

CAREER SATISFACTION AND MOBILITY INTENTIONS OF MISSOURI
PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AMID THE WAKE OF COVID-19

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CAREER SATISFACTION AND MOBILITY INTENTIONS OF MISSOURI
PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AMID THE WAKE OF COVID-19

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The Faculty of the Graduate Education Department
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Doctor of Education

By

Angela Holman, B.S., M.S., Ed.S.

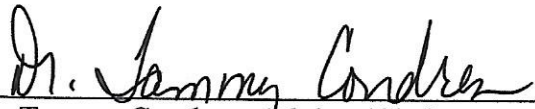
Dr. Benny Fong & Dr. Tammy Condren, Dissertation Advisors

July 2022

The undersigned, approved by the Department Chair of Graduate Studies in Education, have examined a dissertation entitled:

CAREER SATISFACTION AND MOBILITY INTENTIONS OF MISSOURI
PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AMID THE WAKE OF COVID-19

Presented by Angela Holman, a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.



Dr. Tammy Condren, Advisor/Chair
Associate Professor, Graduate Education



Dr. Benny Fong, Advisor/Chair Assistant
Professor, Graduate Education



Dr. Mick Arnold, Committee Member
Professor, Graduate Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals after 3 or more years in the profession who served during the COVID-19 pandemic. The framework of this study was based on Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory and Herzberg et al.'s (1959) Two-factor Theory. Participants in this study included nine high school principals who served in Missouri public school districts, one from each of the RPDC regions across the state of Missouri. With research questions one, key themes associated with satisfactory experiences include change, collaboration, connection, helping and learning, problem-solving, and students overcoming challenges. Conversely, key themes associated with unsatisfactory experiences include pandemic related guidelines and challenges, student academic concerns, and staffing struggles, community turmoil, and work-life balance. For research question two, key themes related to overall mobility intentions amid the pandemic include passion and commitment, connections, managing people, workload, and support. In relation to workplace conditions, key themes included prioritization and time management, delegation, and an inability to balance. In relation to emotional aspects of the work, key themes included support, health, and hobbies. Exploring answers to the research questions, the researcher was provided invaluable insight into the perceptions of high school principal to portray their individual lived experiences concerning career satisfaction and mobility intentions. Approximately half the participants represented in the study were considering leaving the position, however the reasons were more personal related rather than pandemic related. Overall, when considering career satisfaction, while most spoke to the challenges, of the public high

school principals represented in the study seemed energized and/or indifferent to the added stress and strain of the pandemic. Participants enjoy their career as a high school principal and are focused on meeting the challenges head on.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Principals' days are different, exhausting, and relentless; none are the same. Fourteen-hour days are the norm, each as unpredictable as the next, campus buzzing nonstop, no sleep, no rest, everyday all day. Managing students and adults in the building is a full-time job without email, phone calls, or meetings. Parent correspondence is vital, rarely to give a pat on the back, mostly to share frustrations. In addition, there are special events and assemblies to plan, walk the halls, teachers, counselors, and custodians to visit, walkthroughs and evaluations, supervision of students before school, after school, during lunch, and late-night sporting events. Do not forget the money boxes, walkie-talkies, reminders, budgets, testing schedules, senior meetings, and class presentations. If a student or staff crisis occurs or school safety is jeopardized, stop, drop everything, switch gears, and take care of the most important aspect of this chaotic world, humans. Give and give until there is nothing more to give. Fourteen hours have come and gone in the blink of an eye, impossible to recall, unable to trace, unnecessary to replicate. With an inbox forever full, the unexpected is faced daily, with student achievement at the core of all that is done, grounded in helping students become their best. Exhausted, physically, and emotionally, principals go home, only to do it again tomorrow morning. The number of days, weeks, months, and years in the profession cannot be sustained. The pace, the schedule, the time, the job, the responsibility, the pressure, and the sacrifices are relentless. These are the observations of the researcher as a practicing high school principal.

This was reality to hundreds of principals across the United States prior to March 13, 2020. Their stories represented why principals leave the profession at an alarming rate. Almost 20% of principals leave their schools each year and nearly half leave their schools within the first 3 years (Apostol & Austin, 2020; Superville, 2019). Post March 13, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shocked every person and organization globally, creating an urgent and complex set of new challenges for those in leadership positions (Ahlström et al., 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Klingbeil, 2020; Stasel, 2020; Superville, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). Personally, and professionally, school leaders continued to face this crisis in schools all over the world, understanding the COVID-19 pandemic lingered for some time (Stasel, 2020). Educational leaders encountered multiple stressors daily, resulting from both internal and external sources (Turk & Wolfe, 2019). Klocko and Justis (2019) stated, when considering factors influencing abilities and outcomes of school administrators, as years of experience increases, loss of joy also increases. According to the national average, in 4 short years, turnover takes its toll (Levin & Bradley, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic affected everyone, including high school principals, a key position leading our nation through educational changes. The goal of this research was to understand the story of high school principals amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding principals' passions and ambitions, driving, and sustaining their purpose beyond the complex, day-to-day, month-to-month interactions between teachers, students, and parents is important. Told as narrative stories and supported by relevant research, this study explored Missouri public high school principals' career satisfaction and mobility intentions based on lived experiences. Ultimately, how has the COVID

crisis affected principals and are they satisfied with their career choice, a profession that takes such a toll? This study sought to highlight the perspectives of Missouri public high school principals on the topic of career satisfaction and mobility intentions amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter One provides an overview of the theoretical framework of the research, including the problem statement and purpose of the study, followed by the research questions to guide the study. The significance of the study and definition of key terms followed by design controls complete the chapter. Design controls cover necessary limitations, delimitations, and assumptions involved in carrying out the research, before delving into a review of current literature.

Theoretical Framework

Experiences and observations build knowledge and shape individual decisions. Formal education teaches a great deal, but people learn the most from experiences (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) developed the Social Learning Theory that helps examine one's career development: interest, choices, and performance. Bandura suggested individuals learn through observation, both positive and negative. When an observed behavior is successfully replicated, an individual is rewarded. When an individual is rewarded, self-efficacy is developed (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is defined as the belief one possesses regarding personal capabilities to exercise control over events that influence their lives (Bandura, 1977). Continuing, as self-efficacy develops, motivation is gained, and action is taken. Self-efficacious individuals tackle obstacles, become resilient, learn to persevere, set goals, meet challenges head-on with commitment and drive, and overcome setbacks along the

way (Postma, 2019). In contrast, inefficacious individuals shy away from difficult tasks and adversity. Risk-taking is outside their purview focusing on their shortcomings rather than their strongpoints.

Social learning theory also involves how individuals make career decisions. The path to principalship involves numerous experiences, personal characteristics, and interactions that impact career-making decisions (Bandura, 1977). A few experiences and characteristics include commitment to educational background, demographics, external factors, and school culture and climate (Krumboltz et al., 1976). Driven by a belief to address specific situations or duties, the social learning theory suggests individuals could successfully handle situations required (Yost et al., 2019). Leading and managing people requires administrators to have the self-confidence required to assess one's ability and to perform necessary behavior and cognitive functions to successfully handle situations and carry out pertinent duties (Yost et al., 2019).

Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory theorized there are two motivation factors that contribute to an individual's career satisfaction: motivators and hygiene factors. Herzberg et al. proposed hygiene factors contribute to career dissatisfaction while motivators contribute to career satisfaction. According to Herzberg et al., hygiene factors are mostly extrinsic, such as working conditions and salary, understanding they do not typically increase career satisfaction. Further, if hygiene factors are missing, career satisfaction is likely to decrease. Conversely, motivators are mostly intrinsic, such as recognition and achievement, increasing career satisfaction, according to Herzberg et al. Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory provides

an organizational framework geared toward understanding motivation factors and as a result, career satisfaction.

Self-efficacy and career decision-making embedded in social learning theory coupled with motivation factors rooted in Herzberg's et al. (1959) theory served as the theoretical framework for this research. Research studies have been conducted on the topic of career satisfaction using Herzberg et al.'s theory with the basic premise that experiences shape individual decisions (Cayak, 2021; Gardner, 1977; Postma & Babo, 2019; Stewart, 2020). Bandura's (1977) social learning theory adds components to individuals' career decisions, rounding out the theoretical framework for this research. Utilizing the framework of both theories, the researcher outlined the problem of Missouri public high school principals' career satisfaction and mobility intentions based on lived experiences amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Problem Statement

According to Engel (2020), high school principals struggled through extreme stress, constant change, and juggled complex roles prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Reopening schools post-COVID-19 shutdown, as described by Argyropoulou et al. (2021), school leaders found themselves juggling more complex roles and struggles with less control and an extended use of emotional intelligence to its full potential. Amid the pandemic, leaders had little time to develop leadership plans for the present or future day. In many ways, school leaders were learning to walk once again, while showing others how to deal and cope with the new realities faced (Stasel, 2020). Since then, research has shown widespread anxiety globally as the COVID-19 crisis has taken a toll on personal well-being (Ahlström et al., 2020; Bozkurt et al., 2020; Canese & Amarilla, 2020;

Clifford & Coggshall, 2021; Grooms & Childs, 2021; Kafa, 2021; National Association of Secondary School Principals [NASSP], n.d.; O'Connell & Clarke, 2020; Okilwa & Barnett, 2021; Stasel, 2020; Ujifusa, 2021). Amid the crisis, principals carried the burden and stress of conflicts over several disputed issues and controversial decisions (Ujifusa, 2021). A completely new set of concerns is now present both inside and outside school walls. Principals were an easy target for those unsettled and dissatisfied due to the pandemic and were overwhelmed from pandemic-related issues (Ujifusa, 2021). Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, expectations and stress for principals have never been so high and principals are feeling the pressure. According to Ujifusa (2021), a survey completed by the NASSP found 45% of principals stated that because of pandemic stress, they considered leaving their positions sooner than previously planned. Whether or not the pandemic will result in increased principal departure, mobility, and resignations is yet to be determined (Ujifusa, 2021). This qualitative narrative study sought to explore career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals after 3 or more years in the profession who served during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Consistent principal leadership is a vital piece to a school district's success and focus (Engel, 2020). As of 2016-2017, the average tenure of a principal in schools was 4 years (Levin & Bradley, 2019; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021). According to federal statistics, 18% of high school principals are no longer in their position after one year (S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). Principal turnover was an issue affecting schools prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has only compounded the issue of principal turnover and mobility, which could impact and disrupt school progress with high teacher turnover and lower student achievement (Levin

et al., 2020; Snodgrass Rangel, 2017). According to Fuller and Young (2008), much research has been carried out on principal turnover; however, understanding of principals' career paths is limited; little is known about mobility intentions of principals once they enter the profession (Aravena, 2020; Snodgrass Rangel, 2017; Ujifusa, 2021; Yan, 2020).

With principals carrying a brunt of the load due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this study sought to determine Missouri public high school principals' career satisfaction and mobility intentions based on lived experiences (Ujifusa, 2021). According to Gopalan and Pattusamy (2020), career satisfaction is important to study; however, several studies that include academic faculty and professionals, such as principals, have not included career satisfaction as a variable (Aravena, 2020; Cavazos, 2020; Engel, 2020; Postma, 2019; Stewart, 2020; Tahir et al., 2019). With little known about career satisfaction and mobility intentions of principals, investigating public high school principals' career satisfaction and mobility intentions based on lived experiences was important to study. Additionally, research revealed a gap in literature about occupational stressors, principals' perspectives of the effect of stress on their professional and personal lives, and the coping skills they used to deal with that stress (Record & Couturier, 2020). Principals' career demands, stress-level, and coping strategies pre and post COVID-19 were investigated in Chapter Two. Additionally, motivation and career satisfaction factors were explored with an overall goal to add to the existing and present educational literature and current research while providing insight into administrators' perspectives on the topic of career satisfaction and mobility intentions based on lived experiences amid

the COVID-19 pandemic.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals after 3 or more years in the profession who served during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic disrupted education around the world, forcing administrators to lead during unprecedented times with short-term and long-term costs yet to be determined (Ahlström et al., 2020; Canese & Amarilla, 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Klingbeil, 2020; Stasel, 2020; Superville, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). This study sought to highlight the perspectives of public high school principals based on this situation. High rates of attrition in high school principals were present prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (Engel, 2020; Fuller & Young, 2008; Levin & Bradley, 2019; NASSP, n.d.; Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011; Yan, 2020). Attrition, in large part, is due to the challenges presented in carrying out principal duties. Principal duties affected by the crisis involve dealing with an increased amount of stress, addressing challenges, processing information, and making decisions (Ahlström et al., 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Klingbeil, 2020; Stasel, 2020; Superville, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). High school principals served in key positions to lead our nation through educational changes. The presence of hope and resilience continues to push school leaders when dealing with the effects of COVID-19. Perspectives of current public high school principals add to the present literature on the topic of career satisfaction and mobility intentions amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

At this stage in the research, the career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals are less known. Based on the few studies

conducted, a negative correlation between career satisfaction and career mobility intentions exists (Barthauer et al., 2020; Meyer et al., 2020; Skaalvik, 2020). The researcher investigated the public high school principal's role during the pandemic that contributed to satisfactory and unsatisfactory experiences. The researcher strived to investigate mobility intentions, and career satisfaction of public high school principals, and uncover perspectives and experiences that contributed to leading and practicing in unusual circumstances. Additionally, the study disclosed workplace condition themes and common emotional aspects experienced while dealing with the effects of COVID-19. With a lack of systematic research to investigate career satisfaction of high school principals across the nation (Aravena, 2020; Cavazos, 2020; Engel, 2020; Gopalan & Pattusamy, 2020; Postma, 2019; Stewart, 2020; Tahir et al., 2019), this study was designed to capture the lived experiences of a group of Missouri public high school principals as they related to career satisfaction and mobility intentions.

Research Questions

The central research questions for this qualitative narrative study explored career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Two research questions and four sub questions guided this qualitative narrative study:

1. How do Missouri public high school principals describe their career satisfaction amid the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - a. What are the perspectives of Missouri public high school principals regarding satisfactory and unsatisfactory lived experiences during the pandemic?

- b. How did Missouri public high school principals' role during the pandemic contribute to or detract from career satisfaction?
2. What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals amid the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - a. What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals in relation to workplace conditions?
 - b. What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals in relation to emotional aspects of work?

Significance of the Study

Stable principal leadership is crucial for schools across our nation to succeed. Consistency in the high school principal position is of utmost importance to the success of schools. Successfully carrying out the duties of a high school principal directly affects student achievement (Hitt & Player, 2019; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Levin et al., 2020; Record & Couturier, 2020; Toner, 2019). Principal duties are complex, challenging, and always changing. Those changes and challenges have been exacerbated since the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting principals' career satisfaction (Ahlström et al., 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Klingbeil, 2020; Stasel, 2020; Superville, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). Research has been conducted looking at school changes and closures due to the COVID crisis (Ahlström et al., 2020; Argyropoulou et al., 2021; Bozkurt et al., 2020; Canese & Amarilla, 2020; Clifford & Coggshall, 2021; Grooms & Childs, 2021; Kafa, 2021; NASSP, n.d.; O'Connell & Clarke, 2020; Okilwa & Barnett, 2021; Stasel, 2020; Ujifusa, 2021). From a leadership angle, responsibility burdens were real and evident (Stasel, 2020). In Levin et al.'s (2020) survey of 424 secondary school principals, 42% of

focus group participants were considering leaving their school. The number of principals leaving their schools is increasing. Toner (2019) reported 1 in 5 principals leave their schools each year with an average tenure of fewer than 4 years. Additionally, 35% of principals stayed at their schools for fewer than two years. High school principals are less likely than other building-level principals to stay at their schools for extended periods of time (Toner, 2019). Retaining effective principals and reducing principal turnover are important; after teachers, principals are the second most key factor associated with student achievement in schools (Levin et al., 2020; Snodgrass Rangel, 2017). Minimizing turnover improves school performance and reduces replacement costs. Hiring and training costs related to turnover represent more than an employee's salary (O'Connor, 2018).

The significance of this study is based on current research and multiple reports that due to the COVID-19 pandemic; principals were experiencing a great deal of stress and high turnover rates (Klingbeil, 20,20; Stasel, 2020; Ujifusa, 2021). The daily stresses of dealing with COVID-19 are many. School districts need to understand lived experiences of public high school principals amid the COVID-19 pandemic to help plan for and address career satisfaction and mobility intentions among principals in their district with a goal of retaining effective administrators rather than losing them to other schools, positions, or professions. According to Record and Couturier (2020), our nation has reached a crisis-level of school administrator shortages. Schools need effective and competent leaders, especially during unprecedented times of increased teacher shortages, pressures, and educational expectations.

Definition of Key Terms

A better understanding of the study can be achieved by defining the following terms:

Career or Job Satisfaction. Overall current state of happiness in one's current job or career (Greenberg et al., 2019).

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Proposed hygiene factors contribute to career dissatisfaction while motivators contribute to career satisfaction (Stewart, 2020).

High School Principal. For the purposes of this study, high school principal is the lead principal serving students in Grades 9 through 12 (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE], n.d.).

Mindfulness. A mental state of being aware, evaluating, and accepting one's thoughts and feelings in the present moment (Kim et al., 2019).

Mobility Factors. Factors predicting or causing movement within one's career (Meyer et al., 2020).

Motivation Factors. Factors that drive one's actions (Engel, 2020).

Self-Efficacy. A belief in one's ability (Postma, 2019).

Social Learning Theory. A relatively new theory that helps examine one's career development: interest, choices, and performance (Cavazos, 2020).

Limitations

As with any study, limitations and delimitations existed and affected the study. Limitations and delimitations that existed within the research need to be clearly communicated. Limitations existed that could not be controlled by the researcher, restricting the methodology and conclusions (Engel, 2020). Limitations existed in this

study, and were as follows:

1. As with any qualitative study, researcher and participant biases were possibilities. Impartial collection of data was critical to the reliability and validity of the study. Participants may have had emotional connections and varying degrees of comfort discussing challenging work environments.
2. Only participants who responded to the survey were included in the study.
3. Due to the small sample size, limitations were present concerning demographics of participants.
4. Length of interview and schedules may have been deterrents. Principals are busy and may have chosen to not respond or cancel the interview.

Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries set by the researcher. Delimitations are important to assist the researcher in narrowing the scope of the research and focusing on specific research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Delimitations present in this qualitative narrative study were as follows:

1. The study was delimited to experiences, personal stories, and participant interpretations of each principal's career situation, mobility, and satisfaction.
2. Participants were selected with 3 or more years of experience in the high school principal position.
3. Sample populations were delimited to the state of Missouri.
4. The study was delimited to nine public high school principals located in each of the nine Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDC) of Missouri. Assistant principals were not included in this study.

5. Theoretical frameworks of Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory geared toward understanding motivation factors and career satisfaction of high principals bound this study.

Assumptions

Throughout the study, the researcher assumed the following:

1. Assumptions were made that participants answered questions openly and honestly, offering an accurate representation of a principal's perspective.
2. Participants served or were currently serving in the role of high school principal for 3 or more years.
3. Assumptions were made that participants had a true interest in participating in the research without other motives, such as receiving compensation or special treatment for participating.
4. High school principal duties and roles were comparable across the state of Missouri.

Design Controls

The researcher selected a qualitative narrative study to explore career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals after 3 or more years in the profession who served during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), narrative research encompasses stories of individuals who lived and told, often involving turning points in their lives. A qualitative narrative study design was used to purposefully select potential interview candidates to participate in semi-structured interviews in examining the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher considered quantitative research, however, chose to carry out this study

using a qualitative narrative design to understand the lives of participants, capture points of view, and gain a deep understanding of a few select individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research analyzed various lived experiences of public high school principals and developed a thematic analysis of leading during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing understanding of the experience. By analyzing lived experiences of public high school principals, interviews, archival data, and field notes were collected as data sources and triangulated to improve the reliability of the study (Fusch et al., 2018).

In this study, nine current high school principals in Missouri public school districts differing in size, location, and classification were interviewed based on a purposive sampling. To determine a pool of candidates along with location and years of experience, a list of Missouri public high school principals serving during the 2020-2021 school year was obtained from Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) open access database. Participant and job description information obtained from the DESE database was assumed to be accurate and up to date. The researcher then determined those who had served 3 or more years in the high school principal position and divided them into groups according to school size and location. From this list, three principals were purposefully selected from each of the nine RPDC regions, for a pool of 27 possible participants. The researcher then randomly selected one from each of the RPDC regions to participate in the study. Realizing high school principals have busy schedules and may have chosen not to participate or stop participation at any point. If/when this occurred, the researcher will select the next participant from that RPDC to interview. Quantity and sample size addressed by Peoples (2021) provided a saturation framework of eight to 15 participants in the study. With the

small sample size and participant demographics, multiple interviews ensuring principals from all nine RPDC regions statewide were included. To improve the validity of the study, no two principals were from the same district, creating a broader representation to explore lived experiences of current Missouri public high school principals who served during the COVID-19 pandemic (Peoples, 2021).

For this study, participants were sent an email invitation to interview with the researcher and each participant showing true interest accepted the invitation to participate in the study. Interviews were carried out at the participant's convenience through Zoom, telephone, or face-to-face methods. Through open-ended questions, each interview included participants with varied experiences and perspectives related to career satisfaction and mobility intentions. With permission, interviews were recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai to assist in identifying the number of times a pattern or common themes were noted among principals' lived experiences. If the participant declined to be recorded, the researcher complied and simply took copious notes. The researcher conducted member checking to verify transcripts and coded transcriptions to provide participant confidentiality, as well as consistent themes in the data. Ensuring confidentiality of participant identifying information, the researcher assumed that a participant's answers were a true representation of one's perspective rather than choosing to be more politically correct or socially responsible.

The study delimited to Missouri public high school principals with 3 or more years of experience serving in the position during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher interviewed nine principals located in each of the nine RPDC regions of Missouri. To support the limitations and delimitations of the study, the researcher

utilized open-ended questions about career satisfaction and mobility intentions.

According to Fusch et al. (2018), the researcher plays a key role in the study's data collection process, an important perspective to consider. Attempting to enhance the reliability and validity of the data, the researcher collected and triangulated data through interviews, archival data, and field notes. In addition, the researcher aimed to determine biases upfront by journaling and reflecting on lived experiences prior to interviews (Creswell, 1998). As the researcher analyzed and interpreted participant data, the journal was referenced to constantly check for unintentional biases during analysis.

Summary

This qualitative narrative study was based upon Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory. The research documented career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals after 3 or more years in the profession who served during the COVID-19 pandemic. Significant research on training and support of principals entering the role is available; however, limited research surrounds those who persist (Aravena, 2020; Cavazos, 2020; Engel, 2020; Postma, 2019; Stewart, 2020; Tahir et al., 2019). This research attempted to fill the gap in literature where, according to Engel (2020), a lack of systematic research investigating career satisfaction of public school principals across the nation exists. Identifying what principals enjoy or dislike about their careers is important. Understanding these factors is the first step, while knowing how to address these areas is the next logical step in the process. Principals experience a great deal of stress and high turnover (Engel, 2020; Fuller & Young, 2008; Levin & Bradley, 2019; NASSP, n.d; Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011; Yan, 2020). A gap in literature revealed a need to

research principals' occupational stressors, perspectives of the effect of stress on their professional and personal lives, and the coping skills used to deal with that stress, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Record & Couturier, 2020). Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation factors rooted in Herzberg's et al.'s (1959) theory provided an organizational framework geared toward understanding motivation factors and as a result, career satisfaction. Additionally, looking closely at Bandura's (1977) social learning theory's factors of self-efficacy and career decision-making, the researcher intended to determine mobility intentions in addition to overall career satisfaction of Missouri public high school principals.

