Spring 2-10-2022

School Climate and Teacher Self- Efficacy: Teacher's Perspectives

Jennifer Prado
Arkansas Tech University

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

By

JENNIFER N. PRADO

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College of
Arkansas Tech University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
May 2022

Abstract

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY:
TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

Jennifer N. Prado

Teacher self-efficacy is used to describe how a teacher feels about their ability to perform the tasks related to teaching. This qualitative study focused on how teachers' perceptions of their school climate affect teacher self-efficacy in eight middle school teachers in Arkansas. Participants were Arkansas middle school teachers with three or more years of experience. The typical participant was a 43-year-old female with an undergraduate degree in education, a master's degree, and 16 years of classroom experience. A request for participants was sent to the superintendent of every district in Arkansas that had at least one middle school with the exception of the current and previous employer of the researcher. Once permission was granted from the superintendent, the researcher sent a request for participants to the middle school principals and ended up with eight volunteer participants. Interviews were conducted using a teleconferencing platform, and artifacts were collected. Data analysis was done using the Constant Comparative Method. The interview transcripts were coded based on emerging patterns in responses, and the emerging patterns became the themes that the key findings were based on. Results indicated that teachers working in self-described positive climates had positive descriptions of their teacher self-efficacy. Other findings include the importance of relationships with coworkers and students to teachers, the impact of the support and trust from leadership on teachers, and the impact of leaders on school climate. In addition to the key findings, the final chapter contains also contains implications for practice and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: school climate, teacher self-efficacy, middle school, leadership, relationships

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

Chapter I: Introduction

Self-efficacy can have a powerful effect on an individual's life, even to the point of determining their career (Bandura, 2005). Teaching is a career that can have an incredible impact on the lives of young people – for better or worse (Hattie, 2003). This chapter presents background information concerning the problem studied. School climate and self-efficacy will be described and defined. The formal problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the research question follow. An overview of Social Cognitive Theory is given as a theoretical foundation for the study. Finally, this chapter sets up the organization for the rest of the study.

Background of the Problem

According to years of research that Hattie (2003) has analyzed, teachers make a tremendous impact on students' education. Knowing that teachers have such a significant influence on education, understanding their experiences, and what makes them more or less effective can help educational leaders find ways to improve the educational process. Middle schools in particular have been found to have more staff turnover than elementary and secondary schools and an issue with teacher satisfaction (Kraft et al., 2016).

Middle school is a time of intense change for many students; this developmental stage needs types of support that might be different from elementary or secondary schools (Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Malone et al., 2017). Studies have also shown that a positive school climate might be more valuable during the middle school stage than it is at other grade levels (Daily, Smith et al., 2020). The experiences of the adults that teach students during this time of change will be highlighted in this study. One aspect of teachers' work that can be studied to better understand their situation is self-efficacy. The

focus of this study was how school climate affects the self-efficacy of the teachers in the study. The next two sections give background information on school climate and teacher self-efficacy.

School Climate

School climate is the first piece of the problem that was explored. It is an often-studied topic, but a universally agreed-upon definition has been elusive due to the abstractness of the subject (Hoy, 1990). It is sometimes described as the "indigenous 'feel' of the workplace" (Hoy, 1990). Another definition of school climate is "the set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another and influences the behavior of its members" (Hoy, 1990).

Several factors influence school climate: how the school is organized (both formally and informally), the leadership of the school, and the relationships maintained by the stakeholders (Hoy, 1990). Multiple sources have pointed to the principal of the school as the primary influencer on the school's climate (Anderson, 2019; Goleman, 2006). As the leader (or most powerful person) goes, so goes the rest of the organization. Having high emotional intelligence, inspiring trust, and having high expectations and optimism are some of the characteristics that effective leaders have that encourage a positive work environment (Anderson, 2019).

An improved school climate might play a part in better attendance and grades in middle and high school students (Daily et al., 2020; Daily, Mann et al., 2020). Beginning teachers who report working in a positive school climate are more likely to say that they plan to stay in the profession (Wynn et al., 2007). In one study, staff members that reported higher ratings on their school climate also reported a lower incidence of hostile

behavior and bullying among the staff (Powell et al., 2015). School climate has been linked to job satisfaction (Dicke et al., 2020) and teacher self-efficacy (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016). Job satisfaction impacts an employee's commitment to the organization (or profession), their well-being, and their self-efficacy (Dicke et al., 2020). As job satisfaction improves, so does student achievement (Dicke et al., 2020). School climate has also been directly linked to student achievement (Hoy & Hannum, 1997).

School climate has the potential to affect a myriad of educational outcomes. This study is being proposed to explore how it affects teacher self-efficacy. A better understanding of school climate and what it influences could help school leaders improve the educational process for all stakeholders.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the other half of the problem that was explored. Bandura (1993) describes self-efficacy as an individual's "beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives" (p. 118). He goes on to say that "beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave" (Bandura, 1993, p. 118). Applying this definition to the field of teaching, teacher self-efficacy is "a teacher's personal judgment or belief about his or her capabilities to teach" (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016, p. 292)

Teacher self-efficacy can be measured using surveys or questionnaires, and past research regarding this topic has primarily been quantitative (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Barkley et al., 2014; Dellinger et al., 2008; Hoy & Hannum, 1997). Dellinger et al. (2008) found that many of the more common assessments measure teacher efficacy and not teacher self-efficacy. The difference is subtle but important. According to Aldridge

and Fraser (2016), teacher efficacy "is concerned with teachers' beliefs about their ability to affect student performance" (p. 292) while teacher self-efficacy is "is concerned with a teacher's personal judgement or belief about his or her capabilities to teach" (p. 292). So, teacher efficacy is concerned with the outcome of teaching, while teacher self-efficacy is concerned with the act of teaching itself.

Self-efficacy can be impacted by many things. Bandura (1977) found that self-efficacy is formed and changed by four things: experience, modeling, verbal persuasion, and psychological arousal. Aldridge and Fraser (2016) noted that teacher empowerment and school resources and support played a role in teacher self-efficacy. Another factor in the shaping of teacher self-efficacy is principal support (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Walker & Slear, 2011).

Just as self-efficacy is impacted by outside factors; it, in turn, influences things as well. An individual's self-efficacy affects commitment to teaching and motivation (Bandura, 1993). Veiskarami et al. (2017) note that for teachers "higher motivation is correlated with academic achievement, self-esteem, self-regulation, and self-efficacy among the students" (p. 482). Research has also shown that teacher self-efficacy is associated with job satisfaction (Veiskarami et al., 2017) and student achievement growth (Walker & Slear, 2011). Aldridge and Fraser (2016) indicate that self-efficacy affects job-related stress, teacher burnout, and the use of teaching strategies.

Ultimately, self-efficacy can determine the course of an individual's life. Bandura (1993) said, "People are partly the product of their environment. Therefore, beliefs of personal efficacy can shape the course lives take by influencing choice of activities and environments" (p. 135). Since self-efficacy has powerful potential in directing an

individual's life, this study is attempting to add to the understanding of how it is affected by the environment an individual finds him or herself in.

Problem Statement, Purpose of the Study, and Research Question

Though we know school climate plays a role in teacher retention, student attendance, job satisfaction, student achievement, and teacher self-efficacy, there has not yet been any inquiry into how the perception of school climate affects teacher self-efficacy of middle school teachers in Arkansas. In fact, in a review of school climate literature, Wang and Degol (2016) point out the need for more research into how school climate affects teachers and administrators. Additionally, although researchers have validated Bandura's (1977) work in identifying what influences self-efficacy, Harrison et al. (1997) have noted that further work needs to be done looking at the influences within an organizational context to make the findings more applicable to a wider audience. Thus, research needs to be done to understand why and how the teacher self-efficacy of middle school teachers in Arkansas is affected by their perceptions of their school climate. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore how school climate affects Arkansas middle school teachers' teacher self-efficacy. This study examined how teachers perceive their school climate and their self-efficacy in order to better understand how these teachers' beliefs about their ability to do their jobs might be impacted by the environment they work in. By using qualitative methods with a constructivist approach to observe and describe this phenomenon, the story about the possible relationship between these two topics can be told. This study explored the following research question: How do Arkansas middle school teachers' perceptions of their school climate affect their self-efficacy?

Theoretical Framework

This study was based on SCT. One of Bandura's key elements of Social Cognitive Theory was the concept of agency (Bandura, 2002). Bandura (2002) defines an agent as one who "influence[s] intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances" (p. 270). This gave rise to the idea of self-efficacy which is an individual's "beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1993, p. 118). Since self-efficacy is the focus of this research study, SCT is a natural choice for a theoretical framework.

Significance of the Study

School leaders need a better understanding of how teachers are affected by the school climate where they spend so much of their time. Administrators can use this information to make the best use of their available resources as they endeavor to support their teachers and make every effort to provide excellent educational opportunities for all students. Teacher self-efficacy is important because it affects commitment to teaching, motivation (Bandura, 1993), job satisfaction (Veiskarami et al., 2017), and student achievement (Walker & Slear, 2011). Research has shown that school climate correlates with teacher self-efficacy (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016) and that administrators influence the climate (Walker & Slear, 2011). Thus, it is reasonable for administrators to want to have a better understanding of school climate and teacher self-efficacy.

The results of this study might help administrators better understand how their school climate is affecting their teachers. Since both school climate and teacher self-efficacy have been linked to student outcomes, it stands to reason that exploring those topics could be beneficial toward improving student achievement. Hattie's (2003)

research has pointed out that other than the contributions of the students themselves, teachers and "what [they] know, do, and care about" have the biggest impact on student learning (p. 2). The focus of this study was one of those teacher effects, self-efficacy, and it will add more data to the existing research focused on understanding aspects of the educational process.

Up to this point, most research concerning how school climate affects teacher self-efficacy has been quantitative. This study will add a qualitative perspective to the existing literature. By approaching school climate and teacher self-efficacy from a qualitative perspective, more can be learned about how school climate affects self-efficacy and possibly ways to maintain or increase teacher's beliefs in their ability to teach. If an administrator can identify with any of the characteristics found in the schools in this research data, they might be able to better understand their teachers and apply this new knowledge to their situation.

This research could provide school administrators more tools as they endeavor to provide all students with what they need to succeed. Equipped with a better understanding of how school climate affects teacher self-efficacy administrators might be able to find ways to boost their teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and consequently improve the educational opportunities of all students.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for use in this study:

- School climate was defined as the "internal characteristics that distinguish one school from another and influences the behaviors of its members…the relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by

its participants…and is based on their collective perceptions of behaviors in schools" (Hoy, 1990, p. 152). It will encompass the dimensions of leadership, academics, teaching and learning, safety, institutional environment, social atmosphere, and relationships.

- Teacher self-efficacy was defined as "a teacher's personal judgement or belief about his or her capabilities to teach" (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016, p. 292).
- Middle school usually comprises grades six through eight, although they could be in different configurations depending on the district (Malone et al., 2017).
- Positive school climate is an environment that "fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributive, and satisfying life in a democratic society" (National School Climate Council, 2007, p. 5).

Assumptions

This section describes the assumptions the researcher made during this process. First, the researcher assumed that qualitative inquiry is the appropriate method for this study. Next, the researcher assumed that participants would be truthful and willing to discuss their school climate and self-efficacy. Additionally, the interview questions would elicit the information needed to draw any significant conclusions. In the analysis process, the researcher assumed that patterns would emerge in the responses when using the Constant Comparative Method. Finally, the researcher assumed that the findings of the study will be useful to educators.

Limitations

An obvious limitation to the study is human error from both the researcher and the participants. The data came directly from the participants' perspective and could be biased, inaccurate, or incomplete. Additionally, participants might have had trouble articulating their thoughts and feelings or might not have been equally perceptive of their environment. Another limitation related to the participants is whether the sample that was interviewed had enough variation to make the findings relatable to other individuals.

The researcher could have caused an issue by not clearly communicating the definitions of terms to the participants resulting in skewed responses to the interview questions. Another limitation is in how the researcher defined the terms of the study particularly school climate since it does not have a universally agreed-upon definition.

Delimitations

For this study, only middle school teachers with at least three years of experience were interviewed. Teachers with only one or two years of experience might not have enough historical data or a reference point to discuss the school climate. Also, their level of self-efficacy could be affected by their lack of experience which could skew their responses.

Only teachers in Arkansas were interviewed in this study. This is partially due to convenience and partially due to the lack of research in school climate and self-efficacy in Arkansas teachers. Middle school was chosen over elementary or high school due to the specific developmental changes going on at this stage of a student's life (Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Malone et al., 2017). Kraft et al. (2016) contend that middle school is a "crucial period" for students both academically and developmentally and that middle

schools have a serious problem with “teacher satisfaction and turnover” (p. 1413). Middle schools also tend to focus on the concept of teaming (Hoy & Hannum, 1997) which could give their teachers a unique perspective on school climate.

Summary and Organization of the Remainder of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how school climate affects Arkansas middle school teachers’ self-efficacy. School climate is how the school environment is perceived by those who are in it. The study was focused on middle schools because they tend to be oriented toward a team concept (Hoy & Hannum, 1997).

Self-efficacy is a personal belief in one’s ability to do something. Self-efficacy is a central concept in Bandura’s (2005) Social Cognitive Theory, but SCT can be applied to school climate as well since it is made up of individuals and their behaviors. Social Cognitive Theory asserts that human behavior is “strongly stimulated by self-influence” (Harrison et al., 1997, p. 79).

The next chapter will comprise current research regarding school climate, self-efficacy, and how the two concepts are related. Chapter three will include the research design and methodology. Chapter three will also relate the procedures that were used to collect and analyze data for the study. Chapter four will report the findings from the interviews. Finally, chapter five will be a discussion of the implications of the findings and directions for future research.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This study will explore the following research question: *How do Arkansas middle school teachers' perceptions of their school climate affect their self-efficacy?* This chapter synthesizes research on school climate and self-efficacy to lay a foundation for the study. Social cognitive theory and constructivism are also discussed as theoretical frameworks for both self-efficacy and school climate.

Database searches were performed to locate peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles. Keyword terms such as social cognitive theory, school climate, self-efficacy, teacher self-efficacy, and middle school were used in various combinations and multiple date ranges (all dates and 2016-2021) in ProQuest, Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, and PsycInfo. The search results were scanned for relevance. Any article that had a relevant title or abstract was then read in full. Additionally, if any relevant studies were mentioned in these articles that did not turn up in the original searches, these articles were located and reviewed as well. Pertinent quotes were highlighted then organized by theme in a spreadsheet. This process continued until saturation was reached. When articles from the searches no longer yielded new information, the synthesis process began.

Theoretical Framework – Social Cognitive Theory

This study is based on Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). The following sections will discuss the origins of SCT and self-efficacy and how this theory is connected to the study.

Overview

In the 1960s, Albert Bandura developed a theory to explain human behavior that filled the gaps left by behaviorists (Bandura, 2005). Behaviorists assert that human

behavior is influenced solely by conditioning (reward or punishment) with no cognitive component (Bandura, 2005). Bandura (2005) said that he

> found it difficult to imagine a culture in which its language, mores, familial customs and practices, occupational competencies, and educational, religious, and political practices were gradually shaped in each new member by rewarding and punishing consequences of their trial-and-error performances. This tedious and potentially hazardous process where errors are costly was shortcut by social modeling. In modeling, people pattern their styles of thinking and behaving after the functional ones exemplified by others (Bandura, 2005, pp. 10-11).

