groups provide situations in which individuals may produce more significant insights related to personal experiences (Al-Barashdi, 2020).

Qualitative data were gathered from a series of focus groups with the participant population being made up of high school teachers. An examination of the beliefs of the study participants in each focus group was explored. It was the hope of this researcher

that the findings from this study would add meaningful context to the ongoing research related to teacher decisions to stay in the classroom and offer policy decision makers viable information necessary to support teacher retention.

The total anticipated number of participants was a minimum of 50. The sample in this study utilized a nonprobability sampling design with a focus on purposive sampling because this research involves participants who had been identified to have the shared characteristics related to the topic and research questions. Participants were randomly selected. Incentives included an offer of free lunch and a \$10 gift card toward Starbucks for their participation.

Participants were recruited by peer teachers and were not selected because of any specific characteristics. They were all high school teachers, but demographics on these teachers may vary. For example, there was not a preference for male versus female teachers, single or married. It was the expectancy of the researcher that demographic factors would vary, and consideration of an all-female participant group, should it occur, was to be considered in the resulting data. Union leaders were not interviewed to avoid bias that could lead to misinterpretation of the actual lived experiences of the teachers leaving their positions.

Focus groups were to be conducted in an in-depth open-ended manner, in which questions would be asked while group members were encouraged to explore the presented issues. If because of COVID concerns the focus groups were conducted on Zoom, then the informed consent would be completed online during the session. Zoom sessions included 14 participants. All sessions were recorded for accuracy of data collection and subsequently transcribed using Live Transcribe™.

Participants were de-identified during focus group discussion and each had a hand-held sign to lift (if participating in person), which identified them by an associated sign in number. Participants were observed both audibly and visually by the researcher. Participants were instructed to raise a sign with their identification number when wishing to contribute feedback to an answer during the focus group. On Zoom, participants were instructed to simply raise their hand and unmute their microphones to communicate.

The focus group began with an informed consent discussion. Anonymity was provided by de-identifying teachers and assigning participant numbers for identification. This researcher then followed with discussion using open-ended questions in an interview format within the parameters of a focus group. Interview and observation data were collected and analyzed to determine saturation levels regarding themes and/or emerging concepts related to the disclosures by the teachers in each focus group session. All focus group sessions were structured with open-ended questions to inspire discussion among participants who may or may not have had shared experiences.

Consideration of individual personalities that may impact group dynamics was an area to be viewed and incorporated into research results in terms of helping to shape a deeper understanding of how teacher collaboration may affect an individual's decision to leave his or her position. Additionally, if for some reason an individual did not feel comfortable sharing in the group session, he or she had the opportunity to submit his or her perspectives in writing. The anticipated timeframe for each focus group session was to not exceed 60 minutes. Participants were free not to provide answers during the focus group if doing so created discomfort.

The Credibility of the Researcher

This researcher's experience in the development, management, and interpreting of results from focus group participants is extensive, with over 28 years in the direct-to-consumer product marketing arena. This experience included work globally in areas of product development as it related to consumer needs. Infomercial production was central to most product distribution campaigns, and focus group management was an important component of each successful launch.

Further qualifications include an earned Masters' Degree in Clinical Counseling Psychology and certifications as a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) in the state of California. This position includes the facilitation of managing multiple group counseling sessions, which further enhances the ability to manage such groups with a level of empathy and knowledge that offers not only nonjudgmental or unbiased support to participants but also the ability to recognize and interpret nonverbal cues. In this case, researcher bias was managed and can only expect to be present at a level per normative standards. The researcher's CV is included in Appendix A of this paper.

Potential Bias

Researcher bias may have been impacted given the nature of approaching focus group management from a commercial versus noncommercial perspective. To maintain the integrity of the content shared and manage the group dynamics, strict dedication to a noncommercial protocol was followed (Al-Barashdi, 2020). Bias may further have been impacted through an interpretation of the qualitative data in terms of researcher understanding of shared information, comparison measures related to prior investigated research found in the literature on the topic of teacher attrition, and in consideration of

this researcher's personal experiences and cultural competencies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

For these reasons, a qualitative methodology was chosen to explore the problem of teacher attrition, beyond what the literature validates, by providing actual teacher lived experiences but analyzing the impact they held from a dispositional attribution lens. Qualitative data validity strength was supported by using clarified descriptions in the study findings specific to the environment in which the study took place, the themes discussed and revealed, and how the themes presented in a shared experience manner among participants.

As previously stated, the potential for researcher bias was a strong consideration, particularly in the interpretation of the data. Because of this potential limitation, focus group transcripts were validated by this researcher during transcription and the coding process; the latter, which is discussed within this methodology section, facilitated the efficient transfer of data to summary results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A dedicated effort was made to find meaning in the voices of the participants stemming from their experiences. From the perspective of disadvantage, it was important to watch for and prevent participants from adopting the views and opinions of others as stories were shared.

Before the focus group meeting, an interview protocol was developed that supported the development of nonbiased (to the extent they can be) questions and standards for recording physical observations made by the researcher. For example, when a participant shared a point of view that he or she felt passionately about, observing the reactions of the other study members in terms of agreeing or disagreeing was

important given the reality that some participants may not have shared as openly (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Another benefit of having prepared interview questions and observation protocol before the focus groups was to support the organization and professionalism of the event and the integrity of the data being collected. In consideration of this, the essential nature of remaining open to new insights was crucial to the integrity of the data collected at this event.

Ethics and Confidentiality

To uphold the ethical integrity of this study, all participants were randomly selected and accepted on a volunteer basis via an invitation to participate during a break from a teacher in-service meeting. The study purpose was discussed with all participants before the start of the collaborative session. The role of the researcher was discussed with potential bias, and rules of confidentiality and anonymity were presented and enforced throughout the study.

Measurement

The reliability of the data collected in this qualitative study has high power because of the structured protocol followed in selection strategy of participants, extensive literature review, and the nonbiased qualitative data acquired through a multiphase structured protocol. Protocol as used here refers to the detailed procedures followed within each aspect of this study and its responsibilities. Validity was increased and secured by having participants verify their data regarding personal responses to questions related to what made them want to enter the teaching profession and what may be the attributed factors making them want to stay in their job.

Qualitative Data Collection

From a qualitative conceptual framework, an understanding of why teachers stay (dependent) was measured and operationalized by the following dimensions:

Dimension 1: Individually reported beliefs that determine interest in becoming a teacher.

Dimension 2: Individually reported beliefs that lead to a desire to leave teaching.

These factors (independent variable) were to be analyzed by district (per focus groups/session).

Dimension 3: Actual teacher attrition, either teacher or school based, as reported by the individual participant to the extent it exists.

The following techniques were used to maximize an effective understanding of the attributed expectancies of the participants: (a) The focus group setting was one in which all participants felt at ease, particularly during the COVID-19 year. Consideration of participant physical safety and emotional needs was considered (wearing of masks, social distancing, disinfectants provided, or participant via Zoom conferencing), and standards were strictly adhered to; (b) Participants were encouraged to share in a descriptive discussion that captured individual life experience with the topic; and (c) Participants were motivated to explore perceptions and consider the topic with objectivity and transparency.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants were approached through an invitation to participate in a doctoral study that examines the reasons why teachers leave their jobs. Participation was voluntary, and the study took place in an informal setting in which all attendees had the opportunity to interact. Confidentiality was discussed, and the study's purpose was

shared as a part of the informed consent process. All teachers were to sign an informed consent document related to the study. The study agenda took an estimated 60 minutes in total time from meet and greet to interview completion. Time was allotted for participants who wished to share information privately.

A survey was completed first to capture an understanding of age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, years of experience, grade level, subject(s) taught, education level, course(s) taught, tenure, ethnicity, and vocation status. The purpose of collecting this information was to further enhance the data in terms of providing detailed descriptions of the participants.

Coding

To explore the beliefs that influence a teacher's decision to stay in the profession, which affects attrition rates, both predetermined and emerging codes were used. Before transcript analysis, a codebook was developed with code labels, adherence rules for when to apply the code, and a full description of it and how it relates to the aspect being viewed. Tesch's eight steps in the coding process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), were applied as the methodology behind the coding mindset. The logistics of the steps are as follows: (a) Read transcripts and frame an understanding of the topic in a general sense, (b) Identify the first document and determine the meaning of what is being communicated to write some thoughts about it, (c) Complete this for several more participant documents and list them in a manner that connects similarities and levels of importance, (d) Classify participant statements by abbreviated codes and arrange topics as either new or emerging, (e) Reduce lists by developing clearly defined categories with stringent groupings that express relatedness and therefore themes can be put together that

fit topics, (f) Finalize coding and the alphabetization of codes, (g) Execute analysis, and (h) Review and assess for the potential need to recode (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Coding for this research was done by hand method.

Interview Process

The first phase of the interview process encouraged participants to (a) share their experience in being a part of the study, (b) support an understanding of the thoughts and feelings the topic brings to the surface for the individual, and (c) capture beliefs and perceptions related to experiences and characteristic themes. Data collection regarding answers to the discussion questions took place in a structured environment to help manage bias on both the researcher as well as participants. The framework followed had at its foundation the intention to capture information related to the factors influencing teacher experiences resulting in attrition. Captured data were coded and logged immediately following each focus group, with the precoded characteristics being considered as well as demographic information and interview discussions collected. All participant information was stored securely and according to ethical standards. Data were duplicated to assure safekeeping on a dedicated computer and redundant thumb drives. All paperwork documentation was secured in a home safe.

It should also be communicated that participants in the pilot group were not allowed to participate in the focus groups in which concluding data were confirmed. The focus group sessions and any individual interviews, if they were necessitated, were transcribed to uphold the integrity of data collected; however, transcripts do not express emotive responses, which called for the importance of immediate analysis.

A potential for bias corrupting data was a possible limitation to the qualitative data given this researcher's vocation as a psychotherapist as well as the detailed role involvement in this study. However, this was also a possible strength as discussed in the researcher's credibility section of this report because of the trained skill set in understanding and the ability to interpret individual effect. The overall quality of the data was upheld through strict adherence to a detailed protocol approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter shares the journey this researcher experienced and introduces the data collected in this study's initial attempts at conducting focus groups and will detail the findings from those sessions. Additionally, the intent to effectively communicate patterns, themes, and outlier data that were collected from teacher input as well as the difficulty in utilizing the instruments designed for those encounters is presented. Finally, the presentation of findings is discussed to create a foundation for further understanding of the suggested answers to the research questions of this study.

Purpose Statement

This study intended to explore, understand, and potentially reveal beliefs that influence secondary public school teachers' decisions to stay in their profession. From an attribution theory perspective, this research explored what teachers expected the profession would provide for them and helped to understand why they stay from a dispositional perspective. An examination of the data collected related to focus group participation and survey completion of the study participants explored beliefs and personal interpretations as they related to teacher attrition.

It was the hope of this researcher that the findings from this study would add meaningful context to the ongoing discussion related to teacher attrition and offer policy decision makers viable information necessary to support teacher retention. In terms of goal development, this study presents information that may be integral to tool building for more efficient processes in the implementation of teacher acquisition, retention, and needed support programs from a public administration perspective related to teacher

expectations influencing whether to stay in the profession. A major aim of the study was to identify dispositional attribution themes based upon participant responses that guide professional and personal development. The results of this study are intended to support teachers, administrators, and school districts by providing insight into interventions that offer educators sustainable benefits that result in long-term employment adherence, thus reducing the costly and disruptive consequences of attrition.

Technology has supported researchers with ample tools and instruments with which to study participants and gather information. The most often used instruments in qualitative research are interviews, surveys, focus groups, and in-person observation. Although under normal circumstances these instruments have advantages and disadvantages, the impact of a pandemic related to their use, especially upon the teaching profession, is presently not understood. As an additional and unexpected opportunity, the evaluative value of these instruments came into question as COVID-19 impacted the national education system and affected teachers both personally and professionally. Following is the account of this researcher's exploration into the uncharted waters of the utilization and sustainability of traditionally used methodology instruments and the impact a pandemic has on their reliability.

Methodology Instruments: Ancillary Question

This researcher fully engaged in a methodology planning process that involved detailing the specific tasks of defining data collection tools, listing procedures, and identifying participants and how to solicit them for research purposes. The selection of a survey tool and focus group supported the intention to collect data that were both objective and subjective. The survey instrument, which is in Appendix B of this

document, was developed to collect demographic data and information related to carefully crafted questions regarding factors that influence teacher decisions to leave the profession. These questions were cultivated from existing surveys and newly produced by this researcher.

The decision to conduct multiple focus groups with participants was made with the consideration of adding richness in terms of learning the stories of the teachers, which may or may not have influenced a decision to leave their profession. Focus groups help a researcher to identify and explore deeper meaning, perceptions, and attitudes of participants and provide insight into needs, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The opportunity to conduct a focus group also adds the benefit of exploring the dynamics that occur when more than one person is being questioned (Loviglio, 2012).

Research Question

The original research question for this case study was “What belief(s) is(are) perceived to be attributed to influencing a high school teacher’s decision to stay in the teaching profession?”

Ancillary Research Question

The ancillary research question for this case study was “What methodological research approach was most effective in exploring teacher dispositional beliefs at Chaffey Joint Union High School and Chino Valley school districts during a pandemic?”

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

Pilot Test

In June 2020, teachers from the two districts were asked to participate in a pilot test. After ample effort in securing the participants, an in-person session was scheduled

in August 2020. Three teachers participated in a socially distanced focus group session, which was preceded by coverage of the informed consent document and completion of the survey. The rationale behind conducting this pilot group session was to work out any research-related issues with the instruments and any time constraint issues and to debug any technical issues prior to collecting data for research purposes. Participants were given lunch and a \$10 Starbucks gift card as an incentive. The group consisted of two males and one female and resulted in the correction of one survey question that had a typo, fixing recording issues with the transcription software, and identifying that 60 minutes would be needed. It should be noted that the three teachers who participated were acquainted with the researcher and that confirming their attendance, although not entirely without challenges, was ultimately successful. After this session, it was decided to put the survey instrument on the website Survey Gizmo, now known as Alchemer, to simplify the process.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

All three participants signed an informed consent document and completed the survey. Discussion during the focus group was productive, and each participant shared meaningful experiences. Data are as follows.

The pilot test results are reported here for the purpose of disclosure regarding participant's feedback. The goal of running a pilot test was to gain an understanding of timing protocols as well as any areas of inquiry that may have been overlooked. Participants included two men and one female. Two individuals were between the ages of 50-59 and one was in the 40-49 age range. Two are Caucasian and one is Hispanic/Latino. All three are married, and all three have one to three children. One has

been teaching for 0-5 years, one 16-20 years, and one 21-25 years. Two teach multiple grades, and one only teaches Grade 9. Two teach math, and one teaches multiple subjects. One participant has a bachelor's degree, and two have master's degrees with credential.

Survey Data First Pilot Test

1. The financial compensation I earn as a teacher influenced my choice to become a teacher.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 2 disagree

2. The financial compensation I earn as a teacher may influence my decision to leave teaching.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 2 neutral

3. The benefits package I earn as a teacher (medical, dental, vision, life insurance, and vacation time) influenced my choice to become a teacher.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 1 neutral, 1 disagree

4. The benefits package I earn as a teacher (medical, dental, vision, life insurance, and vacation time) may influence my decision to leave the teaching profession.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 1 neutral, 1 disagree

5. My work as a teacher has generally met my expectations.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 2 disagree

6. My work as a teacher has generally not met my expectations.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 2 agree; 1 disagree

7. I plan on continuing to teach until retirement.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 2 agree; 1 disagree

8. I plan on leaving teaching before retirement.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 2 disagree

9. Job conditions (hours, safety, and peers) are what I expected.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 3 agree

10. Job conditions (hours, safety, and peers) may be why I leave teaching.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 2 disagree

11. Being able to work with students influenced my choice to become a teacher.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 3 agree

12. The challenges of working with students may influence my decision to leave the teaching profession.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 3 disagree

13. I find teaching policies (curriculum standards to be met, reporting and grading requirements, accountability standards, student discipline guidelines etc.), and non-teaching related requirements (district meetings, monitoring student clubs, peer interactions etc.), manageable.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 2 disagree

14. I find teaching policies (curriculum standards to be met, reporting and grading requirements, accountability standards, student discipline guidelines etc.), and non-teaching related requirements (district meetings, monitoring student clubs, peer interactions etc.), not manageable.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 2 agree; 1 disagree

15. Leadership has supported me in my career.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 3 agree

16. Leadership concerns may cause me to leave teaching.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 neutral; 2 disagree

17. I feel that teaching is a fulfilling vocation.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 2 agree; 1 disagree

18. I feel that teaching has not been a fulfilling vocation.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree, 1 neutral, 1 disagree

19. Family concerns (childcare, elder care, or divorce) influenced my choice to become a teacher.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree, 1 neutral, 1 disagree

20. Family concerns (childcare, elder care, or divorce) may influence my decision to leave teaching.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 2 disagree

21. The reasons why I wanted to teach remain the reasons why I stay.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 2 agree; 1 neutral

22. I feel I am making a positive difference in student's lives.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 3 agree

23. I feel I have little to no influence on my student's success.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 3 disagree

24. Please rank the following factors by priority in terms of influencing your decision to stay or leave the teaching vocation; 1 being most important, and 11 being least important.

- a) Leadership __
- b) District mandates/policy ____
- c) State mandates/policy ____
- d) Federal mandates/policy ____
- e) Salary and benefits ____
- f) Student behavior ____
- g) Teacher absenteeism ____
- h) Family/personal issues ____
- i) Peer Relationships ____
- j) Better work opportunity ____
- k) Working Conditions including safety concerns ____

Scoring: Consistent top two of importance: salary/benefits and student behavior.

Focus Group Questions

1. Participants 1 and 3 stated they wanted to impact the lives of students in a positive manner as a primary reason for deciding to teach, and a secondary motive was what teaching offered in terms of compensation and benefits at the time. Participant 2 stated salary and the need for a job were the reasons for teaching.

2. Participant 1 and 3 indicated that pre-COVID-19 teaching was essentially as they expected it would be. Participant 2 stated that the level of paperwork and bureaucracy was not expected.
3. Participants 1 and 3 planned on staying in teaching for the remainder of their careers, one would leave if wins the lotto. Participant 2 would leave at any time for a better paying job.
4. Participants 1, 2, and 3 stated they would leave if the financial offer from another job would be compelling enough to do so.
5. Participants 1 and 3 were admittedly not aware of public education policies however did state that mandatory requirements now take an estimated 30% of their time to complete. Participant 2 stated the bureaucracy in the position did not meet expectations.
6. Participants 1 and 3 had no comment because they were admittedly not familiar with policies. Participant 2 stated policies regarding special education need to be more efficient and consider input from the special education teachers because they are in no way in line with reality.