Chapter Two included a review of current literature due to a gap in research regarding mobility intentions and career satisfaction of Missouri public high school principals. Specifically, Chapter Two was organized thematically around Bandura's (1977) social learning theory (1977) and Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory, which were the lenses through which the researcher viewed perspectives of principals regarding their job satisfaction based on experiences. The researcher sought to investigate principals' career demands, stress-level, motivation factors, and coping strategies pre and post COVID-19 with an overall goal to add to the existing and present educational literature and current research. Chapter Three provided the methodology behind the research, the role of the researcher, and an in-depth look at the research questions based on information found in the literature review. Interview plans and techniques to determine mobility intentions and career satisfaction were included. Chapter Four included the interview results, report, and analysis of the data collected from the study. Finally, in Chapter Five the researcher drew conclusions, reported

findings, defined implications of practice, and recommended further research related to this topic.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The position of high school principal is challenging, even for experienced principals (Kafa, 2021). Tremendous change occurred in schools and society as the country addressed the COVID-19 pandemic (Clifford & Coggshall, 2021; Kantos & Topcu, 2021; Reyes-Guerra et al., 2021; Superville, 2021). School leaders have played a pivotal role developing new leadership practices and learning new processes and outcomes (Aravena, 2020; Horwood et al., 2021; Meyer et al., 2020; NASSP, n.d.; Turk & Wolfe, 2019). The current review of literature on principal mobility intentions and career satisfaction explored a range of ideas and thoughts presented by the research questions. In addition to mobility intentions and career satisfaction, this study investigated Missouri public high school principals' career roles, workplace conditions, and emotional aspects of carrying out the position. Career satisfaction was analyzed by studying not only mobility intentions but sustainability amid one's career.

School principals play a vital role in schools and the lives of students, teachers, staff members, and families (Aravena, 2020; Horwood et al., 2021; Meyer et al., 2020; NASSP, n.d.; Turk & Wolfe, 2019). Research has given little attention to how school leaders have dealt with the pandemic or school leaders' capacity (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Kafa, 2021). Economic collapse and divisions were brought to the forefront in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which required a new approach to school leadership (Reyes-Guerra et al., 2021). The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals after 3 or

more years in the profession who served during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Aravena (2020), past research indicated principal movement between six to eight times during one's school leadership career. If principal mobility is frequent and rapidly occurring, not only does it cause career disruptions, but the effects on school progress and achievement can be detrimental (Aravena, 2020; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011). While schools may benefit from ineffective principals leaving, Tekleselassie and Villarreal (2011) reported school leader turnover undermines the school's ability to sustain continuous growth and successfully maintain the change process and implement educational initiatives and programs.

Knowledge of K-12 principal succession is limited (Aravena, 2020; Arvidsson et al., 2021; Tahir et al., 2019). Principal succession in school systems coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic was a critical issue needing investigation due to the increased pattern of principal movement (Aravena, 2020; Arvidsson et al., 2021; Tahir et al., 2019). The results of this study sought to add to the present literature on the topic of high school principal career satisfaction and mobility intentions amid the COVID-19 pandemic. By retaining current principals, less turnover and consistent school leadership will strengthen academics and promote stability within school systems (NASSP, n.d.; Reid & Creed, 2021). Individual school districts might benefit from this study by analyzing policies and adjusting in areas of principal retention and recruitment with a goal of increasing career satisfaction. Understanding high school principals' careers, roles, workplace conditions, and emotional aspects of the position will help lay the foundation to establish high school principal career satisfaction and mobility intentions amid the COVID-19 pandemic (Stewart, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

The qualitative narrative study was based on Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory. Bandura's social learning theory provided a framework for how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted and influenced high school principals' career decisions. Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory provided a framework for understanding motivation factors and how the factors contributed to principals' career satisfaction.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory stemmed from research emphasizing how people perform and what they learn when faced with obstacles. Bandura's research developed from his belief that instead of being weighed down in a crisis or stressful situation, self-efficacy is developed, motivation is gained, and action is taken (Bandura, 1977). Bandura's theory follows the principle that observations build knowledge and shape individual decisions. Research shows principals face significant challenges and complex situations on a regular basis, and as a result, self-efficacy would influence how principals viewed or handled specific situations and how satisfied principals were in the principalship (Bandura, 1977; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Skaalvik, 2020; Yost et al., 2019).

Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory is fundamentally based on an individual's belief in their capacity to succeed in any given situation or role. The belief influences how one thinks, feels, responds, and behaves. A leader's self-concept and self-esteem indirectly impacts motivation to learn a new task, achieve a desired objective, or duplicate actions. However, belief in one's ability alone does not determine success.

Periodically, self-efficacy and ability level contradict one another leading to considerable inconsistencies and motivation issues. Instead, self-efficacy is built by continuous effort, influence, and experiences over time. Bandura (1977) noted 4 main sources of influence responsible for building a leader's self-efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and emotional and physiological state. Mastery experience is seen as the most direct and significant method to develop and strengthen one's self efficacy. Mastery experience involves acting and reflecting on the level of effectiveness and perceived results. Vicarious experience builds self-efficacy by observing others and duplicating actions based on perceived success, rewards, and punishments. Upon observation, through vicarious experience, whether positive or negative, behavior can be adapted and followed (Schrik & Wasonga, 2019). Social persuasion builds one's self-efficacy through positive encouragement and praise from respected individuals in a leader's social circle. Envisioning success and positive persuasion cultivate one's belief in carrying out the desired tasks. In contrast, social persuasion can be negative requiring resilience to withstand unfavorable opinions. Finally, an effective way to build self-efficacy is through a comprehensive understanding and awareness of one's emotional and physiological state. Strong emotional responses to experiences often shifts one's perception affecting the approach in facing adversity. Believing in one's ability and having a strong sense of self-efficacy alone does not insure a positive outcome or successful experience (Postma & Babo, 2019). Instead, a variety of methods are used by educational leaders to build and maintain self-efficacy.

This study sought to highlight and understand the lived experiences and perspectives of Missouri public high school principals' career satisfaction and mobility

intentions amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the study attempted to describe principals' roles, workplace conditions, and emotional aspects of the position in relation to mobility and career satisfaction. The principalship involves numerous experiences, personal characteristics, and interactions that impact career-making decisions (Bandura, 1977). Social learning theory and self-efficacy impact how principals make career decisions.

Herzberg et al.'s Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory theorizes two motivation factors contributing to an individual's career satisfaction: motivators and hygiene factors. Herzberg et al. proposed hygiene factors contribute to career dissatisfaction while motivators contribute to career satisfaction. Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory stated that regarding career satisfaction, factors that contribute to career satisfaction seldom, if ever, contribute to career dissatisfaction. According to Herzberg et al., hygiene factors are mostly extrinsic and when missing, career satisfaction likely decreases. Subsequently, motivators are mostly intrinsic and when present, career satisfaction increases.

Herzberg's two-factor theory in relation to principal job satisfaction studies focuses on both extrinsic and intrinsic aspects of one's career (Postma & Babo, 2019). Extrinsic factors of working conditions, salary, interpersonal relationships, policies, and role definition, as well as the intrinsic factors of work engagement, achievement, recognition, success, autonomy, and work content all have substantial connections to principal job satisfaction. Overall, intrinsic job satisfaction is how people feel about the nature of their job responsibilities and roles, and extrinsic job satisfaction is how people feel about the condition of their position.

Research has been conducted on the topic of career satisfaction using Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory with the basic premise that experiences shape individual decisions (Cayak, 2021; Gardner, 1977; Postma & Babo, 2019; Stewart, 2020). Utilizing this framework, the researcher investigated the careers of Missouri public high school principals, specifically identifying roles, workplace conditions, and emotional aspects. Herzberg's two-factor theory provides an organizational framework geared toward understanding motivation and hygiene factors and as a result, career satisfaction and mobility intentions.

Roles of High School Principals

A wide array of responsibilities is essential to operating and running a school. The National Policy Board for Education Administration (2015) approved a set of standards for educational leaders released by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Standards were designed and implemented as a comprehensive list of roles and skills necessary to navigate the leadership landscape for Missouri school leaders, see Appendix A. Cultivating one's leadership capacity as an effective leader is critical to the success of schools (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Prior to the 2020-2021 school year, effective leaders fell under one of four core categories of leadership as it pertains to student learning: visionary, instructional, managerial, and overall improvement (Superville, 2015).

Pre-COVID

Life in the trenches, degrees, and administration certificates do not prepare educational leaders for the everyday challenges faced. Difficult and demanding words are frequently used to describe the role of a high school principal (Bertrand et al., 2018).

Leading and managing people require administrators to perform necessary behavior and cognitive functions, an assessment of one's ability, investigated in Bandura's self-efficacy study (Yost et al., 2019). According to Schrik and Wasonga (2019), the key cognitive variable controlling leader functioning in an ever-changing environment is leader confidence or self-efficacy. Efficacious individuals believe in their ability to succeed and are motivated, highly committed, effective problem-solvers (Bandura, 1977; Schrik & Wasonga, 2019). An increase in self-efficacy often results in improved job performance. According to the Learning Policy Institute and NASSP, school principals are facing career challenges having a great deal to cope with (Levin et al., 2019).

Kim et al. (2019) reported the unique role of school leader includes attention to detail, strategy and discipline, and emotional connection to others, all at the same time, in extremely trying times. Complex roles result in added stress for principals who are already overworked and overloaded (Engel, 2020; Fuller & Young, 2008; Levin & Bradley, 2019; NASSP, n.d.; Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011; Yan, 2020). Principals were expected to lead with positive energy and excitement, manage their own stress, and reduce the stress of the faculty and staff.

Visionary. Visionary leadership is responsible for the development and implementation of a common and shared vision (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Specifically, the role of high school principal has become more complex as principals face growing pressure to revolutionize schools into effective and progressive learning environments (Clifford & Coggshall, 2021; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Ganon-Shilon et al., 2021). Developing and communicating a clear vision for the school with a long-term pursuit toward learning goals effectively influences student

achievement (Hitt & Player, 2019). In influencing student achievement, leaders develop people and provide stimulating intellectual experiences to benefit the adults in the school (Hitt & Player, 2019). In addition, a sharp vision and structure help individuals improve work performance and achieve career satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959; Saraih et al., 2019). Improvement steps are constantly necessary for struggling schools.

Instructional. Instructional leadership prioritizes teaching and learning. Effective instructional leaders recognize and develop excellent instruction and organize and improve curriculum and assessment (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). A principal must lead instruction, be available for teacher observations, and provide feedback, all while being accountable to central office, teachers, school boards, parents, and communities for performance of school (DeMatthews et al., 2019; Horwood et al., 2021; Swen, 2020). Instructional leaders recognize the need for change, take risks, understand the implications, and navigate the process with a deep understanding of aspects at play (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Principals are charged to be instructional leaders, change agents for school improvement initiatives in a complicated and politically charged climate while preparing young people for the 21st century (Mahfouz, 2020). Effective instructional leaders are forward thinking and skillfully move organizations in the right direction driven by a belief to handle specific situations and duties (Bandura, 1977; Yost et al., 2019). Bandura (1977) supported the notion that self-efficacy influences how a person perceives the environment. Principals often experience lack of energy and a high amount of time pressure (Skaalvik, 2020). To have the time and energy to devote to instructional leadership, Skaalvik (2020) pointed to the need to

reduce excessive stress and demands in the principal position. The principal role is complex, from changing policies, introduction of innovative technologies, and growing pressure of accountability to meeting the diverse needs of students (Greenberg et al., 2019; Levin et al., 2020).

Managerial. Managerial leadership and obligations involve coordinating time, people, practice, money, and resources carrying endless responsibilities and duties for school leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Effective leaders have the knowledge and skills to be intentional in utilizing time to maximize productivity of adults serving in one's school. As described by Lejman and Lazaros (2020), principals manage staff, hire personnel, evaluate teachers' performance, organize professional development, and provide faculty opportunities (Levin et al., 2020; Paterson, 2020). Principals oversee and ensure schools implement and meet local, state, and federal standards, as well as supervise instruction, manage budgets and teaching materials, and support teachers (Holsey et al., 2020). Additionally, principals work with students directly, act as the disciplinarian, and assess students' academic progress based on student performance related to schoolwork and standardized tests (Sugrue, 2005). The principal role involves dealing with societal problems and pressure to accomplish more with less support (Kantos & Topcu, 2021; Klocko & Justis, 2019; Reyes-Guerra et al., 2021). Leading and managing people requires principals to perform necessary behavior and cognitive functions outlined in Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy study. The managerial role of leadership is complicated, making it difficult to prioritize with increased responsibility (Stasel, 2020; Sugrue, 2005; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021).

School Improvement. Effective educational leaders understand the importance of

making continuous improvement, and cultivating relationships to bring opportunities to students, and sustaining successful schools. Power and influence of relationships with students, staff, parents, and community are simple yet fundamental pieces of shaping school culture and improvement (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). School leaders are asked to address the needs of faculty, staff and community members, school boards, and their own families (Infante, 2020). Students' lives outside of school are increasingly chaotic with challenges such as poverty and abuse (Swen, 2020). Principals were charged with safeguarding, ensuring, and supporting the well-being of children and families all while being exposed to trauma (Clifford & Cogshall, 2021; DeMatthews et al., 2019; NASSP, n.d.; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021). As a result, leading school improvement involves a belief to successfully handle complex duties requiring self-confidence of one's ability outlined in Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy study. Additionally, a delicate act of balancing relationships within the school community and understanding the importance of using discretion and moral imperative is necessary (Bertrand et al., 2018).

During COVID

COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization in March 2020, alerting the world to the highly contagious nature of the virus (Ahlström et al., 2020; Bozkurt et al., 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Klingbeil, 2020; Stasel, 2020; Superville, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). COVID-19 quickly migrated from a foreign threat to a present phenomenon in our daily lives (Ahlström et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic created a disturbance in the lives of all humanity (Kafa, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). Safeguard measures were taken to slow the spread, such as partial or complete lockdowns, curfews,

and social distancing guidelines (Okilwa & Barnett, 2021; Superville, 2020). To reduce the spread, schools and other areas where people are intricately connected were shut down (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; Grooms & Childs, 2021). On Friday, March 13, 2020, principals were alerted schools would be closing at the end of the day or would not return from spring break for 2 weeks due to an increase in COVID-19 cases (Clifford & Cogshall, 2021). As a result, 1,500,000,000 students worldwide experienced an interruption in their education, an unprecedented interruption, one not seen before (Bozkurt et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many aspects of life, specifically education (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Kafa, 2021). As COVID-19 was introduced, swift and complete change took place leading to the evolution of a new world order (Kantos & Topcu, 2021). Research has begun on the COVID-19 pandemic due to the rapid effect and implications on society (Kantos & Topcu, 2021). According to Kantos and Topcu (2021), research suggests not only rethinking education, but reshaping education.

At the onset of the closure period, principals were one of very few school professionals who were required to go to work (Stasel, 2020). Principals' roles multiplied and intensified during the pandemic with increased demands and changes in relation to school closures, reopening, and social distancing protocols (DeMatthews et al., 2019; Engel, 2020; Fuller & Young, 2008; Levin & Bradley, 2019; NASSP, n.d.; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021; Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011; Yan, 2020). School closures due to COVID-19 across the nation sprang principals Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as the belief one possesses regarding personal capabilities to exercise control over events that influence their lives. Leaders found themselves with less control amid the pandemic

(Argyropoulou et al., 2021). Determining root causes of stress and ways to rid feelings of doubt in the ability to tackle insurmountable systematic inequalities and self-efficacy was needed (S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021). Self-efficacy impacted work-related emotion and mobility intentions in connection (Reid & Creed, 2021). While the four core categories of leadership were still essential during the COVID-19 pandemic, amid the 2020-2021 school year, effective leadership added numerous responsibilities and duties in each area, specifically social media and crisis communication and management (Superville, 2021). With the addition of social media and crisis communication and management during the COVID-19 pandemic, the extensive list of priorities changed for principals, and many standards were pushed aside to prioritize others (Superville, 2021).

Visionary. Schools' vision and mission received little attention during the COVID-19 pandemic (Superville, 2021). According to Superville (2021), standards were still relevant and necessary, however principal priorities changed, and future vision was not a topic of conversation with central office and principals. According to Record and Couturier (2020), demands constantly pulled principals in different directions. Principals were faced with how to determine and achieve future vision, the basics of which were how to operate amidst stakeholders bombarding with requests of past events (Record & Couturier, 2020). During the pandemic, schools continued to place the focus on human aspects of the educational system, specifically centered around struggling leaders (Reyes-Guerra et al., 2021). Social and emotional support for the well-being of school leaders were non-negotiable; they were necessary in a school's mission (Reyes -Guerra et al., 2021). To achieve career satisfaction, demands and work-life balance needed to be emphasized (Herzberg et al., 1959; Saraih et al., 2019).

Instructional. Instructional standards were one of the first to be shelved during the COVID-19 pandemic (Superville, 2021). As a result, major implications with state and federal accountability measures for the future are likely (Superville, 2021). Inside the school walls, as described by Ujifusa (2021), principals were overwhelmed from pandemic-related teacher absences, substitute teacher shortages, chaotic schedules, and quarantine and trauma-induced student struggles, learning loss, and overall well-being. Learning loss because of the in-person shutdown presented technical challenges for principals, making it necessary to provide added support to allow for a focus on academics and instruction (Superville, 2020). For students and parents who participated in remote learning during the 2020-2021 school year, principals were dealing with an adjustment to mitigation measures (Grooms & Childs, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). With ever-changing and shifting context, responsive leadership was needed and evident to keep teachers working virtually and students participating in their education (Argyropoulou et al., 2021). During the crisis, effective and self-efficacious school leaders were decisive in decision making, communicated effectively, practiced flexibility, and demonstrated creativity (Bandura, 1977; Okilwa & Barnett, 2021). Principals rapidly rearranged schooling to deliver and manage instruction by use of technology. Teacher evaluations were not mentioned as a school's focus, instead, principals organized professional development opportunities for teachers to help ensure students had equitable technology access as tech skills were necessary to get the job done (Superville, 2021). Educators and school leaders entered the pandemic and virtual learning world from varying levels of technology skills, dispositions, and knowledge (Greenleaf, 2020). In addition, a lack of social interaction took a toll on students, teachers, educators, and administrators alike

(Greenleaf, 2020). Technology filled a gap and formed a bridge during pandemic isolation, but long-term learning with successful outcomes have fallen short (Greenleaf, 2020). For ethical purposes, school, teaching, and learning moved on amid the crisis with an emergence of differentiated leadership (Argyropoulou et al., 2021). At the same time, students and teachers who were in person were adjusting to a separate set of measures during the 2021-2022 school year (Superville, 2020; Ujifusa, 2021).

Managerial. The COVID-19 pandemic required principals to manage and deal with issues for which they had not been trained or had any experience (Aravena, 2020; Superville, 2021). School leaders were faced with making immediate changes to unprecedented problems (Argyropoulou et al., 2021). During the crisis, principals proved efficacious in their ability to succeed as motivated, highly committed, and effective problem-solvers (Bandura, 1977; Okilwa & Barnett, 2021). In the rapidly changing world, principals determined the means to develop the skills, abilities, and knowledge to succeed in a dynamic environment (Shirbagi, 2018). During the pandemic, high school principals dealt with new conflicts and pressures to solve a whole host of controversial decisions concerning masks, quarantines, vaccinations, and other disputed issues (Ahlström et al., 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Klingbeil, 2020; Stasel, 2020; Superville, 2020; Ujifusa, 2021). Pandemic-related action involved a myriad of duties such as packing meals for students and families and quickly establishing remote learning opportunities (Clifford & Coggshall, 2021; Superville, 2019). As reported by Stasel (2020), leaders found themselves fulfilling time-sensitive and intense directives from those higher up, dealing with the urgency to lead staff members, while keeping calm throughout the crisis. With increased frequency of changing policies and guidelines,

principals were faced with realizing and responding to parent concerns about a myriad of pandemic-related issues and meeting those unavoidable, challenging conversations head-on (Paterson, 2020; Ujifusa, 2021). Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, principals worked to evaluate the crisis and emergency situations, determine what was needed, and then react by taking charge (Clifford & Coggshall, 2021; Superville, 2019). Within a brief period, as stated by Superville (2021), a new wave of communication and interaction took shape. A lot of information needed to be shared in an abbreviated period. Additionally, information was changing rapidly, requiring a faster response time (Aravena, 2020; Clifford & Coggshall, 2021; Mahfouz, 2020). Principals made decisions concerning students' schedules, grades, and assignments (Superville, 2021; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). In addition to student decisions and support, principals communicated regularly with teachers to give direction or engage in regular pep talks (Ujifusa, 2021). Specific challenges faced included low compensation for long hours, increased accountability with lack of resources, and stress of trying to meet increased needs of parents, students, and teachers (How principals, 2021).

School Improvement. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, providing continuous improvement and cultivating relationships by supporting teachers, students, and the school community quickly became the focus (Superville, 2021). Principals spoke of enormous challenges and major changes faced during the 2020-2021 school year (Clifford & Coggshall, 2021; Superville, 2021). Principals rapidly rearranged schooling, meeting needs of student care and learning through dreadful and traumatic events (Clifford & Coggshall, 2021). The country emerged from pandemic with old routines gone, and innovative approaches and persistent problems prevailed (Clifford &

Coggshall, 2021). Principals implemented innovative techniques to keep students linked to schools and learning and gained new perspectives on the school's ability to adapt, finding a new way to achieve the desired goal of educating students (Clifford & Coggshall, 2021; Superville, 2021). Reconstruction of student flow was necessary (Clifford & Coggshall, 2021). New staffing techniques and practices and new partnerships with community and government agencies were utilized to meet the needs to better serve the school community (Clifford & Coggshall, 2021). Principals supported students' academic success and social-emotional well-being along with building supportive professional school environments ensuring students and staff had the necessary resources to thrive (Superville, 2021). Much of the leadership shown during the COVID-19 pandemic was without control, support, capacity, and training (Kafa, 2021).

Collaboration and communication were core aspects and best responses for leading school communities through the crisis (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021; Tintore et al., 2021). Extrinsic factors encompassing social aspects and interpersonal relationships were some of most crucial pieces of the framework given the isolation experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic (Herzberg et al., 1959; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021). Principals were expected to be more visible virtually during the closure period (Reid & Creed, 2021). At minimum, weekly meetings were held between principals and district staff to ensure clear communication and ongoing dialogue, and to provide necessary feedback and clarification (DeMatthews et al., 2019; Ujifusa, 2021). Subsequently, principals found themselves more interpersonally connected to staff members than prior to the pandemic. Principals provided constant communication with staff members and central office to prepare for difficulties that lay ahead (Argyropoulou

et al., 2021; Paterson, 2020; Superville, 2019). Additionally, principals reported the benefits of networking with other principals during this time to get advice or blow off steam (Superville, 2020). Partnerships among principals provided the support needed to work toward sustainability and solutions (S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021). Staying connected involved leading with patience, understanding, and support while embracing change (Kafa, 2021). Constantly emerging circumstances during the crisis required school leaders to lead during times of uncertainty; a perception and obligation have remained to have a clear strategy to guide others through the crisis (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Kafa, 2021).

High School Principal Mobility

Mobility is defined as the ability to physically move (Meyer et al., 2020). Research and literature on principal mobility are thin (Yan, 2020). Meyer et al. (2020) studied mobility and turnover among leaders in various states. Mobility intentions can be described in three ways: thought to leave, searching for another job and intention to leave (Alam & Asim, 2019). Strong and stable leadership is necessary in our nation's schools (Mahfouz, 2020).

A negative correlation exists between principal mobility, turnover, and school and student outcomes as studied by Meyer et al. (2020). As a result of mobility, lower student test scores and achievement, poor school culture and climate, and increased teacher turnover are common (Levin et al., 2020; Meyer et al., 2020; Snodgrass Rangel, 2017). Levin et al. (2019) specifically stated school progress is disrupted by short principal tenure resulting in high teacher turnover and lower student achievement and test scores. Principal turnover costs districts on average \$75,000 to reboot according to Toner

(2019). In addition, higher turnover results in instability, loss of shared purpose and trust with teachers and communities, and derailed attempts at school improvement initiatives (Levin et al., 2020). Research indicated distinct reasons why principals move or change schools including personal reasons, external factors, or the school themselves (Alam & Asim, 2019; Mahfouz, 2020; Meyer et al., 2020; Tahir et al., 2019; Yan, 2020).

