JOB EXPECTANCY, BURNOUT, AND DEPARTURE:

PREDICTORS OF HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL TURNOVER

by

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JOB EMBEDDEDNESS, BURNOUT, AND DEPARTURE:

DISRUPTING HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL TURNOVER

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ABSTRACT

TARA CLAYTON ROSS

JOB EXPECTANCY, BURNOUT, AND DEPARTURE: PREDICTORS OF HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL TURNOVER

Under the direction of OLIVIA M. BOGGS, Ph.D.

Among the many new educational challenges resulting from COVID-19 and existing learning deficits of students in underserved communities, districts and policymakers must address the school disruption caused by constant principal turnover. Extensive empirical studies on principal turnover continually show that transiting leaders impact staff and students at similar rates each year, further widening the gaps in performance for select subgroups of students and the careers of these leaders. The purpose of this study was to examine the causes of principal turnover in relation to those who stay and leave public education after one and three years with a focus on high school principals from a large metropolitan district in a southwestern region of the United States. The researcher aggregated district and school-level certified personnel data of 339 from approximately 2000 school principals through 2017-2020. The data were compiled into two categories: (a) staying on or leaving the job after one year and (b) staying on the job or leaving after three years. Using binomial logistic regression design, the researcher determined the extent that principals leave their schools based on individual and collective influences in the profession. The construct of job embeddedness was used to define the voluntary principal turnover behaviors for multiple years. The analysis showed a decrease in the principals who stayed at the same school from one to three years, with key variables such as the principal's age, gender, and subordinate leaders predicting their intent to remain with the institution.

The impact takes three to five years to improve the school or return student performance to a certain level. Furthering students' educational path requires the district and school leaders to develop systematic and supportive processes to decrease principal turnover rate, particularly with minority student populations and inexperienced school leaders. Preventing and predicting involuntary principal turnover is necessary to increase and sustain the achievement and school climates conducive for favorable working and learning conditions. Recommendations included systematic efforts for national, state, and district retention initiatives, ongoing professional development on school improvement cycles, coaching for principals beyond their first two years, and greater autonomy at the school level.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Elementary and secondary principals are critical to school effectiveness, student academic success, and the public trust (Agasisti et al., 2020; DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Principal leadership is a vital factor with an indirect, yet positive influence on student performance across various learning modalities and the school at large (Dhuey & Smith, 2018; Gurr et al., 2020; Liang & Slotnik, 2020). The multitude of issues confronting public education, including expanding accountability requirements, rapidly growing diversity, staffing challenges, and most recently, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, requires dedicated leadership with the capacity to mitigate these and other concerns (Harris, 2020; Masonbrink & Hurley, 2020). The study explores the alarming and increasing principal turnover rate in public schools in the United States by identifying factors that disrupt job fidelity and commitment, resulting in sustained disruption to these institutions (Pendola & Fuller, 2020; Rangel, 2018; Yan, 2019).

Problem Statement

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), the national principal turnover rate in 2016-17 was 18% and 21% in schools with high-poverty student populations. Further, in 2017, 35% of principals left their school before serving two years (Taie & Goldring, 2019). Principal turnover studies of elementary and secondary principals indicate that the variability in methodologies and definitions (Davis & Anderson, 2021; Rangel, 2018), dissatisfaction in the leadership position with addressing the accountability requirements for increasing student achievement (Mitani, 2018; Rangel, 2018; Swen, 2020), lack of decision-making authority and district support (Arvidsson et al., 2021; Fuller et al., 2017; Hansen, 2018),

decline in student achievement, increase in teacher turnover, and inadequate stressful working conditions (Bartanen et al., 2019; Fuller et al., 2017; Hansen, 2018; Levin et al., 2019; Rangel, 2018; Swen, 2020; Yan, 2019). While principal turnover is a known predictor of student achievement and school progress, few empirical studies examine the turnover and predictive behaviors of principals that remain in education in tandem with those that leave the profession.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the antecedents of principal turnover with a focus on high school principals who remain in public education for three years or elect to leave the profession in less than three years. District and school-level certified personnel data through the years of 2018-2020 provided the lens for this study to predict the behaviors of principals staying or departing the school. Yan (2019) defined principal turnover as movers who serve another school in the same role or with reduced responsibility and leavers as individuals who exit education altogether. Though principal turnover has been widely studied, recent principal turnover literature found variability in the design methodology and definitions of robust work in this area (Rangel, 2018). Another study reviewed data from first-year principals and discovered that half of the leaders left the school in the first two years, and by year five, only 19% of those who remained were at the same school (Davis & Anderson, 2021). Davis and Anderson (2021) argied that the limited studies on the predictive factors of principal turnover require further examination to minimize disruptions for school leaders, staff, and students.

Background of the Problem

As the need for innovative and committed school leadership increases, multiple surveys and national data verify an alarming trend in principal departure, documenting that 20% leave

their school after only one year of service (Levin et al., 2019; Taie & Goldring, 2019). A joint study between the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and Learning Policy Institute (LPI) using 2019-2020 data found that 42% of principals were contemplating vacating their position (Levin et al., 2020). Further, on average, principals tend to leave a school after only four years of service.

Davis et al. (2020) analyzed the patterns in the career moves of 1,113 Texas principals with no prior experience relating their personnel and institutional characteristics. The researchers found that 50% of the principals' time in the position was short—within the first two years of their administration—and urban school administrators left the profession at a greater rate than rural principals. Bartanen et al. (2019) stated that the rate of principal turnover was highest among novice principals of schools where low student achievement was prevalent two years before the leader voluntarily or involuntarily left the school. The principal transitions resulted in the individuals leaving the district for other positions. For those who stayed in the district, male principals were promoted, and these moves were more often at the middle and high school level.

Davis and Anderson (2021) suggested that principal turnover research complicates solving the problems because the methodologies and insufficient use of data do not fully address the underlying facts. These trends are consistent with years of empirical studies that indicated principal turnover is significantly higher in schools that serve predominantly minority student populations and low-income families (Levin et al., 2020).

A recent contributing factor to elementary and secondary principals departing the field of education is the 2020 fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. The advent of COVID-19 further exacerbated an already unstable trend of teacher departures, leaving building principals facing

the task of accelerated hiring of temporary or substitute teachers. Throughout the country, teachers have expressed reluctance to return to what many view as unsafe classrooms in the absence of a vaccine to fight the virus. In a nationwide poll of educators administered by the National Education Association, 28% of the teachers surveyed suggested early retirement as a determinant for exiting the education profession due to the fear of teaching in-person and the possibility of contracting COVID-19 (Martin, 2021).

In addition, state school systems have reported an increase in resignations or early retirements due to the pandemic. For example, in a survey of 145 public school districts and charter schools in Arizona, at the start of the school year, 751 teachers left their positions. Of that number, 326 teachers quit, claiming the potential consequences of COVID-19 as the reason, and an additional 138 teachers elected to receive a yearlong unpaid leave (Brock et al., 2021; Fischer, 2020).

Frequent turnover in leadership has created a domino effect of disruption leading to higher teacher attrition (Beteille et al., 2012; Dhuey & Smith, 2018; Miller, 2013), lower student achievement (Berrong, 2012; Henry & Harbatkin, 2019), and overall school destabilization (Hanselman et al., 2016). Multiple studies have documented how principal turnover negatively alters student achievement, with a particular impact on minority students (Bartanen et al., 2019; Pendola & Fuller, 2020; Sewell, 2019). Further, high principal attrition influences school culture, climate (Yan, 2019), and teacher efficacy (Dhuey & Smith, 2018). Student performance in schools where more than 75% of the population is on free-and-reduced lunch indicates higher principal turnover than all public schools (Goldring & Taie, 2018). Boyce and Bowers (2016)

posited that one of the reasons for principal turnover is a misalignment between the actual job and the principal's self-perceptions.

Theoretical Framework

The framework for this study was job embeddedness theory (Watson, 2018). Job embeddedness is related to factors that cause employees to commit to remaining on a job. Within the context of the principalship, job embeddedness is the relationship between a building leader, the school and the community at large. A reliable predictor of an employee's intent to remain or leave a position is job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001), which consists of three interrelated components: links, fit, and sacrifice on and off the job (Safavi & Karatepe, 2019).

Psychology and business management widely apply job embeddedness theory to identify factors that influence an employee's decision to remain in a particular job with a specific employer. The theory addresses both internal (on-the-job) and external (community) factors. Internal determinants of job embeddedness are inclusive of attachments to colleagues, congruence of worker skills with job duties, and service activities sponsored by the employer (Coetzer et al., 2019; Felps et al., 2009; Holtom et al., 2006). The theory of job embeddedness was particularly appropriate for this study, which targeted the growing problem of sustaining leadership in public education, particularly in communities that experience the most disruptions in leadership and low performance in student achievement. Job embeddedness theory was the lens through which the researcher viewed and studied the variables.

Research Questions

The following two research questions guided the study.

1. Do (a) age, (b) gender, (c) free and reduced lunch status, (d) minority population, (e) school enrollment size, (f) superintendent longevity in service, and (g) assistant principal continuity in service predict the principals' retention at a single high school for a minimum of one year?
2. Do (a) age, (b) gender, (c) free and reduced lunch status, (d) minority population, (e) school enrollment size, (f) superintendent longevity in service, and (g) assistant principal continuity in service predict the principals' retention at a single high school for three years?

Instrument

The researcher gathered data for the research questions from three fiscal years, 2017 through 2020, from a single state, Department of Education Classified/Certified Personnel Information data collection system (CPI).

Methodology

Using a non-experimental binomial logistic regression design, the researcher analyzed the extent to which it is possible to predict principal departure based on the individual and collective influence of seven independent variables: age, gender, free and reduced-price lunch status, minority population, school enrollment size, superintendent continuity in service, and assistant principal longevity in service. Further, the study explored the extent to which these variables were predictive of principals' job embeddedness (commitment to remain at the school).

Limitations of the Study

This study used a collection of a single state's certified personnel and school-level data. A limitation of the study was the assumption that data collected and submitted by each district

were accurate. The data were collected twice per year when the student enrollment information was aggregated for personnel and school funding. Some possibilities for missing personnel and institutional information included the district's renaming a school, closing a school, or reassigning the principal during the school year. An additional limitation to the study was the possibility that principals from urban, suburban, and rural communities served in multiple leadership roles in the same year. As a result, some personnel data were not a part of this study to ensure the accuracy and validity of the research.

Delimitations of the Study

The researcher confined the study to the following restrictions: (a) the geographical setting was be a single state, (b) only high schools and their principals were used, (c) data were collected from three academic years.

Definition of Terms

Specific terms used in the study were defined as indicated.

Employee retention refers to the connections, ability, and sacrifice an individual possess be present to lead and grow professionally to improve the organization and community (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Job embeddedness refers to the commitment and intention of a public school principal to continue as a building leader at a specific school (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Leaver is a public school principal who resigned from the job and worked in a different career field in the following year (Goldring & Taie, 2018).