One hundred percent of participants completed the informed consent document, 100% completed the survey, and 100% participated in the focus group.

Survey Data: Second Pilot Test, October 2020

The entire month of September was dedicated to setting up the first study session. It was decided, after receiving unanimous feedback that an in-person session would not be acceptable to teachers, to move the study group to a Zoom meeting. Informed consents were emailed to each participant personally, and teachers were directed to the

online survey via a link that was also sent to their personal email. Zoom participants were highly engaged and provided meaningful depth to their responses. The participant group totaled 14. However, only six participants returned a signed consent form, resulting in a return of 43% and unusable data. Participant survey results for this second focus group had a completion rate of 78%. Zoom meetings therefore reduced the completion rate by 22% for survey completion and 57% for submitting a signed informed consent, which resulted in this researcher not being able to use the data. Consistent reminders had no impact on exciting the teachers enough to get the consents signed and submitted; they often cited feelings of being overwhelmed and made promises that went unfulfilled to submit the documentation. Consultation with one high school principal disclosed the reality that her teachers have communicated significant distress related to constant Zoom exposure and the professional and personal strain they have been experiencing related to the COVID-19 reality. Survey results are presented in Appendix C.

Focus Group Feedback Pilot 2

1. The majority of responses were that teachers wanted to do something meaningful and reach others. Most often cited by participants was that they wanted (a) to share their love of learning with others and connect with others daily, (b) wanted a career with security for family, and (c) wanted a career that allowed them to be with family on off times.
2. Participants 1 through 14 cited that daily responsibilities have not largely met expectations as less time is spent with the actual teaching and connecting in

comparison to the amount of paperwork and meetings. The amount of nonteaching work was not expected.

3. Most responses were a decision to stay until retirement, with the sideline comment, “providing I continue to feel I am making a difference in the lives of the children I teach.” Participants 3 and 4 commented that COVID-19 and distance learning have made them feel as if they should consider another career.
4. The number one factor that would influence leaving teaching was finding a career that paid significantly more money. Participant 14 stated that leaving if personal safety became an issue was a possibility.
5. All participants except Participant 2 felt that no policies had met their expectations and were overwhelmed by how many there were and that they were possibly unaware of all of them. Participant 2 cited affirmatively in favor of the special education policies.
6. Most of the consistent feedback communicated a greater need for school funding, teacher support at leadership levels, and fewer paperwork requirements. Participant 5 suggested the need for the development of programs that supported teachers in “refueling” to create more positive environments for teachers emotionally.

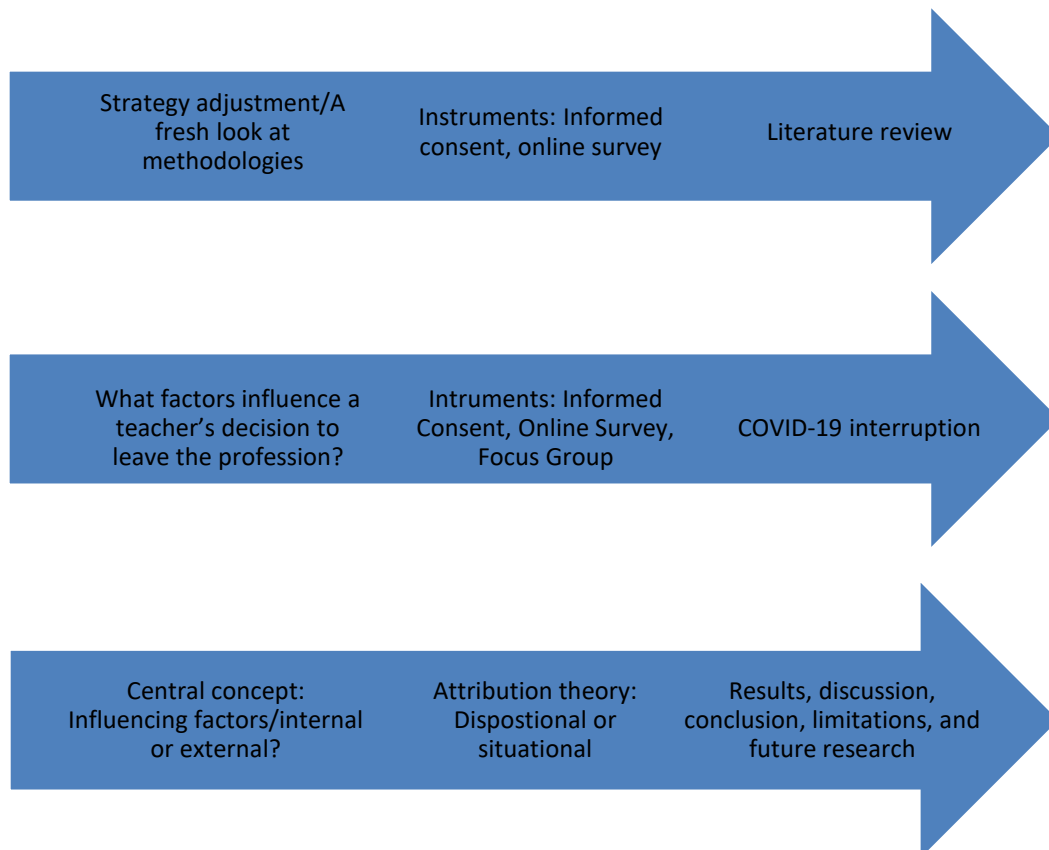
Study 3

In December 2020 and based on prior experience and feedback, this researcher adjusted methodology to include just the survey questions and sought the assistance of teachers from each district to solicit peers for the study. For their efforts they were compensated \$100. Those efforts resulted in 21 participants taking the survey with a completion rate of 100%. However, only 16 participants submitted a signed informed consent form, which is approximately 76.5% of *N*. Timing was planned in accordance

with the teachers' finals schedule with the goal of not adding extra stress on teachers during grading time. Discussions with recruiters resulted in choosing a time prior to the holiday break as it was believed by the recruiters that teachers would not want to be bothered with anything teacher related on their down time. It should be noted that prior to sending out this request for participation, the researcher tested the CBU email address to be sure that consent forms being emailed were being delivered. The test was successful, and no apparent email address errors exist. These numbers continue to express a significant level of teacher COVID distress. After careful consideration and analysis of what this researcher should do to move forward, study efforts were placed into a process flow map (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Process Flow Map



Following are data collected during the COVID 19 pandemic from teachers using an online survey-only platform. Data are expressed in Figures 2-36 and reflect the demographic information related to the teachers who participated as well as Likert-scale results from questions related to why they stay in the teaching profession.

Research December 2020

Report for Dina Schon Teacher Survey

Dina Schon Teacher Survey

Figure 2

Response Statistics

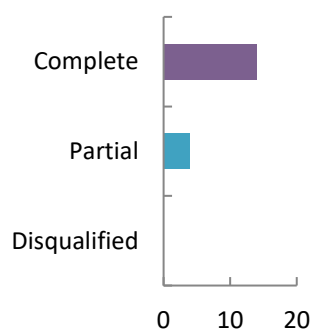
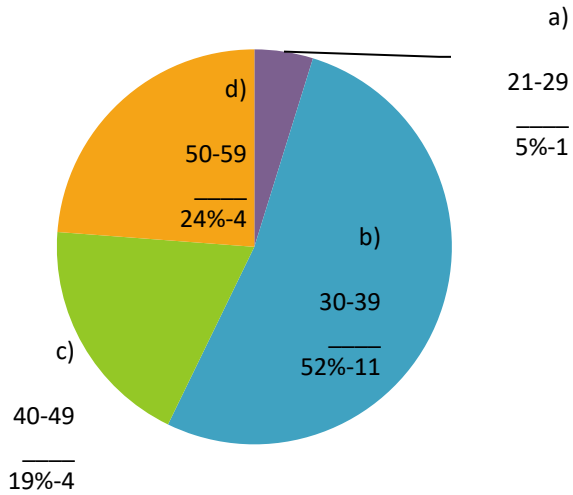


Figure 3

Age Range

1. What is your age? Please check the range that applies to you.

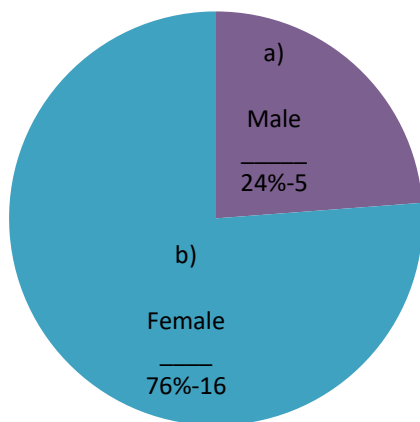


Note. 5% = 1, 19% = 4, 24% = 5, 52% = 11.

Figure 4

Gender

2. What is your gender? Please check which best applies to you.

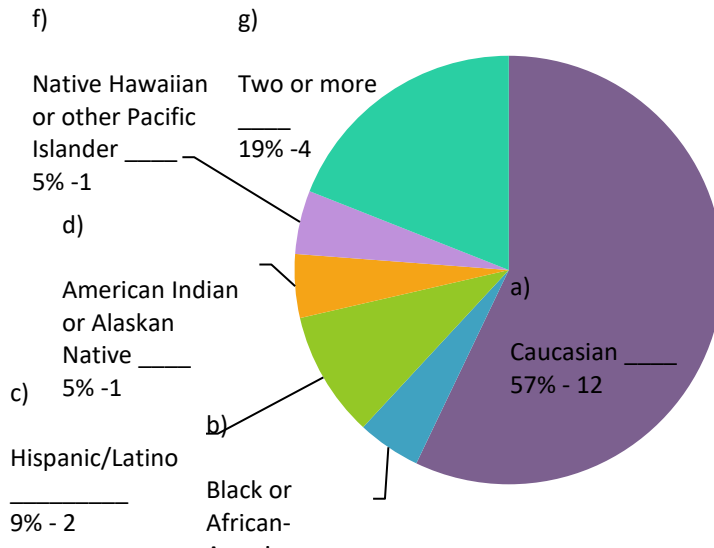


Note. 24% = 5, 76% = 16.

Figure 5

Ethnicity

3. What is your ethnicity? Please check which best applies to you.

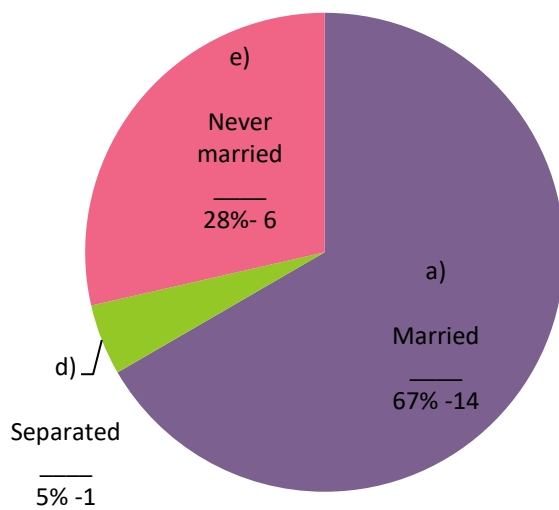


Note. 5% = 1, 5% = 1, 9% = 2, 19% = 4, 57% = 12.

Figure 6

Marital Status

4. What is your marital status? Please check which best applies to you.

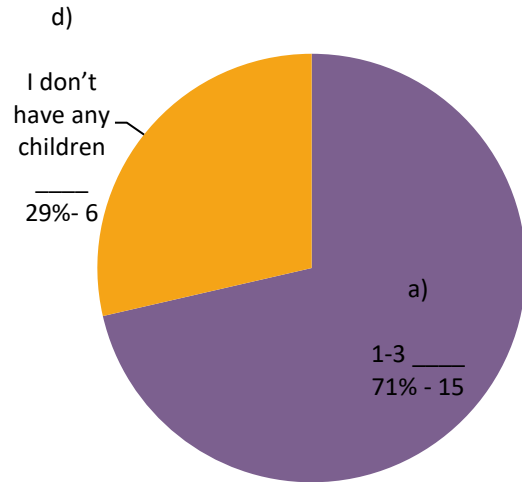


Note. 5% = 1, 28% = 6, 67% = 14.

Figure 7

Number of Children

5. How many children do you have (if any)? Please check which best applies to you.

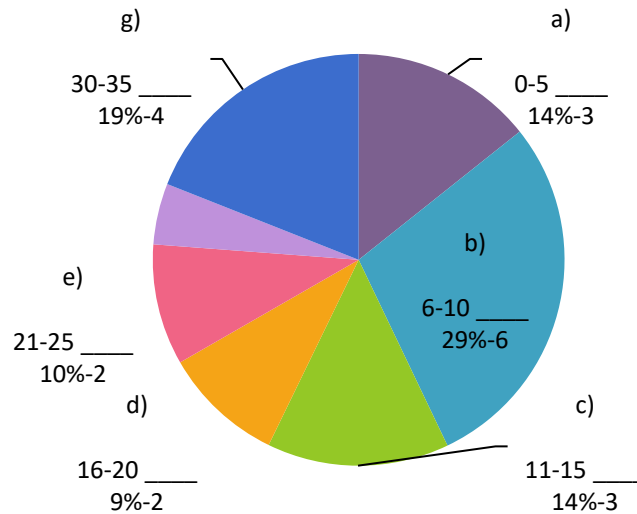


Note. 29%=6, 71%=15.

Figure 8

Years of Experience

6. How many years of experience teaching do you have? Please check which best applies to you:

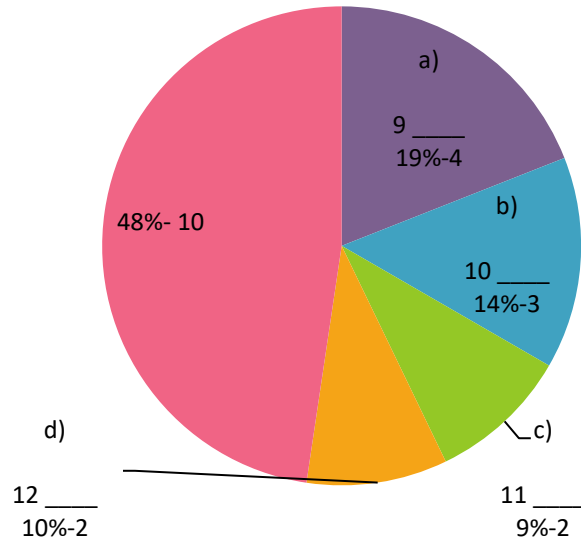


Note. 9%=2, 10%=2, 14%=3, 14%=4, 19%=4, 29%=6.

Figure 9

Grade Level Taught

7. What grade level do you currently teach? Please check which best applies to you.

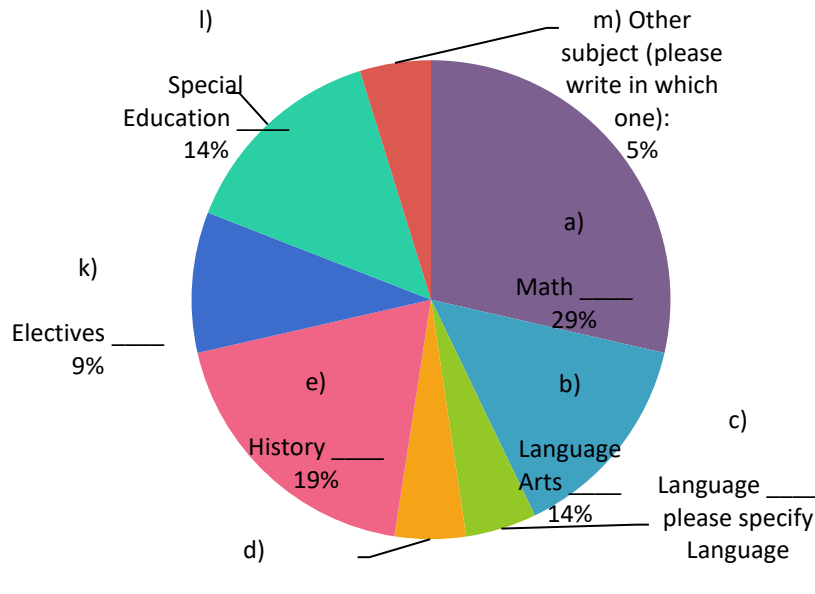


Note. 48%=10, 19%=4, 10%=2, 14%=3.

Figure 10

Academic Subjects Taught

8. What academic subjects do you currently teach? Please check all that apply.

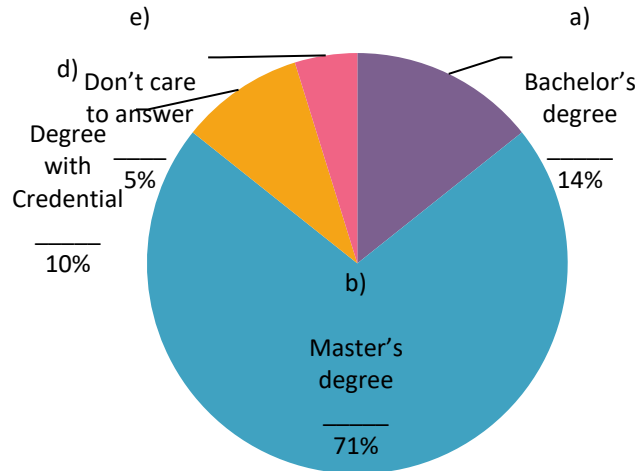


Note. 5%=1, 9%=2, 14%=3, 14%=3, 19%=4, 29%=6.

Figure 11

Education Level

9. What is your education level? Please check all that apply.

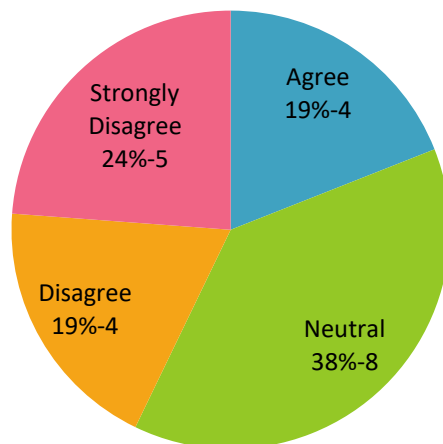


Note. 5%=1,10%=2,14%=3,71%=15.