Bandura (2005) researched human functioning looking for what caused humans to act in the ways that they do. His work led him to develop Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2005).

SCT is a conceptual framework of human functioning that describes the way that "individuals can self-regulate their thoughts, motivation, and behaviors" in a way that is not simply reacting to an external stimulus (McCormick, 2001, p. 23). The central idea is that individuals can control their behavior through sociocognitive processes (Bandura, 2005). SCT describes human functioning as being influenced by three types of determinants: individual thought and personal details, individual behavior, and the environment (McCormick, 2001). Essentially, humans are not just empty-headed organisms that react to their environment but are able to observe their environment, think rationally, and decide how to act in a given situation. The concept of self-efficacy is an integral part of how individuals think about their actions and ultimately act in his or her environment.

Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1997) described perceived self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Self-efficacy plays an important role in self-regulation, defined by Gist and Mitchell (1992) as "a comprehensive process of cognitive, individual determination of behavior" (p. 186). Self-efficacy influences the choices that people make, their motivation and goals, their thought patterns, and how they cope with difficult situations (Bandura, 1997).

Self-efficacy is a critical component of Social Cognitive Theory because it accounts for an individual's belief in their ability to do something; if an individual believes he or she is capable of something, they are more likely to act (Bandura, 1993). This ability to act is also referred to as agency (Dellinger et al., 2008). Self-efficacy is vital to human agency; Bandura et al. (1996) said that "unless people believe that they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act" (p. 1206).

Essentially, self-efficacy is the personal belief that one is capable (high self-efficacy) or not capable (low self-efficacy) to complete a task or do a job with a specific degree of quality. Research has demonstrated that self-efficacy varies across tasks, situations, contexts, and individuals (Dellinger et al., 2008). It is dynamic and influenced by internal and external variables (Bandura, 1997; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Although self-efficacy is situation-specific, research has indicated that an individual's general self-efficacy impacts their situation-specific self-efficacy (McCormick, 2001).

Self-efficacy is not the same thing as self-esteem or outcome expectation (Bandura, 2005; Dellinger et al., 2008; Gist & Mitchell, 1992), but it is sometimes confused with those concepts or found alongside them in literature. Self-esteem is the

judgment of self-worth which is different from an individual believing they are (or are not) capable of doing something (Gist & Mitchell, 1992)(Bandura et al., 1996). An outcome expectation is the confidence (or lack of) that a particular outcome will result from a particular behavior; again, this is different from believing (or not) in the ability to perform a behavior (Dellinger et al., 2008).

Formation of self-efficacy. Tams (2008) says the formation of self-efficacy is "an active process in the sense of creating some meaningful coherence out of the positive and negative cues" they encounter (p. 177). An individual develops self-efficacy from different sources of information--both direct and indirect (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) identified four distinct ways that an individual can receive information for the purposes of developing self-efficacy: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states. How the individual interprets each experience affects the development of self-efficacy (Morris et al., 2017).

First, and most powerful, is the individual acting him or herself (Bandura, 1977). The more successfully the task is completed, the higher the self-efficacy will be the next time the individual attempts it (Bandura, 1977). If an individual fails at a task, and attributes the failure to a lack of ability, the individual's self-efficacy will be lower the next time that task comes around (Bandura, 1977). However, if a failure is "overcome by determined effort" it can actually end up strengthening self-efficacy because it is proof that "even the most difficult obstacles can be mastered by sustained effort" (Bandura, 1977, p. 195). Self-assessment and feedback are important parts of this process but are only helpful when highlighting the positive aspects of the performance (Bandura, 1993).

Second, and next most powerful, is watching someone else complete the task (Bandura, 1977). This type of information is especially useful in situations where the individual is intensely afraid of the task (Bandura, 1977). When they observe a model undertaking the task successfully, it leads the individual to believe that they can do it as well to some degree (Bandura, 1977). It is even more helpful if the individual can see a variety of models completing the task as that increases the generalizability of the ability to complete the task (Bandura, 1977).

Third, and next most powerful, is verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1977). This is a frequently used strategy due to its availability and simplicity (Bandura, 1977). The efficacy expectations developed in this way are weaker than the first two types because of the lack of experience connected to it (Bandura, 1977). Additionally, the individual may not believe the person telling them they are capable of doing something, particularly if, they have experienced failure at the task in the past (Bandura, 1977).

Fourth, and least powerful, is some type of psychological arousal (Bandura, 1977). Anything that arouses emotions could have an impact on self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Again, what happens to the level of self-efficacy often depends on if the individual attributes the success or failure to internal or external factors (Bandura, 1977). Regardless of how self-efficacy is formed, it is a dynamic belief that changes based on factors such as reactions to experiences, perceived danger, or acquired skills (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Research has demonstrated that when people focus on the daunting characteristics of the task, their self-efficacy decreased; but when they focused on the parts they considered doable, their self-efficacy increased (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). The amount that self-efficacy can change in an individual depends on how much they believe

that they have control over a situation or some aspect of it (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Gist and Mitchell (1992) found three ways for changing self-efficacy: giving the individual more information about the task, giving the individual training that improves the individual's abilities, and improving the "individual's understanding of behavioral, analytical, or psychological performance strategies or effort expenditure required for task performance" (Gist & Mitchell, 1992, p. 203).

Connected to these four ways of developing self-efficacy is the idea of how self-efficacy can be increased or decreased. Whether or not an individual believes that their current level of self-efficacy can even be changed affects their self-efficacy judgment (Tams, 2008). Bandura (1977) notes that when an individual behaves in a way that produces successful outcomes, the individual is likely to have an increase in their level of self-efficacy. Conversely, when the behavior leads to failure, the individual is likely to have a decrease in self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) unless the individual makes a conscious effort to "learn from setbacks" (Tams, 2008, p. 176). Additionally, "there is strong evidence that inducing people to expect more of themselves prior to their actual experience, leads them to form higher self-efficacy beliefs and attain higher levels of performance" (Tams, 2008, p. 167).

Effects of self-efficacy. A high sense of self-efficacy, which is one's belief in their "capability to exercise control over events that affect one's life," protects against depression (Bandura et al., 1996, p. 1217). When individuals have a low sense of self-efficacy, they are at a higher risk of feelings of futility or depression because they either don't believe they have any control over the events in their life or they don't have the necessary skills or access to resources to make things happen in the way they want

(Bandura et al., 1996). Another way that low self-efficacy can lead to depression is when an individual has a low sense of social self-efficacy, or their belief in their ability to "seek out and cultivate social relationships;" relationships can help prevent depression by decreasing social isolation (Bandura et al., 1996, p. 1210). On the other hand, a high sense of self-efficacy protects against adverse mental states because efficacious individuals are more likely to persevere in difficult situations, demonstrate resilience, and be less vulnerable to stress (Bandura et al., 1996).

Self-efficacy can help with occupational stress which can set in when an individual finds him or herself in a situation that requires more skill than they possess (or they perceive there to be a skill deficit; (Bandura, 2002). If someone has a high sense of self-efficacy, he or she will push through the obstacles persistently remaining task-oriented (Bandura, 1977). If someone has a low sense of self-efficacy, he or she will not have the same coping ability and or commitment to the task and might try to avoid the situation altogether (Bandura, 1993).

Self-efficacy is also connected to goal setting and motivation (Bandura et al., 1996). Individuals with a high sense of self-efficacy tend to set challenging goals for themselves, work harder on tasks once they start, and stay committed to the goals they set (Gist & Mitchell, 1992; McCormick, 2001). Someone with a high degree of self-efficacy will approach a task differently than someone with a lower degree (Bandura, 1993). An individual with a high degree of self-efficacy will see a demanding task as a challenge, while an individual with a low degree will see a challenging task as a threat (Bandura, 1993). Gist and Mitchell (1992) observed that increased self-efficacy leads to increases in performance. The level of self-efficacy an individual has also affects how they interpret

feedback on their performance which could affect how they perform in the future (Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

Sense of self-efficacy can also influence how someone views the world and how they react to it (Bandura, 1993). A person who considers themselves to be highly efficacious is more likely to think that failure is due to not trying hard enough or having bad luck (Bandura, 1993; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). On the other hand, a person with a lower sense of self-efficacy is more likely to think that their failures are caused by their lack of ability (Bandura, 1993).

An individual's sense of self-efficacy will either lead them to believe that they are capable of certain things, which inspires them to take a particular path in life, or they will not believe they are capable of whatever the task at hand is and take a completely different path in life. Consider an example of what Bandura calls "agentic management of fortuity" (Bandura, 2001, p. 11): A woman believes she has the ability to do a certain thing. This leads her to take a job which sends her out of town. On the flight, she meets a man who she falls in love with. If she had not had a high sense of self-efficacy about the skill needed for that job, she might not have met the man she ended up marrying.

Connection to this Study

One of the key elements of SCT was the concept of agency (Bandura, 2002). Bandura (2002) defines an agent as one who "influence[s] intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances" (p. 270). This gave rise to the idea of self-efficacy, which is an individual's "beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1993, p. 118). Since self-

efficacy is the focus of this research study, SCT is a natural choice for a theoretical framework.

Bandura (2005) also discusses how behavior is influenced by the individual's environment. At the same time, groups are made up of individuals whose behavior affects the environment (Bandura, 2002). Given this reciprocal relationship between behavior and environment SCT can provide a framework for the school climate element of this study as well. A person's occupation takes up a significant portion of time, so the work environment plays a critical role in the development of an individual's identity (Bandura, 2002). Sometimes this environment is chosen or created by the individual, but other times is uncontrollable.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Since self-efficacy is task-specific, teacher self-efficacy (TSE) is defined as a teacher's "individual beliefs in their capabilities to perform specific teaching tasks at a specified level of quality in a specified situation" (Dellinger et al., 2008, p. 752). The profession of teaching encompasses a broad variety of tasks that must be performed by the teacher. Thus, TSE as a general term can include "providing effective, inclusive instruction, developing appropriate assessment tools, and employing responsive classroom management techniques" (Hajovsky et al., 2020, p. 113). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) also include student engagement as part of the task-specific definition of TSE.

TSE is sometimes confused with teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy is the "belief that teachers can positively affect the learning of students" (Walker & Slear, 2011, p. 47). These two constructs are similar, but the distinction is that teacher efficacy is concerned

with the outcome of teaching (students' learning) while TSE is concerned with the act of teaching itself. TSE is important for educators to understand because it has been shown to affect parental participation in the classroom (Bandura et al., 1996), student achievement growth (Walker & Slear, 2011), teacher retention, burnout, absenteeism (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016), and job satisfaction (Veiskarami et al., 2017). The following sections discuss the specific kind of self-efficacy this study focuses on: teacher self-efficacy (TSE). The topics include how it is measured, what factors influence it, and what it affects.

Measurement of Teacher Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy has traditionally been measured using a survey-type instrument (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Participants are given a series of yes or no questions that ask if they can perform a particular task to a specified level of quality (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). For each question that they answer yes to they are then instructed to give a confidence rating on a given scale (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). These ratings are added up to determine the strength of the individual's self-efficacy (Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

Common instruments for measuring self-efficacy are the Teachers' Efficacy Beliefs System (TEBS) and the Teacher Efficacy Scale (Dellinger et al., 2008). Dellinger et al. (2008) asserted that the TEBS was measuring teacher efficacy and not teacher self-efficacy. They introduced a new instrument, the Teacher's Efficacy Beliefs System – Self Form, to more accurately reflect Bandura's definition of self-efficacy (Dellinger et al., 2008).

More recent research has indicated a need to look at other forms of measurement for TSE. Onafowora (2005) and Glackin and Hohenstein (2018) found that using both

quantitative methods (survey) and qualitative methods (interviews and open-ended survey questions) yielded different results. Some teachers gave different or richer responses when they were allowed to elaborate on their answers (Glackin & Hohenstein, 2018; Onafowora, 2005). Prior to these studies, other researchers pointed out issues with current methods of measuring TSE. Wyatt (2014) argues that the TSE research up to that point was actually focused on teachers' locus of control (internal or external) instead of teachers' beliefs about their abilities which resulted in instruments that do not accurately measure what the researchers set out to measure. Wang and Degol (2016) also pointed out that qualitative methods, such as an interview, can allow the researcher to dig deeper into the participants' experiences than qualitative methods, such as a survey that only allows the respondent to select an answer from a list. This study will use qualitative methods to explore teachers' perceptions and how they might possibly influence their TSE.

Influences on Teacher Self-Efficacy

TSE is influenced by many factors (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016). These factors fall under one of Bandura's (1997) four sources: enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states. Other factors that influence TSE are teacher perceptions (Hosford & O'Sullivan, 2016), teacher empowerment (Hemric et al., 2010), principal support, resources (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016), social emotional factors, cultural identity (Yada et al., 2019), and teacher-student interactions (Hajovsky et al., 2020).

Bandura's four sources. Bandura (1997) proposed four sources of self-efficacy development: mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional

arousal. How the individual interprets each of these experiences that affects the development of self-efficacy (Morris et al., 2017). Practices in the teaching profession and preparation for the profession can be viewed through these lenses (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016). Working in the classroom as the lead teacher or intern is an example of mastery experience while observing another teacher is an example of vicarious experience (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016). Feedback from a mentoring teacher or administrator is classified as verbal persuasion, and the feelings brought on by teaching or planning to teach (whether positive or negative) are an example of emotional arousal (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016). Additionally, research has found that in some cases these four sources can work in combination producing higher levels of self-efficacy than a single source alone (Tams, 2008). For example, Morris et al (2017) found that teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge contributes to their measure of self-efficacy. This could be a combination of mastery experiences as a student and verbal persuasion from professors or other teachers. Ultimately, regardless of the source, the development of teacher self-efficacy depends on how the individual interprets the experience and the trustworthiness of the source (Morris et al., 2017).

Teacher perceptions. An individual's thoughts play a role in their sense of self-efficacy (Tams, 2008). How they perceive their self-efficacy affects the future trajectory of their levels of self-efficacy (Tams, 2008). Other perceptions that influence TSE are how the teacher sees the demands of the teaching task, awareness of student needs, and perceptions of what is expected or required of them (Hosford & O'Sullivan, 2016). Also, how teachers perceive the level of collaboration influences how they perceive their TSE (Collie et al., 2012).

Principal leadership. In a three-year study on teacher retention Wynn et al. (2007) found that principal leadership was one of the biggest reasons for new teachers staying (or not staying) in the profession. The researchers used the following characteristics to measure principal leadership: communicating expectations to teachers, supporting novice teachers, providing regular feedback, protecting teachers from undue outside influence, and providing teachers with the resources they need to teach (Wynn, et al., 2007). Teachers' positive perceptions of school leadership have been associated with increased levels of TSE (Hosford & O'Sullivan, 2016). Aldridge and Fraser's (2016) study suggested that increasing principal support would do the most to improve TSE. Hemric et al. (2010) said, "It is important that leaders in education recognize the significance of protecting and supporting the self-efficacy of their teachers" (p. 43).

Teacher empowerment. Teacher empowerment can be defined as "a liberating process where teachers make decisions, and choices, regarding the resources and problems associated with their teaching" (Hemric et al., 2010, p. 38). When teachers can have control over their jobs, they exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy than those who do not (Hemric et al., 2010). In contrast, Bandura (1997) asserted that it works in the opposite direction; empowerment is not "bestowed through edict" but instead it is "gained through development of personal efficacy" by permitting individuals "to take advantage of opportunities and to remove constraints guarded by those whose interests are served by them" (p. 477). Brown (2012) also wrote about a number of studies that showed a negative correlation between self-efficacy and depersonalization which she said is "an individual feeling they do not have control over their work situation" (p. 60).