Pre-COVID

Mobility intentions have become more complex since 2002. Twenty years ago and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the reason for leaving pertained to getting another position (Mahfouz, 2020). Research confirms burnout is related to career turnover or mobility intentions (Barthauer et al., 2020). Today, higher stress correlates to higher principal turnover rates. Career mobility or turnover is seen as a coping mechanism contributing to a more sustainable career. School districts play a role in helping build principals' commitment to a longer career in the principal position by engaging principals in professional development opportunities. These opportunities not only improve principals' knowledge and skills but also increase self-efficacy and competence (Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011). With proper tools, resources, and skills, principals can mitigate negative impacts of carrying out the position on their lives.

According to Mahfouz (2020), principals do not remain in their position for a prolonged period due to increasing job demands and workplace conditions. Principals highlighted intentions to leave one's position or change workplaces due to the demanding roles and being squeezed between management and colleagues (Arvidsson et al., 2021). Research shows workplace conditions, extrinsic factors, and job influences are more effective in determining principal mobility, career transitions, or turnover than

salary (Yan, 2020). Principal turnover is the continual wearing down of someone over a period of time to the point of leaving. According to Tekleselassie and Villarreal's (2011) research, career satisfaction, salary, and workplace conditions influence career mobility intentions. Alam and Asim (2019) noted, organizational commitment and industrial relations are used to measure job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Out of 10 career facets, three extrinsic or hygiene factors are responsible for and contribute to intentions to leave: pay, security, and promotion (Alam & Asim, 2019). As described by Gardner (1977) and Herzberg et al., factors that contribute to job dissatisfaction are referred to as hygiene factors. All three facets are highly negative in relation to mobility intentions.

Efforts to simply improve workplace conditions do not positively correlate to increased career satisfaction and mobility intentions among principals (Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011). Gardner (1977) and Herzberg et al. (1959) described hygiene factors as contributing to job dissatisfaction, whereas motivators contribute to job satisfaction. Focusing on hygiene factors will not increase job satisfaction but will result in decreased dissatisfaction with no improvement in performance. Focusing on motivators results in improved job satisfaction but has no effect on job dissatisfaction (Gardner, 1977; Herzberg et al., 1959). Emotional attachment and commitment within organizations are both important to reduce the intention to leave. Aligning principal values with workplace conditions helps retain principals and reduce mobility (Holsey et al., 2020; Meyer et al., 2020; Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011). Research shows it is necessary for principals to be rewarded financially as well as given growth opportunities to decrease departure or mobility intentions (Barthauer et al., 2020; Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011).

During COVID

The COVID-19 pandemic added another set of challenges to an already difficult school leadership role. Work-related chronic pressure of the principal position is described as unrelenting, stressful, and demanding, all contributing factors to burnout and principal mobility and turnover (DeMatthews et al., 2019, DeMatthews et al., 2021). Principals reported plans to leave the position due to the chaotic and inconsistency surging from a harmful political environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic (How principals, 2021; DeMatthews et al., 2021). The work seemed insurmountable, and principals felt overlooked and unappreciated (How principals, 2021). Principals believed their needs were being ignored (DeMatthews et al., 2019; NASSP, n.d.).

According to the Learning Policy Institute, principal turnover rests at nearly 18% (S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). Whether or not the pandemic will result in increased turnover, principal departure, mobility, and/or resignations is yet to be determined. A survey completed by the NASSP found 45% of principals considered leaving their positions sooner than planned because of the pandemic (Ujifusa, 2021). However, Ujifusa (2021) described conflicting data that existed concerning principal turnover and mobility because of the pandemic. A Research and Development (RAND) Corporation survey of superintendents in 2021 stated there was not an increased occurrence of principal mobility or departure due to the pandemic (Ujifusa, 2021). Either way, the reality is, principals are feeling the pressure.

Outcome expectations are highlighted within the social cognitive theory (Barthauer et al., 2020). Within the framework, employees seek opportunities to experience feelings of success and maintain employment. When considering a future

career change, a belief in one's ability to be successfully employed is crucial. Bandura's (1977) theory supports the notion that self-efficacy influences how a person perceives the environment. For example, with two principals with similar responsibilities and available resources, due to self-efficacy differences, both principals may have varying degrees of perceived job demands and resources. In addition, low self-efficacious principals experienced elevated levels of pressure and emotional exhaustion and lower levels of career satisfaction. When an employee believes their purpose is out of reach because of low resources, mobility intentions result (Truong, 2019). Specifically, principals who intend to leave their position show signs of emotional exhaustion (Arvidsson et al., 2021; Skaalvik, 2020). Mobility intentions positively correspond with emotional exhaustion and negatively connect with career satisfaction (Skaalvik, 2020). Higher career satisfaction positively correlates with employees' intentions to stay, decreased mobility intentions, and emotional exhaustion (Alam & Asim, 2019; Skaalvik, 2020). According to Skaalvik (2020), of all workplace conditions, time pressure and stress have the most profound consequences related to emotional exhaustion and mobility intentions. Even through a pandemic, it is necessary to manage workplace conditions and stress while maintaining leadership effectiveness (Kafele, 2021).

Workplace Conditions

Barthauer et al. (2020) defined work environments for high school principals as fast-paced, full of change, having heavy workloads, and having high sensitivity to the timeliness of accomplishing tasks and objectives. A principal's goal is to promote a positive culture with motivated passionate teachers to do their jobs without fear or anxiety. Studies suggest principal stress is in direct correlation to the imbalance between

demands of the career and the resources available to deal with those demands (Horwood et al., 2021; Klocko & Justis, 2019; Okilwa & Barnett, 2021; Turk & Wolfe, 2019). Prior to the pandemic, workplace conditions and demands of the principal position were complicated, making it difficult to prioritize with increased responsibility (Stasel, 2020; Sugrue, 2005; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021).

Pre-COVID

Teachers and principals are caught up in the relentless pursuit of progress with no easy answers and external demands for accountability too great (Cayak, 2021; Sugrue, 2005). The principal position carries with it the reality of working well beyond traditional work hours, into nights weekends (Barthauer et al., 2020; Kafele, 2021; Reid & Creed, 2021). Long work hours and career demands have resulted in principals' health and well-being suffering-specifically mental-health issues, burnout, and work-related stress (How principals, 2021; Greenberg et al., 2019). Additionally, principals who feel drained and overworked and are less effective (DeMatthews et al., 2019). A delicate balance exists to carry out the roles and responsibilities of the principal position, and equally important are sustaining and maintaining habits, strategies, and routines (Sugrue, 2005). Additionally, principal support is needed to assist in maintaining healthy, balanced lifestyles to persist on the job. Principals who define themselves by their work rather than seize the opportunity to grow and learn by thinking critically about their identity are more prone to burnout (Sven, 2020).

The day-to-day challenges in addition to the multiple roles and negative experiences of a principal lend themselves to early career burnout (Fanuele, 2019; Gopalan & Pattusamy, 2020; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021). Burnout is defined as

disengagement from work and ineffectiveness within the profession. Burnout is associated with unreasonable workloads, job demands, and lack of autonomy (Horwood et al., 2021; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021). According to Truong (2019), burnout research of new principals compares to the burnout research in other fields, such as nurses. Often, the first few years in the role lead to job dissatisfaction and burnout. School administrators are worn out and exhausted with increasing job responsibilities and pressures; as a result, burnout sets in (Mahfouz, 2020). Principals associate progressively high stress levels with burnout and turnover (Fuller & Young, 2008; Horwood et al., 2021; Mahfouz, 2018). Job demands determine burnout and job resources determine satisfaction and level of engagement (Horwood et al., 2021). According to Horwood et al. (2021) and Herzberg et al. (1959), specifically, high job demands focused on extrinsic versus intrinsic outcomes lead to elevated levels of burnout and turnover for principals.

During COVID

Research indicated that the ability to lead in times of crisis is vastly different from the ability to lead in normal times (Ramos-Pla et al., 2021; Tintore et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic required principals to deal with issues for which they had not been trained and with which they had no experience (Aravena, 2020). Argyropoulou et al. (2021) expanded on these changes stating school leaders were expected to cope with the demands for immediate solutions to raging emotional and managerial problems. The work started and did not stop. A 2-week break resulted in online learning for months (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Clifford & Cogshall, 2021; Klingbeil, 2020). Teachers adapted curriculum and instruction, organized contact tracing, and schools became a hub for health information and food distribution (Clifford & Cogshall, 2021; Superville, 2020).

Outside of school, principals led through a national crisis of increased violence and racial and social injustice (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Clifford & Coggshall, 2021; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021). Principals continued supporting teachers, students, and families even while experiencing an unprecedented disruption to education.

School leaders experienced increased workloads to fulfill the need of daily communication with staff members and deficiencies in school technical systems, while providing emotional and psychological support and encouragement to their school community (Argyropoulou et al., 2021). Principals experienced scarce resources with few solutions and high expectations to deliver (NASSP, n.d.). According to the NASSP (n.d.), the career principals once loved quickly became overwhelming and exhausting. On the spot decisions were executed to keep schools operating during the crisis with short-term goals of action (O'Connell & Clarke, 2020; Okilwa & Barnett, 2021). Challenges of planning during uncertain times were realized, utilizing simple problem-solving strategies and resources on hand (Argyropoulou et al., 2021). As a result, a new facet of leadership in schools emerged.

Principals became targets of frustrated parents and community members who blamed principals for continuous and unpopular changes (NASSP, n.d.; Ujifusa, 2021). Principals were overwhelmed by the responsibility to keep students and staff safe and felt unsuitable to make what felt like life-or-death decisions (How principals, 2021). People became divided, strong relationships deteriorated, and mental strain resulted in increased stress. Staff morale was low, and teachers were exhausted although an intense sense of team abounded. The pandemic took a significant toll on everyone; the disruption was difficult in many ways, but uniting in others (O'Connell & Clarke, 2020). As stated

by O'Connell and Clarke (2020), the disruption left much more to be seen and determined.

Principals reported plans to leave the position based on the chaotic and inconsistency surging from a harmful political environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic (How principals, 2021; DeMatthews et al., 2021). The work seemed insurmountable, and principals felt overlooked and unappreciated (How principals, 2021). Principals believed their needs were being ignored (DeMatthews et al., 2019; NASSP, n.d.). Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory requires employees to recall experiences of when they felt unusually good about their jobs (Gardner, 1977). Similarly, employees were asked to recall experiences of when they felt unusually bad about their jobs or aspects of their employment status. Principals were stressed from constant change, dealing with situations over which they had little control (Mahfouz, 2020). Administrators worked tirelessly to the point that stress, anxiety, and the workload were at unprecedented levels, not seen before (Klingbeil, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic left principals overwhelmed and exhausted, however, school leaders worked to demonstrate sensitivity to personal issues and alleviate further difficulties and problems (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; NASSP, n.d.). Principals recognized their staff needed strong leaders now more than ever (NASSP, n.d.).

Emotional Aspects

Principals suffer from stressful, emotionally and physically exhausting days (DeMatthews et al., 2019; Mahfouz, 2018; Paterson, 2020). Studies confirm the seriousness of stress for principals related to the all-encompassing role of high school principal (Engel, 2020; Fuller & Young, 2008; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Mahfouz, 2020;

NASSP, n.d.; Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011; Yan, 2020). Principal stress is indicative of health concerns, time-management problems, conflict, relationships, and compliance with state and federal mandates (DeMatthews et al., 2019; Horwood et al., 2021; Skaalvik, 2020). Implications involve economic concerns, high rates of career burnout, and job insecurity in the working population (Barthauer et al., 2020). Difficulties and emotional aspects are necessary to address; without doing so, principals become ineffective and are compelled to leave the position (Paterson, 2020). Prior to the pandemic, the nature of the principal position was demanding, given the emotional aspects, complexity, and severity of problems to be solved coupled with the high-level workload and demands of the position (DeMatthews et al., 2019). Since the onset of the pandemic, the role of school leader and stress of the position have intensified, becoming more complex and demanding (Okilwa & Barnett, 2021).

Pre-COVID

A culture of stress and conflict is present for school principals due to chronic pressure and high expectations (Klocko & Justis, 2019). Stress associated with job demands is widespread, an inevitable part of a principal's life, an epidemic that is necessary to address (Mahfouz, 2020; Skaalvik, 2020). High visibility and accountability responding to legislative demands are sources of stress. According to Mahfouz (2020), responsibility and accountability involve attending to high emotional and relational demands while sustaining strong and positive interpersonal relationships with the many stakeholders. Unfortunately, conflict often arises, producing emotional exhaustion (Mahfouz, 2020; Skaalvik, 2020). As a result, compassion, fatigue, emotional exhaustion, frustration, and resentment set in. Added stress can spur unhappiness and a

low sense of contentment in one's life (Gopalan & Pattusamy, 2020). Negative and positive stressors were investigated and used to describe emotional aspects of the principal position.

Negative Stressors. Stress experienced by school administrators affects job performance and well-being (Mahfouz, 2020). Principals' well-being lays the groundwork for positive school climate, teachers thriving, positive school-community partnerships, and eventually, successful student outcomes (Greenberg et al., 2019). Difficulties and issues need to be addressed; the well-being of principals will be threatened if access to essential resources for workplace well-being is not available to offset high job demands, a common occurrence among principals across the world (Collie et al., 2020; Greenleaf, 2020). In the meantime, principals tending to the needs of school faculty and staff often jeopardize their own health in the process (Mahfouz, 2020). As a result, job pressure and stress often lead to health impairments. Educational leaders face physical common stressors including headaches, high blood pressure, and increased weight (Paterson, 2020). Collie et al. (2020) indicated that when the well-being of principals is threatened, serious ramifications for school operations result.

In addition to well-being suffering, principals have found it difficult to manage a work-family life balance and stay focused on the job (DeMatthews et al., 2019). Work-family conflict results when role pressures from work and family are incompatible (Gopalan & Pattusamy, 2020). Work-family conflict leads to frustration, strain, burnout, and low family (Saraih et al., 2019). According to Gopalan and Pattusamy (2020,

Positive Stressors. S. S. Sutton and Gong (2021) noted, "superhero" principals have been expected to overcome the odds with tremendous internal strength, resilience,

and coping skills. Improving protective factors such as self-esteem and self-efficacy along with utilizing healthy coping strategies have shown to increase resiliency and one's capacity to self-regulate emotions. The social theory of self-efficacy describes one's confidence in their ability to perform at a certain level (Bandura, 1977). The more prepared to develop strategies to deal with stress during challenging times, the better. Mahfouz (2018) described strategies to deal with stress as intentional effort, a learned technique to deal with challenging work. Challenging work is sustainable when looked at as an opportunity to grow and collaborate (Barthauer et al., 2020; Swen, 2020). Intelligence and experience are also important; however, emotional intelligence to offset stress and challenges faced is a critical factor in the success of educational leaders (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; Ramos-Pla et al., 2021; Turk & Wolfe, 2019). Emotional intelligence research has been ongoing. Related to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, emotional competence revolves around one's ability to learn, develop, and enhance tolerance, often learned by observing and modeling others. Low self-efficacious individuals believe things are harder than they really are and acquire a narrow outlook as to how to address a problem (Skaalvik, 2020). Conversely, efficacious individuals believe in their ability to succeed and are motivated, highly committed, and effective problem-solvers (Skaalvik, 2020). According to Turk and Wolfe (2019), effective leaders must have a high degree of emotional intelligence and foster success by recognizing and managing not only their emotions, but also others' emotions as well. Emotional intelligence skills and resilience were imperative to the success of educational administrators as multiple challenges and increased demands with current education reform were faced (Turk & Wolfe, 2019). Studies show that emotional intelligence is

twice as important as expertise or intelligence in predicting success in leadership (Turk & Wolfe, 2019). The principal position is a lonely career filled with complex duties and emotionally challenging days. Encountering numerous stressful emotionally challenging days, one must learn the skills necessary to respond effectively (Greenberg et al., 2019).

Stress, as described by Kleiman et al. (2017), results in decreased immune response; however, optimism may reduce the negative response. Optimism is noted to buffer the effects of stress on depression and negative health outcomes (Kleiman et al., 2017). Driving success, strong educational leaders learn to manage their own emotions as well as the emotions of others (Turk & Wolfe, 2019). Training in mindfulness strategies assists principals in regulating emotions with the important goal of increasing well-being and improving health (Greenberg et al., 2019). Self-efficacy impacts one's emotions and thought patterns (Bandura, 1977; Schrik & Wasonga, 2019). According to Schrik and Wasonga (2019), Bandura's theory of self-efficacy describes one's confidence in their ability to perform at a certain level to accomplish an outcome or influence decisions. Mindfulness strategies such as compassion, empathy, self-control, and self-awareness are all vital skills in leaders who help others develop those same skills (Mahfouz, 2018). In Mahfouz's (2018) study, leaders were given mindfulness strategies to practice such as centering, compassion for self, checking their emotional elevator, breathing practices to regulate feelings, and becoming more observant and attentive to others.

A principal's passion often results from a desire to succeed at goals, regardless of the time and energy required, often overlooking, or not realizing the impact the situation has on one's mentality (Kafele, 2021). Educational leaders must strike a balance, take time for themselves, and have the discipline to unplug (Greenberg et al., 2019; Klocko &

Justis, 2019; Türkoglu & Cansoy, 2020). Kafele (2021) reported that managing stress comes down to focus and priority - remembering one's "why." Principals must remember the focus and priority are students who benefit from the work done in schools. Principals cannot lose sight of the why by focusing solely on their work, especially with the stress and negative experiences that accompany school leadership. As a group, principals reported a burning passion and high satisfaction in carrying out their jobs (Horwood et al., 2021; Sugrue, 2005). While passionate about their jobs, the passion served as a double-edged sword. According to Horwood et al. (2021), passion helped principals maintain job satisfaction and avoid burnout, but only when manifested skillfully. Horwood et al. reported nearly 90% of principals are passionate about their work, resulting in greater career satisfaction compared to the average worker. Whether or not principals burn out or remain in the position largely depends on how their passion materialized (Kafele, 2021; Sugrue, 2005). Understanding the realities of one's career and calling helps guide their career and helps take care of oneself when challenges are faced (Swen, 2020). Swen (2020) described three main callings – destiny to be an educator, duty to serve all students, and personal achievement or passion to carry out the work. Passion must fuel the demands and choices made daily according to Sugrue (2005). Individuals, their stories, and their passions, maximize the school experience for all learners. Passionate leadership is a fundamental ingredient (Sugrue, 2005). Understanding the realities of the career and focusing on one's project and passion, principals need to be encouraged to learn strategies to deal with stress and lay out ways to manage during challenging times (Kafele, 2021).

During COVID

The COVID-19 pandemic was an all-encompassing stress test for districts to consider preparedness for future crises (Superville, 2020). As a result of COVID-19, principals reported anxiety among parents, teachers, and students (Ahlström et al., 2020; Bozkurt et al., 2020; Ujifusa, 2021). Principals noted dealing with overwhelming situations that were difficult to handle, situations for which they were not equipped socially or emotionally. According to Superville, (2020), district leaders struggled to make plans surrounded by a fog of uncertainty and challenges ahead.

Negative Stressors. The stress of principals comes from constant change and having little control of situations. School leaders dealt with complex challenges where the idea of crisis and uncertainty has become the rule (Kafa, 2021). Principals continued to be under added pressure and greater stress with student learning gaps becoming more prominent beginning in the 2020-2021 school year (DeMatthews et al., 2021). School is not easy; it is a tough business (Ujifusa, 2021). Schools deal with human beings and relationships. Human beings and relationships can get chaotic in general (Ujifusa, 2021). Added stress of a national pandemic had a direct result in people not being well, communities hurting, and everyone experiencing high tensions (Ahlström et al., 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Klingbeil, 2020; Stasel, 2020; Superville, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). People want to get back to normal, back to what life was like prior to the pandemic regardless of the cost (Ujifusa, 2021). The desire for life to get back to normal increases tension and stress levels. While most parents are not causing issues, the distinct and adverse impact on students and principals because of the tense atmosphere is concerning. Additionally, exhaustion and fatigue set in with staff members. Cancellations and

interruptions in education during the 2020-2021 school year contributed to the emotional collapse at school.

In the fall of 2020, many schools reopened, teachers and students returned to the same buildings, but nothing was the same; instead, new ways of teaching and learning commenced (Clifford & Cogshall, 2021; Superville, 2020). For principals, the hope of a less challenging school year faded quickly and a return to simple routines collapsed (Ujifusa, 2021). School administrators were under increased scrutiny and extreme and unprecedented amounts of stress, but were expected to remain calm, positive, and composed during rapidly changing circumstances (Mahfouz, 2020; Tintore et al., 2021). Schools reopening and the pandemic lingering presented a rare experience and placed principals and other staff members under extreme stress due to the extent and type of disruption to norms and behaviors within society (Okilwa & Barnett, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an increased workload along with uncertainty that contributed to added stress (DeMatthews et al., 2019; Gopalan & Pattusamy, 2020; Ujifusa, 2021). A recent NASSP (n.d.) poll highlighted what was already known:(NASSP, n.d.). Principals were burdened and continued to carry the brunt of the load, a crisis that must be addressed to allow principals to flourish rather than flounder (Ujifusa, 2021). According to S. S. Sutton and Gong (2021), stress comes from unrealistic expectations, inadequate resources, and increasing social injustice. Demands were placed on school leaders with no consideration to one's physical or emotional wellbeing or limitations; research pointed to high rates of burnout among principals who leave their positions too soon (Okilwa & Barnett, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on schools, students, and staff members

required a change in assessing burnout among principals (DeMatthews et al., 2021). According to Barthauer et al. (2020), burnout threatens sustainability of one's career. Burnout can be defined as job-related risk impacting an individual's personal and professional well-being (DeMatthews et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic affected the complexity of principals' jobs, and therefore, hindered self-efficacy, resulting in feelings of doubt and hopelessness, and influencing the ability to do one's job (Bandura, 1977; Mahfouz, 2020). As highlighted by DeMatthews et al. (2021), since pandemic onset, burnout has resulted in emotional exhaustion problems, depersonalization, and feelings of decreased personal accomplishments among principals. Understanding factors that threaten the principal position and knowing what resources are necessary to improve career satisfaction are vital to overcoming stress and burnout (Barthauer et al., 2020). Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction factors are often found at distinct positions on the same continuum (Gardner, 1977). According to DeMatthews et al. (2021), principal burnout and retention must be prioritized, and additional research is needed to connect the impact of secondary trauma and burnout to the lives of principals.

Increased levels of stress, pressure, and other factors were responsible for burnout and an increased shortage of principals. According to DeMatthews et al. (2021), work-related chronic stress influenced principal effectiveness, leading Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory investigated factors contributing to job dissatisfaction (Gardner, 1977). Hygiene factors contribute to job dissatisfaction and are mostly extrinsic in nature, encompassing how people feel about the conditions of their employment status (Cayak, 2021; Gardner, 1977). The nature of the principal position is demanding, given the emotional complexity and severity of problems to be solved in addition to the high-level

workload and demands of the position (DeMatthews et al., 2021). According to the NASSP (n.d.), our country is in a full-blown crisis finding school leaders. The NASSP (n.d.) poll indicated 45% of principals have accelerated their plans to leave the position due to pandemic working conditions. National Association of Secondary School Principals (2021) stated that while 45% reported having accelerated plans, 46% indicated the pandemic had little to no effect on their plans to remain or leave the position. However, 22% of principals reported that pandemic conditions had sparked first time thoughts of leaving the profession due to working conditions. Surprisingly, 5% reported the decision to leave the principal position as soon as possible (NASSP, n.d.). Schools were choosing from a shallow pool of principal candidates as schools were already strained by principal turnover prior to the pandemic (NASSP, n.d.). Tending to the needs of current principals must be a priority, as well as continuing efforts to build the numbers capable of filling vacant positions with strong leaders.