Figure 12

Influence of Financial Compensation on Becoming a Teacher

10. The financial compensation I earn as a teacher influenced my choice to become a teacher.

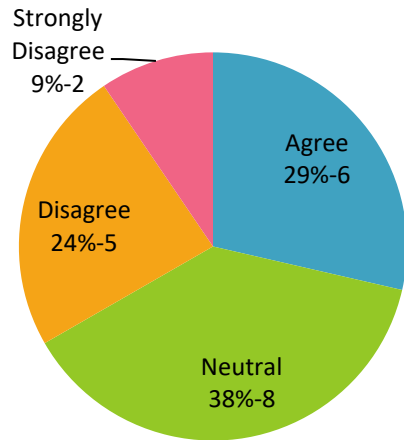


Note. 19%=4,19%=4,24%=5,38%=8.

Figure 13

Influence of Financial Compensation on Leaving Teaching

11. The financial compensation I earn as a teacher may influence my decision to leave teaching.

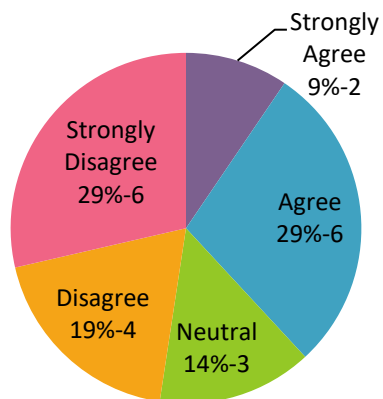


Note. 9%=2, 24%=5, 29%=6, 38%=8.

Figure 14

Influence of Benefits Package on Becoming a Teacher

12. The benefits package I earn as a teacher (medical, dental, vision, life insurance, and vacation time) influenced my choice to become a teacher.

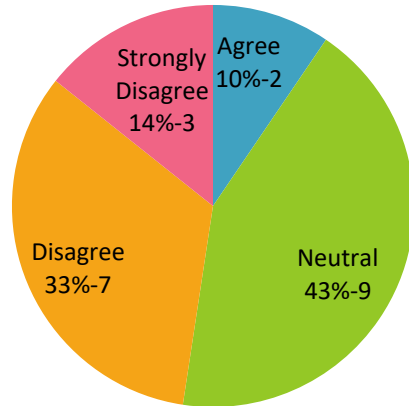


Note. 9%=2, 14%=3, 19%=4, 29%=6, 29%=6.

Figure 15

Influence of Benefits on Leaving Teaching

13. The benefits package I earn as a teacher (medical, dental, vision, life insurance, and vacation time) may influence my decision to leave the teaching profession.

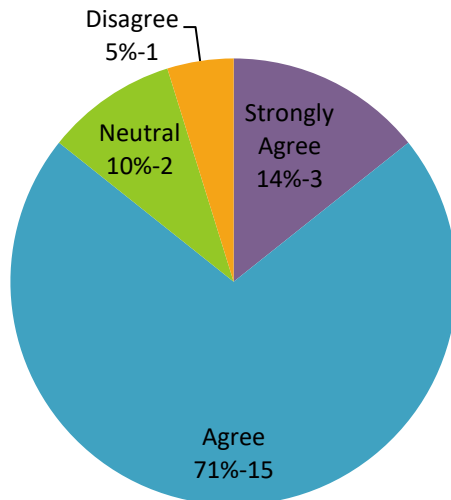


Note. 10%=2, 14%=3, 33%=7, 43%=9.

Figure 16

Teaching Met Expectations

14. My work as a teacher has generally met my expectations.

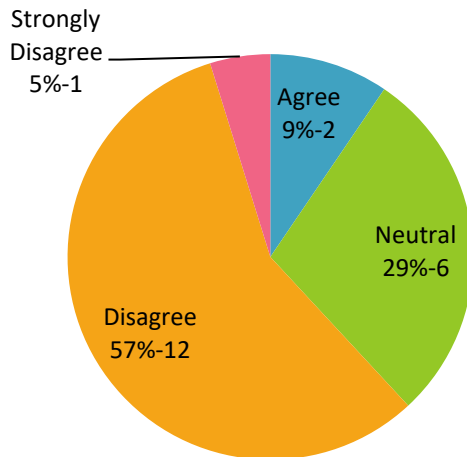


Note. 5%=1, 10%=2, 14%=3, 71%= 15.

Figure 17

Teaching Did Not Meet Expectations

15. My work as a teacher has generally not met my expectations.

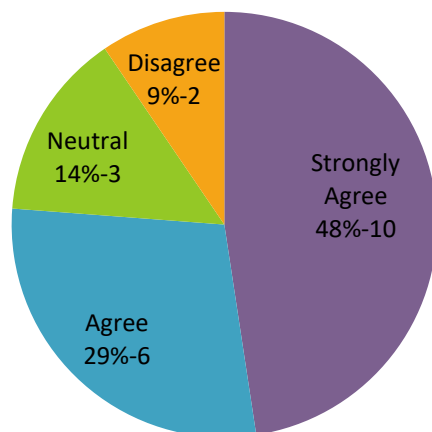


Note. 5%=1, 9%=2, 29%=6, 57%=12.

Figure 18

Teaching Until Retirement

16. I plan on continuing to teach until retirement.

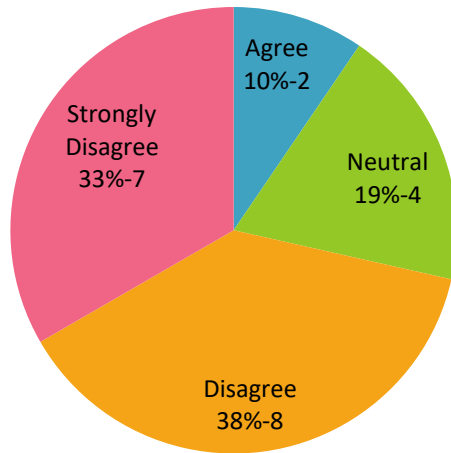


Note. 9%=2, 14%=3, 29%=6, 48%=10.

Figure 19

Leaving Teacher Before Retirement

17. I plan on leaving teaching before retirement.

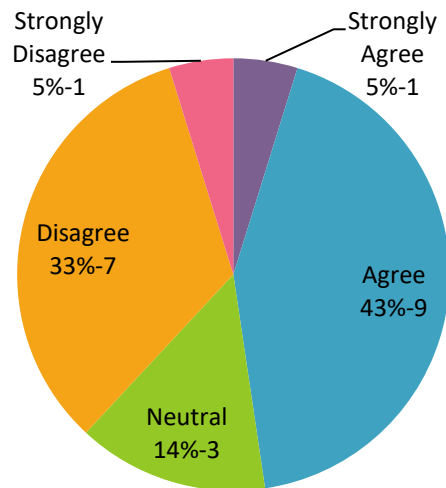


Note. 10%=2, 19%=4, 33%=7, 38%=8.

Figure 20

Job Conditions Were Expected

18. Job conditions (hours, safety, and peers) are what I expected.

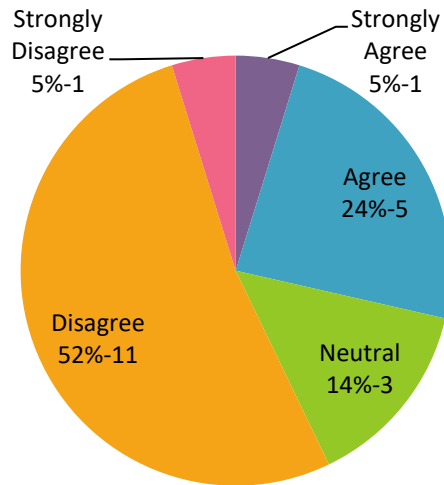


Note. 5%=1, 5%=1, 14%=3, 33%=7, 43%=9.

Figure 21

Job Conditions Reason for Leaving Teaching

19. Job conditions (hours, safety, and peers) may be why I leave teaching.

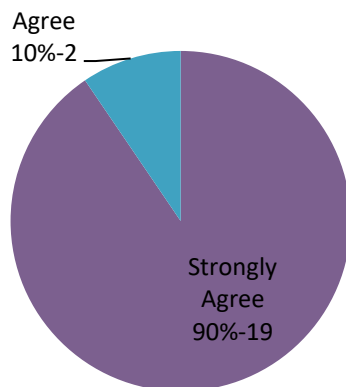


Note. 5%=1, 5%=1, 14%=3, 24%=5, 52%=11.

Figure 22

Working With Students Influenced Becoming a Teacher

20. Being able to work with students influenced my choice to become a teacher.

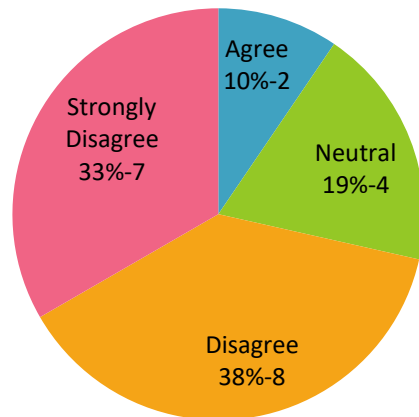


Note. 10%=2, 90%=19.

Figure 23

Challenges Working With Students Influence Leaving Teaching

21. The challenges of working with students may influence my decision to leave the teaching profession.

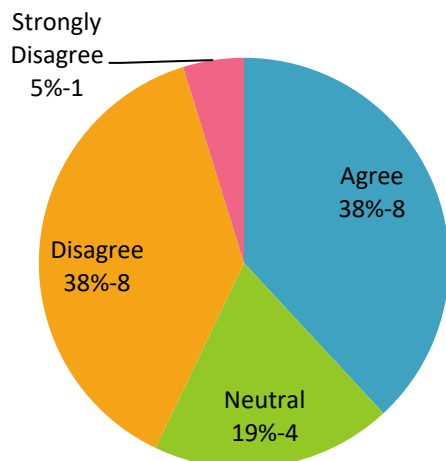


Note. 10%=2, 19%=4, 33%=7, 38%=8.

Figure 24

Teaching Policies are Manageable

22. I find teaching policies (curriculum standards to be met, reporting and grading requirements, accountability standards, student discipline guidelines etc.), and non-teaching related requirements (district meetings, monitoring student clubs, peer interactions etc.), manageable.

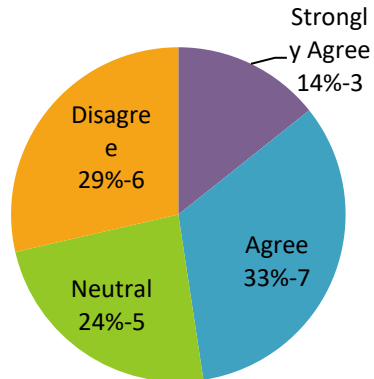


Note. 5%=1, 19%=4, 38%=8, 38%=8.

Figure 25

Teaching Policies Are Not Manageable

23. I find teaching policies (curriculum standards to be met, reporting and grading requirements, accountability standards, student discipline guidelines etc.), and non-teaching related requirements (district meetings, monitoring student clubs, peer interactions etc.), not manageable.

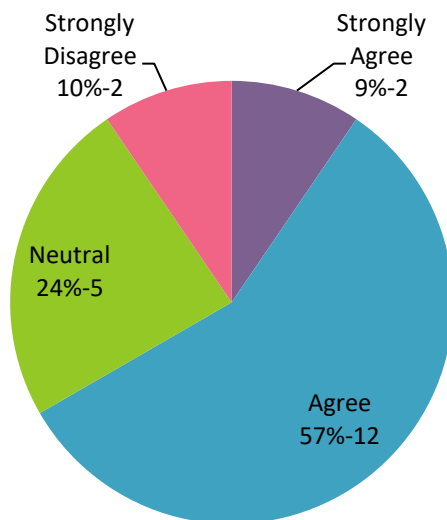


Note. 14%=3, 24%=5, 29%= 6, 33%=7.

Figure 26

Leadership Supported Career

24. Leadership has supported me in my career.

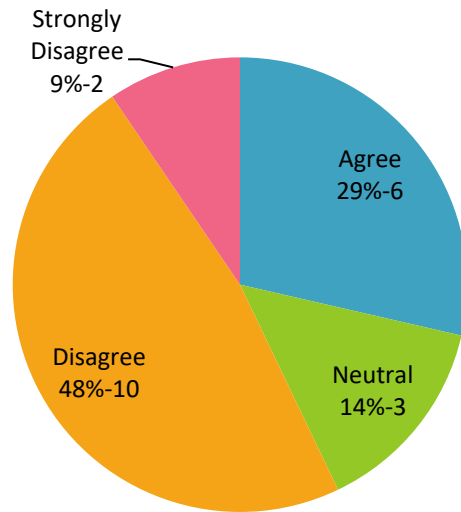


Note. 9%=2, 10%=2, 24%=5, 57%=12.

Figure 27

Leadership Concerns Cause Leaving Teaching

25. Leadership concerns may cause me to leave teaching.

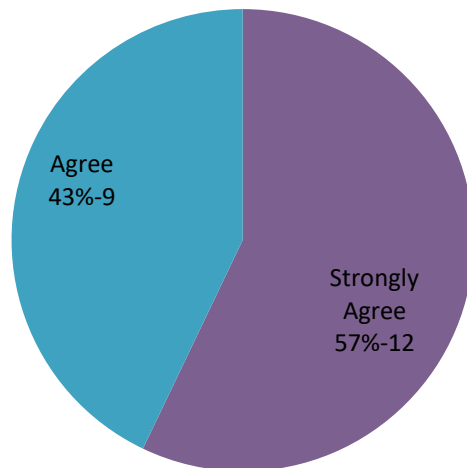


Note. 9%=2, 14%=3, 29%=6, 48%=10.

Figure 28

Teaching Is a Fulfilling Vocation

26. I feel that teaching is a fulfilling vocation.

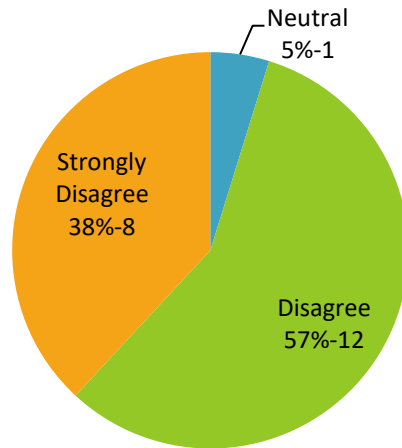


Note. 43%=9, 57%=12.

Figure 29

Teaching Is Not a Fulfilling Vocation

27. I feel that teaching has not been a fulfilling vocation.

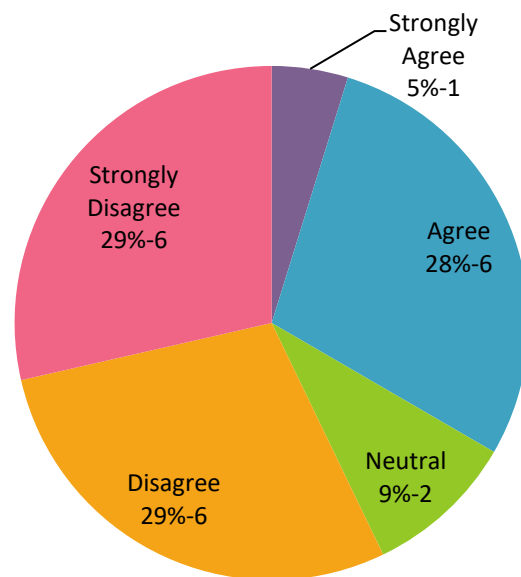


Note. 5%=1,38%=8,57%=12.

Figure 30

Family Concerns Influenced Becoming a Teacher

28. Family concerns (childcare, elder care, or divorce) influenced my choice to become a teacher.

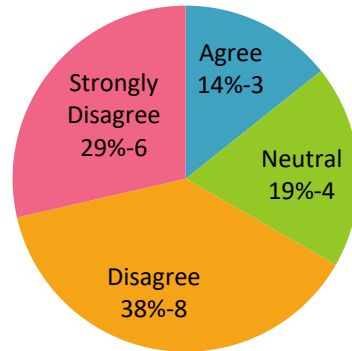


Note. 5%=1,9%=2,28%=6,29%=6,29%=6.

Figure 31

Family Concerns Influence Leaving Teaching

29. Family concerns (childcare, elder care, or divorce) may influence my decision to leave teaching.

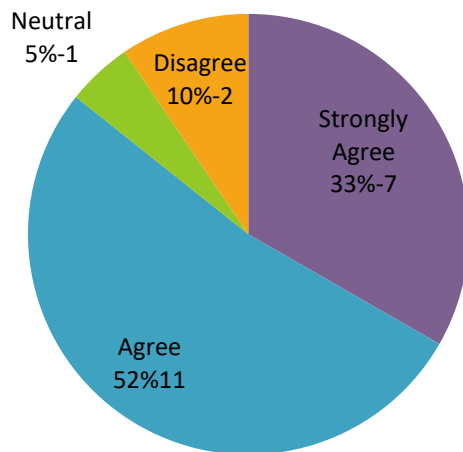


Note. 14%=3,19%=4,29%=6,38%=8.

Figure 32

Reasons for Teaching the Same as Reasons to Stay

30. The reasons why I wanted to teach remain the reasons why I stay.

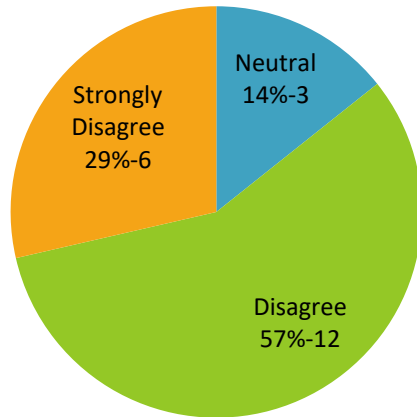


Note. 5%=1,10%=2,33%=7,52%=11.

Figure 33

Reasons for Teaching Not Realized Is Reason for Leaving

31. The reasons why I wanted to teach have not been realized and may be why I leave teaching.

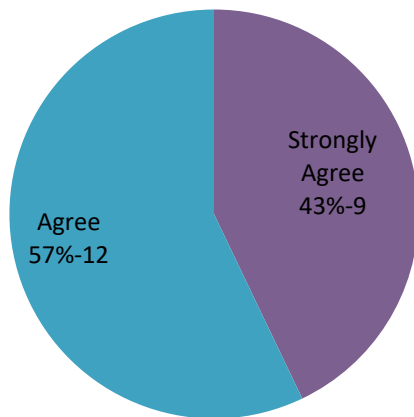


Note. 14%=3,29%=6,57%=12.