Social and emotional factors. Social and emotional factors are things like stress (job-related or personal), relationships, and attitudes. Yada et al. (2019) found that "group norms and one's relationship with others can enhance or diminish efficacy beliefs" (p. 14). Personal issues also affect TSE; an individual's stress level or tendency toward negative emotional states can weaken his or her sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Research has shown that reducing stress (whether it is personal or professional in nature) increases TSE (Collie et al., 2012). Even a teacher's comfort level in implementing social emotional learning for their students is associated with TSE because it relates to how comfortable they feel with their own social and emotional development (Collie et al., 2012). Another social factor is an individual's cultural affiliation. Yada et al. (2019) note that self-efficacy is dependent on the teacher's cultural background. For example, a study in Shanghai found that the confidence and respect of students and parents was often mentioned by teachers as an important source of TSE (Yada et al., 2019).

Teacher-student interaction. Teacher-student interactions are based on the quality of the relationship between teachers and students (Hajovsky et al., 2020). These interactions could be "a pattern of warmth and positive affect in the dyadic relationship between the teacher and student" which includes the student feeling comfortable "engaging and openly communicating with the teacher" (Hajovsky et al., 2020, p. 112). On the other hand, these interactions could also be "a dysfunctional communication pattern marked by negative interactions and a general lack of affinity between the teacher and the student" (Hajovsky et al., 2020, p. 112). These two opposing dimensions of teacher-student relationship quality are described as closeness and conflict, and they are related to TSE (Hajovsky et al., 2020). Researchers have found "teacher self-efficacy to

be positively related with student closeness and negatively related with student conflict" (Hajovsky et al., 2020, p. 114). In fact, Hajovsky et al. (2020) found that closeness and conflict regularly predicted the level of TSE in each of the measurements they used in students in third through sixth grade. Their study indicates that close connections with students might elevate TSE (Hajovsky et al., 2020). Conversely, student-teacher relationships that are full of conflict or lack warmth might have the consequence of reduced TSE because it causes the teacher to feel less confident in his or her abilities (Hajovsky et al., 2020). Pfizer-Eden (2016) also points to the voices of students as an influence on TSE as verbal persuasion; the feedback that students give teachers (verbally or through other nonverbal communication) can affect how teachers rate their self-efficacy. Morris et al. (2017) found that student behaviors also influence teachers' self-efficacy beliefs; this is likely due to teachers inferring that their performance in the classroom caused the student behavior (Morris et al., 2017). For example, when teachers note that students are engaged in the lesson or successfully completing tasks, their self-efficacy increased (Morris et al., 2017). Conversely, teachers who perceive their students' behavior to be less manageable or their motivation to be lacking tend to have decreased TSE (Collie et al., 2012).

Effects of Teacher Self-Efficacy

TSE affects many facets of the education process. The next two sections discuss the effects that TSE has on both students and teachers.

Student effects. TSE affects students in several ways. The level of self-efficacy that a teacher has affects student academic progress and students' social and emotional growth.

Academic effects. Studies have shown that teacher self-efficacy is positively correlated with academic achievement and academic growth (Veiskarami et al., 2017; Walker & Slear, 2011). Academic achievement refers to any kind of measurable, scholarly performance such as grades or test scores. Similarly, academic growth refers to an increase in the quality of such work. Teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy tend to allocate more time for academic work and give struggling students more help which promotes student learning (Bandura, 1993). On the other hand, teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy tend to spend more time on nonacademic tasks and give up sooner on students who are not making progress quickly, thus decreasing the likelihood of student learning (Bandura, 1993).

Social emotional effects. TSE affects the social and emotional development of students by its connection to self-esteem, self-regulation, and self-efficacy of students (Veiskarami et al., 2017). Self-esteem refers to a student's "affective evaluation of the self (e.g., feelings of self- worth or self-liking)" (Gist & Mitchell, 1992, p. 185). Self-regulation is "a comprehensive process of cognitive, individual determination of behavior" (Gist & Mitchell, 1992, p. 186). Teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy tend to create environments that diminish student self-efficacy and cognitive development and are more apt to criticize student failures (Bandura, 1993). TSE also affects how students handle transitions from grade to grade and school to school; students taught by teachers with a low sense of TSE "suffer losses in perceived self-efficacy and performance expectation" during times of transition (Bandura, 1993, p. 142). If students who have been affected in this way move to another teacher who also has low TSE, their "self-doubts become even more severe" (Bandura, 1993, p. 142).

Teacher effects. TSE affects job satisfaction (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016) and teachers' decision making in the classroom (Bandura, 1993). TSE also plays a role in an individual's emotional health.

Job satisfaction. According to Aldridge and Fraser (2016), job satisfaction is "the positive or negative evaluative judgement that people make about their job" (p. 293). The level of self-efficacy that a teacher has toward their job affects how satisfied they are with their job and how likely they are to stay in the profession (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016). Teacher satisfaction is so important that Shann (1998) calls it "a pivotal link in the chain of educational reform" because it "influences job performance, attrition, and, ultimately, student performance" (p. 68). Essentially, teachers that are satisfied with their jobs are more committed to their jobs which contributes to school effectiveness (Shann, 1998).

Instructional decisions. The decisions that a teacher makes about instruction and other classroom matters is affected by their sense of self-efficacy. Bandura (1993) wrote that "teachers' sense of personal efficacy affects their general orientation toward the educational process as well as their specific instructional practices" (p. 140). Morris (2017) found that teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy use more effective teaching strategies. There is evidence that teacher's instructional self-efficacy is a determining factor in the development of the classroom environment (Bandura, 1993). Fuchs et al. (1992) found that efficacious teachers were more likely to structure their classrooms in a way to allow for instructional adaptation because they were more confident in their ability to manage student behavior. TSE has also been shown to affect how much teachers encourage parental participation in classroom activities which is important;

because when parents participate in classroom activities, they communicate to their children that they value their education (Bandura, 1993; Bandura et al., 1996).

Teachers with higher self-efficacy reports fewer student discipline issues in their classrooms (Yada et al., 2019) and "spend more time on instruction and less time on discipline" (Onafowora, 2005, p. 35). Hosford and O'Sullivan (2016) report that teachers with high TSE "tend to assume greater responsibility for meeting the needs of learners, believing that their pupils are reachable and teachable, whose difficulties can be addressed through committed teaching methodologies and practices" (p. 605). Teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy are less committed to teaching (Bandura, 1993) and have less confidence in "their perceived ability to implement inclusive practices" which causes them to feel more threatened by challenging student behaviors (Hosford & O'Sullivan, 2016, p. 607).

Emotional well-being. Teachers can be emotionally impacted by the level of self-efficacy they possess. Emotional well-being is having the emotional resources and support one needs to function during times of stress; a lack of emotional well-being, or emotional exhaustion, can be characterized by "fatigue, debilitation, [and] loss of energy" (Brown, 2012, p. 49). Brown (2012) reviewed eleven published studies on the relationship between self-efficacy and teacher burnout; she noted multiple studies that showed a negative correlation between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion indicating that as self-efficacy decreases, emotional exhaustion increases, and burnout is more likely. Brown (2012) described burnout as a "teacher's negative responses to the mismatch between job requirements and their perceived abilities" (Brown, 2012, p. 48). Thus, when teachers feel that the job requirements are greater than what they can achieve

(low TSE), they are at risk for burnout (Brown, 2012). Brown (2012) also noted that a high sense of TSE can guard against teacher burnout because individuals with a high sense of TSE "may perceive the objective demands of daily teaching as being less threatening than those teachers who harbour self-doubts about their professional performance" (p. 49).

Teachers with high self-efficacy focus their efforts on finding solutions to problems that are causing stress, but teachers with low self-efficacy "avoid dealing with academic problems and, instead, turn their efforts inward to relieve their emotional distress. This pattern of withdrawal coping contributes to occupational burnout" (Bandura, 1993, p. 134). Thus, self-efficacy can be a predictor of how well teachers will adapt and avoid job burnout (Veiskarami et al., 2017).

School Climate

Another construct that is part of this study is school climate. The following sections provide an overview and historical context for the topic. The difference between climate and culture will be discussed along with perception, measurement, and effects of school climate. The final section will discuss factors that influence school climate.

Overview

Numerous researchers have noted that there is no universal definition for school climate, and this lack of consensus has led researchers to define school climate in various ways for their studies (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Barkley et al., 2014; Hoy, 1990; Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Johnson & Stevens, 2006; Malone et al., 2017; Thapa et al., 2013; Voight & Nation, 2016; Wang & Degol, 2016). One thing that researchers have agreed on is the multidimensionality of school climate (Daily et al., 2020; Thapa et al., 2013; Wang &

Degol, 2016; Wynn et al., 2007). Unfortunately, all researchers do not agree about what domains should be included. Wang and Degol (2016) refer to the frequent lack of rationale for inclusion or exclusion of various characteristics and domains.

Across the research, the most frequently used domains are leadership, academics, teaching and learning, safety, institutional environment, social atmosphere, and relationships (Daily et al., 2020; Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Kraft et al., 2016; Malone et al., 2017; Maxwell & Thomas, 1991; Roach & Kratochwill, 2004; Thapa et al., 2013; Veiskarami et al., 2017; Wang & Degol, 2016; Wynn et al., 2007). Less frequently mentioned, but still relevant, are the domains of professional development, community involvement, personal growth, engagement, and respect for diversity (Voight & Nation, 2016; Wang & Degol, 2016; Wynn et al., 2007).

School climate has been described as the heart and soul of a school (Wang & Degol, 2016) or the amount of teacher morale and empowerment (Barkley et al., 2014). Researchers have used a variety of analogies and models to explain school climate: the personality of the school (Roach & Kratochwill, 2004), the health of the organization (Hoy, 1990; Hoy & Hannum, 1997), and the spirit or heartbeat of the school (Daily et al., 2020). Hoy (1990), a notable scholar in the field of school climate, called school climate the "internal characteristics that distinguish one school from another and influences the behaviors of its members…the relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by its participants…and is based on their collective perceptions of behaviors in schools" (p. 152). School climate has also been expressed as the "essence that leads a child, a teacher, and an administrator to love the school and look forward to being there each school day" (Freiberg & Stein, 1999, as cited in Wang & Degol, 2016).

Hoy and Hannum (1997) stressed the importance of school climate by saying that it "should be both a means to an end and an end in itself" (p. 308). Researchers have found that the study of school climate is useful for school improvement efforts (Powell et al., 2015; Wang & Degol, 2016) and for better understanding how schools function (Powell et al., 2015). Collie et al. (2012) also underscored the importance of school climate when they wrote, "School climate is a powerful characteristic that can foster resilience or become a risk factor for students, teachers, administrators, parents, and other members of the school community" (p. 1191).

The United States Department of Education (USDOE) has also recognized the importance of school climate (Thapa et al., 2013). In the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2015 (currently known as Every Student Succeeds Act), school climate was recommended as "a non-academic measure that state education agencies include in their new school accountability systems" (Voight & Nation, 2016, p. 188) and could serve as "an added measure of school safety and quality to compliment standardized metrics of school performance" (Daily et al., 2020, p. 183). In a review of school climate literature, Thapa et al. (2013) noted that the USDOE concluded that school climate would be a way to study schools' efforts in non-academic domains such as character education or social-emotional learning.

School climate is important not only because of its use for understanding the functioning of the school and its place in school accountability but also because of the outcomes it affects. As mentioned in the introductory chapter school climate affects many aspects of the educational process. Social, emotional, intellectual, and physical safety,

mental health, higher graduation rates, academic achievement, and teacher retention are just a few of the outcomes affected by school climate (Thapa et al., 2013).

Historical Context

The construct of school climate has been around for roughly 100 years. New York City school principal Arthur Perry published a book entitled *Management of a City School* in 1908 that referred to the learning environment beyond the physical structure of the school (Perry, 1908, as cited in Wang & Degol, 2016). Despite this early mention, the concept of organizational climate was not developed until the late 1950s (Hoy, 1990). Perceptions of college climate were not surveyed until the 1950s (Johnson & Stevens, 2006), and school climate was not seriously studied until the early 1960s when the first school climate survey was created (Halpin & Croft, 1963, as cited in Wang & Degol, 2016).

The earliest concerns relating to school climate were structural issues like the size of the buildings and classrooms or available resources and teacher-to-student ratios (Johnson & Stevens, 2006). By the mid-1960s, Gilmer began to describe organizational climate based on the characteristics that differentiated one organization from another (Gilmer, 1966, as cited in Hoy, 1990) and in the late 1960s, the idea of perception was added to the workplace climate definition (Litwin & Stringer, 1968, as cited in Hoy, 1990). In the 1980s, school climate began to take shape as it is known today (described in this chapter at the beginning of the school climate section) when researchers started taking note of how the concept of climate was operationalized in business management (Maxwell & Thomas, 1991).

Up to this point, most of the research on school climate has been correlational; researchers have studied how school climate is related to student achievement and behavior, teacher job satisfaction and efficacy, principal leadership (Wang & Degol, 2016), safety, healthy relationships, and school improvement (Thapa et al., 2013). According to Daily et al. (2020), the "goal of most school climate research has been to empirically highlight the importance of non-academic factors in lieu of an overemphasis on curriculum and instruction to support student success" (p. 183). The effects of school climate (according to research) will be discussed in greater detail in a later section.

In their review of school climate literature, Wang and Degol (2016) point out that much research has been done on the connection between school climate and student outcomes, but more research needs to be done examining the impact of school climate on teachers and administrators since their actions, in turn, have an impact on student outcomes. They noted that most of the research looks at climate from the student perspective, particularly middle and high school students (although not equally spread across all grades bands). They found that approximately 23% of the research focused on surveying teachers or other staff members, 17% focused on students, teachers, and parents, and the remaining 50% were focused solely on student perceptions (Wang & Degol, 2016). This highlights the need for a study like the one that is being proposed that focuses solely on teachers.

Climate vs. Culture

Climate and culture are often used interchangeably, but the two terms have different meanings (Mulyadi & Sudibjo, 2018). The differences in these two words are subtle but important to understand. Culture is often a more abstract term than climate and

attempts to get at the assumptions and motivations that drive the individual behaviors that tend to make up the climate of the organization (Roach & Kratochwill, 2004). While climate and culture can seem to refer to the same thing, Hoy (1990) says "they evolve from different perspectives, use different research strategies, and concentrate on different organizational aspects —perceptions of behavior (climate) or shared values and ideologies (culture)" (p. 163). Although climate and culture are similar, this study will explore school climate because it is less abstract and easier to describe than school culture.

Perceiving Climate

As previously noted, school climate is based on individuals' perception of behaviors, events, interactions, and the organization itself (Hoy, 1990). Due to the perceptual nature of school climate every individual in the environment could describe the same environment differently (Wang & Degol, 2016). For example, teachers are more perceptive to classroom-level climate factors, while students are more aware of school-level climate factors (Thapa et al., 2013). Research has shown that several factors influence perceptions of school climate for the individuals participating in it. For students, behavior issues, retention, and gender are a few things that impact their perceptions (Thapa et al., 2013). Studies have also shown that the perceptions of school climate change over time for students (Daily et al., 2020), are affected by the student's race and culture (Thapa et al., 2013), and tend to become less positive as students reach high school age (Wang & Degol, 2016).