Positive Stressors. As noted by Greenberg et al. (2019), principals must model and sustain self-care and a work-life balance. If not modeling self-care and work-life balance, principals cannot ask school staff to take care of themselves (Greenberg et al., 2019; Mahfouz, 2020; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021). Work-life balance is achieved when demands of work and demands of life are the same (Gopalan & Pattusamy, 2020; Saraih et al., 2019; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021). Work-life balance affects not only the employee's overall well-being but one's career satisfaction (Saraih et al., 2019). Herzberg et al. (1959) developed a motivational theory outlining structures that affect an employee's job satisfaction. These motivation tools are classified as intrinsic or extrinsic factors (Cayak, 2021; Herzberg et al., 1959). Motivating factors are intrinsic while

hygiene factors are extrinsic (Cayak, 2021; Herzberg et al., 1959). To effectively carry out the roles and responsibilities of the principal position and maintain habits and routines is a delicate balance (Sugrue, 2005). Balancing workload and working hours can increase the level of a principal's work-life balance and career satisfaction (Saraih et al., 2019; Sugrue, 2005). Greenberg et al. (2019) suggested principals focus on doing a few things well rather than doing everything not well. Specifically, principals need to be encouraged to be available for change, shy away from demands to make instant improvements, and focus on constant and consistent commitment to doing what is best for students (Swen, 2020). Principals should actively plan for work-life balance and proactive coping strategies, never losing sight of the reason for doing the work (DeMatthews et al., 2021; Kafele, 2021). According to DeMatthews et al. (2021), principals cannot count on districts to provide the necessary burnout support. Principals must explore ways to address burnout individually and among peers.

By prioritizing principal well-being, healthy principals can withstand stress and maintain efforts to improve schools, support staff members, and build community trust. Important studies have been carried out to gain insight into what sustains principals in turbulent times (Alam & Asim, 2019; Mahfouz, 2020; Meyer et al., 2020; Tahir et al., 2019; Yan, 2020). Principals participating in Okilwa and Barnett's (2021) COVID-19 crisis study indicated an overwhelming burden this pandemic caused professionally and personally. While principals resorted to coping strategies to deal with the pressures, most ended up in survival-mode rather than coping (Okilwa & Barnett, 2021). Understanding the stress principals dealt with and the coping strategies utilized to face stressors because of the COVID-19 pandemic is important (Mahfouz, 2020).

Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic placed a significant burden on school leaders and the overall K-12 education system (Grooms & Childs, 2021). No textbook prepared principals to be ready to confront the pandemic crisis. In addition to the pandemic crisis, our society was amidst complex times that directly affected school leadership including natural disasters, school shootings, social unrest, and serious economic recessions (Reyes-Guerra et al., 2021). School leaders have faced unprecedented political and social issues because of the crisis. Principals must grow school cultures, establish strong relationships within the school community, and work together and take care of one another, exhibiting moral courage to confront inequity or injustice issues (Reyes-Guerra et al., 2021).

Mobility intentions have become more complex in the past 20 years. Principal turnover is a great concern, as strong school leadership is responsible for long-term school improvement (Greenberg et al., 2019; Snodgrass Rangel, 2017). Twenty years ago, the reason for leaving pertained to getting another position (Mahfouz, 2020). Today, higher stress correlates to higher principal turnover rates. Principals do not remain in their position for an extended period due to external and internal mandates, more time with family, frustration with barriers, burnout, and increasing job demands (Mahfouz, 2020). Principal turnover also leads to higher teacher turnover, which results in increased dissatisfaction and inability to sustain satisfying-caring relationships (Snodgrass Rangel, 2017).

Amid the pandemic, though controversy ensued, connections were made, trust was built, and problems were solved; principals persevered by doing what was needed

and taking charge (Greenberg et al., 2019). Principals' satisfaction, as it relates to Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory, suggests interpersonal relationships with other intrinsic factors are significant to principal job satisfaction (Bozkurt et al., 2020). Principal stability was necessary to develop supportive school environments fostering social, emotional learning (SEL) for all stakeholders (Greenberg et al., 2019). With proper tools, resources, and skills, principals can mitigate negative impacts of carrying out their role on their lives. Research by Toner (2019) also pointed out principal turnover can be combated by understanding, addressing, and putting structures in place to support principals in the work done. Retaining principals requires a shift in mindset and systems, a reimagining of how principals engage in their work, and what necessary steps need to be taken to make their work sustainable (S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021). Dealing with COVID-19, administrators were doing their best to address what was going on, unsure of what else could be done (Klingbeil, 2020). Additional research is needed to connect the impact of COVID-19 to the lives of principals and support needed to assist in maintaining healthy, balanced lifestyles to persist on the job (DeMatthews et al., 2021).

The review of literature included the careers of Missouri public high school principals, identifying roles, workplace conditions, and emotional aspects amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Even through a pandemic, principals managed stress, maintained leadership effectiveness, and worked to understand social justice (Kafele, 2021). Teams moved forward, recovered quickly from setbacks, maintained optimism and composure, and viewed struggles and recovery as a learning experience (Kim et al., 2019). Modern resilient leaders did not just get through the challenging times but learned and improved to anticipate the future (Barthauer et al., 2020). The purpose of this qualitative narrative

study was to explore career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals after 3 or more years in the profession who served during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic disrupted education around the world, forcing administrators to lead during unprecedented times with short-term and long-term costs yet to be determined (Ahlström et al., 2020; Canese & Amarilla, 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Klingbeil, 2020; Stasel, 2020; Superville, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021).

Chapter Three included the methodology of the qualitative narrative study, including the participants, design, and a summary. Chapter Four included the experiences of public high school principals through the interviews to address the research questions. Chapter Five included a detailed summary of the process, implications and conclusions, and significance of the findings for future researchers.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the world of education, the principal role is difficult and demanding with growing pressure to meet the needs of students, faculty, and the community (Bertrand et al., 2018; Fanuele, 2019; Greenberg et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2019; Mahfouz, 2020; Paterson, 2020). School leaders are stretched and pulled in many different directions. Principals are overworked and overloaded, resulting in overwhelming stress (Ahlström et al., 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Klingbeil, 2020; Stasel, 2020; Superville, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). Therefore, few are surprised a quarter of our nation's principals leave their schools yearly and 50% of principals leave their school after 3 years (Levin & Bradley, 2019; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021; Turk & Wolfe, 2019). According to Superville (2019), overall, the costs associated with principal turnover are extensive.

This was reality to hundreds of principals across the United States prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic shocked every person and organization globally, creating an urgent and complex set of new challenges for those in leadership positions (Ahlström et al., 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Klingbeil, 2020; Stasel, 2020; Superville, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic affected the high school principal position, a key position leading our nation through educational changes (Ahlström et al., 2020; Canese & Amarilla, 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Klingbeil, 2020; Stasel, 2020; Superville, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). This study sought to shed light on the perspectives of Missouri public high school principals' career satisfaction and mobility intentions amid the COVID-19 pandemic. With the frequent and constant

demands on the position of public high school principal in the state of Missouri coupled with the additional demands placed on principals amid the COVID-19 pandemic, researching job satisfaction and career mobility intentions was valuable, with an overall goal of adding to the existing and present educational literature and current research.

Chapter Three identified and described research methodology and procedures used capturing lived experiences of public high school principals serving in the position amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter begins with a discussion on the purpose of the study followed by the research questions, participants, selection and sampling, research setting, and an outline of the research design. The study's instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis were also described in detail. The chapter included the reliability and validity of the study for consideration in future research and to further test the findings of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals after 3 or more years in the profession who served during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic disrupted education around the world forcing administrators to lead during unprecedented times with short-term and long-term costs yet to be determined (Ahlström et al., 2020; Canese & Amarilla, 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Klingbeil, 2020; Stasel, 2020; Superville, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, expectations for principals have never been so high (Klocko & Justis, 2019). High rates of attrition in high school principals were present prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (Engel, 2020; Fuller & Young, 2008; Levin & Bradley, 2019; NASSP School Principals, 2021; Tekleselassie &

Villarreal, 2011; Yan, 2020). According to a poll by NASSP (n.d.) 45% of principals have accelerated their plans to leave the position due to pandemic working conditions. As a result, an already challenging principal attrition crisis will worsen. As Postma (2019) stated, additional research is needed on career satisfaction of principals who have left the profession or their positions to fully understand principal attrition and mobility. Collecting information and identifying patterns and themes in principals' experiences provided insight into the research, adding to the present literature on the topic of career satisfaction and mobility intentions amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the results of the study may assist school districts in planning for and addressing career satisfaction among principals in their district with a goal of adding to the current research and retaining effective administrators rather than losing them to other schools, positions, or professions.

Research Questions

The central research questions for this qualitative narrative study explored career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Two research questions and four sub questions guided this qualitative narrative study:

1. How do Missouri public high school principals describe their career satisfaction amid the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - a. What are the perspectives of Missouri public high school principals regarding satisfactory and unsatisfactory lived experiences during the pandemic?

- b. How did Missouri public high school principals' role during the pandemic contribute to or detract from career satisfaction?
2. What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals amid the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - a. What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals in relation to workplace conditions?
 - b. What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals in relation to emotional aspects of work?

Participants

The participants in this qualitative narrative study included current Missouri public high school principals after 3 or more years in the profession who served during the COVID-19 pandemic. Out of 27 possible participants, principals from nine high schools in Missouri public school districts were selected to participate in this study. The nine public high schools included were in each of the nine RPDC's of Missouri. Quantity and sample size addressed by Peoples (2021) provided the structure and framework of including eight to 15 participants in the study. Purposive sampling was used to assist the researcher in examining the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). With the small sample size and participant demographics, multiple interviews ensuring principals from each of the nine RPDC regions statewide were included. To improve the validity of the study, no two principals were from the same district, creating a broader representation to explore lived experiences of current high school principals who served during the COVID-19 pandemic (Peoples, 2021). By exploring experiences from public high school principals who currently served, the researcher sought to determine career

satisfaction and mobility intentions based on lived experiences.

To determine a pool of candidates along with location and years of experience, a list of Missouri public high school principals serving during the 2020-2021 school year was obtained from DESE's open access database. The researcher then determined those who had served 3 or more years in the high school principal position. From the database list, three principals were purposefully selected from each of the nine RPDC regions statewide, for a pool of 27 possible participants. The researcher then randomly selected one from each of the RPDC regions to participate in the study. Realizing high school principals have busy schedules and may choose not to participate or stop participation at any point, the researcher selected the next participant from that RPDC to interview. A database of potential interview candidates consisting of nine public high school principals who served in Missouri public school districts differing in size, location, and classification amid the COVID-19 pandemic was compiled.

Selection and Sampling

Purposive sampling of participants was used in this qualitative narrative study to effectively obtain responses from the target population. This technique was used to identify and select individuals who had experiences and were knowledgeable about a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Selection through purposive sampling served to achieve an understanding of the perspectives of public high school principals by identifying common patterns while increasing the credibility of the results.

The study set out to include Missouri public high school principals currently serving in the position for the 2020-21 school year for 3 or more years. Candidates included public high school principals in each of the nine RPDC regions of Missouri.

Principal contact information was made available from DESE's open access database. Potential interview candidates meeting the criteria of the study were sent an email stating the Missouri public high school principal was being invited to participate in a study of principals' career satisfaction and mobility intentions based on lived experiences amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Administrators were informed they were chosen as potential candidates in this study because they served in the role of public high school principal in the state of Missouri. The email was designed to determine years serving in the high school principalship, to receive a participant's initial approval to participate, and to purposefully screen possible high school principals for the study. Potential candidates were informed that by responding to the email, they were indicating their agreement to participate in the next stage of the study. Sample email included the following questions:

1. Do you currently serve in the role of public high school principal?
2. If so, how long have you served in that role?
3. If selected, would you be willing to participate in an interview about the experiences of public high school principals, the career demands, and subsequent career satisfaction and mobility intentions amid the COVID-19 pandemic?

Upon receipt of the participant's initial approval to participate, a focus group of 27 participants, three from each region, was purposefully chosen and separated into nine groups. Nine groups of public high school principals, one from each RPDC region of Missouri, were comprised to gather a broad glimpse of data covering a varied range of backgrounds. A combination of email invitations and telephone calls were made to inform potential study participants of Phase 2 of the research including an invitation to participate in Zoom, telephone, or one-on-one semi-structured interviews to gather

pertinent research information. Follow-up communication included possible dates and times for interviews along with steps to ensure confidentiality of participants.

The researcher interviewed nine high school principals from public school districts, one from each of the RPDC regions across the state of Missouri. Demographic information for each of the nine participants in the study is found in Table 1. Years of experience and region were noted in the study. The study set out to explore career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals amid the COVID-19 pandemic by identifying patterns and themes in their experiences. Collecting information and understanding lived experiences of public high school principals provided insight into the research.

Table 1 details the nine participants randomly chosen for the study.

Table 1

List of Participants for Study

Participant	Years of Experience	Region
Participant 1 (P1)	7	RPDC 1
Participant 2 (P2)	8	RPDC 2
Participant 3 (P3)	13	RPDC 3
Participant 4 (P4)	5	RPDC 4
Participant 5 (P5)	3	RPDC 5
Participant 6 (P6)	11	RPDC 6
Participant 7 (P7)	3	RPDC 7
Participant 8 (P8)	19	RPDC 8
Participant 9 (P9)	3	RPDC 9

Steps were taken to provide ethical consideration and protect the confidentiality of school principals participating in the study. Additionally, approval from the Southwest Baptist University Research Review Board, see Appendix B, was granted. Codes were assigned to participants in the study to ensure confidentiality and omit personal identifying information. Interviews were carried out at the participant's convenience via Zoom, telephone, or face-to-face methods. With permission, interviews were recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai. If the participant declined to be recorded, the researcher complied and simply took copious notes. Interview data were stored via cloud-based software, ensuring only the researcher had access to interview information. In following research conclusion guidelines set forth, the researcher kept all data on a password-protected device before destroying after 5 years.

Research Setting

The research setting for this study involved public high schools in each of the nine RPDC regions of Missouri. For this study, participants were sent an email invitation to interview with the researcher; each participant showing true interest accepted the invitation to participate in the study. The email highlighted research information including the purpose, selection process, and interview topics. Participants were interviewed one at a time at the participant's convenience through Zoom, telephone, or face-to-face methods. The qualitative narrative research method of individual interviews was conducted in private offices to eliminate disturbances or interruptions. Interviews lasted 30–40 minutes at the location or via method of the participant's choosing. Email was utilized for follow-up communication or clarification, if necessary. The researcher set out to gather data from public high school principals on career satisfaction and

mobility. A predetermined set of open-ended interview questions were asked of all participants, and with permission, interviews were recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai. Patterns and themes were developed based on information gathered and analyzed. Coded transcriptions provided participant confidentiality, as well as consistent themes in the data. The interviews included participants with varied experiences and perspectives related to career satisfaction and mobility intentions. The subjects participated in unique research settings designed to meet the needs of the researcher and participants.

Participants in the study were Missouri public high school principals serving in the position during the 2020-2021 school year amid the COVID-19 pandemic. High school principals were hired by the school district's superintendent, who was hired by the local board of education. Principals were given the authority to make building wide day-to-day decisions, however, principals were bound by school board policy, evaluated by the superintendent, and held accountable by the local board of education. The pandemic disrupted education around the world, forcing school leaders and school boards to lead during unprecedented times (Ahlström et al., 2020; Canese & Amarilla, 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Klingbeil, 2020; Stasel, 2020; Superville, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). High school principals served in key positions to lead our nation through the pandemic and educational changes (Ahlström et al., 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Klingbeil, 2020; Stasel, 2020; Superville, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). The crisis increased principal's stress and created challenges in processing information and making decisions. However, the presence of hope and resilience continued to push school leaders when dealing with the effects of COVID-19 (DeMatthews et al., 2021; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021).

Research Design

The researcher selected a qualitative narrative study to understand and explore the lived experiences of Missouri public high school principals during the COVID-19 pandemic. Collecting information and understanding lived experiences of public high school principals provides insight into the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Postma (2019), rather than looking at a moment in time, a longitudinal, qualitative study would offer insight and dig deeper into principals' perspectives of a school administrator's career satisfaction and ability to perform duties effectively. Sugrue (2005) highlighted the importance of capturing the story of principals to understand the passion and ambitions that drive and sustain their purpose beyond the complex day-to-day, month-to-month responsibilities. To accomplish the goals of the study and to better understand an individual's life and decisions made, a qualitative narrative research method was used. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), narrative research encompasses stories of individuals who lived and told, often involving turning points in their lives. Narrative inquiry and stories from individuals form the raw data in qualitative research (Butina, 2015). Peoples (2021) provided the sample size structure and framework of including eight to 15 participants in the study. The qualitative narrative design allowed the researcher to obtain data and address the questions set forth. While other methods such as quantitative research could help determine factors attributing to principals' career satisfaction and mobility intentions, a qualitative narrative design was carried out to understand the lives of participants, capture points of view, and gain a deep understanding of a few select individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Interviews were used to capture the lived experiences of Missouri public high

school principals during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews make up the first phase in the data collection process and provide an opportunity to solicit stories and collect qualitative data from open-ended questions (Butina, 2015). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), an effective way to collect data and research trends, viewpoints, and perspectives of larger populations is through interviews and studies of smaller samples. Therefore, the first phase of the research design involved a short email, designed simply to receive a participant's initial approval, and purposely screen participants for the study to determine years serving in the high school principalship, if they chose to participate. Potential candidates were informed that by responding to the email, they were indicating agreement to participate in the next stage of the study. The second phase of the research design involved establishing and separating potential interview candidates into nine groups, based on RPDC location (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The third phase involved random sampling from each region to determine participants selected to participate in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Peoples, 2021). After determining the participants to be interviewed, the researcher contacted each participant to schedule an interview location, date, and time. Using field notes, interviews were carried out through Zoom, telephone, or face-to-face methods and were audio-recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai (J. Sutton & Austin, 2015). Using the methods set forth, data were collected by the researcher from each participant.

To begin the interview, the participant was provided a consent form, see Appendix C, outlining the purpose of the study, description of the process, anticipated benefits, explanation of their rights, and a confidentiality guarantee. Participant identifying information was kept confidential. Processes were put in place to de-identify

participants to prevent interview questions from being connected back to the individual or their school district. Participants were randomly assigned a number from 1 to 9, identified as P1, P2, continuing until P9. Every effort to get to know and build a comfortable rapport with each participant was made prior to the interview to solicit as open and honest responses as possible. Similar formats were followed for each interview, and transcriptions were provided to each individual for member checking purposes. The researcher then made any corrections noted by the participants prior to analyzing data. Interview data were coded for themes and patterns. The interpretation of the data provided the researcher with meaning in relation to the lived experiences shared by each participant in the study. Data will be kept for 5 years on a password-protected device at which time it will be destroyed.

Instrumentation

This study was designed to obtain data by interviewing participants regarding career satisfaction and mobility intentions amid the COVID-19 pandemic to answer the research questions. Using the researcher as a valid and key instrument to the study, the researcher documented the date, examined documents, observed behaviors, and interviewed participants using open-ended questions (Creswell, 1998). Serving as a current public high school principal in the state of Missouri, the researcher aimed to determine biases up front by journaling and reflecting on lived experiences prior to interviews (Creswell, 1998). As the researcher analyzed and interpreted participant data, the journal was referenced to constantly check for unintentional biases during analysis. A preliminary email was sent to approximately 400 principals across each of nine regions of Missouri whose districts were RPDC members. The email stated that the principals

were invited to participate in a study of career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals. The potential candidates were told the researcher was seeking to explore Missouri public high school principals' career satisfaction and mobility intentions based on lived experiences amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Candidates were told that they were selected as potential candidates in this study because they served in the role of public high school principal and their districts were RPDC members in the state of Missouri. In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted of Missouri public high school principals currently serving in the position for 3 or more years. Data were obtained using open-ended questions where principals were allowed to speak to their firsthand experiences related to their career, mobility, and overall satisfaction. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), an effective way to collect data and to research trends, viewpoints, and perspectives of larger populations is through interviews and studies of smaller samples.

An interview guide with protocols and a set of interview questions served as the key data collection instrument in this qualitative narrative study, see Appendix D. The protocols in place for data collection were reviewed and examined by study participants at the beginning of the interview session. Following data collection, participant interview results were shared with everyone for member checking purposes. The researcher used feedback, clarification, and corrections noted by the participants prior to analyzing the data. Similar formats were followed for each participant interviewed. Interview questions were developed using Chapter Two literature review as a guide. Interview questions addressed themes related to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory: perceptions of principal's job situation and satisfaction through

experiences and observations (Stewart, 2020).

In addition to interview data, following Fusch et al.'s (2018) direction, the researcher used the following data sources as an attempt to increase the reliability and validity of the data: field notes and archival data (NASSP publications and artifacts, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance and DESE guidance). Field notes aimed to complement the interviews, allowing the researcher to maintain and comment on context such as impressions, behaviors, and nonverbal cues not captured through the audio-recording (J. Sutton & Austin, 2015). Specifically, field note observations were captured, which aided the researcher in analyzing the data through coding to develop and identify patterns and themes. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance and NASSP publications and artifacts regarding pandemic working conditions also supplemented researcher information and filled gaps related to pandemic workplace conditions and lived experiences. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education guidance was used to help identify Missouri schools operating recommendations pre and post COVID-19 pandemic along with local policy and procedure changes across the state. Results of a replicated study would vary with different school environments and number of years removed from the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional steps to enhance reliability and validity by the researcher were carried out through member checking and verification of interview session recordings, transcripts, and coded themes. Ensuring confidentiality of participant-identifying information, the researcher assumed that participants' answers were a true representation of one's perspective rather than choosing to be more politically correct or socially responsible.

Procedures

A qualitative narrative study to address the research questions set forth was developed and approved by the Southwest Baptist University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals amid the COVID-19 pandemic. A qualitative narrative research design was used to gather data from public high school principals based on conversations, stories, and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interviews were conducted in the spring and summer of 2022. Following approval of the IRB to begin the study, the researcher obtained participant contact information from DESE's open access database. The researcher sent a preliminary email, as noted in Appendix E, inviting principals to participate in the study. Potential candidates were told the researcher sought to explore Missouri public high school principals' career satisfaction and mobility intentions based on lived experiences amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and they were selected as potential candidates in this study because they currently served in the role of public high school principal.

Semi-structured open-ended questions were developed for selected interview candidates to answer. One-on-one interviews via Zoom, telephone, or face-to-face methods were conducted. Data were collected using field notes and interview questions. Interview questions were predetermined with additional follow-up questions to provide further insight from individual interview candidates. Not only were interview questions designed as open-ended, but in a manner to allow interview candidates an opportunity to speak openly regarding their perspectives and lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The consent form ensuring confidentiality was reviewed and secured before

moving on to the interview questions. With permission, interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim using Otter.ai following each interview session. If the participant declined to be recorded, the researcher complied and simply took copious notes.

Interviews commenced with the starting of the Zoom session or audio-recording program for face-to-face interviews. Capturing specific responses using audio-recording and field notes, interviews lasted 30-40 minutes, depending on the candidate's discussion and answers. At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher thanked the interview candidate for their time and reviewed the next steps in the data analysis process.

Following the interviews, written transcripts and additional notes taken were reviewed for accuracy of the data. Data must be accurate to reflect what the participant said during the interview. Finally, interview transcripts were emailed to each of the participants for review of accuracy and validity. Additional steps to enhance reliability and validity by the researcher were carried out through member checking and verification of interview session recordings, transcripts, and coded themes.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected and analyzed in this study utilized both content and thematic analysis to elicit patterns and themes in the data. In this study, data were collected and analyzed by the researcher utilizing initial emails, participant interviews, transcriptions, and field notes (Butina, 2015). The researcher conducted open-ended semi-structured interviews using field notes and audio-recording to collect the data. The interviews were transcribed using Otter.ai before returning transcriptions to each participant to ensure accuracy and check for errors. Participants were at liberty to add or clarify details in addition to transcript information. In the event additions or clarifications

were made, the participant provided the researcher with the information, noting any changes to the transcription draft from the interview.

For triangulation, the researcher used interviews, field notes, and archival data to inspect evidence from three diverse sources. To gain perspective, transcripts and memos from the data collection were read multiple times and analyzed by the researcher. Results were evaluated using a multistep process beginning with single and cross-question analysis. With the use of Otter.ai, the researcher analyzed and coded interview transcripts from each participant, identifying general themes to categorize the data. Next, the researcher evaluated and sorted themes in each interview transcript to form subthemes. Finally, main themes relating to each interview question were derived from subthemes, allowing the researcher to capture each participant's lived experiences leading during the COVID-19 pandemic. Field notes captured during interviews helped add context and provide the researcher with situational data (J. Sutton & Austin, 2015). In addition, the researcher obtained documents relevant to the study. Documents reviewed and analyzed to supplement data collected from interviews and field notes included the following archival data: NASSP publications and artifacts, and CDC and DESE guidance regarding educational changes, workplace conditions, and procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Discrepancies between interview transcripts and triangulation data sources were documented. Procedures were utilized to collect demographic information and analyzed for possible clustering of topics and themes. Interviews, field notes, and archival data were triangulated seeking commonalities and similarities in themes across data sources in relation to the research questions (Elliott, 2018).