Mover is a public school principal who serves one school in his or her first year of service and moves to a different school in the following year (Goldring & Taie, 2018).

Principal turnover occurs when a public school principal voluntarily or involuntarily does not return to the same school and district the following year (Rangel, 2018).

Stayer is a public school principal who leads the school from the previous year (Goldring & Taie, 2018).

Significance of the Study

Multiple studies have found that frequent principal turnover is detrimental to the stability of schools, intellectual progress of students, and quality of life of communities. Further, high turnover is fiscally costly to districts. By addressing the extent to which employee years of experience, superintendent and assistant principal longevity in service, school poverty index, Title I status, and school size impact principal departure, the study has the potential to resolves the principal turnover crisis.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to provide insights into the growing job turnover of P-12 principals. Using the theoretical framework of job embeddedness, the study explored two research questions designed to determine if (a) age, (b) gender, (c) free and reduced-price lunch status, (d) minority population, (e) school enrollment size, (f) superintendent continuity in service, and (g) assistant principal longevity in service is predictive of principal turnover. Data were analyzed using binomial logistic regression.

Chapter 2 presents of review of pertinent principal turnover literature and an-depth discussion of job embeddedness theory. Chapter 3 provides a description of the research design and methodology. Chapter 4 reports the results of data collection. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results, as well as implications and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will address several aspects of principal turnover, including theoretical and empirical studies. Topics explored principal turnover, challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, stressors related to teacher turnover, principal turnover, student achievement, leadership style and supervision, school disruption, school and principal characteristics, and job embeddedness theory.

Principal Turnover Gaps in the Literature

Principal turnover is disruptive to the school climate and achievement (Dhuey & Smith, 2018; Kraft et al., n.d.), inequitable toward minority student populations and communities (Levin et al., 2020). Further, involuntary transitions from the position decrease the possibility for school improvement during the school term and years to follow (Zalaznick, 2020). With the continued learning and staffing challenges the education system faces, ratifying principal turnover is paramount to the success of future generations. Rangel's (2018) study of principal turnover literature found differences in the design methods, research questions, and datasets, such as the personnel and school-level characteristics, enrollment size, key variables, and definitions. Rangel's (2018) analysis identified gaps in the findings and showed incomparable aspects across the various state and national data.

According to multiple years of data gathered by NCES, average principal turnover rate continues to concern district and federal policy in school leadership (Alenezi, 2020). Nonetheless, Alenezi (2020) stated that principal turnover is a voluntary and involuntary element with multiple competing personnel and professional factors. An examination of years of

principal turnover literature utilizing correlational designs or descriptive studies reveals the limitations of the factors associated with certain types of leaders leaving the school or professional.

Correlational Designs

Principal turnover requires district and policymakers to implement processes and support that retain and develop school leaders. Defining the causes of principal turnover and the predictive behaviors are necessary to establishing reasonable measures and methods that support multiple forms of data. Baker et al. (2010) examined eight years of U.S. K-12 public school principals as a means of predicting the factors that caused them to stay on the job or leave the profession. Using logistic regression and Cox proportional models, Baker et al. (2010) determined the work behaviors of the school leaders with a keen focus on their education level. The analysis of the principals' career paths differed based on the schools' grade band. Baker et al. (2010) found that elementary school principals have the longest tenure at the same school. However, retaining principals significantly declined after five years, with many leaders transitioning to another school. In addition, the researchers showed that schools with large African American student populations experienced more principals leaving for another school or position (Baker et al., 2010).

In another study as far back as 2007, Papa analyzed a large dataset of school principals' personnel and school-level characteristics and determined the contributing factors to retaining the leaders. Papa (2007) used multivariate analysis to establish that low-income students and communities with inexperienced teachers cannot retain principals. Likewise, Baker et al. (2010) utilization of another state's database while analyzing similar variables with a different purpose

suggested that school environments that acquire less experienced leaders faced a constant change in new leadership for staff and students. Hence, another study found more significant variability with principal mobility in low-performing schools because effective principals succeed in these environments. Consequently, principals serving high-performing schools with a majority of White students are less likely to leave to lead an institution with the propensity of sanctions based on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status (Li, 2015).

Additionally, Li (2015) examined the distribution and quality of principals across high and low-performing schools measured by the federal policy of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Regression analysis and descriptive statistics determined sanctions and their impact on the principal's mobility. Li (2015) concluded that NCLB sanctions that are indicative of the school failing AYP status significantly occurred in communities with a high concentration of minority-low-income students at the elementary level. According to Li (2015), sanctions are not a deterrent for quality principals to lead low-performing schools. Still, the departure of these leaders increases the number of students showing poor performances in math and reading classes. Variations in the designs and methods create completing factors, thus limiting the improvement in the principal's practices.

Descriptive Statistics

Similar to correlational designs, researchers determined antecedents of principal turnover by using descriptive statistics to compare or cross-tabulate turnover measures. The use of descriptive statistics creates suggestive attributes of the factors relating to the stability in the school leadership. For example, Fuller and Young (2009) investigated three years of an average of 1,504 U.S. K-12 public school principals' tenure and retention behaviors of new hires to the

school and district. In another study, Papa et al. (2002) examined the career paths of 12,000 principals' over a 30-year period. Both studies noted that the quality of the principal's leadership is not easily accessible and raises questions that are not evidenced in the analysis (Fuller & Young, 2009; Papa et al., 2002).

Principal tenure and retention rates strongly influence student achievement. While significant changes are present among the school's grade bands, elementary school leaders return at a high rate to the same school, and their tenure outpaces other colleagues (Fuller & Young, 2009). Consequently, new high school principals stay at a rate greater than 50%; however, less than 30% remain after five years. Earlier work by Papa et al. (2002) indicated that less-experienced principals and teachers serve institutions with large demographics of students with lesser means than the majority population. Papa et al. highlighted that principals holding lesser degrees from lower-ranked institutions showed higher turnover rates at schools with a high concentration of minority-low income and poorly achieving students. Papa et al. (2002) established that principals' careers have followed a teaching path toward the principalship; however, 15% of these leaders landed the position with no teaching experience and primarily worked in urban, underserved communities.

Key Variables and Definitions

In contrast to different analyses are the use of key variables and the variations in defining the school leaders as principals and not including assistant principals and other district leaders, hence questioning the validity of the findings to other turnover data. As early as 2003, Gates et al. examined personnel and perception data from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) national database. Using regression analysis with the dependent variable as the principal's years

of experience, Gates et al. (2003) found that novice principals who faced challenges with school climate tended to move to another school with fewer discipline problems.

Another study by Akiba and Reichardt (2004) investigated predictive behaviors on multiple years of data on 100 U.S. public elementary school principals and assistant principals' career paths. Researchers used multiple logistic regression analysis, with the dependent variable indicating if the school leaders stayed or departed the job. Akiba and Reichardt (2004) stated that attrition rates distort data, since principals and assistant principals who retire, leave the profession, and move out of state were included in the data. In addition, female principals and assistant principals with bachelor's degrees, age 35 or younger, minority, and leading schools with low achievement were more likely to transition from the school or district (Akiba & Reichardt, 2004).

In a more recent study conducted in 2016, Lochmiller et al. analyzed five years of U.S. public school retention, attrition, and mobility for teachers and administrators from the U.S. Department of Education personnel and school-level data using descriptive statistics. Like Akiba and Reichardt (2004), Lochmiller et al.'s (2016) data were inclusive of superintendents, deputy superintendents, principals, assistant principals, or vice-principals; as a result, the annual averages were not reflective of principals only. For example, Lochmiller et al. (2016) found that the average rate of turnover for administrators with three years or 15 or more years was 12.2 and 13.0%, respectively, which was almost double the rate for principals between 4 and 14 years of service. In addition, the study highlighted that at a minimum, an average of 1.2% of administrators left one district for another school or district in the state (Lochmiller et al., 2016).

Contrary to other quantitative analyses on principal turnover and perspective from the leader's subordinates, Husain et al. (2021) investigated teacher perceptions of the principals to understand the quality of principals who leave a school or district. Using multiple years of a large dataset of teacher responses for approximately 1900 schools in U.S. K-12 public schools and about 7000 (SASS) national data, Husain et al. (2021) used linear probability regressions of principals who left the position from the state and replicated the design using the national data. Principal quality was not a determinant of turnover practices, and the state and national datasets representation of student and principal demographics significantly differed. Husain et al. (2021) indicated that analysis of state and national principal data differences in demographics of students and personnel rendered turnover rates an 8.4% difference. Thus, the variances in the analysis of principal quality showed that high-performing principals returned to the same school.

Other Designs Methods

Different from correlational designs and descriptive statistics are storytelling through interviews. As earlier as 1996, Oberman investigated the principal turnover in U.S. K-12 public schools using multiple years of personnel and school-level data and surveys from 61 principals who left the position, of which 26% resigned and 16% left to be administrators in another district. The majority of the respondents were from the elementary school level, and the findings suggested that quality staff impacts the outcomes of students and their tenure with the job. Oberman (1996) indicated that principals deemed autonomy, district leadership support with policies and procedures, and other demands impeded school progress, particularly with lesser quality staff to complete the work at an efficient level. Oberman (1996) found through principal

interviews that the working conditions contributed to them opting out of returning to the principal role:

> These responses are from people who left—Would you consider becoming a principal in Chicago again? No, No (there) isn't a great deal of respect from the central office for the job—work increasing without pay increase—too political a role. Not under today's conditions: social problems, unfunded mandates, expectations and animosity toward principals (who are) totally disrespected now. It all worked out the way I thought it would except for the end. (p. 32)

The more recent study by Farley-Ripple et al. (2012) also investigated multiple years of U.S. K-12 public school principals' career paths relative to the influences of various organizational structures and people. Interview data from 100 administrators revealed 48 principals and assistant principals identified the causes of career paths for stayers and movers. Farley-Ripple et al. (2012) reported that administrators' career decisions were based on the district and school stakeholders' needs and the principal's connectedness to the job. Analysis of the administrators' interview responses were categorized by those who stayed at the same school, moved to another school as the leader or district position, or left the profession. Farley-Ripple et al. (2012) suggested that an administrator's career decision to stay or move was conditional, thus pushing and pulling the leader's career path in the direction of the district's needs:

> You know administrators don't have the luxury because once you say no to them, then the chances of other options—opportunities that come up—you may not be considered. I don't think that is a written statement or law but it's just a feeling everyone tells you. You go where—and really when you sign your contract it says you are working at the

> discretion of the superintendent—wherever he needs you. You are not hired for a specific job or a specific site or whatever; it's at his discretion you serve. (p. 798)

Principal turnover literature suggests that administrators' career moves are not autonomous to their own choices but greatly influenced by district leaders.