Teacher perceptions. Collie et al. (2012) note that "teachers' perceptions are critical for shaping the decisions they make in classrooms" (p. 1189). Teachers'

perceptions of school climate have been associated with burnout and work commitment and contributes to their sense of stress, teaching efficacy, and job satisfaction (Collie et al., 2012).

Gunbayi (2007) found that Turkish teachers had significantly different perceptions of climate based on their teaching category. For example, those teaching art, music, and physical education reported that their school climate was more open in terms of member conflict than teachers in the social sciences. In this same study, while not statistically significant, there was also a trend for male teachers to report a more open climate in terms of intimacy and support than female teachers. Trends were also noted regarding single teachers versus married teachers, teachers with lower degrees of education versus higher degrees, younger versus older, and those with more or less seniority (Gunbayi, 2007).

Student perceptions. School connectedness and achievement are two factors associated with perception of school climate for students (Collie et al., 2012). School connectedness is a "psychological state of attachment that students experience when they feel a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and belonging in school" (Wang & Degol, 2016, p. 323). Achievement is any school-related performance or accomplishment. Additionally, students look at interactions with their teachers; Conderman et al. (2013) found that students reported a less favorable perception of teacher-student interactions than teachers did. On the other hand, students in that study reported a more positive perception of quality of the school environment than the teachers did (Conderman et al., 2013).

Measurement of School Climate

School climate is typically measured from an individual perspective because it is based on individuals' perceptions of behaviors within the environment (Roach & Kratochwill, 2004), but it is sometimes recommended to aggregate the data to see an overall picture of the school (Charlton et al., 2021). However, since individual perspectives can vary greatly within the same environment, researchers must be careful about using aggregate data to draw conclusions (Wang & Degol, 2016). Additionally, careful attention should be paid to the wording of interview questions or survey statements to ensure that individual ("I feel") statements are not combined with group ("Students feel" or "Teachers feel") statements when analyzing data (Wang & Degol, 2016).

School climate can be measured by observation, interviews, focus groups, and/or surveys. Surveys are the most common form of data collection, and interviews and focus groups were found less often in literature (Wang & Degol, 2016). Sample sizes are generally smaller for interviews, and this limits the generalizability of the findings, but interviews allow the researcher to dig deeper into participant's thoughts and feelings regarding school climate that surveys often do (Wang & Degol, 2016).

Of the many instruments developed for collecting school climate data, the work of Halpin and Croft was the earliest and best known (Hoy, 1990; Hoy & Hannum, 1997). Their survey, the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ), helped researchers investigate the interactions of professional staff members within the school (Hoy, 1990). The OCDQ would be given to school staff (teachers, principals, etc.), and it asked the participants to identify to what degree statements were indicative of their

school (Hoy, 1990). As the understanding of school climate evolved, other instruments were developed to fill the gaps that might have been left by the OCDQ (Hoy, 1990). Some examples of these instruments are the School-Level Environment Questionnaire (SLEQ), the Revised School Level Environment Questionnaire (RSLEQ), the Organizational Health Inventory (OHI), the Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments (CASE), and the Work Environment Scale (WES) (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Barkley et al., 2014; Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Roach & Kratochwill, 2004).

Factors that Influence School Climate

Researchers have noted that school climate is not instantly made but rather develops over time (Maxwell & Thomas, 1991). Since school climate is based on perceptions of behaviors it can be difficult to clearly articulate (Maxwell & Thomas, 1991). Finlayson (1987) wrote that individuals "are much more confident of the experience of the phenomenon [school climate] than they are of their understanding of it" (Finlayson, 1987, as cited in Maxwell & Thomas, 1991).

In the late 1990s, Hoy and Hannum (1997) wrote that "the influences of school climate are loosely defined and have few clear links with either a theory of schooling or children's learning experiences" (p. 291). However, in later years, Barkley et al. (2014) listed five factors that influence a school's climate: collaboration, student relations, student resources, decision making, and instructional innovation. Others have also mentioned student achievement (Johnson & Stevens, 2006), the quality of relationships (Maxwell & Thomas, 1991), parent involvement (Voight & Nation, 2016), and the size of the school (Thapa et al., 2013). This study focuses on relationships, building-level

factors, and leadership because those are the factors most frequently mentioned in the literature.

Relationships. The quality of the relationships that exist between members of the school has been shown to influence the school climate (Collie et al., 2012). Cohen et al. (2009) points to "school connectedness" which they define as "to what extent students feel attached to at least one caring and responsible adult at school" as a significant influence on school climate. This also extends to the faculty as the existence or quality of collaboration among staff members also influences school climate (Cohen et al., 2009; Collie et al., 2012). Mulyadi and Sudibjo (2018) point out an effective way to develop a positive school climate is to emphasize "mutual respect for each other" (p. 7973).

Building-level factors. Charlton et al. (2021) found that school climate can be influenced by schoolwide interventions, particularly programs that focus on social emotional learning and schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and support. This study also noted that it seemed more effective to focus on fewer programs with "direct connections to practices at school…over more complex conceptualizations" (Charlton et al., 2021, p. 13). Other system level factors that influence school climate include where the school is located (Cohen et al., 2009) and the size and type (for example, public versus private) of school (Oder & Eisenschmidt, 2018).

Leadership. School-level leadership is usually the principal, assistant principals, and teacher leaders that contribute to decision-making processes. Researchers point out the importance of leadership in the development and maintenance of school climate (Hoy, 1990). Hoy and Hannum (1997) wrote that collegial leadership is one of the key ingredients in promoting a healthy school climate. They define collegial leadership as

"principal behavior that is friendly, supportive, open, and guided by norms of equality" (Hoy & Hannum, 1997, p. 294). Hoy (1990) also wrote that principal influence, "the ability of the principal to affect the decisions of superiors, to effectively 'go to bat' for teachers" (p. 154) is part of the operational definition of school climate. Tarter and Hoy (1989) found that teachers' level of trust in their principal is positively related to the school climate (Tarter & Hoy, 1989, as cited in Hoy, 1990). In their school climate literature review, Wang and Degol (2016) also found leadership to be an essential component of the definition of school climate. In the area of school climate, leadership is "the role that principals and other administrators play in shaping and executing the school's vision through communication and guidance" (Wang & Degol, 2016, p. 322).

Effects of School Climate

Research findings indicate that school climate is related to other circumstances in the school setting. Knowing about the school climate helps stakeholders understand the attitudes and behavior of the individuals in the system as well as the system as a whole (Thapa et al., 2013). It is also a significant component in school reform plans (Thapa et al., 2013) and how students, teachers, administrators, and community members regard the school (Anderson, 2019). Overall, research suggests that school climate "can shape the interactions between students, teachers, families, and the broader community" (Daily et al., 2020, p. 183) and that it "can affect the students' personalities, learning experiences...and increase the teachers' efficiency at school" (Veiskarami et al., 2017).

There is an interconnectedness between school climate, its effects, and its influences (Thapa et al., 2013). It can be a challenge recognizing the direction of the influence (Kraft et al., 2016). Do schools have a good climate because of student

achievement and teacher retention, or is student achievement and teacher retention a benefit of having a good school climate? The next sections discuss these and other conditions for the school, the students and the teachers that are related to school climate.

Effects for the school. According to Barkley et al. (2014), a good school climate is one where "teachers, students, parents, and administration function in a manner that is cooperative and beneficial for the students' welfare" (p. 4). Hoy and Hannum (1997) add communities to that list of stakeholders, and that in healthy schools all the stakeholders "work together cooperatively and constructively" (p. 293). Other characteristics of a good or healthy school climate are "high levels of teacher affiliation, academic emphasis, collegial leadership, resource support, principal influence, and institutional integrity" (Hoy & Hannum, 1997, p. 294). Respectful relationships, consistent use of learning strategies, suitable physical environment, and available resources are additional traits that can be observed in a positive school climate (Mulyadi & Sudibjo, 2018).

Klein et al. (2012) found that schools with a positive climate had a lower incidence of student risk behavior (Klein et al., 2012, as cited in Thapa et al., 2013). An important part of safety is having consistent rules that are enforced fairly; schools with this competency report fewer cases of student victimization and delinquency (Thapa et al., 2013). Healthy schools also have shown a decrease in bullying, aggression, and sexual harassment (Thapa et al., 2013).

Effects for students. Numerous studies have been conducted to find what relationship, if any, exists between school climate and student outcomes (Thapa et al., 2013). Described below are other student outcomes related to school climate: student

achievement, student behaviors, and social-emotional development (Daily et al., 2020; Johnson & Stevens, 2006; Thapa et al., 2013; Wang & Degol, 2016).

Student achievement. A student outcome frequently linked with school climate is student achievement (Thapa et al., 2013). Student achievement (often used interchangeably with academic achievement) refers to any kind of measurable scholarly performance such as grades or test scores. School climate is not only linked with student achievement; it can also be used to predict student achievement (Johnson & Stevens, 2006). Daily et al. (2020) found that school climate contributes to academic success for all students regardless of their "at-risk" status (p. 188). Furthermore, it is not only the immediate academic success of students that is related to school climate; other researchers found that this achievement due to school climate can persist for years (Thapa et al., 2013). Out of all the school climate factors studied in relation to student achievement, Daily et al. (2020) found that it was the student-teacher relationships that had the strongest overall impact.

While all stakeholders benefit from a positive school environment, students have unique advantages. Studies have shown that students who attend schools with a positive climate are more engaged in their learning, more likely to persevere on learning tasks, more motivated, and have higher educational goals (Malone et al., 2017). Schools with a positive school climate "are more likely to deliver academically prepared and well-rounded students" (Daily et al., 2020, p. 187). Although most studies connect a positive school climate with increased student achievement, it should be noted that some studies have found no difference or that the differences could be attributed to other factors such as socioeconomic status (Johnson & Stevens, 2006). Overall, students have a better

chance of academic success because of the safe and supportive environment a positive school climate brings (Malone et al., 2017; Thapa et al., 2013).

Student behaviors. Another student outcome related to school climate is how students behave at school. Researchers have found a connection between school climate and levels of aggression, bullying, violence prevention, conduct problems, drug use behaviors, risky sexual behaviors, and student suspensions (Thapa et al., 2013). Research has also found is that school climate is related to absenteeism; showing that schools with a positive climate report a decrease in truancy (Daily et al., 2020). Research also suggests that students are more likely to persist in school despite difficult personal circumstances, in schools with positive climates (Charlton et al., 2021).

Social emotional development. Researchers have reported a relationship between school climate and social-emotional outcomes. How safe students feel at school affects how they learn and develop (Thapa et al., 2013). School climate impacts the mental and physical health of students, their self-esteem, and the prevalence of substance abuse and psychiatric problems (Thapa et al., 2013). Wang and Degol (2016) report that student-student and student-teacher relationships, part of most school climate measures, are an important predictor of students' social emotional development.

Effects for teachers. Researchers have reported comparable school climate impacts on teachers. School climate impacts how teachers feel about their profession as well as their social emotional health (Hoy, 1990; Powell et al., 2015; Thapa et al., 2013).

Professional commitment. The most frequently reported connection is the correlation between school climate and teacher retention with teachers reporting a stronger commitment to their school and the profession when they felt supported in their

work environment (Kraft et al., 2016; Thapa et al., 2013; Wynn et al., 2007). Schools with positive climates typically experience lower staff turnover and have better attendance rates, and as the organizational context of the school improves there is a corresponding decrease in staff turnover which indicates that teachers are committed to their jobs (Barkley et al., 2014; Kraft et al., 2016). This could be due to the teachers' perceptions of administrative support, collegial relationships, school safety, and academic expectations (Kraft et al., 2016). Studies have also shown an increase in teachers' commitment to their work in schools with positive climates (Mulyadi & Sudibjo, 2018) as well as better relationships between school and home (Barkley et al., 2014).

Social emotional health. Another factor, similar to student outcomes, is the connection between school climate and safety for teachers. Researchers have reported a negative correlation between teachers' perceptions of school climate and reports of workplace incivility and bullying (Powell et al., 2015). Teachers and administrators have both reported that their job satisfaction, or the emotions they feel connected to their job, is related to school climate (Dicke et al., 2020).

Positive School Climate

Positive school climate is described by the National School Climate Council (2007) as an environment that

> fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributive, and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe. People are engaged and respected. Students, families and educators work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision. Educators

> model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning. Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment. (p. 5)

In a school with a positive climate, the staff members are "compatible and persistent and [are] aware of the students' emotions…offer[ing] fair services to their students" (Veiskarami et al., 2017, p. 482). All stakeholders should feel comfortable and safe with opportunities to share their ideas and grow professionally or academically (Mulyadi & Sudibjo, 2018). There should be a sense that teachers like each other, are happy to be working there, and exhibit pride in their school (Hoy, 1990). The administrative leadership of a healthy school should be supportive with high expectations for the teachers and students and ensure that teachers and students have the resources they need to be successful (Hoy, 1990).

Middle School

Early adolescence is a stage of development from age 10 to 15 (Ellerbrock et al., 2018). Education that specialized in early adolescents started in the early 1900s, but it was in the form of junior high schools. These junior high schools were "miniature high schools" for young adolescents, but they did "little to specialize in meeting their developmental needs" (Ellerbrock et al., 2018, p. 3). Smith et al. (2020) asserts that "the developmental needs of middle school students are different from those needs of the high school population and should be treated as such" (p. 256).

Proponents of middle schools who believe that they should be different from elementary and high schools, encourage educational methods that "address [the students'] physical, intellectual/cognitive, moral, psychological, social-emotional, and spiritual

characteristics" (Ellerbrock et al., 2018, p. 4). One of the critical aspects to be addressed of adolescence is identity formation because this is a time when they "develop a greater capacity to understand their place in the world" (Smith et al., 2020, p. 255). Since students spend much of their time in school middle school advocates suggest that "students may benefit from schools that intentionally support healthy identity formation" (Smith et al., 2020, p. 256).

Middle schools are usually composed of grades six through eight, although they could be in different configurations depending on the district (Malone et al., 2017). Middle schools are different from elementary and high schools in ways other than grade configuration. Middle schools make an effort to have interdisciplinary teams, flexible schedules, and student-centered teaching strategies aimed at pre-teens (Hoy & Hannum, 1997).

Relationship between School Climate and Teacher Self-Efficacy

It has been established that school climate affects teacher self-efficacy (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Veiskarami et al., 2017). Thus far, studies have used quantitative methods to demonstrate evidence of this relationship. Gist and Mitchell (1992) wrote that "in an organizational context, information derived from the individual, the work task, and others in the work environment may contribute to the comprehensive assessment of capability" (p. 184).

One reason that school climate affects teacher self-efficacy is the fact that teachers rely on other professionals in the building (such as administrators or other teachers) to learn more about the craft of teaching (Veiskarami et al., 2017). Relationships between and among staff members are part of the school climate (Thapa et

al., 2013). Thus, how teachers relate to the other adults in the building can have an impact on what and how they are learning which influences their efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1993).

While not a direct connection between school climate and self-efficacy, Bandura (2002) did write of a link between occupational stress and self-efficacy. Occupational stress comes from either being assigned a task that one feels is above one's skill level or when a person finds their job situation to be consistently below their skill level (Bandura, 2002). According to Bandura (2002), how a person copes with occupational stress is related to their degree of efficacy.