Data were evaluated using career satisfaction and mobility intentions as a guide.

Specifically, the theoretical framework used were Bandura's (1977) social learning theory coupled with Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory to investigate principals' career demands, stress level, motivation factors, and coping strategies pre and post COVID-19 with an overall goal to add to the existing and present educational literature and current research. According to the research in Chapter Two, career satisfaction is a crucial factor that leads to mobility intentions. These aspects formed the basis of the qualitative study, providing the format from the data collected to decipher and explain the lived experiences of the interview participants.

Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology used in collecting and analyzing interview data of this qualitative narrative study. Missouri public high school principals from each RPDC region of Missouri were the participants in this study. The basis of the study involved exploring experiences from current public high school principals amid the wake of COVID-19 to discover career satisfaction and mobility intentions. The researcher interviewed nine participants to assist in examining the research questions. One-on-one interviews via Zoom, telephone, or face-to-face methods were conducted. Interviews were transcribed, analyzed, and coded for themes and patterns in the data. Interpretation of data was carried out using the research questions as the guide.

The resulting themes of the data collected while interviewing Missouri public high school principals amid the COVID-19 pandemic were reported in Chapter Four of the study. The themes provide feedback on career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals. Noted in Chapter Five were implications for education and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

Principals spoke of numerous challenges and major changes faced during the 2020-2021 school year (Clifford & Cogshall, 2021; Reyes-Guerra et al., 2021; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021). As described by Clifford and Cogshall (2021), change occurred in schools and society as the country addressed the COVID-19 pandemic: schools closed, protest around Black Lives Matter spread, hate crime reports increased, teacher morale plummeted, 1 in 4 educators reported a member of the school community died from COVID-19, students left districts and never returned to school in the fall, and over 20 weather-related disasters occurred. With DESE guidance backing individual school mitigation measures to facilitate major changes, school principals were key people to report change with a bird's-eye view on schools and discern substantial or permanent changes from temporary ones. Lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have not subsided and are ongoing for principals; instead new managerial and administrative routines have become entrenched in school structures to support and sustain the learning environment (Grooms & Childs, 2021; Kafele, 2021). Routines in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are comparable to what has been seen in similar catastrophe and disaster situations requiring quick responses to ever-changing context in the educational environment.

Whether or not the pandemic will result in increased principal departure, mobility, and resignations is yet to be determined (Ujifusa, 2021). The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri

public high school principals after 3 or more years in the profession who served during the COVID-19 pandemic. To understand the lived experiences of public high school principals, the researcher conducted open-ended semi-structured interviews with principals located in each of the nine RPDC regions of Missouri to provide insight into the research. The researcher obtained participant contact information from DESE's open access database. After the interviews, transcripts and interview notes were used to determine and analyze themes in relation to principals' roles, workplace conditions, and emotional aspects of the position. The components, together with the theoretical frameworks of Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory, assisted the researcher in understanding motivation factors and career satisfaction of public high school principals amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Chapter Four, the researcher presented the data found from the nine participants' demographics and responses to interviews. After participant introductions, the chapter is organized by data analysis, including themes, to address the central research questions and four subquestions guiding this qualitative narrative study:

1. How do Missouri public high school principals describe their career satisfaction amid the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - a. What are the perspectives of Missouri public high school principals regarding satisfactory and unsatisfactory lived experiences during the pandemic?
 - b. How did Missouri public high school principals' role during the pandemic contribute to or detract from career satisfaction?

2. What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals amid the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - a. What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals in relation to workplace conditions?
 - b. What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals in relation to emotional aspects of work?

Chapter Four introduced the research participants and settings. Next, data were analyzed as they pertained to each research question. Interview data along with participants' district policies and websites were compared for triangulation. A summary of the findings from the research questions concluded the chapter.

Participant Narratives

With clear criterion in place, the researcher utilized purposive sampling to select participants for this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Peoples, 2021). Interviews were conducted with nine public high school principals, one from each of the nine RPDC regions across Missouri. To participate, public high school principals must have served in the position for 3 or more years and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The nine RPDCs' locations are noted in Figure 1. All interviews were conducted to understand lived experiences concerning mobility intentions and career satisfaction. In this chapter, interview and field note information was documented and archival data were explored with an overall goal to add to the existing and present educational literature and current research while providing insight into administrators' perspectives on the topic of career satisfaction and mobility intentions based on lived experiences amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 2 details the nine participants purposefully chosen

for the pool, and then randomly selected for the study.

Figure 1

Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDC)



Note. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Missouri RPDC's (<https://dese.mo.gov/educator-quality/educator-development/regional-professional-development-centers>).

Table 2*Demographic Information of Study Participants*

Participant	Gender	Years as High School Principal	Years in Education	Region
Participant 1 (P1)	M	7	15	1
Participant 2 (P2)	F	8	15	2
Participant 3 (P3)	F	13	25	3
Participant 4 (P4)	F	5	31	4
Participant 5 (P5)	M	3	10	5
Participant 6 (P6)	M	11	31	6
Participant 7 (P7)	M	3	16	7
Participant 8 (P8)	M	19	32	8
Participant 9 (P9)	M	3	16	9

Public high school principals participating in the study had varying years of leadership experience serving in the role. All nine participants represented school districts serving students in Grades 9-12. For participation in the study, demographic traits of public high school principals such as race, gender, and age were not delineating aspects. Participant identifying information was kept confidential, and processes were used to de-identify participants to prevent interview questions from being connected back to the individual or their school district. Specifically, to ensure confidentiality and omit personal identifying information, participants were randomly assigned a number from 1 to 9, identified as P1, P2, continuing through P9. Each Missouri public high school principal participating in the study was interviewed between the end of May 2022

through mid-June 2022 via Zoom, with interviews lasting an average of 45 minutes. Prior to the scheduled interview and email invitation link, the researcher provided the interview questions and protocol to each of the participants. Following is a brief profile of each high school principal describing one's desire to become a high school principal, thoughts as to what the position would entail, and once stepping to the position, what the position was like. Additionally, information from the researcher's field notes is provided, adding elements of context and situational data, the setting and atmosphere, mood, and mannerisms during the interview. Archival data from NASSP publications and artifacts, and CDC and DESE did not add significance to the participant's profile or demographic information but will be shared with interview data where appropriate.

Participant 1

Participant 1 (P1) wanted to become a high school principal to make a bigger impact on students and make more decisions affecting the school. When considering the principal position as a career, P1 was driven by the impact of the position and thought being a principal would help others be more successful. All the while, P1 understood decisions made would not routinely please all stakeholders and disciplining students would be difficult. After stepping into the principalship, P1 realized the position required a "great deal of managing adults."

The researcher's field notes added supplementary information assisting with analysis of answers. The interview with P1 took place on June 6, 2022, at 12:00 p.m. via Zoom, lasting approximately 28 minutes. Participant 1 was specific, to the point, and concise in answering interview questions. Additionally, Participant 1 often scratched his chin periodically when answering questions, fidgeting, and moving around a lot in the

office chair. Participant 1's conciseness and movement could easily be mistaken for being in a hurry. The setting of the interview was in P1's office with a school mascot picture hanging on the wall directly behind the participant.

Participant 2

Participant 2 (P2) wanted to become a high school principal to build relationships with all staff members and to help have an effect and control the bigger picture. When considering the principal position as a career, P2 was excited to have the ability to influence culture and to drive achievement. Participant 2 assumed there would be a fair amount of negative human interactions making it hard to maintain a positive building culture and hold teachers accountable. After stepping into the principal position, P2 described every day as different, with a great deal of problems to solve, viewing problems being dropped onto the principal's desk as the "biggest compliment."

The researcher's field notes added supplementary information assisting with analysis of answers. The interview with P2 took place on June 2, 2022, at 10:15 a.m. via Zoom, lasting approximately 38 minutes. Initially scheduled to interview at 9:00 a.m., P2 was running late due to a summer school bus incident. The setting of the interview appeared to be in P2's school office. The conversation with P2 was positive and upbeat. Specifically, P2 was excited to participate in the study and appeared to be a go-getter, driven, and up to all challenges. Participant 2 used many hand gestures while speaking and talked about tackling problems in practical and logical ways.

Participant 3

Participant 3 (P3) wanted to become a high school principal due to a fascination with students and wanting to understand the system. Participant 3 believed the system

was broken and wanted to try to help fix a system that was not working. Participant 3 wanted to work with fantastic teachers and enjoyed instruction and professional development, making the principal position a natural career progression. When considering the principal position as a career, P3 wanted to improve and impact the lives of other—community, students, faculty, and staff. Additionally, P3 wanted to create an environment where people would thrive, and kids found success because of meaningful experiences and a sense of belonging. Participant 3 assumed the principal position would entail a great deal of pressure by having to wear so many hats. After stepping into the principal position, P3 described the position as “daunting and insane figuring out how to manage, a crash course in flexibility and creativity.”

The researcher’s field notes added supplementary information assisting with analysis of answers. The interview with P3 took place on June 7, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom, lasting approximately 55 minutes, the longest of all nine interviews. Intrigued by the study, Participant 3 had a great deal to share and was passionate and energetic, as evidenced by talking with her hands and active gesturing. The interview took an emotional turn when P3 cried discussing students overcoming challenges, particularly when recalling the Class of 2020 Graduation night, amid the pandemic: “I was so emotional when we got to do graduation. Yeah, it has so hard for those kids. And I was so proud of them that they kept going.” The setting was in the principal’s office with an “education changes the world” quote on the wall behind the interview participant.

Participant 4

Participant 4 (P4) wanted to become a high school principal having had strong mentors providing advice and encouragement to consider an administration career.

Participant 4 loved helping people and fixing problems, making the transition into the principal position seamless. When considering the principal position as a career, P4 envisioned working closely with teachers and students, particularly, working with at-risk students. Participant 4 understood the position involved a fair amount of political minutia, however, was of the mindset that one could not complain about things if they were not willing to step up and change things or help make necessary changes. After stepping into the principal position, P4 explained the position was a little more pressure than what was anticipated, “feeling responsible for everything that happens.”

The researcher’s field notes added supplementary information assisting with analysis of answers. The interview with P4 took place on June 13, 2022, at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom, lasting approximately 32 minutes. Participant 4 spoke of the long history in the current school district served, having graduated from high school there. Beginning her education career as a paraprofessional, she soon moved into the classroom teaching social studies before eventually moving into administration. Throughout the interview, while the focus was on the pandemic, P4 spoke repeatedly about her strong commitment and dedication to the school district. Participant 4 was on the verge of retirement, albeit surprising to the researcher. With long blonde hair, the researcher noted P4 had a youthfulness that did not coincide with retirement age. Participant 4 seemed relaxed and easygoing, sharing practical approaches when dealing with complex issues. Participant 4 periodically paused and rubbed her neck considering the question and formulating an answer. Once again, the setting was in the principal’s office, a collage of student pictures and a diploma hanging on the wall behind the interview participant.

Participant 5

Participant 5 (P5) wanted to become a high school principal for several reasons, including the financial benefit and leadership aspect. Participant 5 described leading a building full of educators as appealing. When considering the principal position as a career, P5 wanted to impact a greater number of students understanding the difficulty of dealing with student discipline and parents. After stepping into the principal position, P5 had the desired reach and influence, but was surprised by several things. First, the discipline aspect became secondary. Secondly, P5 was surprised at “the inability of teachers to act like adults in situations.” The position became a lot of understanding situations and dealing with some parent issues, as described by P5.

The researcher’s field notes added supplementary information assisting with analysis of answers. Participant 5’s interview took place on May 31, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. via Zoom, lasting approximately 45 minutes. Repeating the phrases, “it is what it is” and “important job to complete,” P5 was a relaxed participant carrying on a comfortable conversation even though the Zoom session froze periodically throughout the interview. The participant was interviewed at home in the kitchen. Participant 5 referenced his wife’s reaction to a few questions asked, chuckling a bit, and then apologizing. Participant 5 continued chuckling several more times and questioned the career responsibilities playing a role in future career decisions. When discussing balancing responsibilities as a high school principal, P5 first laughed and then gave a heavy sigh, “Um, I, to me, it goes back to, it is what it is.... [like], that's the position.”

Participant 6

Having been a teacher and coach, Participant 6 (P6) wanted to become a high

school principal because change was needed. Participant 6 considered getting out of education, however, P6's wife believed P6 possessed a strong skill as an administrator and encouraged the administration route. When considering the principal position as a career, P6 thought one's skills and ability would impact more of a global organization, rather than just a small group. However, P6 understood the position would not have a strong connection with the small group from P6's time as a teacher and coach. While the connections were there after stepping into the principal position, P6 described the connections as "more difficult, not as deep compared to the role of teacher and coach." Instead, as principal, P6 was able to see things from a broader perspective and learned "not to sweat the little stuff."

The researcher's field notes added supplementary information assisting with analysis of answers. Participant 6's interview took place on June 10, 2022, at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom, lasting approximately 36 minutes. Participant 6 spoke of being "at a camp," and the setting of the interview was in the lobby of a gymnasium. Sounds of balls bouncing and shoes squeaking could be heard. The researcher noted P6 wearing a Nike T-shirt and glasses. Additionally, the researcher described P6's demeanor as pleasant, humble, and honest. Participant 6 had served in the role of school administrator for some time and as a result alluded to simple solutions to challenges faced. Participant 6, more than any participant, spoke about family and the importance of including family members in the work of a school administrator.

Participant 7

Participant 7 (P7) wanted to become a high school principal having been encouraged and urged to consider the position by other principals. When considering the

principal position as a career, P7 wanted to impact culture in a building on a grander scale. Driven by faith, P7's purpose involved impacting people and trying to help others get better, understanding principals do not get paid "more money for less problems." Participant 7 described the last 3 years as "downhill, not normal." However, after stepping into the principal position, P7 believed there is a lot of truth to treating people well, working hard, getting out in the building, interacting, encouraging others, and impacting culture. In doing so, trust is built and difficult conversations, when needed, are made easier. Participant 7 explained the time commitment as "substantial, coupled with a good amount of mental busyness." While responsibility and problems can be a "nightmare," P7 pointed out that "somebody must do it."

The researcher's field notes added supplementary information assisting with analysis of answers. Participant 7's interview took place on June 7, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom, lasting approximately 29 minutes. Being early in the morning and having wrapped up the school year the day before the interview, P7 was tired and messed with his hair throughout the interview. The setting of the interview looked to be in P7's kitchen, with cabinets and a box of chips on the counter behind the participant. Participant 7 alluded several times to a "tough" end to the school year, however seemed to have a positive perspective to the challenges of an administrator. Participant 7, more than any participant, spoke about faith and "a calling" in carrying out the work of a high school principal.

Participant 8

Participant 8 (P8) wanted to become a high school principal having been encouraged by P8's superintendent along with the desire to expand one's influence

exponentially. When considering the principal position as a career, P8 was driven by the leadership aspect and envisioned getting to work to realize the students' parents are sending schools "their best kids making it our responsibility as educators to educate them." Participant 8 speculated tough situations dealing with occasional parents who believed principals were not doing an excellent job, or the occasional teacher needing to be "convinced to do things the correct way or find another option." Participant 8 described the position as extremely rewarding, casting a vision, leading people, and developing personal and building goals.

The researcher's field notes added supplementary information assisting with analysis of answers. Participant 8's interview took place on June 1, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom, lasting approximately 45 minutes. Participant 8 spoke about how high school principals could influence many people, more so than any other participant. Participant 8 spoke with confidence and positivity, appearing relaxed and finding enjoyment in the interview itself. Participant 8 stressed the opportunities offered within the position and did not focus on the problem-solving aspect. The setting of the interview was in P8's office with the researcher specifically noting the participant rocking back-and-forth in his chair, fiddling with his pen, and using many hand gestures.

Participant 9

Participant 9 (P9) wanted to become a high school principal to have a broader impact on students, believing one's leadership skill set and communication skills aligned well with administration. Personally and professionally, P9 wanted the challenge of influencing and creating positive opportunities for kids. When considering the principal position as a career, P9 envisioned a sphere of influence, an expansion of opportunities to

touch more lives, understanding administration issues would need to be dealt with. Another issue P9 could foresee involved dealing with “illogical parents.” In describing the principal position, P9 explained forgetting how little you know about administration coming into it, making the transition from teacher to assistant principal position harder than the transition from assistant principal to principal. Participant 9 enjoyed every day being different but admitted the position is a “large learning curve.”

The researcher’s field notes added supplementary information assisting with analysis of answers. Participant 9’s interview took place on June 1, 2022, at 11:30 a.m. via Zoom, lasting approximately 50 minutes. Participant 9 spoke of just returning from a family getaway but wanting to “pay it back” as P9 was also working on completing a dissertation, hoping to finish by July. The setting was in the principal’s office with a collage of pictures and diplomas hanging on the wall behind the interview participant. The researcher noted P9’s office as a bit messy. Participant 9 talked a lot about relationships and focusing on making the best decisions for the whole, describing himself as a “confident guy.” Participant 9 spoke of troubleshooting often when working through problems.

Data Analysis Procedures

Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim using Otter.ai, providing a detailed breakdown of each interview session. Member checking allowed participants to verify transcripts and add to thoughts or provide clarification when needed. As a result of member checking, P8 clarified several statements within the transcript. The researcher made changes and returned the revised transcripts to P8 for verification, which was obtained. All other participants, upon review of initial transcripts, validated the data as

presented by the researcher. After transcription of semi-structured interviews, data analysis began. The researcher started by reviewing transcriptions of interviews and reflecting on field notes taken during the interview adding context and situational data (J. Sutton & Austin, 2015). As the researcher analyzed and interpreted participant data, the journal was referenced constantly to check for unintentional biases. As a result of reading and analyzing transcripts and field notes multiple times, a multistep process beginning with single and cross-questions analysis yielded results. Specifically, the researcher analyzed and coded interview transcripts from each participant, identifying general themes and categorizing the data. Additionally, the researcher referenced common terms used between participants from Otter.ai transcriptions. As a result of analyzing and coding interview transcripts by research question, the researcher created a spreadsheet to categorize the data and record the notes into general themes. The researcher documented and highlighted the number of times consistent terms and general themes among participants occurred forming subthemes. Within research questions, by comparing and contrasting subthemes for similarities and differences and grouping accordingly, commonalities and main themes relating to each interview question were derived. Themes derived from Research Question 1 exploring satisfactory lived experiences in the principals' role during the pandemic included the following: change, collaboration, connection, helping and learning, problem-solving, and students overcoming difficulty. Themes derived from Research Question 1 exploring unsatisfactory lived experiences in the principals' role during the pandemic included: pandemic-related guidelines involving masks, quarantining, and contact tracing; student academic concerns; staffing struggles; community turmoil; and work-life balance. Themes derived from Research Question 2

exploring high school principal mobility intentions included: passion and commitment, connections, managing people, workload, support, prioritization and time management, delegation, an inability to balance, health, and hobbies. This allowed the researcher to capture each participant's lived experiences of leading during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Triangulation of data provided the researcher with evidence from various sources to increase the reliability and validity of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For triangulation, the researcher used the following data sources: interviews, field notes, and archival data such as: NASSP publications and artifacts, and CDC and DESE guidance regarding educational changes, workplace conditions, and procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, district policies, websites, and handbooks regarding pandemic guidelines were reviewed to allow the researcher a more thorough investigation in the triangulation process. To ensure confidentiality, policies, handbooks, and websites were classified by respective RPDCs and the corresponding participant. Discrepancies did not arise between interview transcripts and triangulation data sources. Interviews, field notes, and archival data were triangulated seeking commonalities and similarities in themes across data sources in relation to the research questions (Elliott, 2018).

The participant interview data were gathered and analyzed and presented in this chapter separated by the research questions. Emerging themes from the participants are presented within each research question. An overall summary of data follows the final research question.

Research Question 1

The first overarching research question to form the basis of this study was: How do Missouri public high school principals describe their career satisfaction amid the

wake of the COVID-19 pandemic? The researcher asked open-ended questions to explore public high school principals' perceptions through their lived experiences. The purpose of the research questions was to explore satisfactory and unsatisfactory lived experiences and roles that contributed and detracted from career satisfaction during the pandemic. On the topic of career satisfaction, Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory encompasses the basic premise that experiences shape individual decisions (Cayak, 2021; Gardner, 1977; Postma & Babo, 2019; Stewart, 2020). Exploring answers to the research questions using interview data, field notes, and archival data analysis as the guide, the researcher was provided insight into the lived experiences of public high school principals.

Satisfaction. All participants of this study highlighted various satisfactory experiences in their position amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants indicated specific positive growth opportunities either in their position or within their school. Details provided key themes and keywords generated specific to satisfactory experiences amid the pandemic. A summary of keywords and phrases can be found in Table 3.

Table 3*Keywords Related to Satisfactory Experiences by Participant*

Keywords	Frequency	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
Career	187	22	13	27	21	14	22	16	28	24
Position	154	18	9	18	8	30	30	21	10	9
Satisfaction	120	9	7	8	16	24	16	12	12	16
Pandemic	105	15	13	12	7	11	12	8	10	17
Positive	77	9	7	9	7	10	3	11	9	12
Talk	66	4	2	4	7	7	13	7	12	10
Building	65	2	5	15	6	17	1	2	5	12
Change	30	5	8	7	4	2	1	0	2	1
Connect	22	0	0	4	1	5	9	0	1	2

From these keywords, three themes and phrases contributing to satisfactory experiences amid the COVID-19 pandemic evolved: change, collaboration, and connection. All high school principals revealed positive change as a constant throughout the pandemic. While the most positive change was relational, one participant hit on a positive structural change. Participant 1 noted, “As a result of the pandemic, our bell schedule changed to a block schedule.” The researcher verified the evidence of required change by triangulating interview data with data from the district’s website. Additional archival data from CDC and DESE verified recommendations to maintain physical distance and to use cohorts by limiting the number of students and staff who met each other (DESE, 2021). Students attending four classes a day rather than seven or eight classes a day helps accomplish the cohort recommendation measure set forth.

Seven out of nine participants (P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9) discussed positive experiences in the form of collaboration. When considering the role of high school principal, participants were forced to collaborate and work together utilizing different problem-solving techniques. The researcher noted P4’s practicality in field notes when

she said,

The pandemic created opportunities for schools to break out of the mindset that this is how we have always done this kind of thing. We had a chance to figure some stuff out. Additionally, parents were paying more attention and taking an active interest in their child's academics.

From a positive perspective, P7 noted, "We were forced to reflect on practices that have been in place for generations and update those. As result, the staff became more flexible." Participant 9 spoke of finding personal satisfaction from trying to make the best of a crazy situation that had never been dealt with.

In terms of connection, four participants (P3, P6, P8, P9) mentioned being intentional in supporting one another. School personnel were expected to be a steady light for people, a sounding board, because school is a safe place for people. By trying to keep people connected the past 2 years, school reopened, and teaching and learning commenced. Participant 9 spoke of finding personal satisfaction from trying to make the best of a crazy situation that had never been dealt with prior to the pandemic. A new perspective was gained, and personal connections and relationships were made.

All participants were able to speak to specific experiences amid the pandemic that contributed to satisfaction in their position. While one participant, P5, would not attribute "anything" to the pandemic, all others provided details resulting in themes and keywords generated specific to career satisfaction in the principals' role during the pandemic.

Keywords and phrases can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Keywords Related to Career Satisfaction in the Principals' Role by Participant

Keywords	Frequency	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
Role	198	17	11	24	20	17	25	13	37	34
Responsibility	97	12	4	10	6	11	13	10	21	10
Work	86	5	9	10	10	6	7	11	10	18
Students	62	24	1	8	5	6	5	3	2	8
Learn	55	4	3	8	2	5	6	9	2	16
Problem	38	1	11	1	1	9	2	6	6	1

Together with keywords from Table 3, three themes and phrases contributing to career satisfaction in the principals' role during the pandemic evolved: helping and learning, problem-solving, and students overcoming difficulty. These themes were revealed in the following interview statements.