Figure 34

Making a Positive Difference in Students' Lives

32. I feel I am making a positive difference in students' lives.

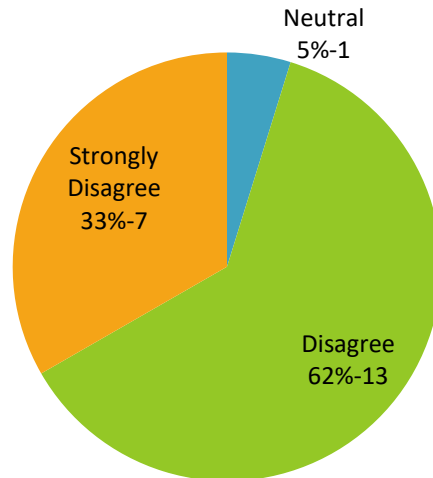


Note. 43%=9,57%=12.

Figure 35

No Influence on Students' Success

33. I feel I have little to no influence on my students' success.

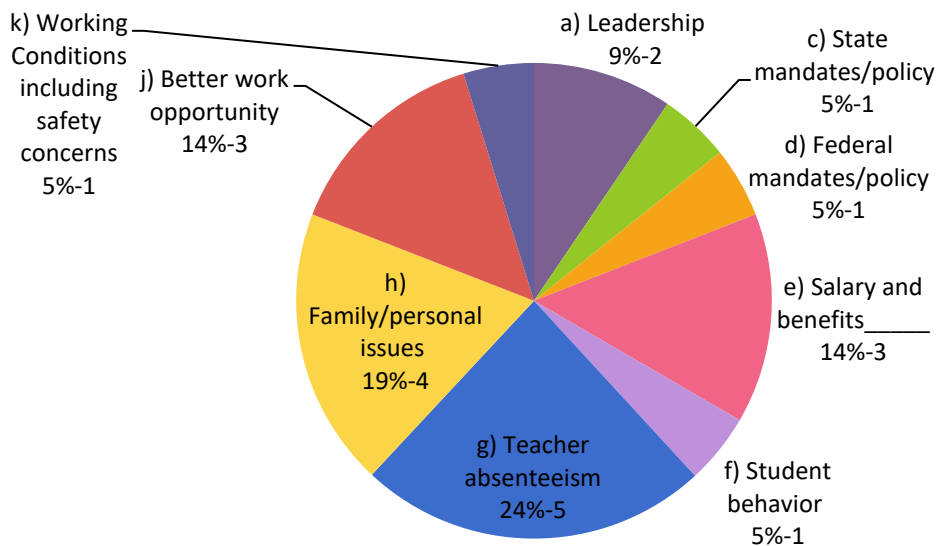


Note. 5%=1,33%=7,62%=13.

Figure 36

Ranking of Influences on Staying in Teaching Vocation

34. Please rank the following factors by priority in terms of influencing your decision to stay or leave the teaching vocation; 1 being most important, and 11 being least important.



Note. 5%=1,5%=1,5%=1, 5%=1,9%=2,14%=3, 14%=3,19%=4,24%=5.

Final Attempt

A decision was made to attempt one more try in attracting teachers to participate in this research project, this time with the goal of appealing to a sense of “New Year Resolution” mindset. This researcher contacted both peer recruiters, and on the morning of January 6, 2021, a mass email was sent out once again to teachers in which the survey link and informed consent documents were provided. There was zero participation in terms of access to the link as well as any submission of an informed consent document.

Analysis and Findings from Original Study Protocol

Will (2020) suggested that COVID-19 quarantine has developed a deeper empathic connection between teachers and students. Although that may appear to be the case, my findings indicated that if teaching continued to occur remotely, teachers would be inclined not to stay engaged emotionally with students, which contradicts Will’s findings. This is evidenced by feedback shared by participants in the first Zoom session. That session was at the height of the pandemic and Zoom fatigue but did not result in teachers letting go of their original beliefs regarding teaching. For example, when responding to what influenced decision to become a teacher, all participants responded, “a desire to positively influence the lives of students through education.” All participants stated that they would stay in teaching until retirement and that although daily activities were not exactly as they believed them to be, the fact that they were able to positively impact the lives of their students made them stay in the profession.

COVID-19 Considerations

The global pandemic COVID-19 created unprecedented challenges for teachers and educational administrators and had an incredible impact on everything from safety

concerns to budget and policy considerations. At the genesis of this research concept, the idea of a COVID-19-like event was not even contemplated. It goes without saying that the long-lasting emotional effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will be substantial.

Education policy decision makers will be faced with new challenges moving forward and will be required to deepen the understanding of teacher needs to support an increase in educator decisions to stay in the vocation. For the purposes of this study and because of the newness of COVID-19, its influence related to attribution factors is expected to impact three potential areas: safety, school environment, and policy making issues.

Zoom Distress

A recent article in *Psychiatric Times* J. Lee (2020) discussed the very real biopsychosocial effects of an individual having to conduct most daily activities that were once in person online via Zoom. The resulting complaints regarding Zoom fatigue in fact have a biological basis as well as an emotional component. This new version of distress has been studied from a technically triggered perspective, meaning that one concern for users is the lapsed delay in sound that occurs often and results in over taxing brain chemistry. Adding to the distress may be the pressures individuals are facing in their own lives as well because of deficits related to either sickness, economic or social concerns, or all these issues combined. Regarding teachers, one positive reward of their vocation is the interaction with students, and a Zoom environment significantly changes that dynamic. Neuropathways related to reward systems identify the changed reality of lessened student contact, even perhaps fewer effective relationships, and the idea that perception creates mental fatigue. Additionally, teachers may carry the emotional load of their students given they are face-to-face with them more than anyone else in that

student's day, and the distress carried by the children related to COVID concerns magnifies what the teacher as an individual may already be experiencing him or herself.

About the Districts

The Chino Valley Unified School District is in San Bernardino County, California and was founded in 1860. It covers over 88 square miles and serves students K-12 living in the cities of Chino, Chino Hills, and the southwestern portion of Ontario, California. The district has an estimated 32,000 students in attendance and approximately 1,300 teachers. There are four high schools within this district: Ruben S. Ayala and Chino Hills High School, both in Chino Hills, California; and Chino High School and Don Antonio Lugo High School, both in Chino, California.

Chino High School has an estimated 1,900 students and 85 teachers; Chino Hills High School has an estimated 3,000 students and 104 teachers; Ruben S. Ayala has an estimated 2,800 students and 112 teachers, and Don Antonio Lugo has an estimated 1700 students and 85 teachers. Academically, this district's high schools are respectably ranked nationally, with Ayala being in the top 5% (Chino Valley Unified School District CVUSD], 2021).

The Chaffey Joint Union High School District (CJUHSD) is also located in San Bernardino County California. It is one of the largest high school districts in the state with over 25,000 students, serving the cities of Ontario, Montclair, Rancho Cucamonga, and sections of Fontana, Upland, Chino, and Mount Baldy. This district serves eight high schools: Chaffey High School, Ontario High School, Montclair High School, Alta Loma High School, Los Osos High School, Colony High School, Rancho Cucamonga High School, and Etiwanda High School. The district employs an estimated 1,042 teachers and

ranks in the top percentages nationally, with Los Osos High School in the 5th percentile (CJUHSD, n.d.).

Summary

The intention of this study was to explore and understand beliefs that influence secondary public school teachers' decisions to stay in their profession. In examining this public policy issue from the standpoint of attribution theory, the focus was to understand the factors influencing why teachers stay.

Research Question

The original research question for this case study was “What belief(s) is(are) perceived to be attributed to influencing a high school teacher’s decision to stay in the teaching profession?”

Ancillary Research Question

The ancillary research question for this case study was “What methodological research approach was most effective in exploring teacher dispositional beliefs at Chaffey Joint Union High School and Chino Valley school districts during a pandemic?”

Data

The final data sample resulted in the completion of an online study by 21 participants. Of those participants, 16 returned a signed consent form. A dedicated effort was made to collect the remaining five with no result. Two subsequent attempts were made to attract more teachers to the survey with no result.

The third attempt for research eliminated the focus group instrument and acclimated the study to utilize the informed consent document and online survey. Complete reporting was presented previously and also appears in Appendix C of this

document. The first pilot test resulted in 100% useable data. The second pilot study resulted in less than 40% return rate on the informed consent documents, which made the data collected unusable. The third study attempt resulted in a 76.5% return on the informed consent participant form. Research that does not require written consent in most institutions is studies that present no more than minimal, if any, risks. Given the nature of anonymity of this researcher's online survey, it can be considered that those who wish to not consent simply did not complete the online survey. Additionally, the survey for this study was not conducted in a coercive manner. All participants did receive the informed consent and were encouraged to read and sign it. The lack of follow through in returning the signed consent suggests that during a national pandemic, such as the COVID-19 outbreak, the traditional qualitative instruments used to collect data from teachers are not effective.

Dispositional and Situational Attribution

In the case of the original study, the intention was to clarify from a dispositional attribution perspective the beliefs that influenced teachers' decisions to stay in their job. The data collected suggest that from a dispositional attribution perspective, with 85% reporting either agree or strongly agree, the teachers in this survey have met their original expectations and reasons for entering the profession. Additionally, 79% stated they plan to teach until retirement. Only 50% reported that job conditions were what they imagined them to be; it should be noted that 50% cited those conditions may be why they leave. Regarding Interview Question 21, which asked whether challenges with students may influence the decision to leave the teaching profession, nearly 30% indicated agreement. This relevance relates potentially to the COVID-19 situation as in the second

focus group, teachers mentioned a growing frustration with lack of and interrupted access to students and student interaction. Related to dispositional analysis, the goal of clarifying the relationship between one's beliefs and expectancies in terms of vocational fulfillment was determined to best be revealed through the individual's attributions. For example, if a teacher attributes his or her meaning gained from teaching to come from positive student interaction and if those relationships are continually strained, is that enough reason for the educator to leave? At the same time, if student interaction is highly regarded and consistently positive, is that enough to keep the teacher from leaving? Dispositional attributions identify factors/beliefs that are of value to teachers and may be the driving force in the decision to stay versus leave the job. As this study evolved however, it became clear that the COVID-19 environment had affected the process of data collection intended but interestingly provided an alternate view of attribution theory with the indication that situational attribution may carry as much significance of influence as one's own beliefs. Although much of the data collected were of no use considering a low return of consent forms and an unwillingness to participate, that very reality presents insight into the potential for the decision to stay in one's teaching position to be drawn from outside causes or influences. COVID-19 has altered our psychological and physical world and individual lifestyles in ways that very few could have predicted and regarding teacher attrition, it may be some time before actual attrition rates for 2020 are connected to the pandemic.

Analysis of the useable data expressed consistency among participants in all three study groups (although Group 2 data were not useable). For purposes of exploring teacher attrition from a dispositional attribution perspective, teachers indicated that their

relationship with students was the primary influencer in drawing them to the profession, and it is their belief in continuing to make a difference in the lives of students that keeps them in the vocation. The belief and perception of having a positive impact in the lives of students is a driving force for these teachers so much so that 100% (first study) and 93% (third study) stated as such. Additionally, issues related to students were cited as the most influential reason for entering teaching and the decisions to stay, followed by policy-mandated requirements and working conditions. This trifecta force remained a constant in discussions and survey data, pointing to the potential for multiple solutions being necessary to reduce teacher attrition rather than looking to a singular source. Leadership influences followed the trifecta grouping in terms of ranking, but interestingly, they were not meaningfully discussed in the first focus group or the second (unable to use the results from the second focus group). Demographic data were consistent with research from literature in the regard that teachers with experience beyond 5 years remain in their jobs more than those with less than 5 years of experience. In Study 3, more than 90% of teachers were in the profession for greater than 10 years.

The COVID-19 national pandemic caused data collection to fail or certainly not meet the standards this researcher was expecting to achieve. The participant group in the third scaled down study totaled 21 with 76.5% conversion into useable data. It can be gleaned from the survey data in all tests (pilot, first attempt, and third attempt) that teachers in these districts have a desire to connect with and inspire students. In both online surveys, the desire to influence students was the reason for teaching, and 100% of responding participants felt teaching was fulfilling and that they had a positive impact on their students. Eighty-six percent of responding participants stated that their original

expectations of teaching had been met, which was in line with the desire to teach until retirement. This is compared to 50% reporting that job conditions did not meet original expectations, with 29% of participants stating that reason may be what influences a decision to leave.

Regarding instruments, the pilot test proved to be the most viable in terms of the ability to collect all necessary documents to complete the study. In person, the researcher was able to collect the signed informed consent, have the survey completed, and enter participants into meaningful discussion in a focus group. The occurrence of a national pandemic created a justifiable fear, which could be attributed to participants' lack in attending to the necessary follow through and access points this study required.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The topic of public education and the ways to improve policymaking related to teacher attrition has been a subject of political debate at local, state, and federal levels for decades, particularly since the 1983 release of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform Report* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Teacher attrition is a public policy problem that is best resolved by first determining the beliefs influencing the issue, such as school leadership, teacher participation, salary levels, and organizational environments. A recent study suggests that today's teacher shortage crisis is in large part caused by attrition rates, which further intensify the snowball effect and impact the loss of teachers has on society as well as its implications on public policymaking. The study suggests that an estimated two thirds of teachers leave their jobs before they reach the age of retirement (Heubeck, 2020a). Teachers' decisions to stay have been disproportionately studied as compared to teachers' decisions to leave their positions. The latter have been viewed from several theories, most of which focus on function-based tasks and not on inter and intrapersonal skills (Cheng, 1994; Lashway, 2001; Marzano et al., 2005; Mendez-Morse, 1992). This study aimed at understanding a teacher's decision to stay as related to dispositional belief perspectives.

Following the No Child Left behind Act of 2001, interest from all stakeholders created a laser-focused intention toward developing public policy that was reflective of accountability-based measurement of representation and legitimacy. It considered policy decisions that operated within the boundaries of educational reform for all communities at local and national levels (No Child Left Behind, 2003). A crucial area of focus resulting from this policy was teacher quality, which has been discussed as a potential

cause of teacher attrition within-year occurrences (Louis et al., 2010). This lends itself to a belief system that undergirds the original direction this study was on course to take—looking at how dispositional attribution (motivation and capacity) influence teacher attrition.

The COVID-19 pandemic ushered in an unprecedented level of professional frustration for public secondary school teachers. An original desire to understand the beliefs that influence teacher attrition within two secondary public school (high school) Southern California districts morphed into an eagerness to understand how beliefs undergird decisions to stay while in a pandemic. Understanding the beliefs that influence secondary public school teachers' decisions to stay in the profession presents areas of public policy concern for all stakeholders. The negative effect on taxpayers is an estimated \$8 billion annually because of teacher replacement and district costs that were calculated per school and district by state (Ware, 2016).

Technology has supported researchers with ample tools and instruments with which to study participants and gather information. The most often used instruments in qualitative research are interviews, surveys, focus groups, and in-person observation. Although under normal circumstances these instruments have advantages and disadvantages, the impact of a pandemic related to their use, especially upon the teaching profession, is presently not understood. The effectiveness of these instruments came into question as COVID-19 impacted our national education system and affected teachers both personally and professionally. This study has been an exploration into the uncharted waters of the utilization of these methods during a pandemic. At the same time, it opened

a new perspective, from this researcher's point of view, into providing a spotlight on the potential for situational attributes influencing teacher attrition.

Research Question

The original research question for this qualitative study was "What belief(s) is(are) perceived to be attributed to influencing a high school teacher's decision to stay in the teaching profession?"

Ancillary Research Question

The ancillary research question for this case study was "What methodological research approach was most effective in exploring teacher dispositional beliefs at Chaffey Joint Union High School and Chino Valley school districts during a pandemic?"

The final data sample resulted in the completion of an online study by 21 participants. Of those participants, 16 returned a signed consent form. A dedicated effort was made to collect the remaining five with no result. Two subsequent attempts were made to attract more teachers to the survey with no result.

The third attempt for research eliminated the focus group instrument and acclimated the study to utilize the informed consent document and online survey. Complete reporting was presented in Chapter 4 as well as in Appendix C of this document. The first pilot test resulted in 100% useable data. The second pilot study resulted in less than 40% return rate on the informed consent documents, which made the data collected unusable. The third study resulted in a 76.5% return on the informed consent participant form. Research that does not require written consent in most institutions is studies that present no more than minimal, if any risks. Given the nature of anonymity of this researcher's online survey, it can be suggested that those who wish to

not consent simply did not complete the online survey. Additionally, the survey for this study was not conducted in a coercive manner. All participants did receive the informed consent and were encouraged to read and sign it. The lack of follow-through in returning the signed consent suggests that during a national pandemic such as the COVID-19 outbreak the traditional qualitative instruments used to collect data from teachers are not effective.

Qualitative data were gathered from a participant population made up of high school teachers. An examination of the perspectives of the study participants in each focus group explored dispositional attributes related to beliefs that result in teacher attrition. It was the hope of this researcher that the findings from this study would add meaningful context to the ongoing research related to why teachers stay in their positions and offer policy decision makers viable information necessary to support teacher retention.

The sample in this study utilized a nonprobability sampling design with a focus on purposive sampling because this research involved participants who had been identified to have the shared characteristics related to the topic and research questions. Participants were randomly selected. Incentives included an offer of free lunch and a \$10 gift card toward Starbucks for their participation.

Participants were recruited by peer teachers and not selected because of any specific characteristics. All were high school teachers, but demographics on these teachers may vary. For example, there was no preference for male versus female teachers, single or married, and the expectancy of the researcher was that demographic

factors would vary. Union leaders were not interviewed to avoid bias that could lead to misinterpretation of the actual lived experiences of the teachers staying in their positions.

Focus groups were to be conducted in an in-depth open-ended manner in which questions would be asked while group members were encouraged to explore the presented issues. Because of COVID concerns, the focus groups were scheduled to be conducted on Zoom, and the informed consent was to be completed online during the session. Zoom sessions were to include eight to 11 participants. All sessions were recorded for accuracy of data collection and subsequently transcribed using Live Transcribe™.

Participants were de-identified during focus group discussion and each was given a hand-held sign to lift (if participating in person) identified them by their associated sign in number. Participants were observed both audibly and visually by the researcher. Participants were instructed to raise a sign with their identification number when wishing to contribute feedback to an answer during the focus group. If the focus group was to be conducted via Zoom, participants were to unmute their audio to communicate.

The focus group began with an informed consent discussion. Anonymity was provided by de-identifying teachers. This researcher then followed with open-ended questions in an interview format within the parameters of a focus group. Interview and observation data were collected and analyzed to determine saturation levels regarding themes and/or emerging concepts related to the disclosures by the teachers. The only focus group session was structured with open-ended questions to inspire discussion among participants who may or may not have had shared experiences.