Collie et al. (2012) pointed out the importance of these two concepts when their findings "emphasize[d] that teachers are not isolated individuals separate from their environment and also that their perceptions of this environment are highly important. Teachers are impacted by their perceptions of their working context, and this influences their well-being and motivation" (p. 1196). Brown (2012), when studying burnout in teachers, noted that "symptoms of burnout could be reduced in environments in which teachers experience personal growth, self-efficacy and perceived success in their career progression" (p. 49). Hosford and O'Sullivan (2016) notes that research has shown that high TSE has been associated with aspects of school climate so "teachers' perception of school climate do matter and warrant further investigation" (p. 607). Research has been done to study how teachers' perceptions of school climate predict their teaching efficacy, but more research is needed to better understand the interrelatedness of these concepts (Collie et al., 2012). This study will explore these two concepts in the middle school setting using qualitative methods.

Summary

This study is based on Social Cognitive Theory which was developed by Albert Bandura in the 1960s (Bandura, 2005). It is a conceptual framework of human functioning that describes how individuals can manage their thoughts, emotions, and actions cognitively instead of as impulse reactions to the environment. An essential element of SCT is self-efficacy.

One of the most important components of human agency (or the ability to act) is self-efficacy. Bandura defined self-efficacy as an individual's "beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1993, p. 118). Essentially, the level of self-efficacy that an individual possesses determines to what degree they believe they are capable of doing a particular task. Self-efficacy can be a powerful force in a person's life. Bandura wrote that "research verifies that efficacy beliefs contribute significantly to the quality of human functioning" (Bandura, 2002, p. 271). Self-efficacy can affect mental health, occupational decisions, motivation, goal setting, and performance (Bandura et al., 1996; Bandura, 2002; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; McCormick, 2001).

A specific kind of self-efficacy is teacher self-efficacy. This is defined as a teacher's "individual beliefs in their capabilities to perform specific teaching tasks at a specified level of quality in a specified situation" (Dellinger et al., 2008, p. 752). Teacher self-efficacy is usually measured with yes/no questions about the respondent's beliefs about their skills. Teacher self-efficacy can be heavily influenced by principal support but can also be influenced by goal consensus, teacher empowerment, school resources, and affiliation among staff members (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016). Teacher self-efficacy affects

both students and teachers in positive and negative ways depending on the level of self-efficacy the teacher has. Notable effects include the teacher's commitment to the profession, quality of the classroom environment, and student achievement.

There is a great deal of research concerning school climate. The fundamental notion that they all agree on is the lack of a consistent, universal definition for the concept. In more recent research, school climate has been characterized as a multidimensional construct encompassing leadership, academics, teaching and learning, safety, institutional environment, social atmosphere, and relationships. Thapa et al. (2013) described the importance of school climate by saying, "The core characteristics of a liberal education, specifically the development of rational, critical, and imaginative thinking, rest on positive school climate" (p. 368). School climate has been shown to have an impact on overall academic achievement, psychological well-being, safety, attendance (Anderson, 2019; Thapa et al., 2013).

Research has been done to determine what, if any, relationship exists between school climate and teacher self-efficacy. The results of these quantitative studies show a positive correlation between the two constructs. However, further study needs to be done to add to this body of research. The next chapter describes the methodology and design of this proposed study.

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology chosen for this study. As discussed in the previous chapter, research has been done on school climate, self-efficacy, and how those two concepts are related. However, most of that research has been quantitative and focused on the student perspective (Wang & Degol, 2016). The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study is to explore how school climate affects Arkansas middle school teachers' self-efficacy.

Research Question

The researcher attempted to answer the following research question with this study: How do Arkansas middle school teachers' perceptions of their school climate affect their self-efficacy? The goal of this research was to try to understand how or why the school climate experienced by the teachers involved in the study affected their self-efficacy.

Research Design

This was a qualitative, phenomenological study. Corbin and Strauss (1998) define qualitative research as "any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (pp. 10-11). One way qualitative methods help researchers better understand a phenomenon is by hearing the experiences of the participants in their own words instead of selecting a response on a quantitative methods survey. The purpose of using qualitative methods in this study was to better understand the how and why behind school climate's effect on self-efficacy (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013). This study had "a focus on understanding and an emphasis on meaning"

(Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013, p. 112) in the quest to learn more about the possible connection between school climate and self-efficacy.

In the context of this study, qualitative methods were essential for collecting data in the participants' own words. Additionally, the interview process allowed for a deeper dive into the topic of school climate (Wang & Degol, 2016). Patton (2002) also speaks of the power of qualitative data. The important thing to remember is that people and how they view their experiences with school climate and self-efficacy are at the core of the study. Understanding the people, and not focusing on labeling the data, is the heart of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002).

This qualitative study used a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is "the description of an individual's immediate experience" with the goal of "understanding how individuals construct reality" (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013, p. 136). Patton wrote that the focus of phenomenology is "exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Essentially, phenomenology is concerned with how people experience the world around them. It is important to explore the way individuals experience the world so their different worldviews can be understood. This difference in perceptions creates a unique reality for every individual and, according to Patton (2002), there is no objective reality. The only way someone can truly know what someone else has experienced, or what their reality is, is to learn about it from them, often either by observation or interview (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) says, "The subjective experience incorporates the objective thing and becomes a person's reality" (p. 106). Phenomenology is not as concerned with the facts

of a particular situation but instead with how the individual personally experienced it (Patton, 2002).

The phenomenological design/approach was especially appropriate for this study because the research was concerned with teachers' perceptions and experiences with school climate and self-efficacy. Understanding the participants' experiences is at the heart of this study. Patton (2002) points out that there is a difference between a phenomenological study and a phenomenological perspective. As a phenomenological study, this research was focused on accounts of what the teachers experienced concerning school climate and self-efficacy and how they perceived it.

Although self-efficacy is typically studied in a quantitative way, a qualitative, phenomenological study is also appropriate for this topic. Glackin and Hohenstein (2018) found a noticeable difference in how teachers responded to quantitative measures of self-efficacy (Likert-type survey questions) versus qualitative measures (interviews and open-ended survey questions). Findings from their study showed that using qualitative measures provided a "more nuanced insight of self-efficacy so slight differences between articulated self-efficacy and embodied self-efficacy might be recognized" (Glackin & Hohenstein, 2018, p. 284).

Participants

According to Patton (2002), "Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples…selected *purposefully*" (p. 230). This means that the participants are selected "based on a specific need" (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013, p. 17). In the case of this study, that need was middle school teachers who were willing to

discuss their experiences related to the climate of their school and their self-efficacy. The sample and sampling method for this study are described below.

Setting and Sample

The setting for this study was middle schools across the state of Arkansas. Any middle school educator who had three years of classroom experience was considered suitable for the study. Teachers with less than three years of experience were excluded from the sample because teachers with fewer years of experience might not have enough experience in a school setting to discuss the school climate. Additionally, Walker and Slear (2011) found that what affected teachers' self-efficacy changed as they gained more classroom experience. New teachers (zero to three years of experience) tended to be solely focused on instructional practice and the only factor that had statistically significant impact on their self-efficacy was the principal modeling instructional expectations (Walker & Slear, 2011). To account for this potential skewing of results, new teachers were not included in the sample for this study. The researcher looked for teachers of various ages, years of experience, gender, education, pathway to licensure, and content specialty, but did not exclude any participant based on those factors.

Sampling Method

The researcher utilized what Patton (2002) calls maximum variation or heterogeneity sampling. This type of sampling "aims at capturing central themes that cut across a great deal of variation" (Patton, 2002, pp. 234-235). The benefit of using this type of sampling is that any common themes that emerge across the different participants will be especially valuable because of the differences in the participants (Patton, 2002). Although the study started with maximum variation sampling, the researcher was

prepared to make a final selection of participants randomly if the initial sample size is too large to accommodate a qualitative study (Patton, 2002). The key aspect of this process is finding information-rich cases that will yield maximum usable data concerning the effect of school climate on self-efficacy. Since the participants were chosen purposefully, the findings are not generalizable across all populations, but maximum variation sampling does allow the reader to see that the emerging themes did come from a variety of backgrounds (Patton, 2002).

Using the maximum variation strategy, the researcher looked for teachers of various ages, years of experience, gender, and content specialty. The researcher initially emailed the superintendent of every district in Arkansas that had middle schools requesting permission to contact their middle schools in search of participants. Once the superintendent granted permission, a request for interviews was emailed to middle school principals in those districts asking them to forward the request to their staff. To maintain credibility, requests were not sent to the researcher's current or past districts of employment.

A total of 22 districts granted permission for the study out of the 116 contacted. Out of the 22 districts that gave permission, 13 teachers from seven districts volunteered to participate. Of those 13 teachers, one teacher was excluded because of lack of classroom experience and four others did not return the informed consent forms or schedule interviews. Interviews from eight individuals make up the data for this study. This group consisted of one male and seven females with ages ranging from 32 to 60. Five were still working in the classroom while the other three had moved into other roles (instructional facilitator, media specialist, and reading interventionist paraprofessional).

Seven of the participants achieved licensure through a traditional pathway (undergraduate degree in education), and one of the participants received licensure by earning a Master of Arts in Teaching degree. For the highest degree earned, two of the participants had bachelor's degrees and the other six had master's degrees. For the content area specialty, one participant was math, one was reading, two were science, two were social studies, and two were English language arts.

Data Collection

Patton (2002) noted that "qualitative methods facilitate study of issues in depth and detail" (p. 14). Data for this study was collected using interviews and artifacts. These two data collection approaches are described below.

Interviews

Interviews enable the researcher to "enter into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Wang and Degol (2016) pointed out that gathering data via interviews allows the researcher to go deeper into the participants' thoughts and feelings about school climate. It is important to note that while qualitative methods contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, the findings will not be as easily generalized as with quantitative studies (Patton, 2002).

Each potential participant was emailed an overview of the study including an explanation of the security and confidentiality of data. Every individual that participated will signed a form indicating their willingness to participate, understanding of the interview process, and the fact that they can opt out at any time. Once these agreements are in place, the researcher contacted each participant via email to schedule a videoconference interview using the WebEx platform.

To conduct the interviews, the researcher used a semi-structured approach, sometimes called the interview guide, to elicit information from participants (Patton, 2002). Interview questions were developed in advance and asked of each participant, but the researcher was free to explore issues brought up by the participants that were not part of the original interview questions (Patton, 2002). Interviews ranged from twenty to forty-five minutes long. Once the researcher and the participant were logged on to WebEx and confirmed identities and that the connection was good, the researcher started recording the session. The researcher then began asking the open-ended questions.

After the interviews, the recordings were saved on the WebEx server and downloaded to the researcher's password-protected computer. The data from each participant will be saved with an alphanumeric code with a key to the code stored in a separate password-protected file. Each interview recording was then uploaded to an online transcription service for verbatim transcription.

Interview questions. The interview questions were developed by the researcher and reviewed by a peer team. The review helped to ensure that the questions were informed by the literature, easily understood, and worded in a way to elicit information-rich responses from the participants. The questions were open-ended so the participants could share their experiences regarding school climate and their thoughts on their self-efficacy.

According to Patton (2002), there are six kinds of questions: experience and behavior, opinion and values, feeling, knowledge, sensory, and background/demographic. Questions for this study were experience, opinion, and feeling types. The purpose of experience questions is to find out what the participant does that is observable (Patton,

2002). Opinion questions are “aimed at understanding the cognitive and interpretive processes of people” (Patton, 2002, p. 350). Feeling questions were used to draw out the participants' emotions (Patton, 2002). It is easy to confuse opinion and feeling questions; therefore, the researcher was careful to word the questions in a way to obtain the type of data needed for the study (Patton, 2002). By using a combination of these types of questions, the researcher attempted to gain an understanding of each participant’s experiences, opinions, and feelings about school climate and self-efficacy.

The research question for this study was *how do Arkansas middle school teachers’ perceptions of their school climate affect their self-efficacy*? The following questions were used for the interviews in order to help answer the overall research question:

1. School climate means “characteristics that distinguish one school from another and influences the behaviors of its members…the relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by its participants” (Hoy, 1990, p. 152). How would you describe the climate of your school?
2. What experiences have you had at your school that cause you to describe it that way?
3. In your opinion, what would make the climate better?
4. In your opinion, what would make the climate worse?
5. What do you consider your school’s greatest strengths?
6. What do you consider your school’s greatest weaknesses?
7. How, if at all, has the climate changed since you started working there?
8. How do you think your school climate has affected you?

9. Who, if anyone, in your building has influenced your beliefs about your teaching ability?
10. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
11. What do you consider to be your greatest weaknesses?
12. In your opinion, what factors most influence student motivation?
13. Describe some challenges you have faced in your teaching.
14. Describe some successes you have had in your teaching.
15. What has the biggest effect on your students' learning?
16. What feelings do you experience when you teach or prepare to teach?
17. Self-efficacy means your belief in your ability to do a given task. How would you describe your teaching self-efficacy?
18. Tell me about the artifact you brought. Why is it important to you?

Artifacts

Artifacts are another way for qualitative researchers to gather data. Examples include, but are not limited to, journals or journal entries, pictures, documents (personal, organizational, or public), video clips, or personal objects (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). At the end of the interviews, the participants were asked to share an object that had significance to them concerning the school climate or self-efficacy. There was a great deal of latitude in what was accepted as an artifact since it was something that was significant to the participant.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim into Microsoft Word by a professional transcriptionist. Each transcribed interview was sent to the interviewee for review (i.e.,

member checking). If the interviewee found an error or wanted to edit their response, that will be recorded in the document. The only changes that were made to the transcripts were related to confidentiality (omitting names of people or places). After this, the transcriptions and the artifacts provided by the interviewees were coded and analyzed by the researcher using the constant comparative method (CCM; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The CCM was designed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s as a qualitative analytic technique (Boeije, 2002). The main concept of CCM is comparison; in theory, the researcher compares every piece of data with the data already collected (Boeije, 2002). It is a cyclical process that goes on until each category of data is saturated (Boeije, 2002). In this case, saturation means that new data does not add any new information to the category (Boeije, 2002).

The first step in the CCM process was coding. Coding qualitative data is the process of using a word, symbol, or phrase to represent each discrete piece of data (Saldaña, 2016). The process of coding is not just labeling the data but instead a technique that allows the researcher to link ideas together: "It leads you from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea" (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 137, as cited in Saldaña, 2016, p. 8). This method of linking provides the researcher with a way to group pieces of data into categories because of some common attribute. The process starts by assigning codes that are real and specific to group data; once all data are coded the researcher will start to group similarly coded data together in categories and eventually into themes. Once data have been sorted into themes, more abstract or general conclusions can be drawn (Saldaña, 2016). Saldaña (2016) also says that coders must be organized, able to persevere, flexible, able to deal with ambiguity,

creative, rigorously ethical, and possess an extensive vocabulary (pp. 36 – 37). These characteristics will allow the coder to organize the data for comparison.

The researcher read the transcripts of each interview (and any other documents submitted) multiple times. Each time the transcript was read, phrases were highlighted and entered in a spreadsheet that listed the quote, the participant that said it, and the interview question it was related to. The coding began as soon as data was collected and continued throughout the process. Codes were created on an emergent basis as the researcher analyzed the interview transcriptions and artifacts (Saldaña, 2016).