Concerning helping and learning, P1 stated,

And I really have placed an emphasis on trying to help those around me as much as possible. And so, whether that be helping with a teacher in the classroom, helping with supervision, duties, things of that nature, I have just tried to do whatever I can to help those around me.

Continuing with helping and learning, P8 also reflected on how the pandemic had affected job satisfaction, "The job is about leadership and leading people and making sure that we are making remarkable things happen for kids, regardless of circumstances."

Four participants explained how problem-solving helped in the realm of career satisfaction. Participant 2 enjoyed the challenge of problem-solving because it allowed people to work together and accomplish hard things. Participant 9 discussed the ability to "persevere and accomplish goals, which has been impactful." Participant 7 noted the goal

of a building leader is to make processes better. Participant 3 continued highlighting the fact that, “We solved problems and tried as best we could with the resources, we had to serve kids. It is inspiring.”

Three of the nine participants spoke of kids overcoming obstacles and succeeding, in tough situations and circumstances. Participant 4 highlighted kids still graduating, still going to college, and succeeding. Participant 9, reflecting on career satisfaction said, “Seeing what some of these kids have overcome, that has been thrown at them through the pandemic through no fault of their own...seeing them persevere and accomplish goals they set four years ago was pretty impactful.” Summing it up, P6 said it best: “Students and staff forged ahead, just rolled with it.”

Dissatisfaction. All participants of this study highlighted various unsatisfactory experiences sharing specific instances during the pandemic in which their role as a high school principal had been not so positive, even considered negative. A summary of themes and keywords generated specific to unsatisfactory experiences in the principals’ role during the pandemic can be found in Table 5.

Table 5

Keywords Related to Unsatisfactory Experiences in the Principals’ Role by Participant

Keywords	Frequency	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
Teachers	93	5	10	12	9	18	12	1	22	4
Deal(ing)	74	1	0	2	0	23	16	1	12	19
Experiences	59	8	2	18	2	8	3	9	3	16
Masks	18	0	2	0	2	3	4	2	4	1

Table 5 keywords, coupled with keywords from Tables 3 and 4, revealed three themes and phrases associated with unsatisfactory experiences: pandemic-related guidelines involving masks, quarantining, and contact tracing; student academic concerns; and

staffing struggles. In addition to key themes and phrases, P4 mentioned the challenge of technology creating a lot of extra work.

The theme of pandemic-related challenges was supported by principal participants P1, P5, P6, P8, and P9. The researcher verified the evidence of pandemic guidelines by triangulating interview data with archival data from CDC and DESE. A framework for pandemic guidelines in the school setting was provided, proving to be less than popular. Specific guidelines involved close contacts, tracing, isolation, masking, distancing, testing, and activity participation (DESE, 2021). Following the guidance and leading in a very conservative community, P5 discussed how masks became a huge issue, “everything was politicized,” and the effects of a negative response from community. According to P9, “By contact tracing and quarantining students and groups, we suffered verbal abuse and had to have thick skin, as the political element was polarizing.” Participant 8 went on to say, “A number of people called the district office to tell them that the blood of my children is going to be on your hands. That kind of thing was hard.”

Student academic concerns were highlighted by 2 of the 9 participants as being negative instances during the pandemic. Participant 1 described the difficulty in catching students up on their work from pandemic-related absences. According to P7, “Big battle up ahead is graduation rate and credit acquisition, as pressure with graduation rate and getting students to the finish line is going to be more difficult in the next 2-3 years.”

Staffing struggles are a real concern, whether from teacher absences, exhausted faculty, or lack of certified applicants. Participant 9 shared, “COVID exasperated the lack of certified applicants; filling positions has been difficult.” The researcher verified the evidence of educator vacancies by triangulating interview data with archival data from

DESE. Supported by the Educator Vacancy Report issued by DESE in June 2021 and mentioned by P3, “We have three critical shortage teachers currently on staff.” The researcher noted P3’s passion and emotion in field notes supporting what she said as she shook her head while mentioning staff absences and describing assistant principals as:

Exhausted. I just saw their exhaustion this year, I think it has been the worst, with the level of exhaustion on my assistant principals. And it is something I am seriously researching how to re-establish structures of workflow because they will not sustain, they cannot sustain.

All participants were able to speak to specific experiences amid the pandemic detracting from career satisfaction in the principal’s role. While one participant, P8, explained that satisfaction was not an issue, all others provided details resulting in themes and keywords generated specific to experiences amid the pandemic detracting from career satisfaction. A summary of keywords and phrases can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

Keywords Related to Experiences Detracting from Career Satisfaction by Participant

Keywords	Frequency	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
Negative	66	13	6	3	4	13	13	5	8	1
Balance	44	3	3	13	3	4	7	4	6	1
Parents	39	2	5	7	2	7	1	5	3	7
Community	27	0	0	10	2	8	0	4	0	3

Table 6 keywords, combined with the keywords from Tables 3, 4, and 5, revealed two themes and phrases associated with specific experiences amid the pandemic detracting from career satisfaction in the principals’ role: community turmoil and work-life balance. These themes were revealed in the following interview statements.

According to P5, relationships between community and school made the principal

position less doable. Continuing, P6 discussed “the complainers – those who shed a negative light on what we were trying to do.” Participant 7 reflected on experiences mentioning turmoil in the community as not easy to swallow and bluntly stating, “Masks created dissatisfaction.” Participant 4 talked about things being more difficult, frustration over political mandates, and fights about masks and no masks.

The final theme derived from Research Question 1 involved work-life balance due to the difficulty of change creating dissatisfaction in one’s high school principal career during the pandemic. Participant 3 mentioned that “Work-life balance was extremely skewed.” Participant 4 discussed the “things that were more difficult,” while P8 spoke of the constant state of change and how hard it was to hit a moving target. The researcher verified the evidence of constant change by triangulating interview data with archival data from CDC and DESE. While the CDC and DESE together provided K-12 schools with updated and ongoing guidance to reflect the most recent science on pandemic related issues, additions, and changes, specifically contact tracing and testing proved difficult for administrators. For example, midyear a *test to stay* option, a strategy used to promote vaccinations and allow students and staff to continue school activities, was implemented (DESE, 2021). Unfortunately, the *test to stay* option was short-lived due to a lack of COVID tests (DESE, 2021). Participant 1 discussed the disruption to school processes, policies, and practices; some were working well, and some needed to be revamped and reworked due to the disruption.

Research Question 2

The second overarching research question to form the basis of this study was:
What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals amid the wake

of the COVID-19 pandemic? Understanding high school principal mobility intentions helped the researcher determine whether the pandemic might result in an increase in principal departure and resignations. The researcher asked open-ended questions to explore mobility in relation to workplace conditions and emotional aspects of work. Exploring answers to this question was approached by identifying themes emerging from interview data, field notes, archival data, and document analysis.

Mobility Intentions. Various experiences led to mobility intentions because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Five participants (P2, P4, P6, P7, P8) reported the pandemic had no effect on intentions to stay, while four participants detailed reasons the pandemic has shaken intentions to remain in the position of high school principal, which aligned with the archival data from NASSP (n.d.) poll stating 45% of principals had accelerated their plans to leave the position due to pandemic working conditions. By coding and then comparing and contrasting keywords and phrases, patterns and themes were identified. A summary of Research Question 2 keywords can be found in Table 7.

Table 7

Keywords Related to Research Question 2 by Participant

Keywords	Frequency	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
People	193	17	16	17	20	21	36	15	29	22
High School Principal	161	18	12	25	13	23	19	17	25	9
Pandemic	105	15	13	12	7	11	12	8	10	17
Responsibility	97	12	4	10	6	11	13	10	21	10
Work	86	5	9	10	10	6	7	11	10	18
Support	76	5	9	9	14	4	13	4	4	14
Opportunity	42	5	2	6	2	2	1	0	11	13
Move	36	3	3	4	0	8	4	0	5	9

From these keywords, five themes and phrases associated with mobility intentions

evolved: passion and commitment, connections, managing people, workload, and support. Passion and commitment to the school and connections with staff members were the two overwhelming themes found when examining key reasons to remain in the position of high school principal. Conversely, the overwhelming key issues when considering mobility intentions to leave the position included managing people, workload, and support. These themes were revealed in the following interview statements.

Intentions to stay were backed by two themes. First, supporting the notion of passion and commitment, P1 spoke of creating as many opportunities as possible for students. Participants 2, 4, 5, and 8 detailed the impact the principal had on the school describing the position as, “Critically important, we need strong building-level leaders” (P5). Participant 8 confidently focused (field notes) on the sphere of influence and opportunity to grow leaders allowing staff to have input on important decisions, ultimately “affecting adults who affect kids.” Participant 9 enjoyed working with young people, helping them find success and seeing them learn, grow, and develop. Secondly, five participants (P1, P3, P6, P7, P9) spoke of connection being a key player to remain in the high school principal position. Participant 1, 7, and 9 enjoyed positive interactions with people, having a fun time with the staff, and being around the students. Due to enjoying the positive interactions so much, P6 smiled (field notes) when describing “opportunities and offers he has turned down,” even though “high school principal is the hardest job in the district.” For P3, encouragement to remain came from taking care of the people, a loyalty to the team. Two participants (P1, P7) were happy to report that the pandemic provided motivation to maintain stability for students, teachers, and families,

P7 noting, “If I can get through what we just went through, I can get through anything.”

While all participants spoke of challenges, four (P1, P3, P5, P9) actively considered change citing three main themes: workload, managing people, and support. Candidly speaking and chuckling, as noted in field notes, P5 explained, “The pandemic encouraged me to look at moving up, because it was hard to have to deal with policies I didn't make.” Participant 9 talked about the pandemic accelerating a change, looking at central office roles to see what opportunities lie ahead. While P5 and P9 spoke of looking at central office positions, both specifically mentioned that the pandemic “didn't encourage me to leave the position, because I will deal with the same issues” and “it is more about opportunity vs. the pandemic.” The challenges of the pandemic made P1 question his ability to stay in the position stating, “I feel like there could be a disruption in our school year at any point, even from this point moving forward.” First, workload challenges led the way in response to the pandemic. All but two participants (P4 and P7) spoke of the workload of the high school principal's position encouraging them to consider moving. According to P9, “The increased workload during pandemic was difficult, dealing with the unknown was difficult, dealing with achievement gaps was and continues to be difficult.” Participant 5 was discouraged trying to fill teaching positions, feeling uncertain as to the future of public education. Participant 3 believed the work-life balance was skewed and did not enjoy the supervision and extra-duty aspect of the position. Next, managing people was a constant struggle. When considering the intention to leave the position, P1 explained that the pandemic “made me question it.” Participant 1 struggled with the extra work others put on “us” that could be challenging, however, P1 was motivated to “provide stability for students and families, to put the puzzle pieces

back together, to get rid of the things that aren't necessary for students to learn at their best." Participant 1 explained, "Trying to keep everyone in a positive state of mind was challenging." Though not stated in the interview, in terms of challenges and "disrupted school processes" (P1), triangulating interview data with data from the P1's district website showed a COVID dashboard with weekly quarantine numbers. Nearly 100 students were quarantined in P1's school district in January 2022. Participant 9 found it harder to hold people to a certain standard of accountability. Participant 8 summarized managing people by stating that it is "easy to sometimes lose focus of being thankful for those around you, thankful for whom you are working with, thankful for teachers who are influencing kids." Participant 8 encouraged principals to instead, look at "crazy teachers and parents and kids coming to school half-dressed" as neat and interesting challenges. Finally, community and parent support were at the top of the list of challenges for P4. Participant 7 agreed that the position in response to the pandemic is extremely difficult, especially in "tough situations with the media and the community."

Workplace Conditions. All participants agreed that workplace conditions coupled with the roles and responsibilities of a public high school principal play a key role in future career decisions. Amid the pandemic, school leaders worked to organize contact tracing, and keep students and staff safe. Additionally, schools became a hub for health information. In review of district websites, each participant's school included COVID-19 protocols with periodic updates in accordance with CDC and DESE guidance. Some district websites proved challenging to navigate as pandemic-related information was not always forthcoming. Participant 7's "Re-entry Plan" was not only challenging to find, but when found, was remarkably short in comparison to other

districts. Participant 2's district not only outlined contact tracing protocols but included scenarios of positive cases to spell out steps taken, and decisions made. Participant 3's district included a portal to answer questions submitted by community members.

Participant 4's district site was the most extensive including not only a detailed reentry and response plan, but also health and safety videos and a list of testing and vaccination sites. While district policies and guidelines varied, all participants spoke of pandemic experiences in a "constant state of change" (P9).

As expressed by P7, "responsibilities play a part in future career decisions, but there's some things that can't prepare you for that." "Things were more difficult" (P4) following pandemic guidelines. Participant 9 mentioned the need to have "thick skin.... the political element was polarizing." Though not stated in the interview, archival data showed P9's district rescinded the Public Health Order to lift mask restrictions. Instead, staff and students were to continue wearing face coverings or masks. Archival data also showed P5's district lifting masking and quarantine requirements altogether as of February 2022. As mentioned by P1 concerning the pandemic, "It was challenging, a lot to change and adjust. It created a lot of frustration among people."

When further investigating workplace conditions, participants were asked to describe their roles and responsibilities. Two participants (P3, P8) spoke of "casting a vision." Six participants (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P9) detailed the instructional piece stating by supporting teacher growth, principals "put teachers in a position to do their best work." Overwhelmingly, all participants detailed extensive managerial roles in carrying out the position amid the pandemic including working with teachers to find out what they need; overseeing activities, processes, and daily building operations; allocating

resources; and managing and creating the budget. Lastly, three participants (P1, P3, P7) detailed school improvement as a key role that involves providing a safe learning environment and evaluating staff and school processes with improvement as the goal.

A summary of themes and keywords generated specific to mobility intentions related to workplace conditions can be found in Table 8.

Table 8

Keywords Related to Workplace Conditions by Participant

Keywords	Frequency	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
Time	236	17	25	40	23	16	18	44	22	31
Day	106	9	21	11	3	5	3	14	10	30
Question	69	6	5	6	8	9	9	8	5	13
Big/Bigger	60	3	4	5	6	13	14	4	4	7
Decision	55	13	2	1	2	6	5	13	10	3
Important	55	6	5	4	2	5	6	11	4	12

Together with keywords from Table 7, in terms of mobility intentions related to workplace conditions, three key themes evolved: prioritization and time management, delegation, and an inability to balance. Leading the way in the “daunting” (P8) position, seven participants (P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9) described balancing responsibilities by prioritizing and using time management skills. Participant 2 spoke of “prioritizing the importance over putting out continuous small fires.” Participants 5 and 9 explained the importance of managing multiple aspects of the building at one time with prioritization of certain tasks. Participant 6 stated, “Be aware of what needs done and pick and choose the most important ones to do.” The researcher verified the evidence of district policy changes by triangulating interview data with archival data from the participant’s district

website. Regarding the task of contact tracing supported by this district's *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction*, P6 stated,

One of my roles was to shield them [teachers] from things that they did not really need to be worried about or taking. So, for example, in our building, we did all the contract tracing. One, because I did not want to send every student home because I knew our nurse might, and two, I wanted to be a little bit more logical about it.

Participant 8 supported the idea of prioritization by seriously stating, "Keep things in order, first and foremost, responsibility with Christ. Second, family and the third one becomes your job. Make sure you keep those in order." Delegation was the second theme addressed by four participants (P1, P3, P6, P8). Participant 3 expanded on delegating to assistant principals without micromanaging. According to P6, "You can't do everything, delegate and then have the confidence in other people to do what you have asked them to do." Participant 8's practical advice, again, noted in field notes, was to "utilize your people, grow them as a leader and allow them to feel valued." Finally, when considering workplace conditions and the roles and responsibilities of the high school principal, two brave souls (P2, P4) opening admitted to not having that balance, not doing it well, especially amid the pandemic.

Emotional Aspects of Work. Following in line with Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, all participants agreed that confidence played a role in one's future career, indirectly impacting motivation to learn and grow as a leader. Participant 1 believed principals grow with confidence by solving problems, overcoming challenges, and seeking out other opportunities. Participant 8 said one "must put yourself out there and have the courage to be a little nervous, be scared to death, but saddle up anyway."

Participant 4 believed it takes confidence to do the job, confidence, and belief that “you are making a difference.” A summary of themes and keywords generated specific to mobility intentions related to emotional aspects can be found in Table 9.

Table 9

Keywords Related to Emotional Aspects by Participant

Keywords	Frequency	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
Confident	104	11	7	7	12	19	9	12	11	16
Feel/Felt	89	15	12	8	13	10	13	0	6	12
Enjoy	42	3	1	5	9	0	2	1	0	21
Stress(ful)	22	3	2	1	10	6	0	0	0	0
Struggle	11	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	5	2

Together with keywords from Tables 7 and 8, when considering mobility intentions in relation to emotional aspects of the job, in addition to confidence, three themes evolved: support, health, and hobbies. These themes were revealed in the following interview information.

Leading the way and touched on by all participants included having the support of family. All but one participant (P2) also spoke of administration team support.

Participant 3 was emotional, as noted in field notes, explaining, “I have seen this job ruin a lot of marriages. That is something that I am very protective of with my assistants, is protecting their families and protecting their time so that they can maintain a healthy life outside of school, because they all have littles.” Participant 9 expanded on the professional support highlighting the need to have a “good network of other administrators, even outside the building.” Participant 8 was insistent, as noted in field notes, on “finding a couple trusted colleagues who have been through what you are going through, in the same role. They can take you aside in complete confidence to let you

know you are paddling in the wrong direction.” While hard for leaders to swallow, P8 believed in the importance of honest feedback. Concerning family support, P9 was diligent in being present when home, enjoying family time, trying not to have spill over from one to the other or dragging a difficult day home, being intentional to put one aside and focus on the other while there. Participant 7 explained that “family is important to help get your mind off of things.” Participant 2 was a “self-professed” workaholic and as a result got sick due to the stress. Now engaged to be married, P2’s fiancé has been instrumental in “telling me to put my phone up, calling me out, and finding breaks.”

The theme of health and hobby when considering emotional aspects of the position go hand in hand. The theme of health and wellness for individuals was supported by the *CDC Healthy Schools Stories of Achievement*, outlining Missouri as one of six states that incorporated “wellness days” in their school year to help with the social and emotional well-being of students and staff (CDC, n.d.). Four of the nine participants (P1, P2, P3, P7) spoke of ways to manage stress by protecting alone time, working out, and having hobbies. Participants 1 and 7 noted the importance of having hobbies, finding time outside family life and work to decompress or relieve stress. Additionally, P7 specifically spoke of his farm as a hobby he enjoyed, as well as “having fun.” Participant 2 agreed adamantly, as noted in field notes, about staying healthy and working out:

I am an avid worker out. Whether it is going for a walk or run, building that time in is important. Yes, it means that I get up at 4:45 during the school year, but I am an angry elephant if I do not get that in.

Summary

Chapter Four of the study included a description of the participants, presented the data analysis, and provided a breakdown of the themes emerging from interview transcripts, field notes, and archival data. In the study, research analysis was broken down and separated by research question to help support and tie data back to each research question. Overall, when considering career satisfaction, while most spoke to the challenges, the public high school principals represented in the study seemed energized and/or indifferent to the added stress and strain of the pandemic. Participants enjoyed their career as high school principal and were focused on meeting the challenges faced. Overall, when considering mobility intentions, approximately half the participants represented in the study were considering leaving the position, however the reasons were more personal related rather than pandemic related. Utilizing interview data, field notes, and archival data, together with the theoretical frameworks of Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory, the researcher was able to identify and understand various experiences leading to mobility intentions and describe career satisfaction of Missouri public high principals amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Lived experiences of participants during the pandemic proved invaluable to exploring mobility intentions and offered a unique perspective detailing satisfactory and unsatisfactory experiences and roles that contributed and detracted from career satisfaction.

Chapter Five includes the findings of the study, conclusions, and steps and recommendations moving forward. Chapter Five also includes the researcher's opinions and professional conclusions based on a combination of literature review findings and

data collection and analysis from participants in the study. Chapter Five concludes with implications for leaders in the field of education, and recommendations for future studies for further exploration to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of school leaders.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Prior to March 13, 2020, hundreds of principals across the United States were leaving the profession at an alarming rate. Nearly 20% of principals left their schools each year and nearly half left their schools within the first 3 years (Apostol & Austin, 2020; Superville, 2019). According to the national average, in 4 short years, turnover takes its toll (Levin & Bradley, 2019). Post March 13, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shocked every person and organization globally, creating an urgent and complex set of new challenges for school leaders (Ahlström et al., 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Klingbeil, 2020; Stasel, 2020; Superville, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has only compounded the issue of principal turnover and mobility, which could impact and disrupt school progress with high teacher turnover and lower student achievement (Levin et al., 2020; Snodgrass Rangel, 2017).

Told as narrative stories and supported by relevant research, the purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals after 3 or more years in the profession who served amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher used semi-structured open-ended interview questions as a research method to help eliminate bias and not alter responses, thereby providing participants an opportunity to portray their individual lived experiences concerning career satisfaction and mobility intentions. Exploring answers to the research questions using interview data and analysis as the guide, the researcher was provided insight into the perceptions of high school principals. Participants in the study included

nine high school principals who served in Missouri public school districts, as referenced in Table 2, one from each of the RPDC regions across the state of Missouri (Figure 1). Through this qualitative narrative study, the researcher intended to determine perspectives of current public high school principals and add to the limited body of research regarding career satisfaction and mobility intentions amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The two central research questions and four subquestions that guided this study included the following:

1. How do Missouri public high school principals describe their career satisfaction amid the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - a. What are the perspectives of Missouri public high school principals regarding satisfactory and unsatisfactory lived experiences during the pandemic?
 - b. How did Missouri public high school principals' role during the pandemic contribute to or detract from career satisfaction?
2. What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals amid the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - a. What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals in relation to workplace conditions?
 - b. What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals in relation to emotional aspects of work?

The framework used for this qualitative narrative study was based on Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory. Bandura's social learning theory provided a framework for how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted

and influenced high school principals' career decisions. Additionally, looking closely at Bandura's social learning theory's factors of self-efficacy and career decision-making, the researcher intended to determine mobility intentions in addition to overall career satisfaction of Missouri public high school principals. Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory provided a framework for understanding motivation factors and how the factors contributed to principals' career satisfaction. Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation factors rooted in Herzberg et al.'s theory provided an organizational framework geared toward understanding motivation factors and as a result, career satisfaction.

Chapter Five contains an analysis and summary of the findings addressing the research questions. A discussion of themes emerging from the data and connections to the current research and literature is provided followed by the study limitations and details on how the researcher addressed the limitations. Chapter Five also includes triangulation of data, professional implications from the findings, recommendations for future research, conclusions, and overall significance of the study.

Summary of Findings

The researcher selected a qualitative narrative study to understand the lives of participants, capture points of view, and gain a deep understanding of a few select individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The current study included a broad glimpse of lived experiences from participants with varied range of backgrounds and perspectives related to career satisfaction and mobility intentions. While other methods such as quantitative research could help determine factors attributing to principals' career satisfaction and mobility intentions, a qualitative narrative design created a broader representation to explore lived experiences of current Missouri public high school principals who served

amid the COVID-19 pandemic (Peoples, 2021). Interviews captured participants' lived experiences using an interview protocol (See Appendix D) established by the researcher, rooted in the literature review conducted for this study.

Interview transcripts were analyzed and coded by the researcher from each participant, identifying general themes to categorize the data. Transcriptions were shared with each participant to ensure accuracy, check for errors, and view for clarifications. The researcher then evaluated and sorted themes in each interview transcript to form subthemes and subsequent main themes. Next, the following documents were collected and reviewed by the researcher: NASSP publications and artifacts, and CDC and DESE guidance regarding educational changes, workplace conditions, and procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Any discrepancies between interview transcripts and triangulation data sources were documented in the post interviewee correspondence allowing for additional clarification, if needed. Themes relating to each interview question were derived based on the findings of the research, allowing the researcher to capture each participant's lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The usage of keywords referenced by interview participants easily formed the themes and phrases for both research questions, as displayed in Tables 3–9.