Factors Leading to Principal Turnover

Nearly 30% of principals who lead troubled schools quit every year. By the third year, more than half of all principals leave their jobs (Tyre, 2015). Arvidsson et al. (2021) studied principals' intention to depart schools due to being overworked and the level of occupational factors involved in managing the school. After analyzing two years of surveys that identified principals' intention to remain with the staff and students or leave the workforce, Arvidsson et al. (2021) found that principals who received support from the administration were more likely to stay. In addition, the researchers highlighted those principals who faced more challenging work situations from the competing demands with staff and supervisors indicated they would leave the workplace. Arvidsson et al. (2021) concluded that principals who remained on the job had favorable working conditions that prevented them from experiencing work-related stress. In contrast, those who left the job reported being overloaded with the demands of the school.

In another analysis, Husain et al. (2021) examined state and national teacher perceptions data to identify the relationship between the leaders' intention to stay with the school and their effectiveness. Husain et al. (2021) found that principals who were supported by the teachers and students in operating the day-to-day functions of the school were most likely to continue working at the same school. In addition, the research confirmed that the principal's ability to perform the

work and gain teacher buy-in led to minimal turnover occurrences, harming the school performance (Husain et al., 2021).

Mitani (2018) examined the impact of accountability sanctions governed by the U.S. Department of Education to determine how the school's performance defined the principal's turnover. Using data from the national school and staffing survey of 45 states, Mitani (2018) found that schools with performance below the expected outcome in student achievement experienced a voluntary or involuntary departure of the principal. However, another study documented that quality principals have less teacher turnover, which is attributed to high-performing teachers (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019). Though principal turnover affects schools, the Mitani (2018) noted that changing the leader improves the school in some cases.

Sun and Ni (2016) found that principals serving schools with a large minority population in high-poverty communities were more likely to leave the school to work in high-performing academic environments. Studies reveal that transitioning to a new leader, student achievement outcomes decrease one to two years before the district demotes or transfers the school leader to a new role or school (Kraft et al., n.d.). Additional research reveals that frequent turnover of the building principals negatively impacts teacher turnover of skilled staff with the ability to increase student achievement (Kraft et al., 2016; Sun & Ni, 2016). However, studies show that the working conditions challenge experienced principals, but other school factors offset the leaders' intent to leave.

Contributing to the challenging work experiences are large numbers of novice teachers. New teachers lack the preparedness to teach in low-performing schools and the impact persist over multiple years with minimal improvement in student performance rates (Henry &

Harbatkin, 2019). The effects of these outcomes contribute to below proficiency performance in reading and math by underserved communities with predominantly minority students typically (Bartanen et al., 2019) and staff turnover, such as transfer and demotions (Yan, 2020). In contrast, this research indicates that the adverse working conditions independent of other factors can change a principal's intent to remain and improve the school.

Principal Turnover Types

In 2016-2017, the NCES, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), and *The Condition of Education 2019* reports outlined the national attrition, mobility, and retention rates of U.S. public, private and charter schools for a two-year period (McFarland et al., 2019). McFarland et al. (2019) identified approximately 91,000 public school principals across the primary and secondary levels. These public schools largely served about 58% White, 16% Black, and 9% Hispanic student populations. This national data included the view of principals' personnel and school contextual factors for staying at the same school, moving to serve a different school, and leaving the position to no longer work in the role of a principal (McFarland et al., 2019). The national data reports state the high-level condition of public schools that does not change or shows similar rates of mobility, attrition, and retention overtime, as well as the data that indicate learning challenges for minority student groups (Taie & Goldring, 2019).

In 2016-2017, of these public schools, about 82% of the principals stayed at the same school, 6% moved to another school, and 10% left the job for a different role (McFarland et al., 2019). Furthermore, of the principal leavers, about 68% had voluntary or involuntary acquired other positions. The average percent of leavers over multiple years has not significantly changed and high-poverty schools experience the highest rate of leaders transitioning their careers.

Consequently, the percent of public-school principals who remained at the same school had fewer populations of high-poverty students (McFarland et al., 2019).

Rangel (2018) stated existing literature on principal turnover finds variability with the definitions and methodologies used to determine the causes for principals leaving the school. A four-year study by Grissom and Bartanen (2019) uncovered links between principal effectiveness and turnover using Tennessee administrators' personnel and professional characteristics data. The results suggested that a principal's low-performance rating was indicative of them exiting the profession or being demoted to another position within the district. Grissom and Bartanen (2019) stated that this is more likely to occur with middle school principals, a finding echoed in a study conducted by Davis and Anderson (2021). In some cases, principals with high-performance rates are promoted to central office positions, thus contributing to principal turnover. The parallels in the outcomes of principal turnover research demonstrate unchanged measures and the impact on positive student outcomes and overall school performance (Rangel, 2018).

Principal turnover is disruptive to student learning and the overall school experience (Zalaznick, 2020). According to Taie and Goldring (2019), principal turnover represents individuals who left or stopped working or left to work in an unknown profession in the following year. Of the varying types of turnover, 40% of principals exited education, which is more representative of experienced or retired school leaders. The remaining 60% of the principal who left were called movers, which reflect principals who remained in education. These movers changed positions through promotions, demotions, or transferred to other schools in or outside a district (Davis & Anderson, 2021). Compelling to the principal turnover types, researchers found

that principals acquiring alternative positions within or outside the organization were among most of the transitions and the remaining move from one school to another in the same district (Goldring & Taie, 2018; Yan, 2020).

Other state-level turnover types indicate demotions as the most common measure in relation to the principal who leaves a school. Although leavers are the most common type of principal turnover, movers who transfer have a slightly negative effect. Those with multiple transitions display a continuous decline in student reading and mathematics achievement (Grissom et al., 2019). In contrast, promoted movers create slight gains in student achievement, and those demoted cause no change (Bartanen et al., 2019). The transition of movers results from a promotion with the principal choosing to serve in an environment with lesser academic and school culture challenges.

Along with the principals who move and leave are those who stay in the role; these principals are significant in that 11 and 20% respectively are undecided about remaining in the position or are preparing an exit when a more favorable opportunity arises (Goldring & Taie, 2018). The change in the principal results in the individual's voluntary or involuntary transition. With the effects of principal turnover impacting student achievement and school performance, the type of turnover, leadership experience, working conditions, and teacher retention are paramount to the school leader's transition in Title I and non-Title I schools and communities.

Empirical longitudinal studies on principal turnover found that schools serving disadvantaged, low-achieving student populations significantly impact principals and teachers' commitment to stay in education (Beteille et al., 2012). Boyce and Bowers (2016) affirmed that principal turnover is inclusive of both satisfied and dissatisfied leaders. Principals who are

content with the position are gratified by the school meeting the performance measures. Some researchers found that principals who are discontented in the position were challenged by the working conditions, such as extended hours, ineffective teachers, and challenging school climates (Burkhauser, 2016; Johnson, 2020). Principals with no or limited years of experience involuntarily vacate the position or the organization entirely. However, most principals with experience were less likely to shift their roles and responsibilities due to their contractual agreements and benefits (Yan, 2020).

Principal Turnover and Student Achievement

Principal turnover negatively affects student success and school performance (Bartanen et al., 2019). Two years preceding the principal's departure, student achievement declines below the school's original performance level (Bartanen et al., 2019; Miller, 2013). Willis (2016) proposed that a decline in school performance continues in the new principal's first two years. Multiple principal transitions contribute to a decrease in student achievement levels with a more significant adverse impact on students of color and low-income communities (Holmes et al., 2019). The trend in principal turnover remains constant, and the effects are more apparent when the transition occurs from one school to another, with declining improvement gains for students (Torres-Blue, 2019).

Student achievement measures the principal's effectiveness in providing instructional leadership for a school, and the principal's capacity in this area is a major determinant for turnover (Beteille et al., 2012; Miller, 2013; Pham et al., 2020). The onset of principal turnover is indicative of their inability to lead teachers, students, and the community in building and sustaining a positive academic and school environment. Therefore, the absence of effective

leadership prevents school and student performance improvements, consequently creating a path toward involuntary or voluntary turnover (Husain et al., 2021). Thus, any type of turnover impacts the planned trajectory of overall school performance, but in low-performing schools, the transition positively influences student outcomes when it is involuntary (Wang & Sun, 2022). There are adverse outcomes in student achievement for the same school that experiences multiple principal turnovers. The downward trend in performance is because improvement initiatives under a new principal minimally take five years to change the student outcomes (Bartanen et al., 2019; Miller, 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). However, school performance continues in a new principal's first two years if the transition type is related to a promotion or a move to a new position. Turnover serves as a glaring challenge for staff and students, since the transition comes with new practices and processes. Although in the beginning student achievement is low, the first years of school performance increase with the successor (Willis, 2016).

The effect of principal turnover is more significant in core content areas and the student population of a high-poverty school and community (Bartanen et al., 2019; Pham et al., 2020). These schools serve a large population of students of color and face more frequent leadership changes (Pendola & Fuller, 2020; Yan, 2020). Principal turnover significantly impacts achievement, and while it is more adverse for underperforming schools, others also experience a decline in the succeeding year due to the leadership transition (Pham et al., 2020).

Principal Turnover and Teacher Turnover

Effective teachers leave their school when a principal transfers to another school or gets promoted or demoted. In the beginning years of the new principal, the teachers new to the

profession replace the existing veteran teachers. Research showed that changing the school leader, no matter the cause of the turnover, negatively affects the principal's ability to retain key teaching staff. Although the change affects all types of turnover, a principal transferring from one school to another has a more significant impact on teachers leaving (Bartanen et al., 2019). Additionally, changing the leadership with a less-experienced principal increases the teachers' probability of leaving the school (Dhuey & Smith, 2018).

Principal transitions directly impact teacher turnover, and an increase in those who leave is greater with less experienced leaders serving in urban, suburban, and rural schools and communities (Player et al., 2017). One of the primary responsibilities of K-12 principals is ensuring that schools are staffed with competent teachers. In 2004, the No Child Left Behind Act added the requirement that U.S. public schools have a staff of teachers designated as highly qualified, which meant that they had a bachelor's degree and full state certification that included educators' performance on the state's examination for the subject matter taught. Evidence of meeting these criteria included an undergraduate major in the subject taught and an acceptable score on a state examination (NCLB, 2002). Urban and rural schools found meeting these standards were difficult (Brownell et al., 2018).

Since 2008, enrollment in the K-12 education programs has been declining because fewer college students are pursuing teaching careers (Garcia & Weiss, 2019a; Taie & Goldring, 2019). According to the Economic Policy Institute, the teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought (Garcia &Weiss, 2019a). When considering indicators of teacher quality (i.e., certification, relevant training, experience), the shortage is even more acute than currently estimated, with high-poverty schools suffering the most from the shortage of credentialed

teachers (Garcia & Weiss, 2019a). The dilemma of staffing schools in the middle of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic has left many elementary and secondary principals in a challenging predicament.