When using the CCM technique, comparison takes place almost concurrently with coding. As soon as the first interview is completed and transcribed, the researcher coded that data and started the comparison process with that information. As subsequent interviews are completed, they were coded using the codes created during the first round (and additional codes as needed) and that data was compared to previous interviews. The process of comparison took place with each piece of data to categorize the information.

To aid in categorization, each piece of coded data in the spreadsheet was printed on an index card. These cards were sorted into piles based on their contents with each pile containing cards with contents that "look-alike" or "feel-alike" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 347). As piles began to accumulate, the researcher began to formulate an overarching rule or theme for each stack. If a card did not seem to fit with any other cards, it went in a miscellaneous pile until later. After all the cards had been sorted, the researcher went through each stack again to ensure that every card in the category fit the rule or theme.

Once all the data had been coded, compared, and categorized, the researcher was able to identify themes among the responses. The researcher also looked for differences or contrasting reports as well as overlap in the categories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These themes and differences became the findings for the research study.

Credibility

Credibility is the "criterion for evaluating the truth value or internal validity of qualitative research" (Hammarberg et al., 2016, p. 500). Patton (2002) said, "The credibility of qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork" (p. 14). Credibility is important because it is how the qualitative researcher defends the trustworthiness of his or her work (Hammarberg et al., 2016). In qualitative research, credibility is contingent on three components: researcher credibility, rigorous fieldwork methods, and opinion on the worth of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002). In this study, credibility was ensured in three ways: triangulation, member checking, and reflexivity.

Triangulation

An element of rigorous research technique is using triangulation for credibility. In the case of this study, the researcher first made use of data collection methods triangulation. Methods triangulation came from collecting data from both interviews and artifacts and from interviewing multiple middle school teachers with the same set of questions (Patton, M., 1999).

Second, the researcher used peer review as a method of triangulation in analysis to confirm the themes found in the data. For research to be considered credible, the methods used by the researcher to collect and analyze data should be well-documented

(Patton, 1999). Once the data is collected, analyzed, and reported, the researcher should look for alternate explanations for the themes presented in the findings (Patton, 1999). These alternate explanations show that the researcher is showing other sides of the issue beyond the conclusions drawn by the researcher.

Member Checking

The researcher also utilized member checking as a way of verifying the participants' responses. Member checking is a validity strategy that qualitative researchers use to "demonstrate the accuracy of their findings and convince readers of this accuracy" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 251). The process involved sharing the transcribed interview with the interviewee for review. Each participant was asked to review their interview transcript for accuracy and edit for clarity if necessary.

Reflexivity

Patton (2002) wrote, "The quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer" (p. 341). For this reason, reflexivity will be addressed in this section. For qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument (Patton, 2002). Knowing what potential experiences, lenses, and biases the researcher brings to the study assists the reader in evaluating how the data has been interpreted. Reflexivity is identified by Creswell and Creswell (2018) as the researcher's reflection on

> how their role in the study and their personal background, culture, and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretations, such as the themes they advance and the meaning they ascribe to the data…how the background of the researcher actually may shape the direction of the study. (p. 182)

Cunliffe (2020) says that “Reflexivity requires us to recognize that we are embedded in and shape, with others, our lived organizational and social experience and therefore need to question how we do so” (p. 65). Reflexivity is becoming a common topic “as a way of increasing the quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research” (Smith, S., 2006, p. 209). As an individual, each qualitative researcher brings a different perspective to the data collection and analysis process. This perspective comes from the experiences that the researcher has had and how the perceptions of those experiences have shaped their worldview.

In order to address reflexivity for this study, the researcher needs to describe past experiences with school climate and how it affects self-efficacy, and how the researcher’s personal experiences could be influencing data interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher also needs to disclose any connection he or she has with the participants or site of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

I am a white, cisgender female born and raised in Arkansas. I became interested in the topic of school climate while working on my Educational Specialist degree. Articles that I read for those classes alerted me to the connection between school climate and multiple other facets of the educational experience. Additionally, personal experience in different schools where I have worked has shown me that each school has its own climate, and that climate affected me in both positive and negative ways.

As a school administrator, this topic is important because I am responsible for the teachers on my team. I want to make sure that they feel supported and valued. My experiences as a teacher influence my actions and goals as an administrator. I want to ensure that my teachers have a work environment that fosters respect and accountability.

I believe that when teachers find a place where they feel connected, safe, and supported, they will benefit professionally and personally. I also believe that these positive feelings ripple outward to the students. These personal beliefs could influence how I approach this study. Since I have been affected by the climate of my workplace, I might tend to assume that others have had similar experiences. I might also assume that they feel that same way about the importance of school climate and how it affects everyone in the environment.

Another bias that I have identified comes from my past reading and informal conversations with educators on this topic. My background knowledge pointed toward school climate having an impact on teachers in a variety of ways. I must be intentional about remembering that each person's experience is unique. While the climate likely has some type of impact on each participant, how that looks could be remarkably different from one interviewee to the next as well as completely different from my own perspective.

My experiences, both positive and negative, form the backdrop for my inquiries. Smith (2006) discusses the usefulness of sharing the researcher's experiences as a way of complementing the findings of the study. Cunliffe (2020) writes,

> Reflexivity encourages us to think about the impact of our assumptions on research and knowledge production; who we may be privileging and who we may be excluding, what voices we may be silencing, and what impact our theories may have. (p.67)

For these reasons, it is necessary for me to consider how my personal narrative is influencing my work and to be transparent about those influences to those who read it.

Ethical Considerations

Before any data collection, approval was obtained from the Arkansas Tech University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once approval was granted, participants were recruited. An important part of this process was ensuring that all participants are fully aware of the nature and scope of the study so they could provide their informed consent. Every participant was assured that their participation is completely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Another important consideration was the protection of the participants, their identities, and the information that they share. Participants were informed that any identifying information would be redacted. Their responses were kept anonymous and confidential. This was important to understand so that participants could share their experiences freely without fear that it could jeopardize their professional standing in their school.

Summary

This study was designed to answer the following research question: How do Arkansas middle school teachers' perceptions of their school climate affect their self-efficacy? Qualitative methods were used to capture the teachers' perceptions in their own words. Teachers who participated in the study were interviewed and asked to contribute a related artifact. Participants were selected purposefully according to the need of the study: middle school teachers who can share of their experiences with school climate and self-efficacy. Maximum variation or heterogeneity sampling was used to ensure that the participants offered a variety of perspectives based on age, gender, years of experience, and content area specialty (Patton, 2002).

The interviews were conducted via videoconference platform WebEx and recorded for later analysis. The interview questions were developed by the researcher. The recordings were transcribed, and the transcriptions were shared with the participants so they could verify their accuracy. The transcriptions were analyzed using the CCM. The researcher read the transcripts multiple times highlighting key statements. These statements were coded in order to sort them into categories. The themes that emerged from the analysis will be presented as findings in the next chapter.

Chapter IV: Results

This chapter outlines the data collected during the interviews. As discussed in the previous chapter, eight middle school educators were interviewed using the same set of 18 questions. The sections that follow describe the participants and the themes that emerged in their responses.

The purpose of this study was to explore how school climate affects Arkansas middle school teachers' teacher self-efficacy in order to better understand how these teachers' beliefs about their ability to do their jobs might be impacted by the environment they work in. The research question for this study was *how do Arkansas middle school teachers' perceptions of their school climate affect their self-efficacy*? The following interview questions were developed to help answer the overall research question:

1. School climate means "characteristics that distinguish one school from another and influences the behaviors of its members…the relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by its participants" (Hoy, 1990, p. 152). How would you describe the climate of your school?
2. What experiences have you had at your school that cause you to describe it that way?
3. In your opinion, what would make the climate better?
4. In your opinion, what would make the climate worse?
5. What do you consider your school's greatest strengths?
6. What do you consider your school's greatest weaknesses?
7. How, if at all, has the climate changed since you started working there?
8. How do you think your school climate has affected you?

9. Who, if anyone, in your building has influenced your beliefs about your teaching ability?
10. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
11. What do you consider to be your greatest weaknesses?
12. In your opinion, what factors most influence student motivation?
13. Describe some challenges you have faced in your teaching.
14. Describe some successes you have had in your teaching.
15. What has the biggest effect on your students' learning?
16. What feelings do you experience when you teach or prepare to teach?
17. Self-efficacy means your belief in your ability to do a given task. How would you describe your teaching self-efficacy?
18. Tell me about the artifact you brought. Why is it important to you?

Participants

Table 1 outlines the participant demographics. Participant 4 was omitted from the table and the data because it was later discovered that she did not have three or more years of experience. The group consisted of one male and seven females with ages ranging from 32 to 60 and experience ranging from 10 to 39 years. The typical participant was a 43-year-old female with an undergraduate degree in education, a master's degree, and 16 years of classroom experience.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Years of Experience	Subject Area	Highest Degree Attained	Age	Gender	Pathway to Licensure
1	10	English Language Arts	Master's Degree	34	Male	Master of Arts in Teaching
2	10	Science	Master's Degree	36	Female	Undergraduate degree in Education
3	18	English Language Arts	Master's Degree	40	Female	Undergraduate degree in Education
5	16	Science	Master's Degree	51	Female	Undergraduate degree in Education
6	13	Social Studies	Master's Degree	41	Female	Undergraduate degree in Education
7	14	Math	Bachelor's Degree	55	Female	Undergraduate degree in Education
8	10	Social Studies	Master's Degree	32	Female	Undergraduate degree in Education
9	39	Reading	Bachelor's Degree	60	Female	Undergraduate degree in Education

Note. Participant 4 was intentionally omitted because it was later discovered that she did not fit the inclusion criteria for the sample.

Findings

During the interviews, the participants had a variety of responses, but several topics emerged consistently. The participants communicated their thoughts on relationships among coworkers and between teachers and students. They also spoke of leadership and in what ways it affected them. The participants talked about their school climate, teacher self-efficacy and in some cases of a direct connection between those two concepts.

The research question asked, "How do Arkansas middle school teachers' perceptions of their school climate affect their self-efficacy?" During the interviews, the researcher defined school climate and teacher self-efficacy for the participants for credibility/consistency purposes. When the data are taken as a whole, a pattern can be seen between how teachers described their school climate and how they described their TSE. Participant comments also emphasized the importance of relationships and leadership regarding teacher self-efficacy. The following sections will give more detail about these findings along with quotes from participants that provide evidence to support the findings.

Relationships

During the interviews, the participants referred frequently to relationships. When they talked about relationships, they were talking about how they interacted or connected with other people in the building. Relationships seem to be a specific piece of how teachers who participated in this study perceived their school climate. All artifacts provided by the participants related to relationships. Interview questions 1, 2, 9, and 12

seemed to most inform this theme. Participants spoke of coworker relationships and teacher-to-student relationships. These subthemes are described in detail below.

Coworker relationships. Six of the participants mentioned relationships in terms of coworker to coworker. Two of the participants showed artifacts that related to coworker relationships. Participant 2 keeps knickknacks that are reminders of her purpose at school around her desk. Many of those items are from her building principal and remind her of the importance of her professional team. Participant 8 displayed a painting that was done as part of a team building exercise with the middle school staff.

These relationships impacted the participants personally and the school overall. Participant 2 described her school as a "community…the way that we're just linked together and supportive of one another." Participant 5 said that her school's greatest strength was their "camaraderie…our willingness to, um, learn from each other and, um, share our, our ideas with one another…the respect that we have for one another." Participant 7 said that the "teacher[s] here [are] on a personal level with each other…families intermingle…we do a lot of stuff together." Participant 7 used positive phrases to describe her school climate such as "very engaging staff" and "relationships between teachers here are pretty amazing," and she also indicated that this positive climate:

> has made me want to be more involved in things outside of school. Basketball games, football games and stuff like that because the teachers here are my friends and we have such a positive relationship, we want to hang out.

Participant 8 summed up the collegial relationships by using the word "warmth" and saying that "the teacher relationships just laterally teacher to teacher are pretty good."

Even Participant 6, who described a climate with a lot of factions, still found coworker relationships to be important. She mentioned the counselor whose office was next door to her as someone she was close to.

On the other end of the spectrum, Participant 9 described the teacher climate as "very distant" and that it made her feel like she didn't "fit in to any group." Participant 9's artifact was pictures of her family instead of something directly from or related to an individual in the school because she considered her family as her most important purpose and didn't have any close relationships at school.

Three of the teachers cited other colleagues (not administrators) as the person in the building that has had the most influence on their beliefs about their teaching ability. Participants 2 and 6 described times that a colleague gave them positive feedback that made them feel more capable in their jobs. Additionally, Participant 2 said "my team is constantly, like, engaging together and lifting each other up and trying to push one another to the next level...my subject team and my grade level team."

Teacher-to-student relationships. Five of the participants mentioned teacher-to-student relationships. This refers to the connection that teachers have with students or the quality of their interactions. Participant 1 considered his greatest strength to be "building relationships with students." All five of the teachers that mentioned teacher-to-student relationships cited it as the primary way to motivate students. When asked what factors influence student motivation, Participant 7 said, "Knowing that I care…I think that relationship with every one of my students is important. They need to know that I care." The artifacts that teachers contributed to the study related to teacher-to-student

relationships. Most of the artifacts were notes from former students and/or their families noting how much the teacher had done for them.

Participant 6 called the notes from her students “love notes.” She spoke of a former student that wanted Participant 6 to proofread a paper that she had written on a controversial topic. Another teacher told Participant 6 that the student was “trolling” her. Participant 6 checked with the teacher and found that the paper had never been assigned and the student was, in fact, trying to be difficult toward Participant 6. Ultimately, Participant 6 said, “And I decided I'm gonna make her my favorite kid. And she's my favorite kid. And now like, I'm her favorite teacher. And she writes me love notes all the time.”

Participant 7 found that the teacher-to-student relationship affected her TSE as well. When asked about her artifact, she spoke of a specific note from the parent of a student that said:

> thank you for caring about the students. I have appreciated your excitement for math and how that translates to the students. For the first time in the student's life, she has been excited to learn math. It has always been a struggle for her and has caused many tears. However, this year she has an enthusiasm to learn it. I do know that she will still have moments like in the past as concepts get harder. But I will celebrate the small victories when I can. The biggest moment for me, though, was on the third day when she told me, “I feel like it's okay for me to make a mistake.” So thank you.

Participant 7 said that note "gives me …all the warm and fuzzies that 'Okay, I'm doing it, I'm doing this.'" This note from the parent describing what Participant 7 had done for the student increased her TSE.

Leadership

When discussing leadership, the participants often referred to building principals, assistant principals, principals from other schools, and instructional facilitators. Interview questions 2, 3, 4, 7 and 9 seemed to most inform this theme. Participants talked about support, trust, and feedback from leaders and what they needed from leadership. These subthemes are described in detail below.

Support, trust, and feedback. The participants described supportive leadership as leadership that gave them a voice, encouraged them, and made sure they had the resources they needed. Participants 2, 3, and 5 explained the support they received from school leadership. Participant 2 noted that this support made for a positive climate. Participant 3 gave examples of times that her principal supported the staff by listening to their suggestions for reducing the stress and workload the recent pandemic had put on teachers and doing what she could to implement them. Participant 5 said the following:

> our principal does a really good job of, um, building us up. He, um, he will come in and when he makes, he'll sit for a little bit, make his observations. And he always leaves a positive note…he is always, you know, checking on us and making sure that, you know, we got what we need.