For Research Question 1, while participants spoke to the challenges, public high school principals represented in the study seemed energized and/or indifferent to the added stress and strain of the pandemic. Participants enjoyed their careers as high school principals and were focused on meeting the challenges faced directly. The key themes associated with satisfactory experiences included change, collaboration, and connection. The key themes associated with unsatisfactory experiences included pandemic-related

guidelines and challenges, student academic concerns, and staffing struggles. The key themes contributing to career satisfaction in a principal's role during the pandemic included helping and learning, problem-solving, and students overcoming challenges. The key themes detracting from career satisfaction in a principal's role during the pandemic included community turmoil and work-life balance. The themes derived from interviews were closely associated with Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory and the study's literature review. Based on participants' belief in their capacity and continuous effort to succeed, whether through action, observation, encouragement, or awareness, self-efficacy is built and maintained to carry out the role of public high school principal.

For Research Question 2, approximately half the participants represented in the study were considering leaving the position, however the reasons were more personal related rather than pandemic related. The key themes related to overall mobility intentions amid the pandemic included passion and commitment, connections, managing people, workload, and support. In relation to workplace conditions, key themes included prioritization and time management, delegation, and an inability to balance. In relation to emotional aspects of the work, key themes included support, health, and hobbies. Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory provided an organizational framework to help understand motivation factors of high school principals and as a result, career satisfaction. The theory outlines two motivation factors that contribute to an individual's career satisfaction: motivators and hygiene factors. Herzberg et al. proposed hygiene factors contribute to career dissatisfaction while motivators contribute to career satisfaction.

Qualitative research is focused on effectively obtaining responses from a target

population, a technique used to select individuals who have experience and knowledge about the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The intent of this qualitative narrative study was to understand the mobility intentions and career satisfaction of Missouri public high school principals and to identify themes that arose from the research. Because a qualitative narrative study relies heavily on open-ended questions and data analysis by the researcher, ensuring credibility can be difficult (Butina, 2015). To help build validity and reliability while eliminating potential biases, the researcher utilized member checking of interview transcripts, along with triangulation of data sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This qualitative narrative study was guided by two research questions focusing on Missouri public high school principals' lived experiences amid the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both research questions were explored through the Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory looking closely at an individual's belief in their capacity to succeed and motivation factors contributing to career satisfaction. This research attempted to fill the gap in literature where, according to Engel (2020), a lack of systematic research investigating career satisfaction of public school principals across the nation exists. Specifically, the researcher investigated principals' occupational stressors, perspectives of the effect of stress on their professional and personal lives, and the coping skills used to deal with that stress, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Record & Couturier, 2020). With the number of principals leaving schools, retaining effective principals and reducing principal turnover are important, as principals are the second most key factor associated with student achievement in schools (Levin et al., 2020; Snodgrass Rangel, 2017). The

study participants provided reflections on career satisfaction and mobility intentions surrounding their role in the public high school principal position.

Finally, limitations existed in this study, and were as follows:

1. As with any qualitative study, researcher and participant biases were possibilities. Impartial collection of data was critical to the reliability and validity of the study. Participants may have had emotional connections and varying degrees of comfort discussing challenging work environments.
2. Only participants who responded to the survey were included in the study.
3. Due to the small sample size, limitations were present concerning demographics of participants.
4. Length of interview and schedules may have been deterrents. Principals were busy and may have chosen to not respond or cancel the interview.

For this study, participant information was obtained from DESE and email invitations to interview with the researcher were sent. A pool of participants was gathered based on initial emails, however, the researcher failed to gain participation from participants in three regions. After a period of time, the researcher sent a second email invitation to a pool of participants specific to the missing regions, gaining only one additional participant. At that point, rather than send a third email invitation, the researcher began calling participants from schools in the particular RPDC region needed to personally ask participants to participate in the study. By addressing the limitations set forth, the researcher was able to secure the pool of interview participants.

Major themes emerged and were verified through the triangulation process to

support the findings and will be covered in this section. Themes will be viewed through the lens of Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory. Discussion of the study limitations and how the researcher addressed the limitations were also addressed in this section.

Discussion

The goal of this research was to understand the lived experiences of high school principals amid the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a gap in research investigating career satisfaction of public school principals across the nation and principals' occupational stressors, perspectives of the effect of stress on their professional and personal lives, and the coping skills used to deal with that stress, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Engel, 2020; Record & Couturier, 2020). Qualitative narrative studies aim to explore lived experiences of participants within a study (Peoples, 2021). This study allowed the researcher an effective way to collect data and to research trends, viewpoints, and perspectives of larger populations through interviews and studies of smaller samples (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The research was guided by the first central research question: How do Missouri public high school principals describe their career satisfaction amid the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic? The sub questions specifically investigated satisfactory and unsatisfactory experiences. All but one participant of this study was able to speak to various experiences in their position that contributed to satisfaction and dissatisfaction amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants spoke of difficulties among the community, imbalance in roles, and constant change faced amid the pandemic. Most participants interviewed in the study

expanded on the turmoil between the community and the school as a result of the pandemic, tying into what was found in the literature review where principals became targets of community members (NASSP, n.d.; Ujifusa, 2021). Archival data showed districts' policies lifting masking and quarantine requirements altogether while other districts were rescinding the health orders to lift mask restrictions requiring students and staff members to continue wearing masks. One participant noted that relationships between community and school were much less doable (P5). The researcher was surprised to know districts were rescinding health orders altogether understanding the amount of turmoil some principals experienced. Additionally, participants in the study experienced difficulty due to constant change and an imbalance in the roles and responsibilities. This feeling of role and responsibility imbalance was in line with the researcher's findings in the literature review (DeMatthews et al., 2019; Engel, 2020; Fuller & Young, 2008; Levin & Bradley, 2019; NASSP, n.d.; S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021; Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011; Yan, 2020). The pandemic created struggles for participants supporting Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory specific to hygiene factors: interpersonal relationships, policies, and role definition.

Participants represented in the study seemed energized and/or indifferent to the added stress and strain of the pandemic, quick to describe their career satisfaction serving in the position. Speaking candidly about the challenges, the researcher was surprised how upbeat and positive the participants were, all putting a positive spin on the challenges faced considering all the negative research surrounding the pandemic. Though not specifically stated, the joys of the principal position seem to outweigh the frustrations, especially when making a difference in the lives of students. Struggles come to an end,

and a tough year culminates with a graduation ceremony, the absolute best night of the school year. On graduation night, all the struggles and challenges seem to dissipate. The same appears to be true of the pandemic. Times were tough during the pandemic, but persevering was reinvigorating. These are the observations of the researcher as a practicing high school principal. This thought process also ties to the researcher's findings during the literature review concerning Postma's (2019) description of self-efficacious individuals. Also, as found by S. S. Sutton and Gong (2021, p.38), "superhero" principals overcome odds with tremendous internal strength. Specific to Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory, the pandemic forced collaboration and teamwork and allowed participants to find success during challenging times. Positive experiences in the form of collaboration related to work engagement were reported by most participants interviewed in the study. Together, participants in the study spoke of the enjoyment of being challenged, finding success, and working together to help students and staff persevere and accomplish goals. As noted in the literature review repeatedly, the challenges of the pandemic were extensive, but also, the passion and drive of the principal were unrelenting. Concerning passion and challenges, one would eventually trump the other. This study indicated the positive outweighed the negative.

The research was guided by the second central research question: What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals amid the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic? The sub questions specifically investigated mobility intentions in relation to workplace conditions and emotional aspects of the work. All participants of this study spoke to mobility intentions and emotional aspects of the work amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The themes derived from interviews are closely associated with Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory and the study's literature review. Based on participants' belief in their capacity and continuous effort to succeed, whether through action, observation, encouragement, or awareness, self-efficacy is built and maintained to carry out the role of public high school principal. This idea was supported as principals embarked upon the extra workload of the pandemic. Many participants noted the importance of believing you can do the job and making a difference or "you probably shouldn't accept the job" (P2). Specifically, participants spoke of confidence by solving problems and overcoming challenges, ultimately "walking away with street cred" (P3). Speaking directly to moving up within the ranks of a school system, P5 and P7 stated that without confidence, "you are not going to move up" (P5), "probably not applying for the next level position" (P7). This study did not find the pandemic as a motivating factor for leaving the principal position, even when challenged by the extra responsibilities. According to Bandura, instead of being overburdened in stressful situations, self-efficacy is developed, motivation is gained, and action is taken. All participants agreed that confidence played a role in one's future career, indirectly impacting motivation to learn and grow as a leader. This thought process ties to the researcher's findings during the literature review concerning how leaders function in an ever-changing environment (Schrik & Wasonga, 2019).

Overall approximately half the participants represented in the study were considering leaving the position, however the reasons were more personal related rather than pandemic related. Looking to remain in the position, P1 was motivated to "provide stability for students and families, to put the puzzle pieces back together, to get rid of the

things that aren't necessary for students to learn at their best." This ties to findings in the literature review and distinct reasons principals move or change schools (Alam & Asim, 2019; Mahfouz, 2020; Meyer et al., 2020; Tahir et al., 2019; Yan, 2020). When considering the intention to leave the position, only one participant mentioned the pandemic making him "question it" (P1: Mahfouz, 2020). Two participants spoke of looking at Central Office positions, but specifically mentioned that the pandemic "didn't encourage me to look at moving up, I will deal with the same issues" (P5) and "it is more about opportunity vs. the pandemic" (P9).

Aside from the pandemic, all participants were quick to note the substantial amount of time spent working outside of the school day and supervising activities (Barthauer et al., 2020; Kafele, 2021; Reid & Creed, 2021). Backed by the literature review and interview data, the COVID-19 pandemic was a rough road, a detour of sorts, and schools have worked to get back on track. The pandemic created more work, however, principals only have so many hours in the day, thus some responsibilities were shelved (Superville, 2021). Principals could not do it all. As education has started to get back to "normal" (P9), the pandemic responsibilities and demands have begun to subside and focus is shifting once again. While the focus will shift and "normal" may return, the negative effects of long work hours and career demands of the principal position continue (Greenberg et al., 2019; "How Principals," 2021). Many participants spoke of the challenges and stress long work hours created. The researcher believes the overall challenges and stress of the principal position are to blame more so than the pandemic for principal mobility. This thought process falls in line and ties back to the research outlining principal stress and imbalance between career demands and resources available

(Horwood et al., 2021; Klocko & Justis, 2019; Okilwa & Barnett, 2021; Turk & Wolfe, 2019).

Professional Implications

School leaders show flexibility and adapt to ever-changing responsibilities, while simultaneously providing compassion, realistic, and timely support for others, not just for the immediate future, but while advancing through crisis (Stasel, 2020). Each year, public high school principals across our nation encounter challenges and navigate complications making the job complex and difficult to manage (Kafele, 2021; Reid & Creed, 2021). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly half of all principals left their jobs within 3 years, contributing to a crisis of principal shortages (Apostol & Austin, 2020; Superville, 2019). Reporting high levels of stress, qualified principals are in short supply and the demand often results in adverse health conditions. Understanding the common themes encountered by public high school principals amid the pandemic could benefit administrators and school districts alike, and guide state and national organizations supporting high school principals.

While principals spoke of the challenges faced amid the pandemic with increased responsibilities, public high school principals represent a population of individuals who are energized and passionate about their work. This idea was supported by research and highlighted in this study. Overall, when considering mobility intentions during the pandemic, nearly half the principals considering leaving their schools or position is significant. Research indicated that high school principals are less likely than other building-level principals to stay at their schools for extended periods of time (Toner, 2019). For schools to prosper, efforts must be made to maintain principals' passion and

drive, and as a result, retain effective principals (Horwood et al., 2021). Understanding reasons a principal might leave their position is key. Participants specifically mentioned leaving the position due to opportunity versus the pandemic.

On one end of the spectrum, one participant would not attribute “anything” to the pandemic (P5) when asked about experiences contributing to satisfaction in the position. This particular participant’s answer stuck out. While P5 had been serving in the role for only 3 years, all since 2019, he fit the 42% national average, more so than any other participant, of principals leaving their position. Participants 5, 7, and 9 had not had the opportunity to serve 1 year in the high school principal role without dealing with some aspect of the pandemic. If the years prior to the pandemic were more “normal,” they had not experienced “normal.” However, coupled with the context of Participant 5’s situation—the conservative nature of the community he served, the isolating nature of his small school administration network, the needs of his family while working long hours carrying out the high school principal position—personal reasons rather than pandemic reasons seem to be the contributing factors for dissatisfaction and mobility. While other participants spoke to the challenge of working long hours, P5 spoke specifically to his community challenges and administration support. Ironically, P5 recently accepted a superintendent position at a small neighboring school, ending his 3-year high school principal tenure. Participant 5 spoke directly to the reasons for his departure, specifically stating,

The pandemic encouraged me to look at moving up, hard to have to deal with policies I didn't make.....working in a public school district, not any different for principal or superintendent... COVID didn't encourage me to look at moving out

and up....will deal with same issues.

Backed by research, interview participants spoke of a “skewed” (P3) work-life balance as a contributing factor affecting career satisfaction and mobility intentions. Principals must focus on improving work-life balance and disengage from the job. Though participants were not specifically asked about health issues, research shows an inability to manage a healthy work-life balance results in health issues attributed to stress (Saraih et al., 2019). While the work of the principal has routinely involved a substantial investment of time, it has evolved into practices leading principals to work long hours, well beyond the average work week (Reid & Creed, 2021). Every participant mentioned spending a telling number of hours working outside of the school day completing work. According to P7, a principal “must be willing to work late, answer email from 8-10 p.m. - no way to do the job without doing that. However, you must know when to say when and put down your phone....”. Participant 5 candidly stated, “high school principal is the worst administration job because of time commitment with supervision...” When asked for reasons, other than monetary, that might discourage a principal from remaining in the position of high school principal, responses included these: “Extra-curricular supervision and extra duty hours” (P2), “Pace....and all the activities and supervision” (P6), “Time commitment discourages an individual from staying in position” (P8). Leading the way in the “daunting” (P8) position, seven of the nine participants (P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9) spoke directly about the need to balance responsibilities of the high school principal position. Specifically, participants spoke to either setting boundaries or creating a work-life balance. Participant 3 explained her method: “Don't communicate on email after 5:00, model balance..... put up barriers, say no....watch that balance of home

and work, be really intentional about it.” Participant 9 stated, “I try to be present when I'm home, not giving up personal time when an email comes in, being present in the moments.” Two participants (P2, P4) openly admitted to not having that balance, not doing it well, especially amid the pandemic. If the role of the principal continues to evolve into the expectation and time-allocation of well over the average work week, principals’ job satisfaction may be influenced, resulting in principals leaving the position having a negative impact on school stability, teacher satisfaction, and student outcomes. Thus, school districts must work to support the role of the principal, make their work sustainable, and retain effective administrators rather than losing them to other schools, positions, or professions. This can be done by developing strategic plans to address high school principals’ present needs and the imbalance between career demands and resources available. As found in the literature review, principals do not remain in their position for an extended period due to more time with family, frustration with barriers, burnout, and increasing job demands (Mahfouz, 2020). Also echoed in the researcher’s literature review findings, by retaining current principals, less turnover and consistent school leadership would strengthen academics and promote stability within school systems (NASSP, n.d.; Reid & Creed, 2021).

Backed by research, interview participants spoke of uncertainty as to the future of public education affecting career satisfaction and mobility intentions. Principals are concerned about the future of education for a variety of reasons, but in this study, topics discussed by multiple participants specifically included political distrust and student academic concerns. Principals often leave the position due to chaotic and inconsistency surging from a harmful political environment, societal tensions, fragmented

communities, and one extraordinary event after another dealing with frustrated parents and community members who blame principals for continuous and unpopular changes (NASSP, n.d.). Participant 5 explained his concern and “uncertainty on what the future of public education looks like, with the lack of teachers, and ability to fill teaching positions.” Along those same lines, P3 was “Worried about the future of education, number of people leaving, inability to fill roles, we have to become more politically active.” When considering instances during the pandemic in which the role as a high school principal has been not so positive, maybe even considered negative, P9 directly stated, “The political element was polarizing, COVID exasperated the lack of certified applicants, filling positions has been difficult, we have three critical shortage staff members.” As found in the literature review, teachers are the greatest factor associated with student achievement in schools (Levin et al., 2020; Snodgrass Rangel, 2017). Teacher shortages can result in serious consequences impacting and disrupting school progress and student achievement. Supporting the professional learning environment can be accomplished by providing teachers with the necessary tools, training, and ongoing professional development to be successful in the classroom. Additionally, a teacher’s social and emotional health must be prioritized by understanding the needs and providing for those needs, including but not limited to, counseling options and support. This ties into what was found in the literature review concerning the need to provide social-emotional and psychological support while building professional school environments ensuring staff have the necessary resources to thrive (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; Superville, 2021). Participant 4 mentioned wading through the “political minutia” several times. When answering the question, P2 simply stated, “negative human interactions.”

Three of the nine participants (P5, P8, P9) all mentioned “dealing with parents” as not so positive, while P7 explained instances as “extremely difficult, especially in tough situations with the media and the community.” While dealing with community and parent concerns and complaints is nothing new and has always been an issue, an increased number of conversations with frustrated parents have become evident. Along those lines, P7 discussed academic concerns: “...big battle graduation rate and credit acquisition, pressure with graduation rate and getting students to the finish line is going to be more difficult in the next 2-3 years.” As research showed, with the use of technology and online learning, a gap was filled during pandemic isolation, but long-term learning with successful outcomes has fallen short (Greenleaf, 2020). Most schools reopened in the fall of 2020 and teachers and students returned to the same buildings, however, nothing was the same. The CDC and DESE together provided K-12 guidance concerning mitigation measures, attendance policies, contact-tracing, and quarantine requirements resulting in increased student absences. Catching students up on their work from pandemic related absences was a challenge. Resources were limited and solutions were scarce, principals were carrying the brunt of the load.

The last question answered by participants in this study was, Are there any other thoughts you would like to share? as part of the interview protocol (see Appendix D). While only 5 of the 9 participants chose to answer, the answers were insightful, especially when considering real-world applications to the study findings. Participant 3 detailed her concern for the future of education. Participant 2’s thoughts were, “It gets easier, things become super automatic.” In terms of support, P6 stressed, “Your family needs to be on board with you and what you're doing, it becomes a lifestyle.” Participant

8's theme encompassed gratitude: "Be grateful and thankful for teachers, secretaries, assistant principal's.... start the gratitude thing, change perspective and attitude, that, you can control." Participant 9 spoke sincerely:

...been a hard couple years in education, people sticking with it are in it for the right reasons --to influence kids and have an impact on students. I think we're getting closer to normal and excited for the future.

Reflections and advice carry distinct differences, but the overall theme involved encouragement: encouragement providing support and encouragement finding a work-life balance. Real-world practical application of the findings encompasses the need for encouragement and support to withstand the struggles of the public high school principal position. Passion accompanies a school leader, a calling, a passion not taught in a class (Sugrue, 2005). Participant 7 also spoke of "a calling" about faith in carrying out the work of a high school principal. Support is needed and must be provided and reinforced for school principals to cultivate and sustain passion. One approach to provide the necessary support for high school principals is for districts to initiate principal support networks. Districts need to provide a safe space for principals to air their frustrations, share job-related challenges, and problem-solve concerns. With a network in place, during challenging situations, principals could have a structure to help provide the support needed from colleagues. Some, not all, principals naturally form a support group on their own. Initiating the network for principals could allow principals who would not naturally form the group to have built in peer support. Social aspects are a crucial piece of the support framework given the isolating nature of the principal position (S. S. Sutton & Gong, 2021). Finally, the last real-world practical application of the findings

encompassed the need for encouragement in finding a work-life balance. Districts must take a proactive approach to realigning support to address high school principals' present needs outside the traditional workday, specifically considering supervision of activities. Reasonable expectations would not have principals supervising three to four nights a week. Instead, supervision one or two nights a week coupled with all the other responsibilities of the principal would suffice. School districts taking a proactive approach to paying other nonadministrators to help supervise activities is a solution where everyone benefits. Additional supervisors would allow principals to go home to their families frequently during the week and nonadministrators to make a little extra cash. Taking a proactive approach to encourage a work-life balance indirectly supports the needs of principals.

Recommendations for Future Research

As the study was designed, the researcher intended to develop a study exploring career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals after 3 or more years in the profession who served during the COVID-19 pandemic. A gap in literature revealed a need to research principals' occupational stressors, perspectives of the effect of stress on their professional and personal lives, and the coping skills used to deal with that stress, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Record & Couturier, 2020). Finding relevant data and investigating lived experiences and perspectives of Missouri public high school principals helped fill the gap by developing themes and patterns related to career satisfaction and mobility intentions. The overall themes developed were more related to personal reasons rather than those related to the pandemic itself while noting the importance of support and encouragement to sustain

one's passion in the position. These themes and patterns helped fill the gap, but also revealed additional opportunities for future research.

The most basic and first step in understanding an issue or topic is to duplicate the existing study (Aravena, 2020). Additional research could be completed to explore career satisfaction and mobility intentions after 3 or more years in the profession serving during the pandemic differentiating between high school principals serving in rural, urban, and suburban areas. Results of a replicated study would vary with different school environments and number of years removed from the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional groupings could involve school districts categorized by student population as well as delineating factors, such as race or gender. Finally, while this study focused on high school principals in the state of Missouri, investigating career satisfaction and mobility intentions of principals from other states could assist the researcher in identifying changes in themes or patterns within the study.

Another area for future research involves a quantitative research study. While the qualitative narrative design allowed the researcher to obtain data and address questions understanding the lives of participants, capturing points of view, and gaining a deep understanding of a few select individuals, a quantitative research method could help determine factors attributing to principals' career satisfaction and mobility intentions. Doing so could provide relevant information and data through statistics and numbers. By carrying out a quantitative study, future researchers could potentially determine further trends to identify any changes in themes or patterns that may exist.

Specific to a high school principal's role and because of the work-life balance theme that developed with the current study, future studies could focus on what principals

do and/or activities carried out outside of the traditional workday or work hours and how that influences burnout and turnover. By comparing and contrasting how much supervision is carried out on average and determining the subsequent tenure of the principal, future researchers could potentially determine trends to strengthen the base knowledge related to high school principal retention.

Conclusions

This qualitative narrative study attempted to fill the gap in literature where, according to Engel (2020), a lack of systematic research investigating career satisfaction of public school principals across the nation exists. Specifically, the study was designed to understand how Missouri public high school principals described their career satisfaction and mobility intentions amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory provided a framework for how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted and influenced high school principals' career decisions. Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory provided a framework for understanding motivation factors and how the factors contributed to principals' career satisfaction. The researcher set out to understand the lived experiences of nine Missouri public high school principals as they led their schools and managed the pandemic challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic added another set of challenges to an already difficult school leadership role. Principals indicated an overwhelming burden this pandemic caused professionally and personally, as it required principals to deal with issues for which they had not been trained and with which they had no experience.

Experiences gained by public high school principals amid the COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented levels of stress, anxiety, and workload. Though

participants were not specifically asked about having an assistant principal, one might believe that the presence of an assistant might alleviate some stress and anxiety due to sharing the duties. This, however, did not seem to be the case, as out of all participants interviewed, the principal who appeared to be the most stressed was one who mentioned having several assistant principals. Instead, research showed principals were stressed from constant change, dealing with situations over which they had little control (Mahfouz, 2020). Together, the CDC and DESE provided K-12 schools with operating guidance regarding educational changes amid the pandemic along with local policy and procedure changes across the state. The pandemic placed a significant burden on high school principals and the overall K-12 education system (Grooms & Childs, 2021). In addition to the pandemic crisis, our society was amidst complex times that directly affected school leadership including natural disasters, school shootings, social unrest, and serious economic recessions (Reyes-Guerra et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic created a disturbance in the lives of all humanity (Kafa, 2021; Ujifusa, 2021). Safeguard measures were taken to slow the spread, such as partial or complete lockdowns, curfews, and social distancing guidelines (Okilwa & Barnett, 2021; Superville, 2020). In addition to dealing with pandemic stress at school, Americans were dealing with their own stresses at home related to lockdowns, illness, isolation, and limited resources for childcare, and so forth. School leaders have faced unprecedented political and social issues because of the crisis.