In a study that highlighted the impact of principal turnover, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission sponsored a survey to explore why 44% of the state's public-school teachers exit the field within their first five years of teaching (Owens, 2015). Of the 55,300 teachers surveyed, 66% stated that they would not recommend teaching as a career choice for the next generation. The attrition and dissatisfaction rates of teachers indicated in the Georgia study further confirm the critical need for stable and effective building leadership to improve (Bartanen et al., 2019). Multiple studies find that when principals face stressors such as retaining or hiring quality staff, they make a voluntary decision to leave the position or the district involuntarily changes the principal's career path.

Principal Turnover Challenges in the Age of COVID-19

In December 2019, the first case of a new respiratory virus was documented in the city of Wuhan, the capital of the Hubei province of the People's Republic of China (Holshue et al., 2020). At the time, this event barely registered in the rest of the world, but the medical and epidemiology communities quickly went on alert, as the virus was highly contagious, untreatable, and deadly. On January 20, 2020, the first U.S. case of the virus was diagnosed in the state of Washington, and by early March, models generated by the University of Notre Dame found that over 100,000 people in the United States were already infected with COVID-19, a significantly higher number than the officially reported cases (Perkins et al., 2020).

By March 2020, Coronavirus was a global pandemic, resulting in an unparalleled disruption to public and private businesses throughout the globe (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). In an attempt to halt the spread in the United States, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools immediately closed, and traditional spring events were canceled. By mid-August 2020, when schools reopened for fall term, the United States had surpassed 6 million COVID-19 cases, and districts were struggling with trying to balance the mandate to educate children while ensuring protection from the virus.

School districts initiated three distinct delivery options for fall 2020: online classes, face-to-face instruction, or a combination of the two. In several districts, teachers refused to return to the schoolhouse due to safety concerns. Education Weekly conducted a survey and reported,

> As the start of the 2020-21 school year approached and many districts began rolling out plans to bring students back to campus, teachers across the country wrestled with the difficult decision of whether to leave their jobs to protect their health and that of their loved ones or stay in the classroom. Surveys showed that 1 in 5 teachers said they were unlikely to return to in-person instruction in the fall and that the same percentage said they were more likely to quit at the end of last school year than they were before the pandemic. (Harvey et al., 2013, p. 3)

In a study of 7,841 educators working in 206 schools in nine states, teachers reported significant challenges that related to how to interact with students virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of significance was the finding that teachers were less likely to resign or retire during this crisis if they believed they “could depend on their district and school-based leadership for

effective communication, targeted training, meaningful collaboration, fair expectations, and recognition of their efforts" (Kraft et al., n.d., p. 1).

Principal Turnover and School Disruption

Multiple sources verified the loss of one in five principals from public schools each year (Balyer, 2017; Fuller & Young, 2009; McFarland et al., 2019; Taie & Goldring, 2019). A critical concern is how these constant departures ultimately affect children. The influence of multiple factors on students' intellectual and personal growth extends beyond the classroom and illustrates the critical role of school, family, and community partnerships (Warren, 2005). The building principal has primary responsibility for developing and sustaining partnerships between the school, the family, and the community (Patrikakou et al., 2005; Valli et al., 2014). In most high-poverty areas, the longest-lasting and most stable institution is the neighborhood school, which is viewed as a community anchor (Bigum, 2004; Owen-Smith, 2020; Warren, 2005). Frequent departures of principals are disheartening to teachers, children, and families (Epstein, 2019) and disruptive to school-community and family-school partnerships (Zepeda et al., 2012). Recognizing that children are inextricably connected to their surroundings, attempting to educate them solely within the confines of a classroom is fruitless.

Several recent empirical inquiries have found measurable influences of principal turnover on student achievement. In a study of principals conducted in Missouri and Tennessee, Valli et al. (2014) found statistically significant effects of principal departures on lowered school achievement in mathematics and reading (Valli et al., 2014). These researchers found that the influence of principal departure on student achievement differed based on the circumstances of the exit. Valli et al. (2014) further noted that schools with principals who exited saw larger

negative effects, while schools with principals who were demoted saw no negative effects and, in some cases, even positive effects. Using 10 years of data from 2009 to 2018, one study found principal turnover closely aligned with significant decreases in student achievement, as well as increases in teacher turnover (McFarland et al., 2019).

Principal Turnover and Superintendent Accord

The chief executive of a school district, known as the superintendent, has a pivotal role in the holistic success and efficacy of principals and teachers in meeting the academic and growth needs of children (Andero, 2000; Harvey et al., 2013; Hoyle et al., 2005). Research confirms the imperative role of principals and superintendents working in tandem for student success (Hvidston & McKim, 2019; Mania-Singer, 2018). There is a strong relationship between superintendents' leadership regarding the clear communication of expectations and goals and the success of building leaders (Andero, 2000; Marzano & Waters, 2009). In one study jointly conducted by a principal and a superintendent, collaborative interactions were found to be strong predictors of academically healthy schools (West & Derrington, 2009). These authors reported the critical role of mutually supportive relationships between building and district leaders that ultimately promote student growth. Despite these and other indicators, there is little evidence of strong and consistent collaboration between superintendents and principals.

One study on building leaders' perceptions of central office leadership found that principals believe superintendents are critical to the development of teacher leaders, yet rarely fulfill this role (Wells et al., 2010). A qualitative study of superintendents and principals in four rural school districts found collaborative leadership increases instructional guidance and supports superintendent strategies being met (Guerrie, 2014). In a four-year study of three

superintendents, Cudeiro (2005) sought to learn more about the connections between superintendents' leadership and principals' behaviors. This study included interviews with superintendents, principals, and their leadership teams to determine what the superintendents did that affected principals' roles as instructional leaders. Findings confirmed a strong relationship between instructional success and robust relationships between principals and superintendents (Cudeiro, 2005).

The high turnover of superintendents, principals, and teachers is a formula for stagnation in K-12 schools, with the primary victims being children (Marzano & Waters, 2009; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). Most disturbing is the finding that superintendents in high-poverty districts serving the highest percentages of students of color remained on the job less than half as long as those in districts that enrolled few students of color. These district leaders departed the job nearly 3.5 years earlier than those serving other areas (Superville, 2018). Nearly 20% of K-12 principals depart from their jobs annually, resulting in the average tenure of four years (NASSP, 2019). The annual turnover of teachers is equally high in schools with higher populations of students of color, resulting in a significant loss of experienced certified personnel (Garcia & Weiss, 2019b). Suffering most are children living in high-poverty neighborhoods, attending unstable schools where teachers, principals, and district leaders are constantly leaving.

An additional issue identified by principals in high-poverty districts is changing priorities and policies related to turnovers at the level of the superintendency. New superintendents are expected to enter the job with fresh ideas and novel policies for principals to implement. However, the short tenure of district leaders results in a constant introduction of new system-wide innovations that all are expected to embrace with enthusiasm. It is disturbing that the tenure

of superintendents serving districts with the highest percentages of students of color remains on the job less than half as long as those in districts that enrolled few students of color (NASSP, 2019). These district leaders depart the job nearly 3.5 years earlier than those serving other areas (Superville, 2018).

An additional concern is a need for principals and superintendents to develop a mutual interpretation of governance policies emanating from the U.S. Department of Education and state education offices (Chu, 2019). When superintendents and principals are in accord, the enactment of policies and procedures at the building level is beneficial for teachers and children (Chu, 2019).

Studies confirm the urgency for school districts to actively address and arrest principal dissatisfaction and departure. Research suggests ways that distributive leadership would be mutually beneficial for principals and teachers (Hatcher, 2005; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). Distributed leadership expands decision making beyond the level of the principal to include assistant principals, teachers, and staff. It positively influences participation, empowerment, and ultimately, commitment and satisfaction (Youngs & Evans, 2021).

Leadership Styles for Principal and Teacher Commitment

This section explores the influence of principal leadership style on school climate, stability, and ultimately, satisfaction levels of principals and teachers. High levels of job satisfaction are the prerequisite for principals remaining in their positions. Accordingly, this section examines ways in which principal leadership styles influence the satisfaction levels of teachers and the stability of schools.

Early Studies

Scholarly studies on the critical role of school leadership can be found as early as the 19th century in the works of Greenwood (1889) and Gray (1934). While the term used at that time was not instructional leadership, it is clear that the principal's active role in issues related to pedagogy and curriculum was considered essential. Greenwood (1889) spoke of the managerial responsibilities of the school principal that included overseeing teachers and pupils and treating assistants as coworkers. He also stressed that principals have a responsibility to strengthen their assistants. Further, Greenwood asserted that an effective principal should first be a first-class teacher and knowledgeable about schoolwork. Gray (1934) stressed the need for principals to remedy school problems quickly and work carefully to strengthen weak teachers. Early in the 20th century, Crane (n.d.) explained the importance of principals supporting and encouraging teachers.

These perspectives verify that views of effective principals as collaborative instructional leaders have been in place for over a century. Further, these early works stress the principal's role as one that fortifies and supports teachers. Notably, all of these studies from the 19th and early 20th centuries used the word "strengthen" when applied to the principal's relationship with teachers.

The Principal as Instructional Leader

Current studies continue to confirm positions touted a century ago related to instructional leadership as the most critical element in school success. However, the growing concern is how the term *instructional leadership* is authentically demonstrated. A recent Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report revealed that schools have higher

levels of performance when led by principals who embody qualities of instructional leadership (Pont et al., 2008). It is inarguable that successful schools are those where the consistent focus of both the teacher and the principal is on the student. Recent research by Shaked (2021) found that a critical component of instructional leadership is relationship building between principals and teachers. The imperative need for principals to provide instructional leadership was significantly elevated during the COVID-19 pandemic when teachers turned to principals for assistance as they were suddenly expected to have expertise in virtual facilitation of learning (Black et al., 2021; Brock et al., 2021; Kundu & Bej, 2021).

The Principal as a Transformational Leadership

A principal who demonstrates transformational leadership is one who is able to bring out the best in others. James Dow first introduced the term *transformational leadership* in 1973, but it gained wider recognition when included in the work of James MacGregor Burns in 1978 (Burns, 2004). Within this context, Hector Diaz-Saenz (2011) defined transformational leadership as “the process by which a leader fosters group or organizational performance beyond expectation by virtue of the strong emotional attachment with his or her followers combined with the collective commitment to a higher moral cause” (p. 299). The literature suggests this type of leader embodies an ability to encourage, inspire, and motivate those around them. A study by Braun et al. (2013) found that transformational leadership was highly related to the job satisfaction of individuals and teams. A similar study found that teachers' job satisfaction and effectiveness are related to their perceptions of principals’ behaviors and interpersonal engagement.

School and Principal Characteristics

Years of principal turnover studies control for school contextual factors, such as the student's free and reduced-price lunch status, school enrollment size, demographics, and the proportion of minority students to determine causes for the principal's departure (Taie & Goldring, 2019). For example, in a study that controlled the school enrollment size, the smaller school sizes showed an increased achievement in math and reading. Another study in Tennessee indicated variability in the number of schools operated by a district. The researchers noted a range of 1 to 290 in each district (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019).