Consideration of individual personalities that may have impacted group dynamics was an area viewed and managed as it was considered to provide a deeper understanding of how teacher collaboration may affect an individual's decision to leave his or her position. Additionally, if for some reason an individual did not feel comfortable sharing in the group session, he or she was able to submit perspectives in writing. The anticipated time frame for each focus group session was to not exceed 60 minutes. Participants were free to not provide answers during the focus group if doing so created discomfort.

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

In June 2020, teachers from the two districts were asked to participate in a pilot test. Three teachers participated in a socially distanced focus group session. The purpose of this session was to work out any research-related issues with the instruments or time constraint issues and to debug any technical issues. Participants were given lunch and a \$10 Starbucks gift card as an incentive. The group consisted of two males and one female and resulted in the correction of one survey question that had a typo, fixing recording issues with the transcription software, and identifying that 60 minutes would be needed. It should be noted that the three teachers who participated were acquainted with the researcher and that confirming their attendance, although not entirely without challenges, was ultimately successful.

After this session, it was decided to put the survey instrument on the website Survey Gizmo, now known as Alchemer, to simplify the process. At the end of June 2020, recruitment for teachers from the two districts began with little to no success. At Chaffey Joint Union High School District, the principals of the high schools sent emails

to their teachers asking them to participate. At Chino Valley Unified School District, a well-networked teacher contacted peers via email. Ultimately, a group of 14 teachers from Chino Valley Unified School District agreed to participate via a Zoom session and to take the teacher survey online. Informed consents were emailed to the participants and discussed at the beginning of the focus group. Only six out of the 14 participants returned a signed informed consent. The online survey had a 78% completion rate. The focus group was informative, and the data from it, while not useable, is detailed in both the results section and Appendix C of this research document. Ultimately, the data were of no significance, considering this researcher was not able to collect the signed informed consents despite reaching out to participants multiple times.

All further attempts to secure participants from Chaffey Joint Union High School District were not successful. Additionally, efforts to secure more teachers for participation at Chino Valley Unified School District also resulted in failure with teachers citing feeling overwhelmed by COVID, an unwillingness to meet in person because of the virus, and not wanting to meet on Zoom because of being on it all day 5 days per week. In December 2020 based on prior experience and feedback, this researcher then adjusted methodology to include just the survey questions and sought the assistance of teachers from each district to solicit peers for the study. These efforts resulted in 21 participants taking the survey with a completion rate of 100%. Sixteen participants submitted a signed informed consent form, which is approximately 76.5% of *N*. It should be noted that prior to sending out this last request for participation, the researcher tested the CBU email address to be sure that consent forms being emailed were being delivered. The test was successful, and no apparent email address errors existed. These numbers

continue to express a significant level of teacher COVID-related Zoom meeting distress. A final attempt for study was made the morning of January 6, 2021 and resulted in zero participation.

Major Findings

The original intention of this study was guided by an interest in exploring the dispositional attributed beliefs that influence teacher decisions to stay in their vocation. Thorough research was conducted on the topic, all of which focused on dispositional attribution that sought to understand why teachers stay in the profession as explained by an internal choice inspired by a personal belief system. Factors such as teacher's salary, job conditions, leadership support, and so on were scoured over in terms of their influence on a teacher's decision to stay in the profession. The school districts were chosen for the following reasons: (a) proximity to researcher, (b) diversity of districts both in comparison and within each district in terms of demographic factors, and (c) ability to attract teachers through contacts for increased participant opportunities.

Then COVID-19 presented, and the world as we knew it changed drastically. The tensile strength of teachers from an emotional perspective was tested in ways it had not been prior to the pandemic. The significant and often overlooked role teachers fulfill in this nation came into clear view throughout the pandemic experience. Parents complained as many felt they were now burdened with supporting the education of their children or were prevented from working because of the need to be present while their child attended an online class. Others were faced with not having the technology necessary to support an online platform. On the other side of the equation were teachers, who were already stretched to mandated limits, finding themselves with the unexpected

reality of having to engage and teach in a new (and rushed) format with mandated requirements that still needed to be met amidst the fear and unknowns, both personal and professional. There was loss. An understanding of the immense impact the national pandemic has had on teachers will be unknown for some time. The world is forever changed, but nevertheless a debt of gratitude is owed to teachers because it has been their daily interaction and dedication to our children that has kept them engaged in mental and emotional activities that surpassed a focus on the pandemic and continued their educational growth.

Unexpected Findings

The national COVID-19 pandemic severely altered access to teachers and their willingness to participate in this study. The most often used instruments in qualitative research are interviews, surveys, focus groups, and in-person observation. Although under normal circumstances these instruments have advantages and disadvantages, the impact of a pandemic related to their use, especially upon the teaching profession, is presently not understood. The evaluative value of these instruments came into question as COVID-19 impacted our national education system and affected teachers both personally and professionally. This study incurred the unanticipated opportunity to explore the uncharted waters of the utilization and sustainability of traditionally used methodology instruments and the impact a pandemic has on their usability. At the same time, it opened a new perspective, from this researcher's point of view, into providing a spotlight on the potential for situational attributes influencing teacher attrition as discussed previously.

The first challenges emerged during recruitment when teachers openly resisted meeting in person for focus group sessions because of COVID fears, despite promises to socially distance and keep participant attendees to five or fewer. For that reason, this researcher offered Zoom-based focus groups before the start of the fall 2020 school year, which were not ideal in consideration of losing some of the peer interaction benefits but still presented an opportunity to share the focus group questions and engage participants in meaningful discussion. The challenge with this format, however, was that participant follow through on submission of signed informed consents was less than 20%, therefore invalidating the data collected. Additionally, there was only 78% completion of the online survey. It should also be noted that the enticement of a Starbucks gift card was also not taken advantage of with only two participants providing address details for it to be received.

Prospective participants for future focus groups shared feedback to explain lack of commitment; there was no desire to meet in person because of COVID-19 fears, and the thought of meeting on Zoom had no appeal given they are on it 5 days per week and they were experiencing Zoom fatigue. Even attempts at simplifying the process and limiting research instruments to include just the online survey and submission of the signed informed consent met with resistance. The message was loud and clear; teachers were overwhelmed, and my research into dispositional attribution theory shifted and was better supported by situational attribution theory. Additionally, from a qualitative instrument perspective, it is not understood which methodological research approach was most effective in answer to the ancillary research question as compliance in the latter three study attempts was limited or outright failed.

Unanticipated Consequences Because of the Pandemic

The global pandemic created several integral barriers to this research project, most notably the access to teachers and the most efficient manner in which to approach them. When designing methodology protocol, access to teachers was an aspect of this research project that was considered to be the least restrictive component of the study procedures. However, once the pandemic changed the landscape of how education was being conducted as well as how people were all living, seemingly like cave dwellers, access to the most efficient manner to approach teachers became one of this researcher's most significant barriers. Several months of well-prepared architecture of protocol changed into a logistical nightmare. Access to teachers was strained, and of those who were able to be cultivated, getting commitment to engagement and follow-through proved equally as difficult as evidenced by the lack of teachers sending in a signed informed consent.

A study conducted in Washington, D.C. revealed that the teacher recruitment process was affected by COVID-19 and that an adjustment to online interviews became the less-than-ideal norm for leadership to meet potential candidates as well as for those interviewees to tour schools (Coffin & Meghjani, 2020). The shift had leadership adopting new insights on recruitment such as relationship building. Whether or not Washington, D.C.'s outcomes for the 2020-2021 school year will become generalized throughout the country, they offer a promising outlook at least for teacher retention. Throughout the pandemic, the District of Columbia has retained 85% of their educators, which is an 8% increase in teacher retention. Additionally, they maintained 90% of their skilled and effective teachers. At the same time, it was determined that teachers reported

a higher level of mental health issues, and the districts were not able to provide the necessary resources to them. The latter is a possible contributor to teachers not engaging in activities that are school or vocational related outside of their daily teaching responsibilities.

In her exploration of the teaching profession in 2020, Will (2020) characterized the vocation as “exhausting, challenging, and unpredictable” (p. 93). The profession itself is characterized as one under constant pressure not only with personal mental health related issues but also with having to deal with those of their students. Research suggests that teacher morale has declined, and among the culprits is having to work longer hours, especially online, with many fearful about a physical return to in-person schooling because of COVID concerns. In an outcry of teachers, one in five stated that they will leave teaching before returning to in-person instruction, which most analysts suggest will not be the case because the same percentage had claimed they would leave teaching before the end of 2020 because of COVID teaching protocols.

Retirements and resignations were at the same percentage level in 2020 as they were in 2019. Remaining a disturbing problem for teachers is the issue of pay, which as of 2019 was 19.2% lower than other similar college-educated professionals. This is an earnings gap that continues to widen despite awareness of the problem and advocacy efforts on behalf of the nation’s teachers. According to Prothero and Samuels (2020), homeschooling of students in certain parts of the nation is on the rise in percentages above the normal rate of 3%, with 10% of parents choosing to homeschool their children during the pandemic. This economically impacts public schools as in many cases the

utility costs of the student population remain fixed while the funding declines as enrollment goes down.

Conclusions

This study began with an interest in understanding the beliefs that influenced a teacher's decision to stay in the profession and aimed to explore the tendency to do so through a dispositional theoretical framework/lens. Extensive research had presented multiple factors that other researchers suggested contributed to teacher attrition, yet nothing connected the decision(s) to the actual teacher's personality, beliefs, or perceptions, and little if any research presented how beliefs framed the decisions of educators to stay in the profession. This researcher felt strongly that if that connection could be made, educational policymakers might possibly view the challenges differently and begin to develop mandates that more effectively support educators with programs and opportunities that reinforce the positive aspects of the beliefs that led them to teaching, which would positively impact our communities. This researcher suggests that teacher's belief systems undergird the decision to stay in the profession. This dispositional thinking was evident in teacher feedback regarding why they decided to teach (desire to positively influence students) and why they stay (believe they positively influence students.). The former and the latter resulted in feelings of fulfillment for the participation group in this study and the central reason as to why they will continue to teach. Research data provided in the literature review section of this paper reinforce the data captured in this study in terms of a teacher's ability to positively impact student lives as being a belief that is foundational to the decision to stay in the teaching profession.

When COVID-19 became a national pandemic, the use of this study's research methodology instruments was impacted, which was the impetus for developing this study's ancillary question. Teachers did not want to meet in person, and the idea of getting on Zoom after being on it all day was a detraction. As essential workers who became daily pillars of strength for our nation's children, teachers presented as emotionally and physically overwhelmed. This researcher can confirm that during a national pandemic that significantly impacts teachers, the traditional qualitative instruments used to collect data are ineffective. This reality shifted theoretical framework inquiry from dispositional to include situational, which offered an additional perspective in the expanded world of this research. The unprecedented pandemic rendered an opportunity to call attention to a heightened sense of how the situation influenced a teacher's decision to stay. To summarize, these research data suggest that both dispositional and situational attribution factors influence a teacher's decision to stay in the profession and that those attributions relate directly to several factors such as student interaction, work environment, leadership relationships, and scope of positive influence. Specific to this participant group, positive connection and influence with students was the most significant belief impacting a teacher's decision to remain teaching in the foreseeable future. Attributions related to the perception of how well the teacher met these self-subscribed standards helped to shape the educator's mindset as it related to attrition.

Further conclusions from this research suggest that standard methodology instruments such as in-person or online focus groups and online surveys are not effective

in a national pandemic environment because of Zoom fatigue and fear of the dangers associated with in-person contact.

Implications for Action

In consideration of the national pandemic, one would imagine that teachers are not likely to quit their jobs in a down trending job market regardless of how overwhelmed they might feel. Teacher attrition may even lessen during this time with the supposition that immediately after the pandemic is under control, rates will skyrocket. Careful consideration should be given to the impact the situational effects of the COVID-19 era have had on our nation's teachers, with individual district wide plans put in place to support teachers who are overwhelmed from trying to manage online remote learning or hybrid scenarios.

It is this researcher's expectation that the transition back to in-person learning will carry substantial challenges for teachers from both a dispositional and situational perspective. Data have yet to be captured regarding actual teacher attrition percentages throughout the national pandemic, but as Will (2020) suggested, it appears that most teachers remained in their positions given that the job market did not present opportunities to leave, and most were able to work from the comfort of their own homes. Once back in school, teachers will be faced with new safety protocols that will add more responsibilities to roles. Educators will undoubtedly be managing the new emotional environment of students, some of whom prefer an in-home environment as compared to having to be in physical class all day. The need to emotionally regulate for teachers and students will become the new norm as anxiety, grief and loss, and academic struggles become more visible. Teacher supports from leadership and districts will be needed

throughout transition phases and will need to focus on interventions that build skill levels for educators that will strengthen their ability to teach in an environment where empathy for self and others will be essential.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the study findings, suggestions for future research related to methodology instrumentation are as follows: (a) methodology that involves individual interviews with teachers in person, one at a time, in consideration of the long-term lingering fears that a pandemic can create (This would be carried out in person so that all documents can be collected and the enticement can be given.) and (b) submission of the survey with an informed consent attached to it via the Alchemer database. This would provide for a larger participant base as well as an opportunity for greater compliance in signing the informed consent document. The downside to this strategy would be the loss of the focus group component, which provides depth in terms of understanding individual experiences.

Future research related to understanding attributions and their influence on teacher attrition should leverage the COVID-19 experience to deepen discussion regarding the influence situational experiences/attributions have on a teacher's beliefs and decision to stay in the profession. Additionally, future study topics of interest suggested by this researcher include (a) explore teacher transition back to in-person learning related to newly identified dispositions that are identified by teachers postpandemic and (b) study the impact of transition back to in-person learning and measure teacher attrition rates within the first year as compared to previous, prepandemic

years and seek to understand why they are higher, if they are, or why they are lower if the result is attrition rates have reduced.

Finally, future research should aim at detailing a more comprehensive analysis of the actual costs of teacher attrition in the United States by factoring in not only teacher retention, acquisition, termination, training, enticements, and district costs but also by adding in those community-based expenditures and losses associated with losing teachers in the classroom.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

The topic of why teachers stay in the profession remains an appealing area of inquiry for this researcher. Although studied for decades, the problem of teacher attrition in the United States continues to escalate and appears to not receive the attention it deserves from a policy-making standpoint. The journey this inquiry has taken was unexpected by all accounts. The initial interest in exploring teacher beliefs as they relate to staying in the vocation through the lens of attribution theory, specifically dispositional, offered the promise of a contextual view into the insights, beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors of teachers as they considered whether to stay in their profession. This quest was derailed by a national pandemic that not only brought to a halt life as everyone knew it but also altered the power and use of data inquiry tools such as surveys, focus groups, and the necessary informed consent document. Once COVID-19 is under control and society begins to normalize in terms of reassimilating into daily routines, the problems teachers experience will present a new and growing dilemma within our communities. Teachers' needs are central to what must drive the nation's educational policies, and in

consideration of those desires, continued research into understanding the beliefs that motivate a teacher's decision to continue to teach remains essential.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

District Approval

Re: Dina Schon Dissertation

Hello Dr. Enfield,

I hope this email finds you and your loved ones well. I am a Doctoral Candidate (DPA) studying at CBU...My research is dedicated to looking at the problem of teacher attrition from the lens of expectancy theory and how a teacher's original expectancies drive a decision to either stay or leave the profession. I will be connecting it to public policy with the goal being to hopefully provide educators with supports necessary to flourish in their chosen vocation.

I am looking at High School teachers specifically and I have CJUHSD confirmed and want to pull teachers for a focus group also from my home district...Chino Valley (my beloved.) Having lived in Chino Hills for over 20 years I know many teachers so I would not be adding anything to your workload. I want to have a minimum of 25 teachers and am planning to run the focus group at a time that does not conflict with school workload.

I am submitting to my IRB beginning of next week and am hoping that you are able to confirm that it is a green light to speak to your teachers. I should tell you that ALL feedback will be 100% anonymous and participants will be de-identified.

My phone number is (xxx) xxx-xxx.

Respectfully,

Dina Marie Schon



Enfield, Norm <xxxxxx@xxxxxx.xxx>

Wed, Jun

17, 4:46

AM

to me

Hello Dina,

I hope you are safe and doing well.

You have my permission to reach out and find teachers to participate in your study.

Sincerely,

Norm

Norman Enfield, Ed.D.

Superintendent Chino Valley Unified School District

Dina Marie Schon <xxxxxx@xxxxx.xxx >

Wed, May 6, 2020 at 8:44 AM

To: Lea Fellows <xxxxxx@xxxxx.xxx>

Hello Mrs. Fellows,

Thank you in advance for your attention to this email. I am in the process of completing my dissertation and research into exploring the factors that inspire teachers to become teachers, as well as those that may lead them to deciding to leave the profession. I will be conducting focus groups in 2 high school districts and wish to include the Chino Valley Unified School District in this study. In a desire to be efficient I'm aiming to offer a lunch session during an in-service if that would be possible, however I will certainly respect and follow your directives as to what works best for you. I would be providing lunch and an additional gift card incentive, and the session would last approximately 30 to 45 minutes maximum.

I understand that you do not have an internal IRB or research group, however I will be submitting to IRB through my university CBU.

I am excited about the potential for this research and hope that my findings will become an additional support to public policy makers in their efforts to support teachers...and of course...Happy Teachers Appreciation Week!

Best Regards,

Dina Marie Schon

From: <xxxxxx@xxxxxx.xxx>

Date: Wed, May 6, 2020 at 8:59 AM

Subject: Re: Follow up question

To: Dina Marie Schon <xxxxxx@xxxxxx.xxx >

Hello,

This is a great dissertation topic. I understand you will be reaching out to some of our teachers to conduct your study.

Lea Fellows

Sent from AOL Mobile Mail

Get the new AOL app: mail.mobile.aol.com

On Wednesday, May 6, 2020, Dina Marie Schon <xxxxxx@xxxxxx.xxx> wrote:

For the entire study I am hoping to gain at least 50 participants...so 20 or more per district. At CJUHSD I am going to be added to one of the high school in service back to school sessions in August...and they will announce I am there and that I have a free

lunch...give them a quick pitch on the topic and that I also have Starbucks gift cards! So it would be during their break...

Dina Marie Schon <xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx>

9:08 AM (3 minutes ago)

to me


Hi Chris! I hope you and your loved ones are safe and healthy! This is Dina Schon. I sent you an email and think that maybe it wasn't received due to the firewall I have here... my dissertation chair asked me to reach out since my research regards understanding why teachers decide to teach and what factors influence their desire to leave... I want to run focus groups using high school teachers and wanted to include CJUHSD. I have already received clearance from Chino Valley. Would I be allowed to conduct such research ... does CJUHSD have its own IRB or research personnel that I would need to run through...? Sorry for the long message and thank you for your time!!! I miss you all!