An analysis of the data discovered themes that corresponded with the review of literature. Concerning satisfactory experiences, themes discovered included the following: (a) change, (b) collaboration, (c) connection, (d) helping and learning, (e)

problem-solving, and (f) students overcoming challenges. Concerning unsatisfactory experiences, themes discovered included these: (a) pandemic-related guidelines and challenges, student academic concerns, and staffing struggles; (b) community turmoil; and (c) work-life balance. Concerning mobility intentions, themes discovered included: (a) passion and commitment, (b) connections, (c) managing people, (d) workload, and (e) support. Specific to Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory, the pandemic created struggles for participants in relation to interpersonal relationships and role definition. However, through the lens of Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and subsequent factors of self-efficacy and career decision-making, the results of this study suggest Missouri public high school principals were overall energized and/or indifferent to the added stress and strain of the pandemic. Public high school principals appeared to represent a population of individuals who are resilient, and seem to understand and accept the roles of the position. All participants spoke to the enjoyment of their career as a high school principal and were focused on meeting the challenges faced directly. Specifically, all participants addressed the need to accept and enjoy the roles and responsibilities of the position with a constant and consistent commitment to doing what is best for students, while learning to anticipate the future.

Two overall themes developed from an analysis of the transcripts in relation to the literature review. Overall, in terms of career satisfaction, participants were energized and/or indifferent to the added stress and strain of the pandemic, and in terms of mobility intentions, reasons were more related to personal reasons rather than those related to the pandemic itself. All participants spoke to the difficulty in the position, yet stated the vital role confidence played in solving problems and overcoming challenges. Additionally,

participants were quick to note the importance of support and encouragement to cultivate and sustain one's passion. Sugrue (2004) and P7 said it best: School leadership, the work of a high school principal is a calling, a passion not taught in a class full of concepts and principles. Understanding principals' stories helps recognize the ambitions that drive and sustain the purpose beyond the complex day-to-day, month-to-month interactions between teachers, students, and parents. "The passion of the leader refers both to the idealized dream that grounds the leader, as well as to the suffering and sacrifice that the pursuit of the dream over time entails" (Sugrue, 2005, p. 12).

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Figure A1

Professional Standards for Education

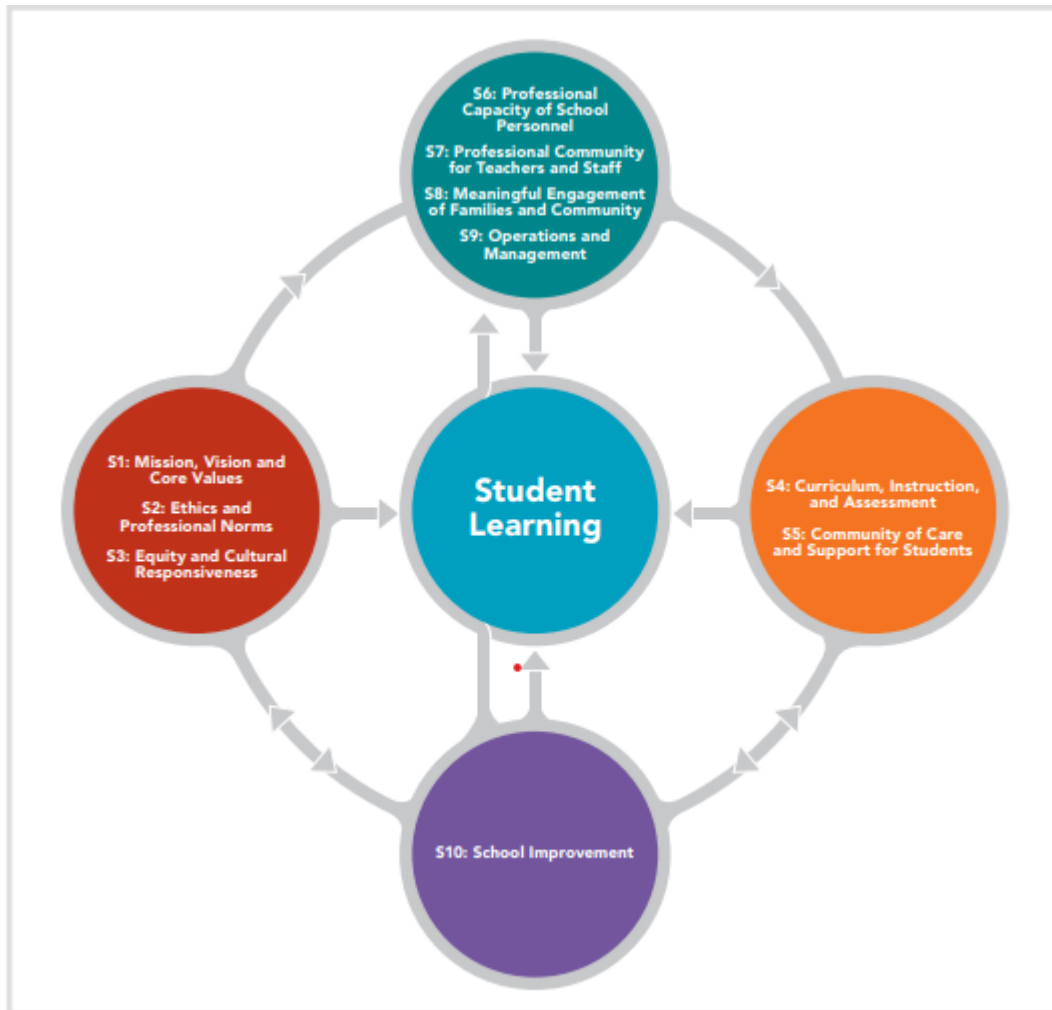


Figure 1: Relationship of School Leadership Work to Student Learning

Note. National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015 (http://www.npbea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Professional-Standards-for-Educational-Leaders_2015.pdf).

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015

STANDARD 1. MISSION, VISION, AND CORE VALUES

Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.

Effective leaders:

- a) Develop an educational mission for the school to promote the academic success and well-being of each student.
- b) In collaboration with members of the school and the community and using relevant data, develop and promote a vision for the school on the successful learning and development of each child and on instructional and organizational practices that promote such success.
- c) Articulate, advocate, and cultivate core values that define the school's culture and stress the imperative of child-centered education; high expectations and student support; equity, inclusiveness, and social justice; openness, caring, and trust; and continuous improvement.
- d) Strategically develop, implement, and evaluate actions to achieve the vision for the school.
- e) Review the school's mission and vision and adjust them to changing expectations and opportunities for the school, and changing needs and situations of students.
- f) Develop shared understanding of and commitment to mission, vision, and core values within the school and the community.
- g) Model and pursue the school's mission, vision, and core values in all aspects of leadership.

STANDARD 2. ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL NORMS

Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

- a) Act ethically and professionally in personal conduct, relationships with others, decision-making, stewardship of the school's resources, and all aspects of school leadership.
- b) Act according to and promote the professional norms of integrity, fairness, transparency, trust, collaboration, perseverance, learning, and continuous improvement.
- c) Place children at the center of education and accept responsibility for each student's academic success and well-being.
- d) Safeguard and promote the values of democracy, individual freedom and responsibility, equity, social justice, community, and diversity.
- e) Lead with interpersonal and communication skill, social-emotional insight, and understanding of all students' and staff members' backgrounds and cultures.
- f) Provide moral direction for the school and promote ethical and professional behavior among faculty and staff.

STANDARD 3. EQUITY AND CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

- a) Ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of each student’s culture and context.
- b) Recognize, respect, and employ each student’s strengths, diversity, and culture as assets for teaching and learning.
- c) Ensure that each student has equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for success.
- d) Develop student policies and address student misconduct in a positive, fair, and unbiased manner.
- e) Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status.
- f) Promote the preparation of students to live productively in and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts of a global society.
- g) Act with cultural competence and responsiveness in their interactions, decision making, and practice.
- h) Address matters of equity and cultural responsiveness in all aspects of leadership.

STANDARD 4. CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT

Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

- a) Implement coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that promote the mission, vision, and core values of the school, embody high expectations for student learning, align with academic standards, and are culturally responsive.
- b) Align and focus systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment within and across grade levels to promote student academic success, love of learning, the identities and habits of learners, and healthy sense of self.
- c) Promote instructional practice that is consistent with knowledge of child learning and development, effective pedagogy, and the needs of each student.
- d) Ensure instructional practice that is intellectually challenging, authentic to student experiences, recognizes student strengths, and is differentiated and personalized.
- e) Promote the effective use of technology in the service of teaching and learning.
- f) Employ valid assessments that are consistent with knowledge of child learning and development and technical standards of measurement.
- g) Use assessment data appropriately and within technical limitations to monitor student progress and improve instruction.

STANDARD 5. COMMUNITY OF CARE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.

Effective leaders:

- a) Build and maintain a safe, caring, and healthy school environment that meets that the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of each student.
- b) Create and sustain a school environment in which each student is known, accepted and valued, trusted and respected, cared for, and encouraged to be an active and responsible member of the school community.
- c) Provide coherent systems of academic and social supports, services, extracurricular activities, and accommodations to meet the range of learning needs of each student.
- d) Promote adult-student, student-peer, and school-community relationships that value and support academic learning and positive social and emotional development.
- e) Cultivate and reinforce student engagement in school and positive student conduct.
- f) Infuse the school's learning environment with the cultures and languages of the school's community.

STANDARD 6. PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

- a) Recruit, hire, support, develop, and retain effective and caring teachers and other professional staff and form them into an educationally effective faculty.
- b) Plan for and manage staff turnover and succession, providing opportunities for effective induction and mentoring of new personnel.
- c) Develop teachers' and staff members' professional knowledge, skills, and practice through differentiated opportunities for learning and growth, guided by understanding of professional and adult learning and development.
- d) Foster continuous improvement of individual and collective instructional capacity to achieve outcomes envisioned for each student.
- e) Deliver actionable feedback about instruction and other professional practice through valid, research-anchored systems of supervision and evaluation to support the development of teachers' and staff members' knowledge, skills, and practice.
- f) Empower and motivate teachers and staff to the highest levels of professional practice and to continuous learning and improvement.
- g) Develop the capacity, opportunities, and support for teacher leadership and leadership from other members of the school community.
- h) Promote the personal and professional health, well-being, and work-life balance of faculty and staff.
- i) Tend to their own learning and effectiveness through reflection, study, and improvement, maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

STANDARD 7. PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF

Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

- a) Develop workplace conditions for teachers and other professional staff that promote effective professional development, practice, and student learning.
- b) Empower and entrust teachers and staff with collective responsibility for meeting the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of each student, pursuant to the mission, vision, and core values of the school.
- c) Establish and sustain a professional culture of engagement and commitment to shared vision, goals, and objectives pertaining to the education of the whole child; high expectations for professional work; ethical and equitable practice; trust and open communication; collaboration, collective efficacy, and continuous individual and organizational learning and improvement.
- d) Promote mutual accountability among teachers and other professional staff for each student's success and the effectiveness of the school as a whole.
- e) Develop and support open, productive, caring, and trusting working relationships among leaders, faculty, and staff to promote professional capacity and the improvement of practice.
- f) Design and implement job-embedded and other opportunities for professional learning collaboratively with faculty and staff.
- g) Provide opportunities for collaborative examination of practice, collegial feedback, and collective learning.
- h) Encourage faculty-initiated improvement of programs and practices.

STANDARD 8. MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT OF FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY

Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

- a) Are approachable, accessible, and welcoming to families and members of the community.
- b) Create and sustain positive, collaborative, and productive relationships with families and the community for the benefit of students.
- c) Engage in regular and open two-way communication with families and the community about the school, students, needs, problems, and accomplishments.
- d) Maintain a presence in the community to understand its strengths and needs, develop productive relationships, and engage its resources for the school.
- e) Create means for the school community to partner with families to support student learning in and out of school.
- f) Understand, value, and employ the community’s cultural, social, intellectual, and political resources to promote student learning and school improvement.
- g) Develop and provide the school as a resource for families and the community.
- h) Advocate for the school and district, and for the importance of education and student needs and priorities to families and the community.
- i) Advocate publicly for the needs and priorities of students, families, and the community.
- j) Build and sustain productive partnerships with public and private sectors to promote school improvement and student learning.

STANDARD 9. OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

- a) Institute, manage, and monitor operations and administrative systems that promote the mission and vision of the school.
- b) Strategically manage staff resources, assigning and scheduling teachers and staff to roles and responsibilities that optimize their professional capacity to address each student's learning needs.
- c) Seek, acquire, and manage fiscal, physical, and other resources to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment; student learning community; professional capacity and community; and family and community engagement.
- d) Are responsible, ethical, and accountable stewards of the school's monetary and non-monetary resources, engaging in effective budgeting and accounting practices.
- e) Protect teachers' and other staff members' work and learning from disruption.
- f) Employ technology to improve the quality and efficiency of operations and management.
- g) Develop and maintain data and communication systems to deliver actionable information for classroom and school improvement.
- h) Know, comply with, and help the school community understand local, state, and federal laws, rights, policies, and regulations so as to promote student success.
- i) Develop and manage relationships with feeder and connecting schools for enrollment management and curricular and instructional articulation.
- j) Develop and manage productive relationships with the central office and school board.
- k) Develop and administer systems for fair and equitable management of conflict among students, faculty and staff, leaders, families, and community.
- l) Manage governance processes and internal and external politics toward achieving the school's mission and vision.

STANDARD 10. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

- a) Seek to make school more effective for each student, teachers and staff, families, and the community.
- b) Use methods of continuous improvement to achieve the vision, fulfill the mission, and promote the core values of the school.
- c) Prepare the school and the community for improvement, promoting readiness, an imperative for improvement, instilling mutual commitment and accountability, and developing the knowledge, skills, and motivation to succeed in improvement.
- d) Engage others in an ongoing process of evidence-based inquiry, learning, strategic goal setting, planning, implementation, and evaluation for continuous school and classroom improvement.
- e) Employ situationally-appropriate strategies for improvement, including transformational and incremental, adaptive approaches and attention to different phases of implementation.
- f) Assess and develop the capacity of staff to assess the value and applicability of emerging educational trends and the findings of research for the school and its improvement.
- g) Develop technically appropriate systems of data collection, management, analysis, and use, connecting as needed to the district office and external partners for support in planning, implementation, monitoring, feedback, and evaluation.
- h) Adopt a systems perspective and promote coherence among improvement efforts and all aspects of school organization, programs, and services.
- i) Manage uncertainty, risk, competing initiatives, and politics of change with courage and perseverance, providing support and encouragement, and openly communicating the need for, process for, and outcomes of improvement efforts.
- j) Develop and promote leadership among teachers and staff for inquiry, experimentation and innovation, and initiating and implementing improvement.

Appendix B

RRB Approval



Southwest Baptist
UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS
4431 S. Fremont
Springfield, Missouri 65804
(417) 820-2069 | FAX (417) 887-4847

May 17, 2022

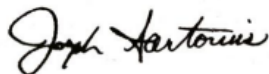
Re: CAREER SATISFACTION AND MOBILITY INTENTIONS OF MISSOURI
PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AMID THE WAKE OF COVID-19

Dear Ms. Angela Holman,

On May 17, 2022 a review of your application and supporting documents for the above named research proposal was completed. The Research Review Board (RRB) for Southwest Baptist University has determined that the proposed research project meets the criteria for Exempt status as per policy 1.15.3 (A.1) in the faculty guidelines. As per the above policy "If the project is certified exempt, the principle investigator need not resubmit the project for continuing RRB review as long as there are no modifications in the exempted procedures". The study has now been approved, therefore, work on the project may begin. If any modifications to the exempted procedures are made, the RRB will need to complete a new review of the changes to determine if the project remains Exempt or if further review is necessary.

Congratulations on the approval of your project, we wish you well during its completion.

Sincerely,



Appendix C

Consent Form

Will be in a Google Form that will be linked to the email.

The advisor for this dissertation project is Dr. Tammy Condren, Professor of Education and Ed.D. Director at Southwest Baptist University. My study has been approved by the Research Review Board of Southwest Baptist University.

The purpose of this study was to explore career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals after three or more years in the profession who served during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Potential Benefits and Foreseeable Risks: Findings of this project will be integrated into reports, presentations, and publications that can add to the research base related to Missouri public high school principals' lived experiences amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings may also be used in articles, presentations, and other publications to inform a national and international audience. Potential risk associated with participation in the study is loss of privacy should confidentiality of responses be compromised. The researcher has taken steps listed below to protect participants' identities in order to protect individuals from embarrassment that may be associated with the identities of respondents with their responses.

Confidentiality: All information associated with project participants will be kept in a locked office accessible only to the researcher. In accordance with the federal regulations, the research materials will be kept for a period of 7 years after the completion of the research project. No comments will be attributed to you by name in any reports or publications related to this study. You may be identified by category (e.g., school leader), but a pseudonym will be used in place of your name in all reports. Neither the school nor the school district will be identified in any reports or publications related to this study.

Participation is Voluntary: Your voluntary participation in the interview is appreciated, and your responses will be kept anonymous. You may decline to answer any questions or discontinue participation in the study at any time without any negative consequences. If you choose to withdraw from the project, all interview data pertaining to you will be destroyed. Refusal to participate or discontinue participation at any time will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Interview Method: To provide flexibility and honor your time, the interview will be carried out at the participant's convenience through ZOOM, telephone, or face-to-face methods. If you do not prefer a specific product, the interview will be completed by a Zoom meeting that will be scheduled with you.

Request for the interview to be recorded will take place on the day of the meeting, which can help the researcher provide accurate transcripts of the participant's answers. You have the right to request the interview not be recorded, and the recording and/or interview be stopped at any time. Recordings and

transcripts will be destroyed 7 years following the completion of this study.

Informed Consent and Choice of Interview Method: Your input is very valuable, and your participation will be greatly appreciated. Please indicate your willingness and consent to participate in the study by digitally submitting approval at the bottom of this Informed Consent form. By providing your digital signature, you are consenting to allow use of your interview responses in this study. You will also share your initial consent for the interview to be recorded for the researcher's accurate transcription process.

Questions: If you have any questions regarding the research project, please do not hesitate to contact me or my research advisor. I can be reached at holmana@carthagetigers.org or (417) 359-6151. Dr. Tammy Condren can be reached at tcondren@sbuniv.edu or (417) 328-1737. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Southwest Baptist University Research Review Board.

Sincerely,

Angela Holman

Ed.D. Student, Southwest Baptist University

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Introductory

Date of Interview:

Time of Interview:

Location of interview:

Interviewee:

I'd like to thank you for being willing to participate in the interview today. My name is Angela Holman and I am working toward completing my doctoral degree in educational leadership from Southwest Baptist University. This research has been reviewed by the SBU Research Board. Our interview today will last approximately 30 - 45 minutes during which I will be asking you a variety of questions in hopes to gain additional insight.

Informed Consent:

Participation in this interview process is completely voluntary. You may end this interview at any time. The consent form for this interview was emailed to you, which you digitally signed and returned to me so, first, I would like to thank you for that. I would like to also make sure you understand I will not be using your name in my dissertation and your information will be kept strictly confidential. I will be recording and transcribing this interview for research purposes and will provide the entire transcript to you for your review.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study was to explore career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals after three or more years in the profession who served during the COVID-19 pandemic. I'd like to know your personal feelings and thoughts related to your lived experiences with serving in the high school principal position during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like your permission to record this interview. Please note, no names or titles will be used in our report and all individuals will be referred to as participants. Do we have your permission to record this interview? ___Yes ___No

If yes: Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record. If no: Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions] If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this interview, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

Interview Questions

Demographic Questions:

**Note gender on interview transcript*

- a. What certifications do you currently hold?
- b. How many years have you been an educator?
 1. Probe: What positions have you held?
 2. Probe: How long have you held the position(s)?
- c. How many years have you been in the role of high school principal?
- d. What RPDC region do you currently serve?

Research Questions (RQ):

This research is seeking to understand your real life experiences leading during COVID-19 - how that has influenced you as a leader, your job satisfaction and mobility, and how it has possibly changed aspects of your role?

1. Tell me about your career path and why you wanted to become a high school principal.
2. What did you think being a principal would entail?
3. What was the position of high school principal actually like?
4. How has the pandemic affected your career satisfaction, both positively and negatively?
 - a. Can you share with me some instances during the pandemic in which your role as a high school principal has been positive?
 - b. On the opposite end of the spectrum, can you share some instances during the pandemic in which your role as a high school principal has been not so positive, maybe even considered negative?

How did Missouri public high school principals' role during the pandemic contribute to or detract from career satisfaction? (RQ – 1b)

1. What experiences amid the pandemic have contributed to satisfaction in your position?
2. What experiences amid the pandemic have possibly caused some dissatisfaction in your position?
3. What role do you believe career responsibilities play in one's career satisfaction?

4. From your perspective, what role does self-confidence play in one's career satisfaction?

What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals amid the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic? (RQ -2)

1. Can you tell me about some of the reasons, other than monetary, that encourage you to remain in the position of high school principal?
2. What are some of the reasons, other than monetary, that might discourage you from remaining in the position of high school principal?
3. From your perspective, how has the COVID -19 pandemic affected your intention to remain or leave the position of high school principal?

A. What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals in relation to workplace conditions? (RQ-2a)

1. Describe for me your role and responsibilities as a high school principal.
2. From your perspective, do career responsibilities play a role in future career decisions? Please explain.
3. How do you balance responsibilities as a high school principal?

B. What are the mobility intentions of Missouri public high school principals in relation to emotional aspects of work? (RQ- 2b)

1. Talk to me about your personal and professional support systems.
2. What do you believe contributes to a public high school principal's future career intentions?
3. How did you balance work and family/home?
4. From your perspective, does self-confidence play a role in one's future career? Please explain.
5. What advice do you have for other high school principals regarding personal and professional support systems?
6. Are there any other thoughts you would like to share?

Concluding the Interview

Thank you, again, for agreeing to participate in this study. Again, I will be transcribing your responses and will email you the transcript when it is complete. If you read through the transcript and would like to add to or clarify any of your answers, you may contact me by email at holmana@carthagetigers.org. Also, I'm happy to offer the results of the study, if interested. If you have any questions or concerns about the study in general, please don't hesitate to contact me as well. Thank you again and I'm very grateful you have shared your experiences with me today!

Appendix E

Email Communication

Good Evening, _____ (participant),

I am a doctoral student currently enrolled and completing my final requirements for the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership at Southwest Baptist University. I am currently working on my dissertation entitled “Career Satisfaction and Mobility Intentions of Missouri Public High School Principals Amid the Wake of COVID-19.” The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of high school principals after 3 or more years in the profession who served during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At this time, my research proposal is complete, and I have received RRB approval to conduct research from Southwest Baptist University. I have been an educator for 22 years and have taken precautions to avoid any potential biases. I am seeking your permission to interview you for approximately 30-45 minutes about your experiences as a high school principal who has served during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your interview will be used, along with eight other school leaders from Missouri public schools’ individual interviews, to determine career satisfaction and mobility intentions of high school principals in Missouri during the COVID-19 pandemic. The nine principals that participate will represent the nine DESE RPDCs, to represent all regions of Missouri. All information will be kept confidential and no individual principal or school will be identifiable.

If you are willing to be part of this study, will you please fill out the following Informed Consent Link and confirm with a return email.

Attached to this email are the interview questions that will seek to help you share your lived experience.

If you have any questions or concerns and would like to further discuss this study, I would be happy to do so. Thank you in advance for considering participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Angela Holman
Ed.D. Student, Southwest Baptist University
Cell Phone: (417) 359-6151
Email: holmana@carthagetigers.org

Reminder Email

This email script will be sent to interview participants who chose the interview method of digital call two days before the scheduled interview.

Greetings! I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to remind you about our interview we have scheduled for _____ (date) at _____ (time). Your responses to the interview questions will be used as data to support my doctoral research study regarding career satisfaction and mobility intentions of Missouri high school principals amid the wake of COVID-19.

The questions we will discuss are:

[insert questions from Appendix D]

Please let me know if you have any questions that I can answer before we meet.

Please use this link [link provided] to access our meeting at the designated time.

Thank you for participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Angela Holman

Ed.D. Student, Southwest Baptist University