Participant 5 described this influence in more detail by saying the following:

> And so I think he [the building principal] sets the stage for us. Um, and it just kinda, I don't know, when you know that your administration is behind you and is

> there for you, it just makes you able to…do your job… he just makes it, uh, an environment that is doable, you know, it's, it's comfortable.

Participant 2 talked about trust from her building principal in the following way:

> I feel like administration trusts that we're certified to do this job and we're capable of doing this job. Um, it doesn't feel like they're overly involved or overwhelming…it feels more like they trust us…I think it's that they know that we're capable and they trust that we are doing the job that we're hired to do.

When asked question 9, Participant 7 said, "It was the first administrator…that hired me. Um, she made me feel like I was effective."

One participant spoke of a direct connection between their teacher self-efficacy and feedback from leadership. Participant 7 mentioned weekly observations and feedback from leaders, saying that they:

> tak[e] notes of what they see effective and what they see that needs to be addressed. And so the feedback we get for those is pretty good. I mean I think that, I live for feedback. I want someone to tell me "Hey, where can I make this better? How can I do better at this?" Um, I don't want someone to tell me all the time "You're doing a great job," because we don't always do a great job.

Needs. Two participants spoke what they needed from their leadership. When they were asked what would make their school climate better, these two participants gave examples related to leadership. Participant 8 said:

> I would like more administrative presence in our classrooms. But because of the way workloads are kind of like, like, I know that this is insane…I have really

> grown to love the fact that our principal and our curriculum director come in and observe us.

Participant 1 said:

> so teachers want more communication more transparency from admin and less initiatives that they feel like are thrown on them they want things to feel like they have a purpose and that they have a voice… ideally in a utopian district were on the same page and we actually know what that mission and vision means on the district and building levels and are all following that. That's kind of idealist and romantic view. But that...if we could edge towards that it would build trust and build credibility more.

Participant 1 also talked about leadership by saying:

> so, our biggest weakness is that we're, eh, I would say probably not giving the teachers more of a voice and not giving all the stakeholders more equal voice...I think now's there a lot of like where they don't feel like they're treated as professionals, they're kinda being told what to do a lot.

Climate

The researcher gave the participants a specific definition of school climate at the beginning of the interview for credibility/consistency purposes. Interview questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8 seemed to most inform this theme. Participants described positive climates, negative climates, and how the leadership is connected to the climate. These subthemes are described in detail below.

Positive climate. When participants talked about a positive climate, they used phrases like “makes me want to go to work” and “a degree of warmth” and “uplifting and

encouraging" and "a positive place to be." Of the eight participants, five described their schools as having a positive climate. Those same five teachers also described their TSE in positive ways.

Participant 7, who described her school climate by saying the staff was "very engaging" and that "the relationships between the teachers here are pretty amazing" also said, "I think I'm more confident in my teacher abilities than anything else in my life." Participant 3 described her school climate as "a positive place to be" and that "it just makes me want to go to work." She also indicated a direct connection between her school climate and her TSE:

> I think because my climate is positive and uplifting and encouraging…even when your evaluation gives you constructive criticism feedback, but…because of the positive climate I feel like my self-efficacy is higher because I, I have the confidence or I, or even if I don't have the confidence, I know I have somebody supporting me and pushing me, whether that's a co-worker, a student, a parent, an administrator, facilitator, all of them. Um, I think that, um, if, if the climate was more negative or wasn't as positive, I think that that would definitely have an impact on…the way I felt like I could perform and do things in the classroom. So I, I mean I think it's a direct correlation that, because I feel like my, our climate is positive that I feel more empowered to do things in my classroom.

Participant 5 expressed a similar thought when she said, "I have, uh, colleagues and students that help me to feel so successful." When asked how the climate affected her,

Participant 7 said:

> it has made me want to be more involved in things outside of school. Basketball games, football games and stuff like that because the teachers here are my friends and we have such a positive relationship, we want to hang out. So I think, I don't live in this town so I drive to get here and by choice…so where I wouldn't stay for other stuff before, I think now it's just second nature.

Participant 8 suggested the strongest link between school climate and TSE. She described her school climate by saying "There's a degree of warmth in, in how we operation as far as just professional to professional" and went on to say that this positive climate "has saved my job" because she had felt less proficient in her previous school where she found the climate to be less positive. She said she "was one bad year away from leaving teaching, going into another profession." However, she described her current situation by saying, "Coming here with the amount of administrative support and co-teacher support, like, it saved my job. 100%."

Negative climate. The participants described a negative school climate as a lack of support and transparency from leadership and not feeling accepted by coworkers. They used words like "distant" and "factions." One participant described the climate as "mixed" and described his TSE that way as well. Two participants described a negative climate; of those two participants, one said it made her a stronger teacher and another said it made her question herself.

Participant 1 described his climate as "mixed" with both positive and negative attributes. He went on to describe his TSE as being a mixture by saying:

> that probably has been the biggest struggle. Um, because being a student was easy but teaching did not feel like a natural gift to me, …a lot of doubt a lot of perfectionism, which can lead to a lot of doubt and a lot of trying to kinda perfect things and balance things… I can finally see kinda see myself more objectively and see that maybe I didn't do the big disservice to kids for 10 years that I always worried that I was gonna do

Participants 6 and 9 described negative school climates. Participant 6 said:

> the climate of this school is, um, um, consists of lots of factions. Um, a, a... That's a difficult question. Um, m- m- m- many different little pockets and cliques, not only in students, but in administrators and teachers and even parents. Um, there's not a cohesive community feeling of we're all in this together, um, from my point of view.

She also said "I've never felt accepted here." However, when asked about her TSE she said, "I was born to teach" and that the difficult environment has "made me stronger in that. Like, I'm still succeeding."

Participant 9 described her school climate as "very distant" and that it took several weeks "to get acclimated to my surroundings because I was shocked by student climate at this level." She also said that she "doesn't fit in to any group." Participant 9 said she finds herself:

> just questioning whether I'm doing the right thing sometimes. Just, um, you know, wondering, "Have I done enough?" You know, I can be really hard on myself, um, 'cause, you know, there's days that you have successes and there's days you

have failures. And so sometimes I'm pretty hard and like, "What could I have done?"

When Participant 9 was asked how the school climate affected her, she replied:

> it's [school climate] something that I can't share when I go home because my family doesn't want to know. They don't want to hear the bad things...On this campus I don't really have anyone here that I can share with, so yes, it has affected me personally, but on the other hand I haven't really reached out to talk with anyone. I just kinda, I mean my focus is, when I get here, I do my job.

Connection to leadership. Many participants indicated that the school climate was directly affected by the building principal. When Participant 2 was asked how the climate has changed during her time at the school, she responded that "things have changed in administration. Uh, when I came in, the principal was different…it was closer to micromanagement…and now it's a little more hands off." When asked "In your opinion, what would make the climate worse?", Participant 3 answered "anytime if you had a change in leadership, or a big turnover in, um, teachers…could definitely change the climate." Participant 3 later described how a change in leadership had changed the climate in her school:

> when I first started there the principal was relatively [new], I think it was her second year there…she started, um, implementing her expectations. And there were some that were not about that…it was a struggle…there were probably four [teachers]…that really did, um, push back and that caused stress on everyone…since then they've retired or changed careers and, um, it's [the climate] gone way up.

Participant 7 described how her principal "is pretty amazing" and how they all know that "she's going to back our teachers a hundred percent" and that she "would hate to lose that." This same participant also described how the climate had changed since she started working there, and indicated that a change in leadership made a dramatic difference in the school climate:

> the principal that I had before…she was really soft-hearted. She was emotionally supportive, but that was where it stopped. Um, and so there was a lot of backbiting between teachers. Um, there were several bully teachers that were hard to handle. When our current administrator came in, she weeded that out. And it was hard…But when you have been supported like she supports, you learn that's more valuable than anything else. And so that's where I've seen the biggest shift here.

Participant 8 said that "a breakdown in trust in the chain of command or even laterally amongst the teachers" would make the climate worse. For example, she referred to being able to rely on her colleagues to step in for her in the case of an emergency and knowing that they would take care of things the right way.

Summary

This chapter reported the findings of the interviews and the themes that emerged from the participants' responses. The data contained answers to the research question as well as other findings. The overarching ideas were relationships, leadership, and how the school climate affected the teachers.

Relationships were a frequent topic of discussion during the interviews. The participants discussed coworker relationships and student-teacher relationships. When

discussing the coworker relationships, participants mentioned how this affected them in mostly positive ways because they provided support, encouragement, camaraderie, and feedback.

Teachers consistently mentioned leadership in the responses to several of the interview questions. Two participants discussed ways that the leadership could make things better. Many participants described supportive building principals. Participants talked about how the school-level leadership directly affected the school climate. Findings also showed that several of the teachers believed that the building leadership had a direct impact on their TSE.

School climate was found to affect the participants in both negative and positive ways. Sometimes the effect was on a personal level such as how accepted a teacher felt at school or how much they enjoyed coming to work. Other participants indicated that the school climate had a direct impact on their TSE. In seven of the eight interviews, the way the teachers described their self-efficacy (positively vs. negatively) echoed how they described their school climate. Only one teacher felt like she was successful despite the negative climate.

Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore how school climate affects Arkansas middle school teachers' teacher self-efficacy. The research question for this study was *how do Arkansas middle school teachers' perceptions of their school climate affect their self-efficacy*? This chapter discusses the key findings from the study and how they relate to the theory on which the study was based.

Summary of Findings

Eight middle school educators were interviewed for this study, one male and seven female. The participants ranged in age from 32 to 60 with 10 to 39 years of classroom experience. Seven of the eight also included an artifact that represented school climate or TSE to them. The interviews were conducted and recorded via WebEx. The videos were uploaded to an online transcription service for verbatim transcription. The transcripts were analyzed and coded based on patterns that emerged in the responses. The themes that emerged from these patterns were relationships, leadership, and climate. From these themes, four key findings emerged. Each of these key findings are discussed further in the next section.

Discussion

Four big ideas emerged from the analyzed data in this study:

1. How teachers describe their TSE is related to how they describe their school climate.
2. Relationships with coworkers and students are important to teachers.
3. Support and trust from leadership have a notable impact on TSE.

4. Leadership has a powerful influence on school climate.

These key findings are listed below and discussed in greater detail in the following sections

Key Finding 1: How Teachers Describe Their TSE Is Related to How They Describe Their School Climate

Finding that school climate affects teachers is not surprising given the research discussed in Chapter 2. Daily et al. (2020) found that school climate "can shape the interactions between students, teachers, families, and the broader community" (p. 183). Studies have also shown an increase in teachers' commitment to their work in schools with positive climates (Mulyadi & Sudibjo, 2018). A school with a positive climate has staff members who are "compatible and persistent and [are] aware of the students' emotions…offer[ing] fair services to their students" (Veiskarami et al., 2017, p. 482). There is a sense of pride in the school and teachers are happy to work there (Hoy, 1990). In this study, five of the teachers described a positive school climate and described their TSE in positive terms. Two participants reported a negative climate; Participant 9 described her self-efficacy in negative terms, and Participant 6 described her TSE as positive despite the way she characterized the climate: "No, it's made me stronger in that. Like, I'm still succeeding." Participant 1 described his school climate as mixed (both positive and negative aspects) and described his TSE as "a struggle" but that he "can finally see kinda see myself more objectively and see that maybe I didn't do the big disservice to kids for 10 years that I always worried that I was gonna do."

While this study cannot speak to a causal relationship between school climate and TSE, it does support previous quantitative studies' findings that school climate influences

TSE (see Aldridge & Fraser, 2016 and Veiskarami et al., 2017). This is important because this study adds a qualitative perspective in an area where the the majority of the studies have been quantitative. As other findings from this study show, school climate is not the only factor in TSE. However, since TSE has been found the affect student achievement (Bandura, 1993; Veiskarami et al., 2017; Walker & Slear, 2011) and their social emotional health (Bandura, 1993; Veiskarami et al., 2017), the quality of the school climate and its potential effects on teachers should not be ignored.

Key Finding 2: Relationships with Coworkers and Students Are Important to Teachers

Collie et al. (2012) found that the quality of the relationships that exist between members of the school influences the school climate. Cohen et al. (2009) wrote that "school connectedness," which they define as the "extent students feel attached to at least one caring and responsible adult at school," as a significant influence on school climate. Additionally, Yada et al. (2019) found that relationships with others "can enhance or diminish efficacy beliefs" (p. 14). Hajovsky et al. (2020) found that TSE is "positively related with student closeness and negatively related with student conflict" (p.114) indicating that relationships with students impacts TSE.

In this study, it was clear that teachers develop relationships with other teachers and with their students. These are the people that they spend the most time with during the school day. Three of the participants in this study mentioned the relationships they have with other teachers as contributing factors to their TSE. Participant 2 spoke of a colleague that helped her increase her TSE through verbal persuasion:

> she's really encouraged me that, "Hey, you're a good teacher. You're connected with kids. You're doing what's, you know, you're doing what's right for kids. Um,

you're working hard at this." Um, so she's, she's helped me have a, a positive view of my own teaching.

The artifacts that teachers shared also pointed strongly to the school relationship factor. Five of the seven teachers that contributed artifacts showed something that was connected to relationships with students or other teachers. Three of those five participants showed notes from students or students' families that conveyed appreciation for what the teacher had done for them. The participants talked about how these notes made them believe they were doing a good job thus increasing their TSE.

Key Finding 3: Support and Trust from Leadership Have a Notable Impact on TSE

According to the teachers in this study, building leaders can also have an impact on how teachers view themselves professionally. Participants spoke of building principals that increased their TSE because of the trust and support they received from them. This could be the result of feedback they have received from the principal; this verbal persuasion is one of Bandura's (1997) four sources of TSE. This positive TSE via building leadership could also be the result of teacher empowerment; Hemric et al. (2010) found that teachers that have more control over their jobs exhibit higher TSE than teachers that have less control. When building leaders show that they trust and support their teachers, they are communicating that the teachers are capable which gives the teachers a higher sense of TSE. As Participant 2 put it when describing a change in the leadership at her school:

> before it was closer to micromanagement...And now it's a little more hands off. I feel like administration trusts that we're certified to do this job and we're capable of doing this job. Um, it doesn't feel like they're over involved or

> overwhelming....it feels more like they trust us... I think it's that they know that we're capable and they trust that we are doing the job that we're hired to do.

Key Finding 4: Leadership Has a Powerful Influence on School Climate

The participants gave many examples of how their building principal had had a positive impact on the school climate. Participant 9 gave an example of how her principal influences the climate when she said that he encourages:

> a lot of positive, um, reinforcement on our campus…whenever we see something positive in a student we send a little note to him and then he will call the parent and share with the parent what the student did that was great for that day.

While Participant 9 did not describe an overall positive climate for her school, she did consider this a bright spot. Participant 5 described a principal who "tries to redirect us" when they get too focused on the negative in a situation. Participant 2 said that she feels like her principal "trusts that we're certified to do this job and we're capable of doing this job."

When discussing the climate of their schools, six of the eight participants mentioned their building principal and the role that he or she played in setting the climate of the school. In the eyes of these teachers, the attitudes and behaviors of their building leadership impacted the climate in a positive way; but it is possible that the reverse of this could also be true. Participant 3, when asked what could make the climate at her school worse, was quick to point out that "anytime if you had a change in leadership…I think [that] could definitely change the climate." Participant 7 spoke of a former principal that:

> was really soft-hearted. She was emotionally supportive, but that was where it stopped. Um, and so there was a lot of backbiting between teachers. Um, there were several bully teachers that were hard to handle.