Prior research controlled principal characteristics such as age, gender, and years of experience to categorize the traits of the principal who departs the school. For example, several studies found that a principal's age determined that the older leaders more than likely remain with the same school. In concert with national data correlating the principal leavers, the leader characteristics and school contextual factors explicitly describe the traits indicated by the 18% principal turnover rate (McFarland et al., 2019).

Job Embeddedness Theory

JJob embeddedness (JE) is a construct that determines an employee's intentions to remain or depart the organization. An employee's intentions to stay or leave the job are complex processes related to a significant personal or professional event. These events result from planned and unplanned circumstances and primarily expose a minimal level of dissatisfaction or a neutral reaction; however, some situations reveal an employee's major discontent with the job (Mitchell et al., 2001). Job embeddedness suggests that the individual's intention to stay or leave

is decided before their actual transition. The employee's behaviors predict their retention or turnover and occur at separate times throughout their career (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Link, fit, and sacrifice are attributes of job embeddedness. These elements align and influence the employee's responsibility and performance, community and family involvement, and emotional and financial circumstances (Mitchell et al., 2001; Nguyen et al., 2017). The JE dimensions shape an employee's on-the-job decisions and years of research in multiple sectors show that it is a critical factor in predicting an employee's intention to stay on the job Shah et al. (2020).

Links are the relationships between individuals and groups formed on and off the job. Potgieter and Ferria (2018) examined 200 early and middle-career employees' intention to stay with their higher-education institution and contended that when employees are not highly involved in developing their careers, the likelihood of staying on the job is associated with friendships with people in the organization. Treuren (2019) examined the moderating effect of job embeddedness on 124 white-collar employees going through company restructuring and mergers and working in various positions. Treuren (2019) found that job embeddedness changed an employee's intentions to leave the company when they had minimal connections with the job and stronger relationships with work and family situations. Another study by Robinson et al. (2014) of 372 front-line hotel employees across the United States found that the individuals involved in the community promoted employees staying with the organization. The family and church structures are examples of the job embeddedness link dimension, and these positive connections influence the person to stay (Mitchell et al., 2001). Community involvement is vital for retaining employees and predicts employees' intent to depart the job (Robinson et al., 2014).

Fit is the employee's belief and experience that personal values and career goals align with the organization. Al-Ghazali (2020) stated that an individual's commitment to the organization's practices and processes fits their values and creates a suitable work environment, positive outcomes in performance, and the prospect of continued employment on the job. Potgieter and Ferria (2018) indicated that the organization's ability to develop the employees' career interests determines their satisfaction and intent to stay with the company. Other research indicate that a deeper level of job embeddedness is actualized when the employees perceive a connection to people and alignment with their core values. Their knowledge and skills fit the organization's job responsibilities and community involvement (Al-Ghazali, 2020; Kapil & Rastogi, 2017). Additionally, job embeddedness fit dimension means the employee's intention to stay is positively attributed to the individual's trust in the organization's leadership (Purba et al., 2016). Trust in the leader allows the employee to settle in the company and embody the work comfortably.

Sacrifice characterizes an employee's psychological state to the on the job and off-the-job practices, and these interactions determine their commitment to the company (Mitchell et al., 2001). For example, research reveals that monetary reward affects individuals' desire to leave and increases their losses because the alternatives are more attractive than their embeddedness with their current employment (Nguyen et al., 2017). Furthermore, bearing the sacrifice to fulfill professional obligations, Safavi and Karatepe (2019) found that the imbalance between work and family lowers the employee's embeddedness to stay on the job. Furthermore, job embeddedness research reveals that challenging conditions increase an employee's intent to remain with the organization (Allen et al.,2016).

In contrast to the employees staying on the job, Coetzer et al. (2017) suggested that working in a smaller company requires more organizational sacrifice than a sizable business. Research shows that organizational sacrifice shows a solid connection to the person's turnover intentions. As their intentions to leave increased, their attitude toward the job significantly decreased (Robinson et al., 2014). Safavi and Karatepe's (2019) study revealed that an individual's relationship with the community and organization affects how embedded they are to stay on the job. Although the alternative is less attractive, linking with the people and career opportunities makes the sacrifice desirable. More findings suggest that less-embedded individuals with the ability to navigate the work projects to a certain level of proficiency are likely to be less committed and turn over the position, thus indicating that an employee's intention to leave is an antecedent to the actual turnover (Dechawatanapaisal, 2018).

Job embeddedness significantly impacts the individual's connection, advancement, and commitment to an organization. When employees are embedded with the organization, their intentions to leave are weakened (Dechawatanapaisal, 2018). A high level of job embeddedness in career goals, development, and equality (Nguyen et al., 2017) improves the employee's performance (Kapil & Rastogi, 2017). However, the job embeddedness effect is conditional to specific situations. For example, Coetzer et al. (2017) stated that the turnover intentions of full-time employees who averaged about seven years with the organization decrease when the group's size is 200 or more employees. Additionally, a decline in an employee's intent to remain on the job is apparent when factors such as job satisfaction, affective commitment, job prospects, education, and tenure are constant.

Research shows job-embeddedness has a moderating and indirect effect on the nature of the employee's links, fit, and sacrifice on and off the job. These JE dimensions coupled with the community and organization indicate different outcomes based on the circumstances. For example, as job embeddedness attributes and its influences on work and life balance interaction concerning their level of commitment, only two of the six dimensions show differences regarding the employee's position with the company (Robinson et al., 2014). Another study on the analysis of JE in relationship to trust in leadership and turnover intentions shows an increase in the actual voluntary turnover occurring more than a year later that happens before the employee acknowledges their intentions (Purba et al., 2016). Investigating JE literature proves that what causes an employee to remain on the job is not a direct effect of the six job embeddedness dimensions; various situations ought to exist to impact an employee's intentions to stay or leave the organization.

Summary

This chapter presented a review of several theoretical and empirical studies of principal turnover and job embeddedness theory. Seen through the constructs of job embeddedness, it becomes apparent that causes of turnover, whether voluntary or involuntary, interact with an individual's relationship with people in the organization, career aspirations, and family circumstances. A principal's effectiveness is important to whether the staff, students, and communities succeed, particularly low-income and underperforming student populations. The national overall principal turnover rate is 18% and 21% in underserved communities (Taie & Goldring, 2019). The literature confirms that the change in leadership places the most marginalized and high minority student populations and communities at risk of declining

academics and quality staff. Moreover, the turnover literature proves transition requires three to five years (Pham et al., 2020; Willis, 2016), effective leadership styles and supervision, quality staff to diminish the adverse outcomes in learning, working conditions, and school climates. The major difference in methodologies and definitions used to define datasets is not vastly addressed in principal turnover studies (Rangel, 2018). However, these studies' findings suggest similar outcomes across various state and national data. The disruptive nature of principal turnover impedes school and student performance and faces a projected growth due to COVID-19 stressors and district accountability measures (Harris, 2020; Masonbrink & Hurley, 2020; Swen 2020).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The current study sought to determine if there are personal, institutional, district, and community variables that are predictive of the high turnover of secondary school principals. These principals lead diverse populations of students and staff from varying socioeconomic communities. Using a non-experimental binomial regression design, the researcher analyzed if it is possible to predict principal intent to stay or leave the job based on the individual and collective influences of seven independent variables: age, gender, free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL) status, minority population, school enrollment size, superintendent continuity in service, and assistant principal longevity in service. Further, the study explored the extent to which these variables are predictive of the intent to stay or withdraw from the position of principal.

Research Questions Reiterated

The study was guided by the following two research questions.

1. Do age, gender, free and reduced lunch status, minority population, school enrollment size, superintendent longevity in service, and assistant principal continuity in service predict the principals' retention at a single high school for a minimum of one year?
2. Do age, gender, free and reduced lunch status, minority population, school enrollment size, superintendent longevity in service, and assistant principal continuity in service predict the principals' retention at a single high school for three years?

Methodology

The study used a non-experimental binomial logistic regression design. The collection of data for the research questions required Mercer University IRB approval (see Appendix). The

certified personnel information was reported with a unique encrypted identifier. This information was housed within a single state's U.S. Department of Education database, and the institutional data are publicly archived, available, and easily downloadable. This study did not include human subjects; therefore, IRB approval of the study was granted.

Binomial logistic regression and descriptive statistics were used to address the research questions. This provided a statistical analysis of the likelihood of the seven independent predictor variables contributing to the dependent variable, the principal's intent to remain or depart from the school.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of a sample of high school principals in the United States. In the target state of the study, there were 494 public and charter high schools, of which 102 were K-12th, 387 were 9th-12th public high schools, two were Department of Juvenile Justice schools, and three were state charters schools. From the aforementioned population, the sample consisted of the 387 public high school principals in the target state.

Setting

The setting for the study was a state located in the southeastern quadrant of the United States. This state was selected because of its high public school personnel turnover rate. A 2015 study conducted by the target state's department of education found that nearly half (47%) of school personnel (teachers and administrators) leave the profession within five years (Tyre, 2015).

Data Collection

Data were collected and compiled from the repository of the state education department.

Data were systematically downloaded from the repository of the target state's education department annual report cards and individual schools.

Protection of Human Subjects

The study was guided by principles and standards designed to ensure confidentiality of subjects and anonymity of the state location. Upon approval by the dissertation committee, the researcher completed Mercer University internal review board (IRB) documents relating to privacy, confidentiality, and safety. Specifically, the state setting of the study remained anonymous and no individual school districts, schools, or staff were included in written documents or oral presentations.

Data Analysis

Data for each high school and principal were organized into an Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and entered in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 software package for analysis. The school was used as the unit of analysis. Binomial logistic regression was used to determine each independent variable's individual and collective contributions to the dependent outcome variables for the length of service. The binomial logistic regression assumptions allowed the researcher to remove missing cases and variables that create collinearity with the dependent dichotomous variable.

Summary

Chapter 3 reiterated the research questions and presented the research design, population, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques for this study. Ethical requirements were followed and data was de-identified prior to analysis. All data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Chapter 4 presents the results of this quantitative research.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Principal job departure is a critical and increasing problem in public schools across the United States. This study sought to identify personnel and institutional factors predictive of principal retention. Data for three fiscal years, 2017 to 2020, from a single state, Department of Education Classified/Certified Personnel Information data collection system (CPI) were analyzed. In October and March, CPI was collected twice per year, assessing the full-time equivalent (FTE) student count for funding schools. In each CPI, collection records reported for all schools and districts were employee job assignments, school codes, enrollment size, demographics, and free and reduce-priced lunch percentages. In addition, each collection cycle reported principals active at the collection period and any terminations that occurred since the last CPI cycle. The CPI report comprised 2,283 schools, with 393 accounting for high schools.