Dina Schon

Dina Marie Schon <xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx>

9:08 AM (2
minutes ago)

to me

Hi Dina!  ☐ Yes, I can help you and you can use us for your research. Please email me your proposal. xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx

Dina Marie Schon

Curriculum Vitae

xxxxx So, xx

Chino Hills, Ca. 91709

(xxx) xxx-xxxx

xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx

Education:

California Baptist University - Present

Riverside, California

Doctorate in Public Administration and Policy; Doctoral Candidate

GPA: 4.0

California Baptist University

Riverside, California

Master's in Clinical Counseling Psychology

Overall GPA: 3.95

Psychology GPA: 4.0

License: LMFT 116288 State of California

Certifications:

- Domestic Violence Volunteer, Wilkes-Barre, PA – 1985
- Children's Bureau of Los Angeles, CA – 1989
- Protecting God's Children Certificate of Training, Diocese of San Bernardino, CA – 2016
- International Centre for Excellence in Emotionally Focused Therapy- May 2017.

Clinical Work Experience: 2016- 2019

Chaffey Joint Union High School District – Tier 1 Therapist

Member of the CHJUHSD Mental Health Task Force – Participation is directed at developing initiatives that support students and teachers regarding mental health concerns.

Safe Harbor- Clinical Counseling Psychotherapist and Board Member

Kings College

Wilkes-Barre PA.

B.S in Health Administration- Gerontology, and International Business/Marketing

1986

Health Administration GPA: 4.0

Special recognition: Graduated in 3 years

Work Experience Prior to Becoming a Therapist: 1986-2016

Consultant for over 28 years in the beauty care industry with award winning success in the Global Salon/Spa sector and Direct Marketing/Infomercial arenas. As team leader, I was responsible for the overall strategy and development of some of today's most recognizable brands.

Through my career I have travelled extensively throughout the world and lived in Europe for several years. I enjoy cultural differences and specialize in working with people who are culturally diverse.

I was also the executive leader and Board member responsible for the development of a global business operations firm that supported top infomercial and direct marketing projects such as *Tony Robbins, 1800 Flowers, Space Bag and Abslide*.

APPENDIX B

Instrumentation

Informed Consent Document

Exempt Research Project

Title of Activity: A Study of Factors that Influence Secondary Public-School Teachers' Decisions to Remain or Leave the Profession

Investigator Name: Dina Marie Schon

Phone: (909) 260-1174

Email: xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx

Dear Teacher,

You are invited to be in a research study. The purpose of the study is to explore beliefs that influence secondary public-school teachers' decisions to stay in or leave the profession. Participation in this research is voluntary. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, after you sign the consent form you will be asked to complete a survey, then participate in a focus group. The time estimated for completion of the entire process is approximately 60 minutes.

It is expected that participation in this study will provide you with no more than minimal risk or discomfort, which means that you should not experience it as any more troubling than normal daily life. However, there is always the chance of some unexpected risks. One foreseeable risk in this study includes discomfort from answering questions that are embarrassing. If needed, the researcher can provide a list of referrals to mental health professionals for follow-up care, including the California Baptist University Counseling Center. If you have any questions or need further

assistance, please contact Dina Marie Schon at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx. A comprehensive resource contact list for support services, should you encounter distress at any point in this research is included with this Informed Consent document in the contacts for questions or problems section. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the (IRB) at (IRB@calbaptist.edu). You may withdraw from this study at any time. This research may not benefit you individually, but it could lead to information that offers public policy decision-makers data that support the teaching profession more effectively.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information collected in the surveys and focus groups will be kept confidential. The following steps to keep information confidential and to protect it from unauthorized disclosure, tampering, or damage will be taken: Throughout the focus group session all participants will be de-identified and assigned a participant number to avoid using names. All study results will be kept in a locked cabinet behind two locked doors. Additionally, work stored in computer files will be security code protected, and the computer itself will be in a locked cabinet when not in use. No statements made by participants will be quoted or summarized in a manner that reveals the participant's identity. The overall results of the study will be analyzed and discussed generally in the planned dissertation, but no individual identifying information will be included. Individuals with access to data and records include Dina Marie Schon, Dr. Elaine Ahumada, Dr. Tanya Harris, and Dr. Carthen-Jackson.

INCENTIVES

Participants will be given a complimentary lunch and Starbucks gift card for their voluntary participation.

YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right not to participate or to leave the study at any time. Deciding not to participate or choosing to leave the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled, and it will not harm your relationship with the researcher. The identity of participants and the content of any information collected in the study will not be discussed with district personnel.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your participation, contact Dina Marie Schon at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or email: xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx.

Contact Information for participant support should distress arise:

California Baptist University Counseling Center: (951) 689-1120. Hours of operation : Tuesday-Wednesday 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Support provided includes: Information resources support, anonymous online screenings, Counseling services, Mind/Body resources, relaxation exercises interventions, and resources regarding mental health apps referrals.

Additional mental health contact information referrals are as follows:

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Riverside Helpline: 24-Hour Suicide/Crisis Intervention Hotline

(951) 686-HELP

(951) 686-4357

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

(800) 273-8255

Addiction:

Celebrate Recovery

A Bible-based 12-step program

www.celebraterecovery.com

MFI Recovery

Several locations available in the Inland Empire

(866) 218-4697

Child Abuse:

Riverside County Department of Social Services Child Abuse Hotline

(800) 442-4918

Domestic Violence:

Riverside County Coalition for Alternatives to Domestic Violence

(951) 683-0829

National Domestic Violence: 24-Hour Hotline

(800) 799-7233

Local Psychiatric Hospitals:

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Riverside, CA 92506

(866) 804-5528

Loma Linda Inpatient

1710 Barton Rd.

Redlands, CA 92373

(800) 752-5999

Canyon Ridge Hospital

5353 G St.

Chino, CA 91710

(909) 590-3700

Sexual Assault:

Riverside Rape Crisis Center: 24-Hour Hotline

(951) 686-7273

Veterans:

Veterans Crisis Line

(800) 273-8255

The Veterans Crisis Line connects veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders.

Other Resources:

Recovery.org

<http://www.recovery.org/topics/crises/>

Recovery.org helps connect people and their families with information and resources to help them recover from substance abuse and behavioral disorders.

NAMI.org

<https://www.nami.org/>

NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness through education programs, advocacy, a helpline, and public awareness events. NAMI also provides a variety of informational resources, classes, and support groups.

I hereby consent to participate in this study

Signature _____

Date _____

TEACHER SURVEY

Instructions: For each item, please indicate your preference by placing a check mark in the appropriate response.

1. What is your age? Please check the range that applies to you.
 - a) 21-29 _____
 - b) 30-39 _____
 - c) 40-49 _____
 - d) 50-59 _____
 - e) 60 or older _____
 - f) Don't care to answer _____

2. What is your gender? Please check which best applies to you.
 - a) Male _____
 - b) Female _____
 - c) Other _____
 - d) Do not care to answer _____

3. What is your ethnicity? Please check which best applies to you.
 - a) Caucasian _____
 - b) Black or African American _____
 - c) Hispanic/Latino _____
 - d) American Indian or Alaskan Native _____
 - e) Asian _____
 - f) Native Hawaiian or another Pacific Islander _____
 - g) Two or more _____
 - h) Other – (please specify) _____
 - i) Do not care to answer _____

4. What is your marital status? Please check which best applies to you.
 - a) Married _____
 - b) Widowed _____
 - c) Divorced _____
 - d) Separated _____
 - e) Never married _____
 - f) Do not care to answer _____

5. How many children do you have (if any)? Please check which best applies to you.

- a) 1-3 _____
- b) 4-6 _____
- c) 7+ _____
- d) I do not have any children _____
- e) Do not care to answer _____

6. How many years of experience teaching do you have? Please check which best applies to you:

- a) 0-5 _____
- b) 6-10 _____
- c) 11-15 _____
- d) 16-20 _____
- e) 21-25 _____
- f) 26-30 _____
- g) 30-35 _____
- h) 35+ _____
- i) Do not care to answer _____

7. What grade level do you currently teach? Please check which best applies to you.

- a) 9 _____
- b) 10 _____
- c) 11 _____
- d) 12 _____
- e) Do not care to answer _____

8. What academic subjects do you currently teach? Please check all that apply.

- a) Math _____
- b) Language Arts _____
- c) Language _____ please specify Language _____
- d) Science _____
- e) History _____
- f) Computers _____
- g) PE _____
- h) Drama _____
- i) Art _____
- j) Music _____
- k) Electives _____
- l) Special Education _____
- m) Another subject (please write in which one): _____
- n) Do not care to answer _____

9. What is your education level? Please check all that apply.

- a) Bachelor's degree _____
- b) Master's degree _____
- c) Doctoral degree _____
- d) Degree with Credential _____
- e) Do not care to answer _____

Directions: Please circle the choice that best describes your response.

1. The financial compensation I earn as a teacher influenced my choice to become a teacher.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

2. The financial compensation I earn as a teacher may influence my decision to leave teaching.

Strongly Agree Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
-------------------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------

3. The benefits package I earn as a teacher (medical, dental, vision, life insurance, and vacation time) influenced my choice to become a teacher.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

4. The benefits package I earn as a teacher (medical, dental, vision, life insurance, and vacation time) may influence my decision to leave the teaching profession.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

5. My work as a teacher has generally met my expectations.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

6. My work as a teacher has generally not met my expectations.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

7. I plan on continuing to teach until retirement.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

8. I plan on leaving teaching before retirement.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

9. Job conditions (hours, safety, and peers) are what I expected.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

10. Job conditions (hours, safety, and peers) may be why I leave teaching.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

11. Being able to work with students influenced my choice to become a teacher.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

12. The challenges of working with students may influence my decision to leave the teaching profession.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

13. I find teaching policies (curriculum standards to be met, reporting and grading requirements, accountability standards, student discipline guidelines etc.), and non-teaching related requirements (district meetings, monitoring student clubs, peer interactions etc.), manageable.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

14. I find teaching policies (curriculum standards to be met, reporting and grading requirements, accountability standards, student discipline guidelines etc.), and non-teaching related requirements (district meetings, monitoring student clubs, peer interactions etc.), not manageable.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

15. Leadership has supported me in my career.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

16. Leadership concerns may cause me to leave teaching.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

17. I feel that teaching is a fulfilling vocation.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

18. I feel that teaching has not been a fulfilling vocation.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

19. Family concerns (childcare, elder care, or divorce) influenced my choice to become a teacher.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

20. Family concerns (childcare, elder care, or divorce) may influence my decision to leave teaching.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

21. The reasons why I wanted to teach remain the reasons why I stay.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

22. The reasons why I wanted to teach have not been realized and may be why I leave teaching.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

22. I feel I am making a positive difference in student's lives.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

23. I feel I have little to no influence on my student's success.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

24. Please rank the following factors by priority in terms of influencing your decision to stay or leave the teaching vocation; 1 being most important, and 11 being least important.

- a) Leadership ____
- b) District mandates/policy ____
- c) State mandates/policy ____
- d) Federal mandates/policy ____
- e) Salary and benefits ____
- f) Student behavior ____
- g) Teacher absenteeism ____
- h) Family/personal issues ____
- i) Peer Relationships ____
- j) Better work opportunity ____
- k) Working Conditions including safety concerns ____

SCHON RESEARCH PROJECT

Opening Script

Thank you all in advance for your participation in this important research project. The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that influence an individual's decision to become a teacher, as well as understand more clearly the reasons why teachers may decide to leave the profession. Although these issues have been studied for several decades, my study is adding the perspective of public administration and policy to the conversation as they connect to factors that influence teacher attrition. One goal of this study is to broaden the scope of knowledge necessary to shape policy that supports communities in their ability to offer teachers sustained and long-term career fulfillment.

Before we begin, let me tell you a little about myself and what you can expect in our brief time together. My name is Dina Marie Schon. I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, and I am working toward my doctorate in Public Administration at California Baptist University in Riverside. During my studies, I identified teacher attrition as one of the most significant public policy issues our society is experiencing, which led to the topic of my study.

As you all may have already noticed, all study participants have been de-identified. Your contribution will be kept anonymous and will not be discussed with district personnel. I will be asking you a series of questions. When you want to share something, please lift the sign with your participant number. I will call out that

participant number to indicate it is your turn to speak. To allow me to analyze the information that is shared today, I will be recording our session to capture what is said. Before we begin the focus groups, I will ask you to complete a short survey lasting approximately 3-5 minutes, and then we will begin with focus group questions. If you find that you have something to share but do not feel like sharing it with the group, please come to me after we conclude. All transcriptions and surveys will be held in a locked cabinet behind 2 locked doors for safe keeping. Are there any questions? If there are no more questions, let us begin the survey.

Focus Group Questions

Instructions: Please raise your participant sign to answer the question.

1. What factors influenced your decision to enter the teaching profession?
2. In what ways do your daily responsibilities as a teacher meet what you envisioned when you were first thinking about entering the profession?
3. As you reflect on your career as a teacher, how long do you plan on teaching and why?
4. What factors would cause you to leave your job as a teacher?
5. What current public education policies at a local, state, or federal level have met your expectations?
6. What policies do you think need to be changed at a local, state, or federal level that would be important for keeping teachers in the profession?

Pilot Test's Informed Consent, Survey, and Focus Group Questions

Instrumentation

Informed Consent Document

Exempt Research Project

Title of Activity: A Study of Factors that Influence Secondary Public-School Teachers' Decisions to Remain or Leave the Profession

Investigator Name: Dina Marie Schon

Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx

Email: xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx

Dear Teacher,

You are invited to be in a research study. The purpose of the study is to explore beliefs that influence secondary public-school teachers' decisions to stay in or leave the profession. Participation in this research is voluntary. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, after you sign the consent forms you will be first asked to complete a survey, and then participate in a focus group. The time estimated for completion of the entire process is approximately 60 minutes.

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Baptist University Counseling Center. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact Dina Marie Schon at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx.

A comprehensive resource contact list for support services, should you encounter distress at any point in this research is included with this Informed Consent document in the contacts for questions or problems section. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the (IRB) at (IRB@calbaptist.edu). You may withdraw from this study at any time. This research may not benefit you individually, but it could lead to information that offers public policy decision makers data that support the teaching profession more effectively.

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(951) 686-4357

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

(800) 273-8255

Addiction:

Celebrate Recovery

A Bible-based 12-step program

www.celebraterecovery.com

MFI Recovery

Several locations available in the Inland Empire

(866) 218-4697

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Riverside County Department of Social Services Child Abuse Hotline

(800) 442-4918

Domestic Violence:

Riverside County Coalition for Alternatives to Domestic Violence

(951) 683-0829

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Local Psychiatric Hospitals:

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5900 Brockton Ave.

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Loma Linda Inpatient

1710 Barton Rd.

Redlands, CA 92373

(800) 752-5999

Canyon Ridge Hospital

5353 G St.

Chino, CA 91710

(909) 590-3700

Sexual Assault:

Riverside Rape Crisis Center: 24-Hour Hotline

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Veterans:

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The Veterans Crisis Line connects veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders.

Other Resources:

Recovery.org

<http://www.recovery.org/topics/crises/>

Recovery.org helps connect people and their families with information and resources to help them recover from substance abuse and behavioral disorders.

NAMI.org

<https://www.nami.org/>

NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness through education programs, advocacy, a helpline, and public awareness events. NAMI also provides a variety of informational resources, classes, and support groups.

I hereby consent to participate in this study:

Signature _____

Date _____

SCHON RESEARCH PROJECT

Opening Script

Thank you all in advance for your participation in this important research project. The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that Influence an individual's decision to become a teacher, as well as understand more clearly the reasons why teachers may decide to leave the profession. Although these issues have been studied for several decades, my study is adding the perspective of public administration and policy to the conversation as they connect to factors that Influence teacher attrition. One goal of this study is to broaden the scope of knowledge necessary to shape policy that supports communities in their ability to offer teachers sustained and long-term career fulfillment.

Before we begin, let me tell you a little about myself and what you can expect in our brief time together. My name is Dina Marie Schon and I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. I am working toward my doctorate in Public Administration at California Baptist University in Riverside. During my studies, I identified teacher attrition as one of the most significant public policy issues our society is experiencing, which led to the topic of my study.

As you all may have already noticed, all study participants have been de-identified. Your contribution will be kept anonymous and will not be discussed with district personnel. I will be asking you a series of questions. When you want to share something, please lift the sign with your participant number. I will call out that participant number to indicate it is your turn to speak. To allow me to analyze the

information that is shared today, I will be recording our session to capture what is said. Before we begin the focus groups, I will ask you to complete a short survey lasting approximately 5 minutes, and then we will begin with focus group questions. If you find that you have something to share but do not feel like sharing it with the group, please come to me after we conclude. All transcriptions and surveys will be held in a locked cabinet behind 2 locked doors for safe keeping. Are there any questions? If there are no more questions, let us begin the survey.

Instructions: Please raise your participant sign to answer the question.

2. What factors influenced your decision to enter the teaching profession?
2. In what ways do your daily responsibilities as a teacher meet what you envisioned when you were first thinking about entering the profession?
3. As you reflect on your career as a teacher, how long do you plan on teaching and why?
4. What factors would cause you to leave your job as a teacher?
5. What current public education policies at a local, state, or federal level have met your expectations?
6. What policies do you think need to be changed at a local, state, or federal level that would be important for keeping teachers in the profession?

Pilot Test #1 Test Results 3 People in August 2020

The pilot test results are reported here, however are not included in the overall text data in the results section. The purpose of running a pilot test was to gain an understanding of timing protocols, as well as any areas of inquiry that may have been an oversight. Participants included two men and one female. Two individuals were between the ages of 50-59 and one was in the 40-49 age range. Two are Caucasian and one is Hispanic/Latino. All three are married and all three have 1 to 3 children. One has been teaching for 0-5 years, one 16-20 years, and one 21-25 years. Two teach multiple grades, while one only teaches grade 9. Two teach math and one teaches multiple subjects. One participant has a bachelor's degree, and two have master's degrees with credential.

Survey Data First Pilot Test

1. The financial compensation I earn as a teacher influenced my choice to become a teacher.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 2 disagree

2. The financial compensation I earn as a teacher may influence my decision to leave teaching.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 2 neutral

3. The benefits package I earn as a teacher (medical, dental, vision, life insurance, and vacation time) influenced my choice to become a teacher.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 1 neutral, 1 disagree

4. The benefits package I earn as a teacher (medical, dental, vision, life insurance, and vacation time) may Influence my decision to leave the teaching profession.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 1 neutral, 1 disagree

5. My work as a teacher has generally met my expectations.

Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree				Disagree

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 2 disagree

6. My work as a teacher has generally not met my expectations.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 2 agree; 1 disagree

7. I plan on continuing to teach until retirement.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 2 agree; 1 disagree

8. I plan on leaving teaching before retirement.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 2 disagree

9. Job conditions (hours, safety, and peers) are what I expected.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 3 agree

10. Job conditions (hours, safety, and peers) may be why I leave teaching.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 2 disagree

11. Being able to work with students influenced my choice to become a teacher.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 3 agree

12. The challenges of working with students may influence my decision to leave the teaching profession.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 3 disagree

13. I find teaching policies (curriculum standards to be met, reporting and grading requirements, accountability standards, student discipline guidelines etc.), and non-teaching related requirements (district meetings, monitoring student clubs, peer interactions etc.), manageable.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 2 disagree

14. I find teaching policies (curriculum standards to be met, reporting and grading requirements, accountability standards, student discipline guidelines etc.), and non-teaching related requirements (district meetings, monitoring student clubs, peer interactions etc.), not manageable.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 2 agree; 1 disagree

15. Leadership has supported me in my career.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 3 agree

16. Leadership concerns may cause me to leave teaching.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 neutral; 2 disagree

17. I feel that teaching is a fulfilling vocation.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 2 agree; 1 disagree

18. I feel that teaching has not been a fulfilling vocation.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree, 1 neutral, 1 disagree

19. Family concerns (childcare, elder care, or divorce) influenced my choice to become a teacher.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree, 1 neutral, 1 disagree

20. Family concerns (childcare, elder care, or divorce) may influence my decision to leave teaching.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 1 agree; 2 disagree

21. The reasons why I wanted to teach remain the reasons why I stay.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 2 agree; 1 neutral

22. I feel I am making a positive difference in student's lives.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 3 agree

23. I feel I have little to no influence on my student's success.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

Pilot Participant answers: 3 disagree

24. Please rank the following factors by priority in terms of influencing your decision to stay or leave the teaching vocation; 1 being most important, and 11 being least important.

- l) Leadership ____
- m) District mandates/policy ____
- n) State mandates/policy ____
- o) Federal mandates/policy ____
- p) Salary and benefits ____
- q) Student behavior ____
- r) Teacher absenteeism ____
- s) Family/personal issues ____
- t) Peer Relationships ____
- u) Better work opportunity ____
- v) Working Conditions including safety concerns ____

Scoring: Consistent top 2 of importance: salary/benefits and student behavior.

Focus Group Questions

7. Two teachers stated they wanted to impact the lives of students in a positive manner as a primary reason for deciding to teach, and a secondary was what teaching offered in terms of compensation and benefits at the time. The third participant stated salary and the need for a job was the reason for teaching.
8. Two of the teachers indicated that pre-COVID-19 teaching was essentially as they expected it would be. The third stated that the level of paperwork and bureaucracy was not expected.
9. Two planned on staying in teaching for the remainder of their careers, one would leave if wins the lotto. The third teacher would leave at any time for a better paying job.
10. All three stated they would leave if the financial offer from another job would be compelling enough to do so.
11. Two teachers were not aware of public education policies, admittedly, however, did state that mandatory requirements now take an estimated 30% of their time to complete. The third teacher stated the bureaucracy in his position have not met any of his expectations.
12. Two teachers had no comment as they were admittedly not familiar with policies. The third teacher stated policies regarding special education need to be more efficient and consider input from the special education teachers, because they in no way are in line with reality.

APPENDIX C

Survey Data Second Pilot Test October 2020

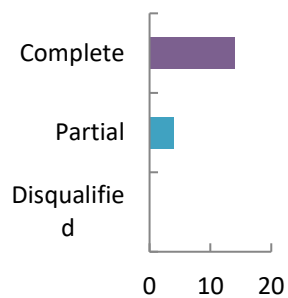
Survey results for the second focus group participants had a completion rate of 78%. Zoom meetings therefore, reduced the completion rate by 22%.

Following is the report data:

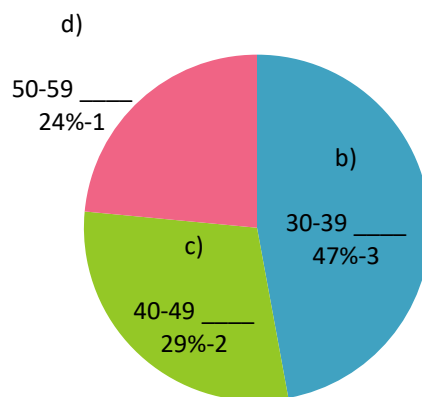
Report for Dina Schon Teacher Survey

Dina Schon Teacher Survey

Response Statistics

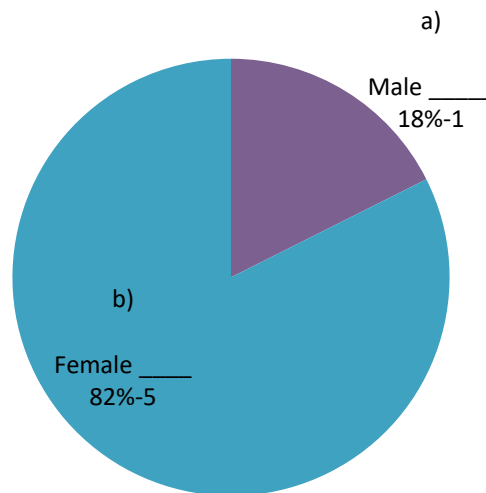


1. What is your age? Please check the range that applies to you.



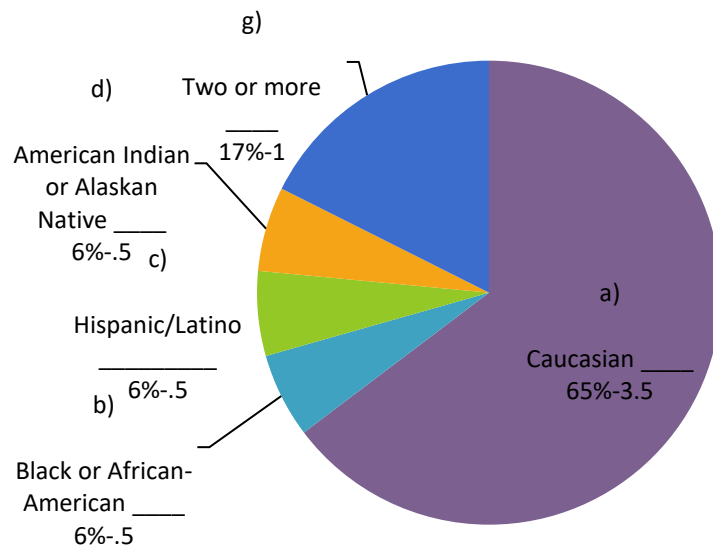
24%=1,29%=2,47%=3

2.What is your gender? Please check which best applies to you.



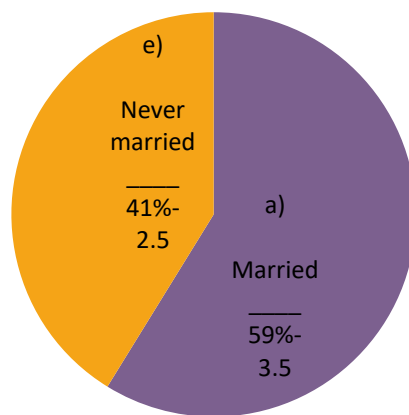
18%=1,82%=5

3.What is your ethnicity? Please check which best applies to you.



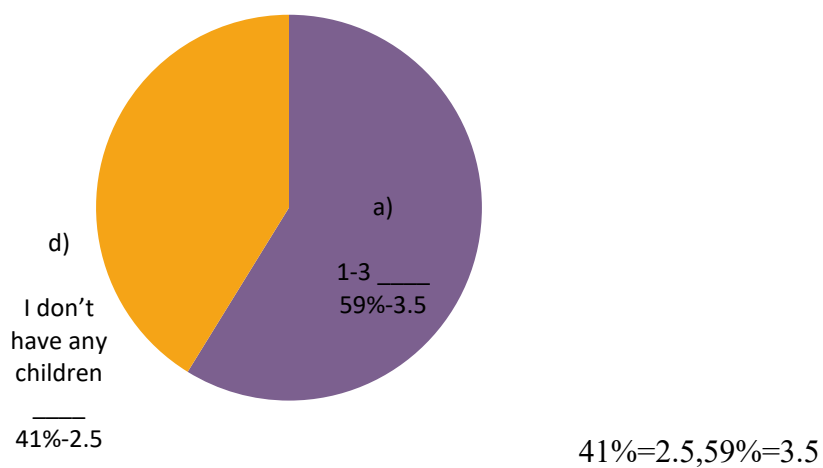
6%=.5, 6%=.5, 6%=.5, 17%=1, 65%=3.5

4. What is your marital status? Please check which best applies to you.

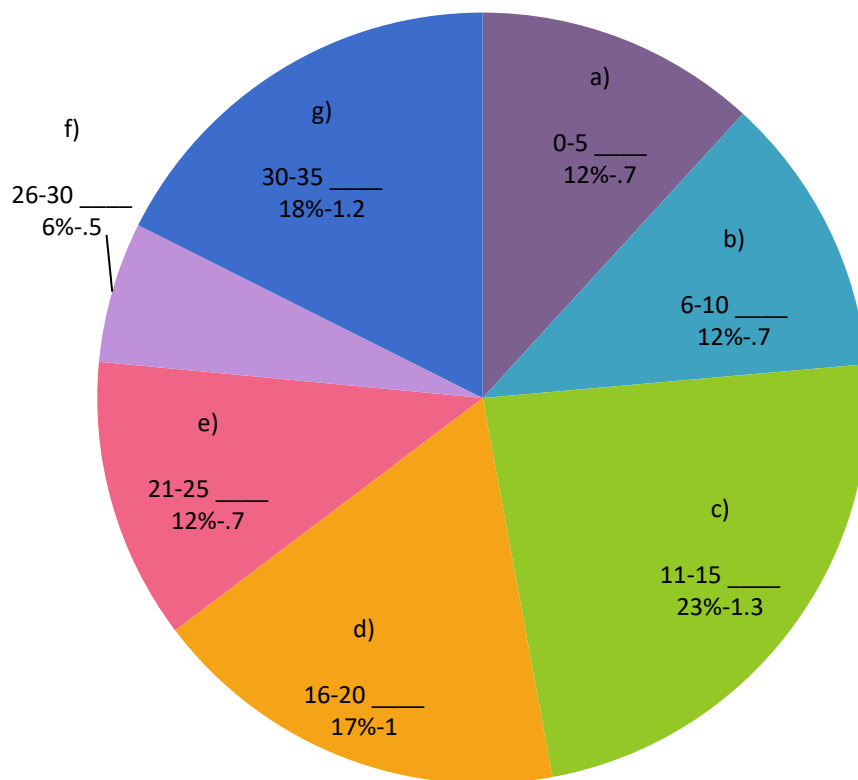


41%=2.5, 59%=3.5

5.How many children do you have (if any)? Please check which best applies to you.

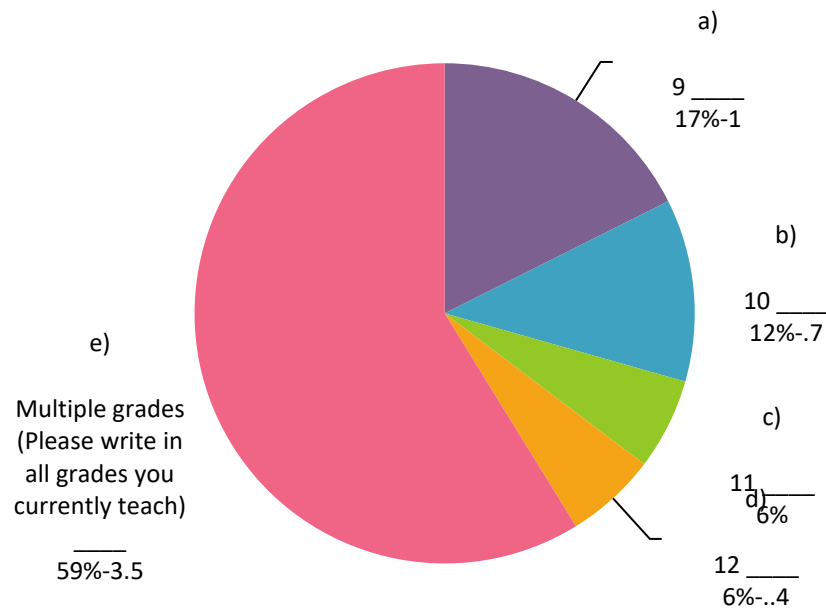


6.How many years of experience teaching do you have? Please check which best applies to you:



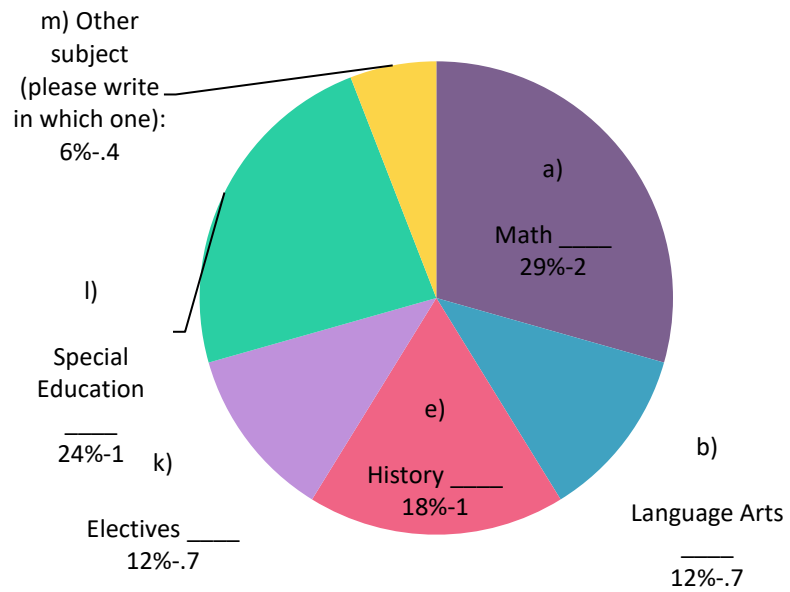
6%=.5,12%=.7,12%=.7,12%=.7, 17%=1,18%=1.2,23%=1.3

7.What grade level do you currently teach? Please check which best applies to you.



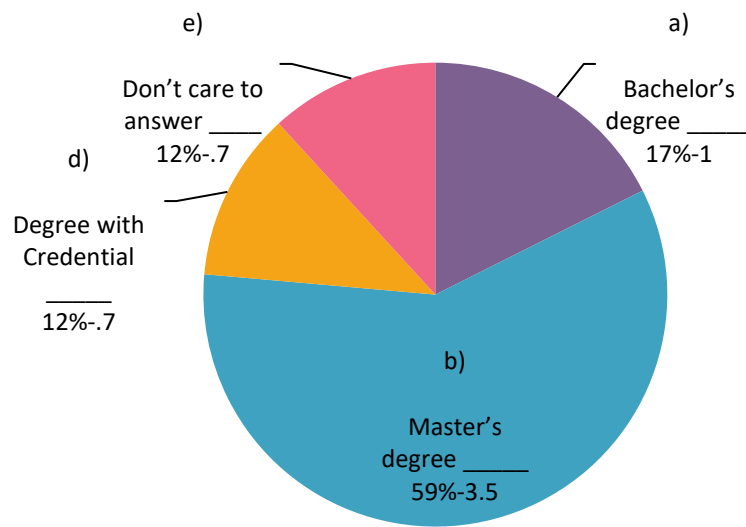
6%=.4, 6%=.4, 12%=.7, 17%=1, 59%=3.5

8. What academic subjects do you currently teach? Please check all that apply.



6%=.4, 12%=.7, 12%=.7, 18%=1, 24%=1, 29%=2

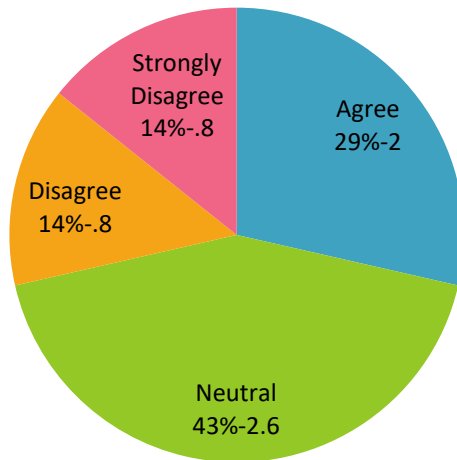
9. What is your education level? Please check all that apply.



12%=.7,

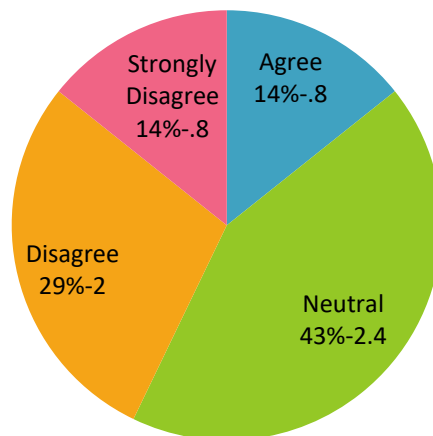
12%=.7, 17%=1, 59%=3.5

10.The financial compensation I earn as a teacher influenced my choice to become a teacher.



14%=.8, 14%=.8,29%=2,43%= 2.4

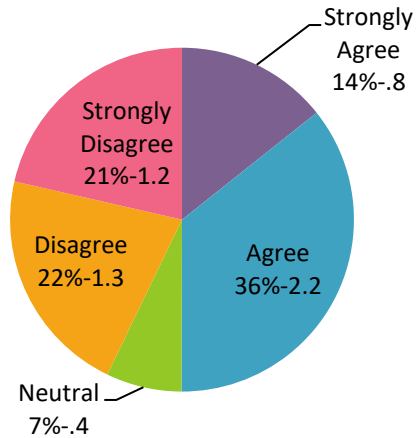
11.The financial compensation I earn as a teacher may influence my decision to leave teaching.



14%=.8,

14%=.8,29%=2,43%= 2.4

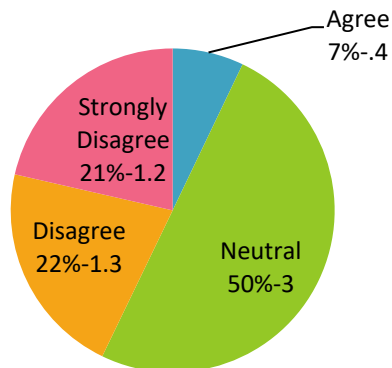
12.The benefits package I earn as a teacher (medical, dental, vision, life insurance, and vacation time) influenced my choice to become a teacher.