Three years of data using a unique encrypted identifier for each employee were compared from the October and March FTE student count. This was used to determine the number of principals, superintendents, and assistant principals who stayed or left the profession from each year. Then three years of personnel rosters were matched to the high school student-level data. This resulted in 339 out of 393 high school principals and school-level data being analyzed to predict behaviors that cause a principal to stay at the same school for multiple years. The other 54 high school principals were removed from the data set because they were missing from one of the FTE cycles.

The dependent variable was principal job persistence, measured by remaining in the position for three years with the same school. The independent variables were age, gender, free

and reduced-price lunch status, minority population, school enrollment size, superintendent longevity in service, and assistant principal continuity in service with the district. Descriptive statistics prior and binomial logistic regression (BLR) were conducted using the SPSS software package. Logistic regression was selected for data analysis because the dependent variable is binary; the two categories being principals remained or left in three years. The examination of the principal personnel and school characteristics explained variances in job retention percentage of cases in the sample and predicted the values of the dependent variable based upon the principal turnover antecedents. The principal and predictor variables are distributed based on the 339 public high schools (see *Table 1*).

Table 1

Distribution of Personnel and Institutional Factors Based on Age, Gender, FRLP, School, and Minority Enrollment Size (N=339 principals)

Variables	Frequency	%
Age		
Less than 45 years old	108	31.9%
45 to 54 years old	187	55.2%
55 years old and more	44	13.0%
Gender		
Female	114	33.6%
Male	225	66.4%
Principal Year 1		
Left	73	21.5%
Stayed	266	78.5%
Principal Year 3		
Left	139	41.0%
Stayed	200	59.0%
Superintendent Year 1		
Different	70	20.6%
Same	269	79.4%
Superintendent Year 3		
Different	101	29.8%
Same	238	70.2%
Assistant Principal Year 1		
Different	201	59.3%
Same	138	40.7%
Assistant Principal Year 3		
Different	285	84.1%
Same	54	15.9%
Student Enrollment		
Less than 500 students	36	10.6%
501 to 1499 students	179	52.8%
1500 to 2499 students	97	28.6%
2500 students and more	27	8.0%
Minority Population	117	34.5%
Less than 25% minority	64	18.9%
75% or more minority	124	38.6%
Free Reduce-Priced Lunch		
Low <25% FRPL	100	29.5%
Mid-high 50.1 to 75%	54	15.9%
Mid-low 24.1 to 50%	111	32.7%
75% or more	74	21.8%

Binomial logistic regression analyzes the likelihood of the outcome in a situation based on single or multiple occurring events. Critical to BLR analysis are key assumptions grounded in large individual cases that are mutually exclusive to one another and shown with a good model fit, linearity of continuous variables, no multicollinearity, and insignificant outliers.

BLR modeled the interactions of 339 high school principals who remained and departed from the same school based on the influence of seven binary and nominal categorical predictor variables: age, gender, free and reduced lunch status, minority population, school enrollment size, superintendent longevity in service, and assistant principal continuity in service. The probability and odds ratio (OR) values were used to determine BLR statistical significance and association between the dependent and independent variables. BLR probability when p is less than 0.05 and the odds ratio within a unit increase of the predictor variables were used to explain the study. The observed cases for the variables were confirmed with the descriptive statistics form of frequency, percentages, and cross-tabulations.

Procedures

Conducting this study required the disaggregation and aggregation of personnel and school-level data from a single state's Department of Education Classified/Certified Personnel Information system. As a result, three years of data for 393 public high schools, each with a unique encrypted identifier for principals, were reviewed and disaggregated from 2,283 public schools using Microsoft Excel. Each case was reported in two CPI cycles, one in October and March for the same fiscal year. This two-cycle reporting represented full-time enrollment student counts and determined the continued employment status of personnel. In addition, CPI collection

cycles reported the codes that identified the school and personnel job assignments, age, years of experience in the state, demographics, enrollment size, and free reduce-priced lunch percentages.

The CPI reports provided the personnel's overall work experience that included other job assignments with the district. Examining whether the principal remained on the job and the causes that changed their work status over time required the researcher to generate new records. CPI reports were disaggregated, aggregated, and paired to the principal's unique encrypted identifier and school code, resulting in 339 out of 393 public high schools found in the 2020 fiscal year. This analysis of the principal's status in the position for multiple years required that the exact process was conducted in two iterations. The 339 schools identified in the year 2020 were used to generate the 2019 and 2018 data.

Additionally, the school codes were compared to the superintendent and assistant principal's unique encrypted identifiers, corresponding to the principal's data for each year. There were 149 superintendents and a range of one to eleven assistant principals associated with each principal for the 339 public high schools. The principal's age, gender, free and reduce-priced lunch percentages, school enrollment size, and minority population for years one and three were represented by the 2020 fiscal year data.

Two years of data were compared to the 2020 fiscal year. Analysis of the unique encrypted identifier for principals determined whether the individuals left or remained on the job for consecutive years. The analysis consisted of two iterations of fiscal year data representing one and three years of data. One year consisted of the 2020 fiscal year, whereas three years comprised the 2018 through 2020 information. The process was repeated and determined the longevity in service for the superintendent and assistant principal from multiple years. The three

years of compiled personnel and school-level data were imported to SPSS software and analyzed with descriptive statistics and binary logistic regression models to determine the predictor values of the variables represented by the data.

Descriptive Statistics

The study examined the predictive antecedents of 339 high school principals from a single state sample of 394 U.S. public high schools. One and three consecutive years of principal and school-level data were analyzed to predict behaviors of principals who left or stayed on the job during the years 2020 through 2017. The average age of the principal was 47.49 years old. In year one, 78.5% of the principals stayed; 33.6% were female, and 66.4% were male. After three years, 59.0% of those principals remained in the position. For principals who remained on the job through the three years, the superintendent changed from 79.4% to 70.2%, but the same assistant principals declined drastically from 40.7% to 15.9%. This suggests that when a principal was in place from year to year or three years, the assistant principals most often left, whereas the superintendent was most likely the same. For principals who stayed on the job after years one and three, the variance in having the same assistant principal was 24.8%, which indicated that of the 200 principals who stayed, 55.1% of assistant principals were different.

Analysis of Binomial Logistic Assumptions

To ensure the three years of high school principal personnel data met the binomial logistic regression (BLR) assumptions, a review and an analysis of the dataset were conducted. Central to the interpretation of these findings is that logistic regression is predictive of the probability of these relationships, not their certainty.

Binary Dichotomous Dependent Variable

The BLR assumes that the dependent variable is binary, representing two values, 0 and 1. This assumption was met; the dependent variable was left v. stayed at the same school as a principal for one year and three consecutive years.

Independent Variables

The BLR assumes that the independent predictor variables considered are nominal categorical variables. This assumption was met; the predictor variables for the multiple-year analyses of principals were the same v. different superintendent, same v. different assistant principal, age (three levels in years), minority population (four levels in enrollment size), school enrollment (four levels in school population) and free and reduced-price lunch (four levels in the percentage of enrollment size).

Independence of Observation

The BLR assumes there is no relationship between the dependent or independent nominal variables in each observation. This assumption was met; each observation is distinct to the outcome that the principal left or stayed on the job for one year or three consecutive years.

Cases per Independent Variable

The BLR assumes that 15 or more cases are observed by the main effect of the independent variables. This assumption was met; there were 339 cases for the dependent and independent variables.

Model of Good Fit

The BLR assumes the model to be a good fit when the Pearson Chi2 Good-fit-test indicates that if p => 0.05 (Hibel, 2015, p. 72). This assumption was met; the model for one year

and three consecutive years explained 23.9% and 20.4% (Nagelkerke R2 model) of variance in principals who stayed on the job and correctly classified cases known as the Percentage Accuracy classification ranged from 78.5% to 79.6% and 59% to 70.5%, respectively. Sensitivity of the correctly observed characteristics of the model predicted 95.9% and 83.5% stayed, respectively. The correctly observed characteristics that left the job were predicted at 20.5% and 51.8%, respectively. The positive predictive value of all cases indicating the principal stayed was measured as 81.5% and 71.4%, and the negative predictive value classifying that they left was 57.7% and 68.6%, respectively. This is based on one cut value; therefore, the ROC curve will be evaluated to determine evidence of increased specificity and discrimination in the cases.

Linearity

The BLR assumes a relationship between the dependent and independent categorical variables. Loglinear analysis was used to measure the association between three or more categorical variables to detect linearity. First, the variables were tested, and linearity was shown with the four levels of categorical variables. Then, variables were removed from the analysis to reduce the effect of linearity. This process showed a minimal effect of linearity, and all variables were kept in the model.

Outliers

The BLR assumes there are no unusual points that will impact the effectiveness of the model. The analysis of the dataset using SPSS Casewise diagnostics identified for one year 10 cases and three consecutive years 5 cases out of the 339 that did not fit the model well. Zero cases with a standardized residual value greater than the -2 standard deviations; all were kept in the dataset.

This study explored the extent to which seven mutually exclusive and exhaustive variables predict whether the principal stayed or left the same school after one year or a minimum of three consecutive years of leadership. Each research question details the results of the descriptive statistics and BLR analysis.

Results: Research Questions

Two research questions were structured to explore the effects of (a) age, (b) gender, (c) free and reduced-price lunch status, (d) minority population, (e) school enrollment size, (f) superintendent longevity in service, and (g) assistant principal continuity in service on the likelihood that principals will remain in their positions for three years. The following sections review these questions and present the results.

Research Question 1

The first research question (RQ1) was as follows: Do age, gender, free and reduced lunch status, minority population, school enrollment size, superintendent longevity in service, and assistant principal continuity in service predict the principals' retention at a single high school for a minimum of one year**?**

The binomial logistic regression model was statistically significant, $X^2(14) = 57.03$, $p < 0.05$, indicating that the relationship between the principal staying on the job for a full academic year and the 18 predictor variables in the model were statistically significant. The model explained 23.9% (Nagelkerke R2 model) of the variance in principals who stayed on the job and correctly classified 79.6% of these leaders.

The odds ratio was calculated to determine the predicted values of principals who stayed on the job after one year. The OR is greater or less than the value of one, respectively increasing

or decreasing the outcomes and the odds of probability for the predictors. The results indicated that a principal between the ages of 45 and 54 was more likely to stay was a positive and significant (β = 0.95, *SE*=.32, *p* = 0.003) predictor of probability increasing for every one unit of the principal's age by a factor of 2.595. Consequently, a principal 55 years and older was a non-significant predictor of them staying at the same school after one full academic year. Similarly, male principals having the same superintendent are an insignificant predictor of the building leader staying on the job. However, for one unit change having an assistant principal was a positive and statistically significant (β = 1.84, *SE* = 0.40, *p* = .001) predictor of the principal staying at the same school and increasing by a factor of 6.272.

The principals leading schools with student enrollment sizes between 501 and 1499 were more likely to stay at the same school (β = 0.95, *SE*=.32, *p* =.003). Still, the statistical significance was not evidence for sizes less than 500 and greater than 1500. The school's enrollment size was associated with a 191% increase in the district's retention of the leader. After one year, the predictor values for gender, low to large enrollment sizes, student minority populations, and free and reduce-priced lunch status were not statistically significant. The results of the BLR analysis for principals who stayed for one fiscal year are in *Table 2*.

Table 2

Binomial Logistic Regression on Principals Who Stayed for One Year

							95% CI	
Variables	*B*	*SE*	Wald	*df*	Sig.	Exp(*B*)	Lower	Upper
Age			8.93	2	**.01**			
Age(1)	0.95	0.32	8.90	1	**.00**	2.60	1.4	4.9
Age(2)	0.60	0.46	1.66	1	.20	1.82	0.7	4.5
Gender(1)	0.27	0.32	0.72	1	.40	1.31	0.7	2.4
Superintendent 1(1)	0.27	0.35	0.60	1	.44	1.31	0.7	2.6
Assistant Principal 1(1)	1.84	0.40	21.10	1	**.00**	6.27	2.9	13.7
Student Enrollment			5.09	3	.17			
Student Enrollment(1)	1.07	0.53	4.11	1	**.04**	2.92	1.0	8.2
Student Enrollment(2)	0.88	0.60	2.16	1	.14	2.40	0.7	7.7
Student Enrollment(3)	1.53	0.80	3.64	1	.06	4.62	1.0	22.2
Minority Population			5.72	3	.13			
Minority Population(1)	-0.34	0.55	0.39	1	.54	0.71	0.2	2.1
Minority Population(2)	-1.00	0.58	2.92	1	.09	0.37	0.1	1.2
Minority Population(3)	-0.08	0.55	0.02	1	.88	0.92	0.3	2.8
FRPL Eligibility			6.06	3	.11			
FRPL Eligibility (1)	0.45	0.59	0.60	1	.44	1.57	0.5	5.00
FRPL Eligibility (2)	-0.04	0.41	0.01	1	.93	0.96	0.4	2.2
FRPL Eligibility (3)	-0.69	0.40	2.90	1	.09	0.50	0.2	1.1
Constant	-0.62	0.79	0.61	1	.43	0.54		

Research Question 2

The second research question was as follows: Do age, gender, free and reduced lunch status, minority population, school enrollment size, superintendent longevity in service, and assistant principal continuity in service predict the principals' retention at a single high school for three years?

The binomial logistic regression model was statistically significant, $X2(14) = 55.584$, $p < 0.05$, indicating that the relationship between the principal staying on the job for three fiscal

years and the 18 predictor variables in the model were statistically significant. Furthermore, the model explained 20.4% (Nagelkerke R^2 model) of the variance in principals who stayed on the job and correctly classified 70.5% of these leaders. This indicated how close the data is fitted to the BLR model and explained the difference for the part (0 1) of the dependent variable associated with the independent variable.

The odds ratio was calculated to determine the predicted value of the principals who stayed on the job for three years. The OR is greater than or less than the value as an increase or decrease in the outcome and the likelihood of the predictors. The results indicated that each age group increased in the model for one unit change of the predicted value. Principals between the ages of 45 to 54 (β= 0.83, SE = 0.27, p = .002) and 55 and older (β = 1.08, SE = 0.412, p = .009) respectively increased by a factor of 2.286 and 2.957 times, with the group of principals 55 and older showing a slightly higher likelihood of remaining at the same school for three years. For one unit change, having the same assistant principal (β = 1.31, SE = 0.40, p = 0.001) increases by a factor of 3.701 and superintendent (β = 0.53, SE = 0.27, p = 0.048) was positive and significant with 1.702 times the likelihood that the principal stays on the job.

For one unit change, male principals who remained at the same school increased by 122% more than females in three years. The principals leading schools with free reduce-priced lunch eligibility of 75% or higher showed a statistical significance of p = 0.035, predicting the odds that the principal stays in these schools compared to communities with lesser students qualifying for low- to mid-poverty status. The predictor values for school enrollment size, student minority population, and free and reduce-priced lunch status were not statistically significant. *Table 3* displays the results of the analysis.

Table 3

Binomial Logistic Regression on Principals Who Stayed for Three Years

							95% C.I.	
Variables	*B*	*SE*	Wald	*df*	Sig.	Exp *B*	Lower	Upper
Age			11.40	2	**0.00**			
Age(1)	0.83	0.27	9.25	1	**0.00**	2.29	1.3	3.9
Age(2)	1.08	0.41	6.92	1	**0.01**	2.96	1.3	6.6
Gender(1)	0.80	0.26	9.36	1	**0.00**	2.23	1.3	3.7
Superintendent 3(1)	0.53	0.27	3.90	1	**0.05**	1.70	1.0	2.9
Assistant Principal 3(1)	1.31	0.40	10.57	1	**0.00**	3.70	1.7	8.1
Student Enrollment			6.79	3	0.08			
Student Enrollment(1)	0.46	0.44	1.07	1	0.30	1.58	0.7	3.8
Student Enrollment(2)	-0.30	0.50	0.37	1	0.55	0.74	0.3	2.0
Student Enrollment(3)	-0.06	0.63	0.01	1	0.93	0.95	0.3	3.2
Minority Population			3.36	3	0.34			
Minority Population(1)	0.22	0.43	0.27	1	0.61	1.25	0.5	2.9
Minority Population(2)	-0.28	0.47	0.34	1	0.56	0.76	0.3	1.9
Minority Population(3)	0.34	0.43	0.62	1	0.43	1.40	0.6	3.2
FRPL Eligibility			8.58	3	**0.04**			
FRPL Eligibility (1)	0.76	0.43	3.13	1	0.08	2.15	0.9	5.0
FRPL Eligibility (2)	0.48	0.33	2.12	1	0.15	1.62	0.8	3.1
FRPL Eligibility (3)	-0.31	0.34	0.83	1	0.36	0.73	0.4	1.4
Constant	-1.79	0.65	7.50	1	0.01	0.17		

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the predictive antecedents of 339 principals who remained with the same public high school for multiple years. In the case of principals who stayed one year, there was a 2.595 likelihood that the principal stayed on the job for one year for every one-unit increase in the principal's age between 45 and 54 years old. With every increase in the assistant principal being on the job for an entire year, there was a 6.272 likelihood that the

principal stayed for the year. For every increase in the student enrollment size of 501 to 1499 compared to less than 500, there was a 2.919 likelihood that the principal stayed on the job.

In the case of principals who stayed for three years, for every increase in the principal's age, the likelihood of them remaining on the job is statistically significant across each age group. The odds of the assistant principal working with the same principal was 2.571 less likely than one year. The likelihood of principals remaining on the job increased by 1.702 times when the superintendent continues as the leader's supervisor. For every male principal, the likelihood of them remaining with the same school was 0.365 times less than year one. This was not a significant change, but it shows a decline in males staying on the job with the same school. The odds of the principal remaining increased in year 3 when free and reduce-priced lunch status was 75% or more in the student population's poverty status.

Using binomial logistics regression explained the association principals had in remaining at the same school for multiple years relative to the independent variables. The analysis showed a decrease in the principals who stayed at the same school from one to three years. The number of different assistant principals who left doubled in these years, resulting in the likelihood of the principal who stayed decreasing at the same high school. The odds of a male principal who stayed on the job for one full academic year were not statistically significant. Still, the statistical significance strengthens in association from $p = .396$ to $p = 0.002$ for males who remained for three years. For every increase in the assistant principal remaining on the job, there was a 3.805 likelihood that the principal stayed for three consecutive years. The BLR predicted the variables of age and assistant principal longevity of experience as strong predictors for principals to remain on the job after one and three years with the same school.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the increasingly transient job status of U.S. public school principals and understand the influence of personnel and school district factors on principal departures. This study sought to explain the antecedents of principal stayers and leavers in the profession. The research further addressed the district and school-level factors used to predict principal turnover and their intentions to stay or leave the school through the theoretical framework of job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001). Job embeddedness was selected as the theoretical foundation of this study because it describes an employee's plan to remain with the organization or leave the profession. Job embeddedness, which is widely used in the fields of business and psychology, states that an employee's intention to stay or leave voluntarily results from planned and unplanned circumstances, such as a sense of belonging to the organization (Dechawatanapaisal, 2018a; Lyu & Zhu, 2017). The three job embeddedness components of link, fit, and sacrifice explain the underlying situations principals consider when deciding to remain with the school, district, and community. Years of principal turnover rates average 11%t, that is inclusive of the diverse types of turnover with 68% of these principal operating in a different leadership (Taie & Goldring, 2019). Literature claims to the conditions, the work and life balance, and the negative impact on student achievement provided the lens for job embeddedness theory to analyze the principal's commitment in the position and organization.

Years of principal turnover have shown that 1 out of 5 principals leave every year (Haven, 2020). The principal's departure adversely impacts student performance and lingers for multiple school terms, not recovering until three years or more with a new leader (Carpenter et

al., 2021). Studies revealed that a change in student achievement is indicative of the principals' departure are defined by but not limited to low teacher quality, unfavorable working conditions, high demographics of underserved minority populations, and school leaders with no or limited years of principal quality and experience (Dixon et al., 2021; Pietsch et al., 2020; Yan, 2020). Additionally, empirical studies have presented variations in the causes of principal turnover relating to the variances in the design methodology, definitions, data sources, and measurement tools (Rangel, 2018). Principal turnover disrupts the school's climate, and in cases with an inexperienced principal, student performance rates are significantly below state and national measures. Leading schools is challenging work, and the antecedents of principal turnover contribute to staff turnover or reduction in experience and quality and declines in student outcomes (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; Tan, 2018). Therefore, this study explored leadership characteristics and district and school-level predictors that affected high school principals' intention to leave or remain in the position for multiple years.

Summary of the Study

This research entailed examining behaviors that predict the principal's intent to stay or leave the same high school and district during the years of 2017 through 2020 using a single state's U.S. Department of Education Classified/Certified Personal and School Information. The construct of job embeddedness was used as the structure that connected principal turnover to the personnel and institution characteristics that predict the behaviors of the principal remaining or leaving the job from one year to three years. Two research questions guided this study:

1. Do age, gender, free and reduced lunch status, minority population, school enrollment size, superintendent longevity in service, and assistant principal continuity in service predict the principals' retention at a single high school for a minimum of 1 year?
2. Do age, gender, free and reduced lunch status, minority population, school enrollment size, superintendent longevity in service, and assistant principal continuity in service predict the principals' retention at a single high school for three years?

These research questions examined the predictor values of the principal stayers and leavers to their associated personnel and institutional variables for a single high school. Rangel (2018) found that principal turnover research has multiple variations in defining the stayers and leavers and the measures used cause differences in the results. This study defines a stayer as a public-school principal who led the school from the previous year and a leaver as a public-school principal who resigned, retired, or was terminated from the job (Goldring & Taie, 2018).