7%=.4,14%=.8, 21%=1.2,

22%=1.3,36%=2.2

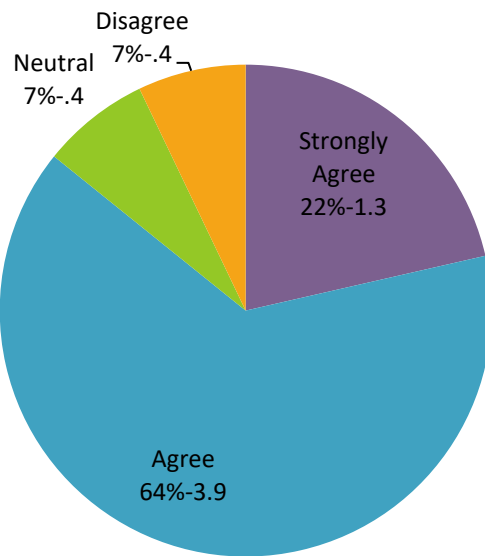
13.The benefits package I earn as a teacher (medical, dental, vision, life insurance, and vacation time) may influence my decision to leave the teaching profession.



7%=.4,21%=1.2,

22%=1.3, 50%= 3

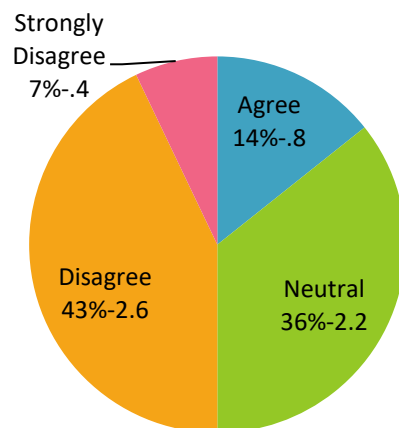
14.My work as a teacher has generally met my expectations.



7%=.4, 7%=.4,

22%=1.3, 64%=3.9.

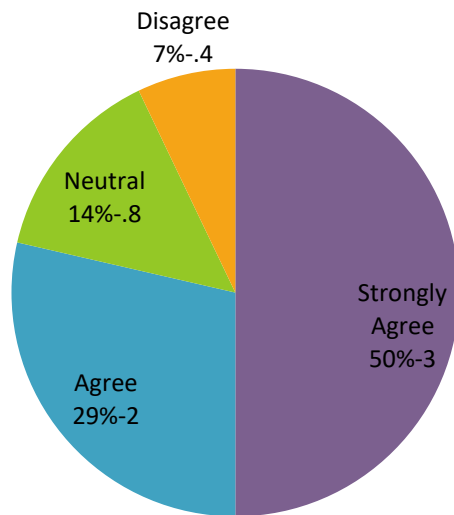
15. My work as a teacher has generally not met my expectations.



7%=.4, 14%=.8, 36%=2.2,

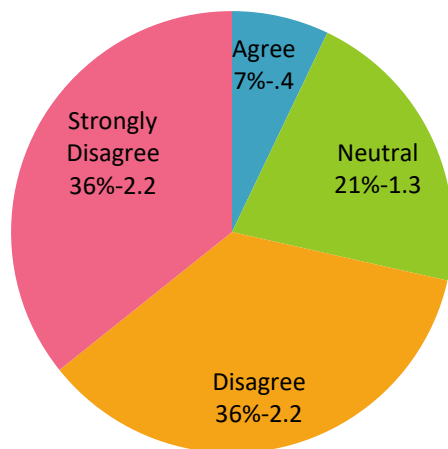
43%=2.6

16. I plan on continuing to teach until retirement.



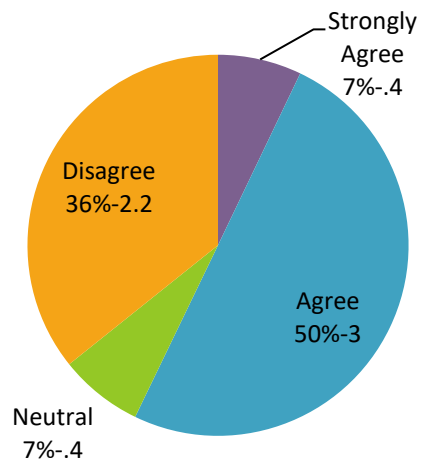
7%=.4, 14%=.8, 29%=2, 50%=3

17. I plan on leaving teaching before retirement.



7%=.4, 21%=1.3, 36%=2.2, 36%=2.2

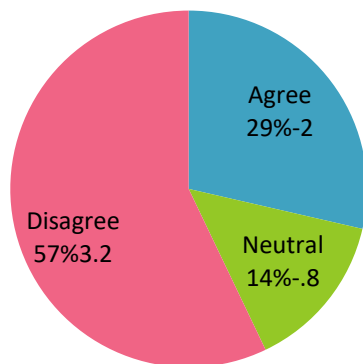
18. Job conditions (hours, safety, and peers) are what I expected.



7%=.4, 7%=.4,

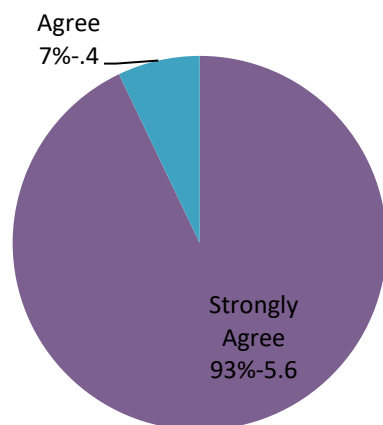
36%=2.2, 50%=3

19. Job conditions (hours, safety, and peers) may be why I leave teaching.



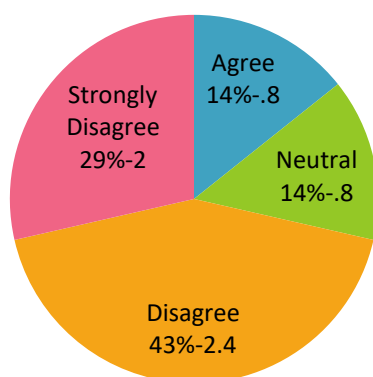
14%=.8, 29%=2, 57%=3.2

20. Being able to work with students influenced my choice to become a teacher.



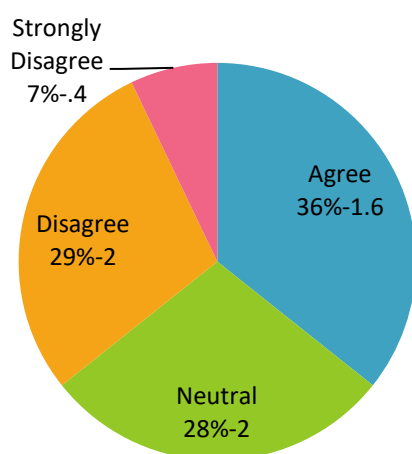
7%=.4, 93%=5.6

21. The challenges of working with students may influence my decision to leave the teaching profession.



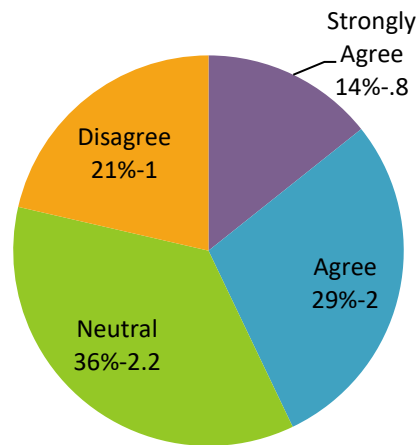
14%=.8, 14%=.8, 29%=2, 43%=2.4

22.I find teaching policies (curriculum standards to be met, reporting and grading requirements, accountability standards, student discipline guidelines etc.), and non-teaching related requirements (district meetings, monitoring student clubs, peer interactions etc.), manageable.



7%=.4, 28%=2, 29%=2, 36%=1.6

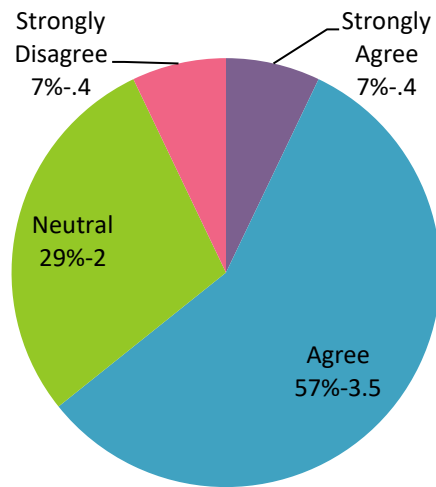
23.I find teaching policies (curriculum standards to be met, reporting and grading requirements, accountability standards, student discipline guidelines etc.), and non-teaching related requirements (district meetings, monitoring student clubs, peer interactions etc.), not manageable.



14%=.8,21%=1,29%=2,

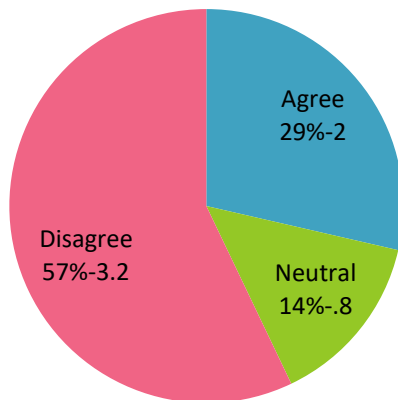
36%=2.2

24.Leadership has supported me in my career.



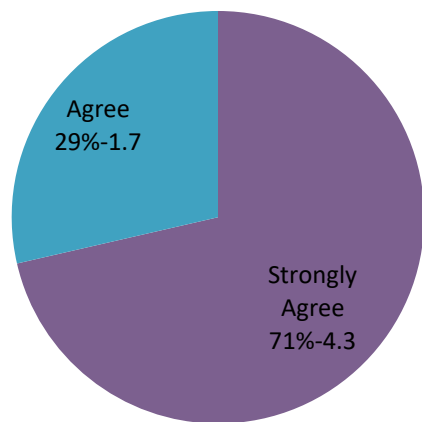
7%=.4, 7%=.4, 29%=2, 57%=3.2

25. Leadership concerns may cause me to leave teaching.



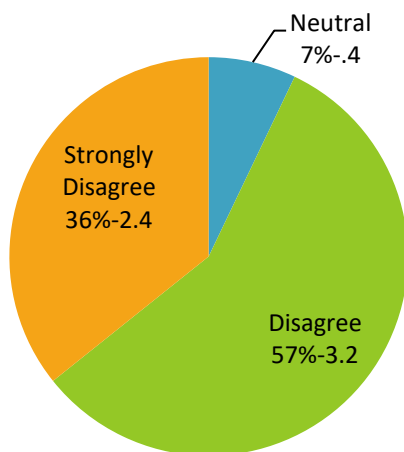
14%=.8, 29%=2, 57%=3.2

26. I feel that teaching is a fulfilling vocation.



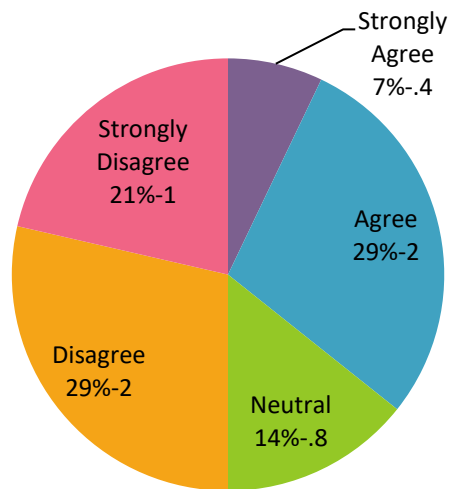
29%=1.7, 71%=4.3

27. I feel that teaching has not been a fulfilling vocation.



7%=.4, 36%=2.4, 57%=3.2

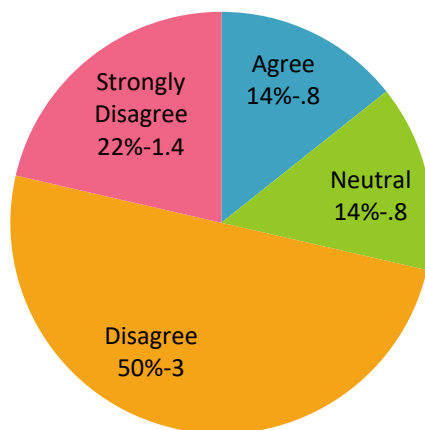
28. Family concerns (childcare, elder care, or divorce) influenced my choice to become a teacher.



7%=.4, 14%=.8, 21%=1, 29%=2,

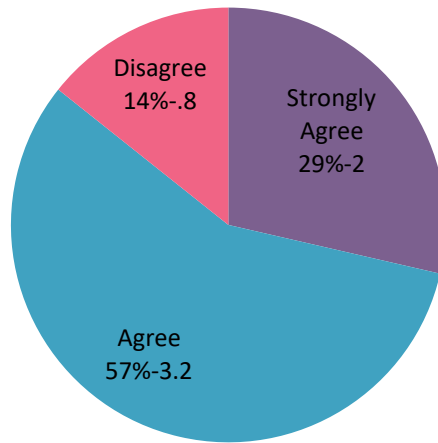
29%=2

29. Family concerns (childcare, elder care, or divorce) may influence my decision to leave teaching.



14%=.8, 14%=.8, 22%=1.4, 50%=3

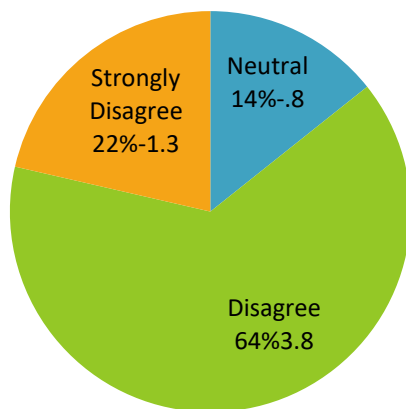
30. The reasons why I wanted to teach remain the reasons why I stay.



14%=.8, 29%=2,

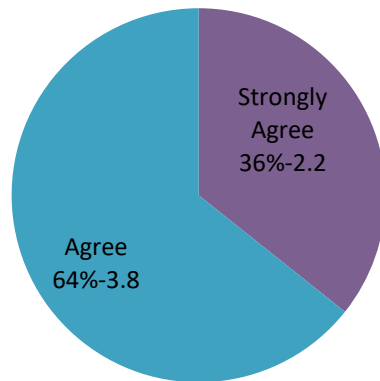
57%=3.2

31.The reasons why I wanted to teach have not been realized and may be why I leave teaching.



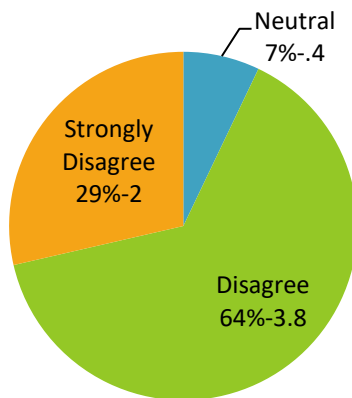
14%=.8, 22%=1.3, 64%=3.8

32.I feel I am making a positive difference in student's lives.



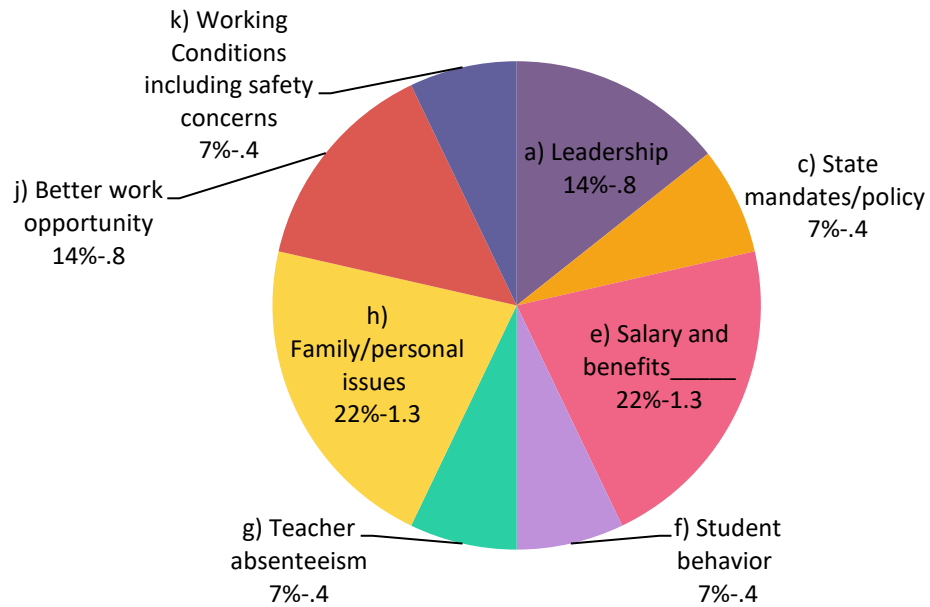
36%=2.2, 64%=3.8

33. I feel I have little to no influence on my student's success.



7%=.4, 29%=2, 64%=3.8

34. Please rank the following factors by priority in terms of influencing your decision to stay or leave the teaching vocation; 1 being most important, and 11 being least important.



7%-.4, 7%-.4, 7%-.4, 7%-.4, 14%-.8, 14%-.8, 22%=1.3, 22%=1.3

Focus Group Feedback Pilot #2:

7. The majority responses were: Teachers wanted to do something meaningful and reach others; wanted to share my love of learning with others and connect with others on a daily basis; wanted a career with security for family; wanted a career that allowed me to be with family on off times.
8. Daily responsibilities have not largely met expectations, as less time is spent with the actual teaching and connecting in comparison to the amount of paperwork and meetings. The amount of non-teaching work was not expected.
9. Most responses were a decision to stay until retirement, with the sideline comment, providing I continue to feel I am making a difference in the lives of the children I teach. Two participants commented that COVID-19 and distance learning has made them feel as if they should consider another career.
10. The number one factor that would influence leaving teacher was finding a career that paid significantly more money. One participant stated leaving if personal safety became an issue.
11. Most participants felt no policies had met their expectations and felt overwhelmed by how many there were and possibly were unaware of all of them. One responded affirmatively in favor of the special education policies.

12. Most of the consistent feedback communicated a greater need for school funding, teacher support at leadership levels, and less paperwork requirements. A specific suggestion was for the development of programs that supported teachers in “refueling” to create more positive environments for teachers emotionally.