The non-experimental binomial logistic regression design was used to measure multiple years of a single state's population of public high school principals who served with the same staff and students. Table (4.1) details the descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations used to describe the principals who stayed and left related to their attributes and district and school-level factors. The data were presented in two cycles for one school year, and before analyzing the data, it was reformatted to remove missing leaders. The two cycles represented the fall and spring Full-Time Equivalent data that provided personnel and institutional information. A unique encrypted identifier was used to review personnel and school-level characteristics. The data were discrete and presented in categorical levels to predict the outcome of a principal staying or leaving his position.

Summary of the Findings

The two research questions sought to predict the probability of the principal staying or leaving with conditions of the personnel and institutional variables for one and three years. A key finding from this study is the continuity in service of the assistant principal, predicting if the principal remained on the job from year to year and continuing for three years. Though there is a statistical significance in the principal leading the same high school, retaining principals declined from 78.5% to 59% during these years. Of the 339 principals, 73 left after completing year one and 139 principals were different at the end of the third year. A second key finding is the principal's age ranging from 45 to 54, indicating a higher significance than at the age of 44 years and younger when the principal served for one year. The significance is slightly more significant when the principals aged 45 to 54 compared to 55 and older for three years of leadership. A third finding is the statistical significance of student enrollment size from 501 to 1499 compared to less than 500 students. This is key in year one, but there was no statistical significance after three years. A fourth finding was the continuity in service of the superintendent, predicting a 5% chance of the principal staying at the same school for three years compared to no significance in one year. A fifth finding is the school's free and reduce-priced lunch status is significant with high-poverty status, 75% and more predicting the same principal remained for three years. There was not a statistical significance of FRPL when the principal served for one year.

Data revealed that six out of the seven variables predicted the odds ratio, the likelihood of the leader remaining in place. Thus, two of the seven predictor variables were shown more likely across multiple years, decreasing by half the factor in year one. The data confirms what research says about principal stayers and leavers that their age and gender (Dixon et al., 2021) are

precursors to their turnover in relation to working at the same school for multiple years. An essential part of this study was the turnover intentions of high schools using standard elements evidenced in studies and including the groups of school-level factors, which was that of the assistant principal continuity of service. The data revealed that principals are more likely to remain on the job when the assistant principal remains for multiple years, although there was an increase in the principals who left after three years.

Discussion of the Findings

Empirical studies on principal turnover confirmed that the type of job transition, school locale and climate, student population, accountability measures, and working conditions are determinants to positive outcomes in the principal's leadership effectiveness, student achievement, and the retention of quality staff. Though principal turnover is harmful to the school's progress, some administrator changes are necessary to advance the staff and student performances. Nationally, the average turnover rate of 20% has prolonged for more than a decade, with higher rates trending with principals leaving low-achieving and high minority populated schools. However, the principal's job transitions continue to show gaps in preventing the downward trajectory in student achievement for the most underserved communities.

This study focused on determining predictor variables of principals who remained at the same school or left the position. The research questions confirm what has been found in previous studies and add to the limited evidence of the principal's administrators' and supervisors' impact on their role and job transitions. Additionally, the results add to the limited studies on the mobility of assistant administrators and their value-added to the principal's leadership. Finally, the principal remaining at the same school with support structures provided by their

superintendent are critical factors of success and improvement of the principal, thus positively transforming their school leadership practices and progress with staff and students.

The results from the research questions confirmed that the principal's age and the assistant principal's time on the job were highly predictive of the principal remaining at the same school for multiple years. Job embeddedness theory attributes of link, fit, and sacrifice served as the lens for describing the predictive nature of principal intentions. The link describes the principal's relationship with the school- and district-level staff. Fit considers the principal's beliefs and values and how well these are actualized working with the school and the community. This was present in the leader's age and years of experience serving the same school over multiple periods. Furthermore, the job embeddedness sacrifice component underscores the principal's capacity to lead high-poverty communities.

The principal's intent to leave weighs on their ability to influence staff and sustain the school's systems and student achievement. Bartanen et al. (2019) found that when principals leave within the novice years, the impact is significant in retaining staff and improving student achievement. Likewise, national data (Taie & Goldring, 2019) shows that 35% of principals stay at their schools for less than two years. The turnover rates trend higher for schools with larger populations of minority students (NASSP, 2019). Consistent with principal turnover research, females are more likely to remain although they do not represent the majority of school leaders at the primary and secondary level (Dixon et al., 2021). Grissom et al., (2019) found that age explained the high turnover rates for principals 60 years and older compared to the other age ranges. These research questions show the probable outcomes of principals who stay or leave the same high school for multiple years and the district and school-level factors.

Other studies show probable causes in principal job transitions. Yet, these results add the variables of administrator leadership and supervision with the superintendent and assistant principal's longevity during the principal's term. Additionally, school enrollment size significantly affects school leadership. Of the seven variables, four demonstrated significances with the principal stayers and adversely impacting the leavers. For example, a principal leaving a school resulting from a demotion indicates low achievement with a population of minority students. Studies found principal demotions increase the turnover of quality teachers and administrators.

Conclusions

The findings of this study indicate that principals who stay or leave the school the following year and after three years make a positive or negative difference in the school's performance. The principal's age, gender, years of experience working with the same superintendent and assistant principal, free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL) status of 75% or higher, and the school enrollment size between 501 and 1,499 students all positively show an association to the principal remaining at the same school for multiple years. Perceptive into the principal's intent to stay decreases the odds of principal turnover. Most significant for principals who stayed for multiple years was leading the school with the same assistant principal. The principals' association to the other variables, school enrollment size, minority student population, and FRPL measured in four different groups, were not shown to significantly associate with the principal staying at the same school for multiple years. These findings correspond to how principal turnover intentions can be used to further the research considering the classification of

the school and community and the diverse student population to increase student achievement and school performance.

Implications

Principal turnover negatively impacts student achievement and overall school performance. Levin et al., (2020) stated that turnover is a voluntary and involuntary action. The impact takes three to five years to improve the school or return student performance to a certain level. Equally important, researchers found that student achievement declines two years before principal turnover occurs, significantly impacting high-poverty communities and minority student populations (Pham et al., 2020; Willis, 2016). The continuance of principals transitioning among schools, districts, and other professions highlighted in years of empirical studies with major differences in the design method affects the response to principal turnover (Rangel, 2018). Furthering students' educational path requires the district and school leaders to develop systematic and supportive processes and practices to decrease principal turnover rate and the disruptive effect it causes in student achievement and school leaders' careers.

First, the district should hire quality principals who have experience creating, implementing, and monitoring systemic practices, building relationships, and serving and engaging the school's stakeholders and the community at large. Many schools in high-poverty environments with minority student populations are subjected to the negative factors of principal turnover. Studies showed that these communities are faced with hiring inexperienced principals, lower-tiered teachers, and a significant number of students with learning deficits below the state's proficiency levels. Combating underserved students and communities requires principals to remain beyond the first three years to affect the necessary changes to increase student

achievement. Given the principal leaves a school at alarming rates, the district can do more to support leaders and improve the predictor factors for turnover.

Another implication for this study is to evaluate the principal to understand their capacity to manage and lead the assistant administrators, teachers and students, and other responsibilities determined by their supervisor and district. The challenges of Covid-19 exposed leadership, teaching, and learning challenges in the 21st-century education system. The lack of equality for all students highlighted deficiencies and access, which transformed how and when students learned, and leaders led. Therefore, the principal should be capable of leading the stakeholders to meet the needs of the school and district. Promote leadership stability and job satisfaction by addressing difficult principal working conditions and unreasonable accountability measures. Give principals better job benefits packages and contracts, competitive salaries, minimize workload and hours.

Recommendations

Extensive empirical studies outline the challenges and contributing factors of principal turnover. However, the findings are complex due to the varying design methods and definitions. Resolving the issue ensures all students have equal access and opportunity, and teachers and leaders have the capacity to meet the students where they are to improve them toward academic acumen in U.S. public schools. Ongoing professional development on school improvement cycles and alignment with the accountability systems to meet the need of students and encourage effective principals to stay in challenging schools are necessary. Moreover, principals need more autonomy and authority to identify and implement solutions to problems at their schools. To support principals beyond their first two years, one-to-one coaching on organization leadership

and sustainable practices would promote retention. Training assistant principals on principal leadership would facilitate their transition to principal or their ability to lead in the absence of the principal. Furthermore, to ensure transparency, the state department of education and school districts should gather principal attrition and mobility data; develop hiring practices to include job fit, link, and sacrifice components; and conduct national surveys and principal interviews to identify predictive behaviors leading to their job transitions.

Final Thoughts

This research entailed examining behaviors that predict the principal's intent to stay or leave the same high school and district during the years of 2017 through 2020 using a single state's U.S. Department of Education Classified/Certified Personal and School Information. The construct of job embeddedness was used as the structure that connected principal turnover to the personnel and institution characteristics that predict the behaviors of the principal remaining or leaving the job from one year to three years.

Researchers correlate principal turnover to teacher turnover and ineffective school improvement practices, and in tandem, these negatively affect student achievement, particularly those in underserved minority communities. Ratifying the educational challenges with principal turnover requires district and school leaders to predetermine the causes and resolve the issue. However, consistency of the same principal serving the school for several terms is essential to reducing adverse student outcomes in core content areas. Preventing and predicting involuntary principal turnover is necessary to increase and sustain the achievement and school climates conducive for favorable working and learning conditions.

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APPENDIX

MERCER UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board
For Research Involving Human Subjects

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Ms. Tara Ross
3001 Mercer University Drive
Educational Leadership
Atlanta, GA 30341

RE: Unlocking Principal Job Expectancy in the Age of COVID-19 (H2103047)

Dear Ms. Ross:

On behalf of Mercer University's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, your application submitted on 02-Mar-2021 for the above referenced protocol was reviewed in accordance with the 2018 Revised Federal Regulations 46.104 under category(ies) _4 and is **Exempt from further review at this time.**

Any changes to the above protocol ***MUST*** be resubmitted for IRB review to ensure that risks to the subject have not changed.

Item(s) Approved (03-Mar-2021):
New application to assess how age, gender, experience, superintendent and vice principal continuity, school poverty index, and district and school enrollment size impact principal departure.

NOTE: Although this study has been reviewed and exempt under the 2018 revision of the common rules, the IRB may ask that you submit a status report should the study continue beyond one year.

We at the IRB and the Office of Research Compliance are dedicated to providing the best service to our research community. As one of our investigators, we value your feedback and ask that you please take a moment to complete our Satisfaction Survey and help us to improve the quality of our service.

It has been a pleasure working with you and we wish you much success with your project! If you need any further assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

Respectfully,

Ava Chambliss-Richardson, Ph.D., CIP, CIM.
Director of Research Compliance
Member
Institutional Review Board

"Mercer University has adopted and agrees to conduct its clinical research studies in accordance with the International Conference on Harmonization's (ICH) Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice."

Mercer University IRB & Office of Research Compliance
Phone: 478-301-4101 | Email: ORC_Mercer@Mercer.Edu | Fax: 478-301-2329
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