In Participant 7's view, this principal had some good qualities (soft-hearted and emotionally supportive), but it was not enough to take care of all the interpersonal issues that came up with the staff. Participant 7 also said that when they had a change in administration, it made the climate better because the new administration "weeded that [the backbiting and bullying] out."

This means that administrators need to be aware of how their words and actions affect the school climate. Hoy and Hannum (1997) found that collegial leadership, which they define as "principal behavior that is friendly, supportive, open, and guided by norms of equality" (p. 294) was key in encouraging a healthy school climate. Building leaders should make every effort to ensure a positive climate as far as it depends on them.

Social Cognitive Theory

This study was based on Bandura's (1993) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). SCT posits that humans control how they think and behave and what motivates them based on the influence of their individual thought, personal traits, individual behavior, and the environment they find themselves in (McCormick, 2001, p. 23). A critical component of SCT is self-efficacy because it accounts for an individual's belief in their ability to do something (Bandura, 1993).

This findings from this study support SCT by showing how the participants were affected by their environment and the people in it. Participants reported that the relationships they had with the people in their environment influenced their behavior. For

example, Participant 7, who described her school climate in terms of a "very engaging staff" and "relationships between teachers here are pretty amazing," said this caused her to "want to be more involved in things outside of school. Basketball games, football games and stuff like that because the teachers here are my friends and we have such a positive relationship, we want to hang out."

Participants also mentioned leadership frequently during the interviews. Specifically, they talked about how school leaders supported them, trusted them, and influenced the school climate. In the experience of these participants, the behaviors of the leaders influenced the environment the teachers worked in as well as the teachers themselves.

Implications

The implications of these findings are presented in the next two sections. Suggestions for practice for both administrators and teachers are discussed. This section concludes with suggestions for future research.

Implications for Practice

These findings suggest that school climate is an important consideration since it affects individuals in different ways and on different levels. This is particularly important for administrators to be aware of since the findings indicate that building administration has a notable impact on school climate. Teachers need to be mindful of how the climate affects them and the role they play in supporting their colleagues.

Administration. Building leadership should regularly assess the school climate using formal and informal methods. Knowing the state of the school climate will assist the leadership in making decisions that will benefit their teachers and students. Building

leaders should also be proactive in showing their support to their teachers. As several participants reported, just knowing that they had the support of their principal made them more engaged and made them feel like better teachers. Although it can be difficult to find time in the hectic school days, building leaders must take the time to build relationships with their teachers so they offer support in meaningful ways.

The findings of this study underscore that leaders profoundly impact school climate; as such, leaders need to be cognizant of what their attitudes and actions are conveying to their staff. School leaders need to ensure that their behaviors are truly aligning with their mission and vision for the school. By being aware of how they impact their team, school leaders can be better prepared to promote a school climate where teachers thrive.

Teachers. Understanding the school climate is important for teachers because they have a symbiotic relationship with it. They both affect it and are affected by it. In this study, support from colleagues was reported as a positive trait regarding school climate. This suggests teachers should be cognizant of the time and effort they put into building relationships with colleagues and how they are showing support.

This study (and others before it) showed that teachers are also affected by the school climate. Thus, teachers should reflect on how the climate impacts their daily life, both personal and professional. If teachers identify areas that negatively affect them, they should consider how they could mitigate these effects. As pointed out in the findings in this study, this could be done by developing supportive relationships with colleagues or recognizing the positive influence they are having on students' lives.

Implications for Future Research

This study suggests two possible veins of future research. First, knowing that school climate affects teachers in different ways and from different sources, future research should focus on how to amplify the positive effects and mitigate the negative effects. Second, since teacher self-efficacy is affected by the school climate, relationships, and the building leadership, future research should focus on how to use those factors to increase TSE.

Conclusion

The findings of this qualitative research study were how teachers describe their TSE is related to how they describe their school climate; relationships with coworkers and students are important to teachers; support and trust from leadership have a notable impact on TSE; and leadership has a powerful influence on school climate.

This chapter discussed these findings in greater detail and suggested implications for practice and future research. Connections were made from the findings to the literature review found in Chapter 2 as well as Social Cognitive Theory which is the theoretical framework for this study.

Finally, the chapter closes with implications for practice and future research. The study suggests that building leaders take responsibility for the climate and cultivate an environment that is conducive to teacher growth. Teachers should be aware of the climate, how they influence it, and how it influences them. Future research could investigate increasing the effects of a positive climate and using school climate, relationships, and building leadership to improve teacher self-efficacy.

References

Aldridge, J. M., & Fraser, B. J. (2016). Teachers' views of their school climate and its relationship with teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction. *Learning Environments Research, 19*(2), 291-307.

Anderson, C. J. (2019). A leader's emotional self-control and management of others impacts a school's climate. *Journal of Invitational Theory & Practice, 25*, 39-59.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84*(2), 191-215. 10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191

Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist, 28*(2), 117-148. 10.1207/s15326985ep2802_3

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control* (1. print. ed.). W.H. Freeman and Company.

Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology, 52*(1), 1-26. 10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.1

Bandura, A. (2002). Social cognitive theory in cultural context. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 51*(2), 269-290. http://www.cultureready.org/sites/default/files/publications/Social%20Cognitive%20Theory%20in%20Cultural%20Context_Bandura%20(2002).pdf

Bandura, A. (2005). The evolution of social cognitive theory. In K. G. Smith, & M. A. Hitt (Eds.), *Great minds in management: The process of theory development* (pp. 9-35). Oxford University Press.

Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V., & Pastorelli, C. (1996). Multifaceted impact of self-efficacy beliefs on academic functioning. *Child Development, 67*(3), 1206.

Barkley, B., Lee, D., & Eadens, D. (2014). Perceptions of school climate and culture. *eJournal of Education Policy,* 1-12.

Boeije, H. R. (2002). A purposeful approach to the constant comparative method in the analysis of qualitative interviews. *Quality & Quantity, 36*(4), 391-409. 10.1023/A:1020909529486

Brown, C. G. (2012). A systematic review of the relationship between self-efficacy and burnout in teachers. *Educational & Child Psychology, 29*(4), 47-63.

Charlton, C. T., Moulton, S., Sabey Christian, V., & West, R. (2021). A systematic review of the effects of schoolwide intervention programs on student and teacher perceptions of school climate. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 23*(3), 185-200.

Cohen, J., McCabe, E., Michelli, N. M., & Pickeral, T. (2009). School climate: Research, policy, practice, and teacher education. *Teachers College Record (1970), 111*(1), 180.

Collie, R. J., Shapka, J. D., & Perry, N. E. (2012). School climate and social-emotional learning: Predicting teacher stress, job satisfaction, and teaching efficacy. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104*(4), 1189-1204.

Conderman, G., Walker, D. A., Neto, J. R., & Kackar-Cam, H. (2013). Student and teacher perceptions of middle school climate. *The Clearing House, 86*(5), 184.

Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. SAGE Publications Inc.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th edition, international student edition ed.). SAGE.

Cunliffe, A. L. (2020). Reflexivity in teaching and researching organizational studies. *RAE: Revista De Administração De Empresas, 60*(1), 64-69. 10.1590/S0034-759020200108

Daily, S. M., Mann, M. J., Lilly, C. L., Dyer, A. M., Smith, M. L., & Kristjansson, A. L. (2020). School climate as an intervention to reduce academic failure and educate the whole child: A longitudinal study. *Journal of School Health, 90*(3), 182-193. 10.1111/josh.12863

Daily, S. M., Smith, M. L., Lilly, C. L., Davidov, D. M., Mann, M. J., & Kristjansson, A. L. (2020). Using school climate to improve attendance and grades: understanding the importance of school satisfaction among middle and high school students. *Journal of School Health, 90*(9), 683-693. 10.1111/josh.12929

Dellinger, A. B., Bobbett, J. J., Olivier, D. F., & Ellett, C. D. (2008). Measuring teachers' self-efficacy beliefs: Development and use of the TEBS-Self. *Teaching & Teacher Education, 24*(3), 751-766. 10.1016/j.tate.2007.02.010

Dicke, T., Marsh, H. W., Parker, P. D., Guo, J., Riley, P., & Waldeyer, J. (2020). Job satisfaction of teachers and their principals in relation to climate and student achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 112*(5), 1061-1073. 10.1037/edu0000409

Edmonds, W. A., & Kennedy, T. D. (2013). *An applied reference guide to research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. SAGE.

Ellerbrock, C., Main, K., Falbe, K., & Pomykal Franz, D. (2018). An examination of middle school organizational structures in the United States and Australia. *Education Sciences, 8*(4), 168. 10.3390/educsci8040168

Fuchs, L. S., Fuchs, D., & Bishop, N. (1992). Instructional adaptation for students at risk. *Journal of Educational Research, 86*(2), 70-84. 10.1080/00220671.1992.9941143

Gist, M. E., & Mitchell, T. R. (1992). Self-Efficacy: A theoretical analysis of its determinants and malleability. *The Academy of Management Review, 17*(2), 183-211. 10.2307/258770

Glackin, M., & Hohenstein, J. (2018). Teachers' self-efficacy: Progressing qualitative analysis. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 41*(3), 271-290.

Goleman, D. (2006). The Socially Intelligent Leader. *Educational Leadership, 64*(1), 76.

Gunbayi, I. (2007). School climate and teachers' perceptions on climate factors: Research into nine urban high schools. *TOJET : The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 6*(3), n/a.

Hajovsky, D. B., Oyen, K. A., Chesnut, S. R., & Curtin, S. J. (2020). Teacher–student relationship quality and math achievement: The mediating role of teacher self-efficacy. *Psychology in the Schools*, *57*(1), 111-134. 10.1002/pits.22322

Hammarberg, K., Kirkman, M., & de Lacey, S. (2016). Qualitative research methods: When to use them and how to judge them. *Human Reproduction (Oxford), 31*(3), 498-501. 10.1093/humrep/dev334

Harrison, A. W., Rainer, R. K., Jr, Hochwarter, W. A., & Thompson, K. R. (1997). Testing the self-efficacy-performance linkage of social-cognitive theory. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 137*(1), 79-87.

Hattie, J. (2003). Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence? Paper presented at the *ACER Research Conference,* https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=research_conference_2003

Hemric, M., Eury, A. D., & Shellman, D. (2010). Correlations between perceived teacher empowerment and perceived sense of teacher self-efficacy. *AASA Journal of Scholarship & Practice, 7*(1) https://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/Journals/AASA_Journal_of_Scholarship_and_Practice/JSP_Spring2010_FINAL.pdf

Hosford, S., & O'Sullivan, S. (2016). A climate for self-efficacy: The relationship between school climate and teacher efficacy for inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 20*(6), 604-621.

Hoy, W. K. (1990). Organizational climate and culture: A conceptual analysis of the school workplace. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation, 1*(2), 149. 10.1207/s1532768xjepc0102_4

Hoy, W. K., & Hannum, J. W. (1997). Middle school climate: An empirical assessment of organizational health and student achievement. *Educational Administration Quarterly., 33*(3), 290.

Johnson, B., & Stevens, J. J. (2006). Student achievement and elementary teachers' perceptions of school climate. *Learning Environments Research, 9*(2), 111-122. 10.1007/s10984-006-9007-7

Kraft, M. A., Marinell, W. H., & Shen-Wei Yee, D. (2016). School organizational contexts, teacher turnover, and student achievement: Evidence from panel data. 10.3102/0002831216667478

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry* (1. print. ed.). Sage Publ.

Malone, M., Cornell, D., & Shukla, K. (2017). Association of grade configuration with school climate for 7th and 8th grade students. *School Psychology Quarterly, 32*(3), 350-366. 10.1037/spq0000174

Maxwell, T. W., & Thomas, A. R. (1991). School climate and school culture. *Journal of Educational Administration., 29*(2), 72.

McCormick, M. J. (2001). Self-Efficacy and Leadership Effectiveness: Applying social cognitive theory to leadership. *Journal of Leadership Studies, 8*(1), 22-33.

Morris, D., Usher, E., & Chen, J. (2017). Reconceptualizing the sources of teaching self-efficacy: A critical review of emerging literature. *Educational Psychology Review, 29*(4), 795-833. 10.1007/s10648-016-9378-y

Mulyadi, G., & Sudibjo, N. (2018). The effect of school culture, school climate, and transformational leadership on teachers' commitment. 10.1166/asl.2018.12468;

National School Climate Council. (2007). The school climate challenge: Narrowing the gap between school climate research and school climate policy, practice guidelines and teacher education policy. https://schoolclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/school-climate-challenge-web.pdf

Oder, T., & Eisenschmidt, E. (2018). Teachers' perceptions of school climate as an indicator of their beliefs of effective teaching. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 48*(1), 3-20.

Onafowora, L. L. (2005). Teacher efficacy issues in the practice of novice teachers. *Educational Research Quarterly, 28*(4), 34-43.

Patton, M. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health Services Research, 34*(5 Pt 2), 1189. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10591279

Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.

Pfitzner-Eden, F. (2016). Why do i feel more confident? Bandura's sources predict preservice teachers' latent changes in teacher self-efficacy. *Frontiers in Psychology, 7*, 1486. 10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01486

Powell, J. E., Powell, A. L., & Petrosko, J. M. (2015). School climate as a predictor of incivility and bullying among public school employees: A multilevel analysis. *Journal of School Violence, 14*(2), 217-244. 10.1080/15388220.2014.906917

Roach, A. T., & Kratochwill, T. R. (2004). evaluating school climate and school culture. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 37*(1), 10-17. 10.1177/004005990403700101

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd edition ed.). SAGE.

Shann, M. H. (1998). Professional commitment and satisfaction among teachers in urban middle schools. *Journal of Educational Research, 92*(2), 67-73. 10.1080/00220679809597578

Smith, M. L., Mann, M. J., & Kristjansson, A. L. (2020). School climate, developmental support, and adolescent identity formation. *Journal of Behavioral & Social Sciences, 7*(3), 255-268.

Smith, S. (2006). Encouraging the use of reflexivity in the writing up of qualitative research. *International Journal of Therapy & Rehabilitation, 13*(5), 209-215. 10.12968/ijtr.2006.13.5.21377

Tams, S. (2008). Constructing self-efficacy at work: a person-centered perspective. *Personnel Review*, *37*(2), 165-183.

Thapa, A., Cohen, J., Guffey, S., & Ann Higgins-D' Alessandro. (2013). A review of school climate research. *Review of Educational Research, 83*(3), 357-385. 10.3102/0034654313483907

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, A. W. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education., 17*(7), 783.

Veiskarami, H. A., Ghadampour, E., & Mottaghinia, M. R. (2017). Interactions among school climate, collective self-efficacy, and personal self-efficiency: Evidence from education institutions. *International Journal of Economic Perspectives, 11*(1), 481-488.

Voight, A., & Nation, M. (2016). Practices for improving secondary school climate: A systematic review of the research literature. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *58*(1-2), 174-191. 10.1002/ajcp.12074

Walker, J., & Slear, S. (2011). The impact of principal leadership behaviors on the efficacy of new and experienced middle school teachers. *National Association of Secondary School Principals. NASSP Bulletin, 95*(1), 46-64.

Wang, M., & Degol, J. L. (2016). School climate: A review of the construct, measurement, and impact on student outcomes. *Educational Psychology Review, 28*(2), 315-352.

Wyatt, M. (2014). Towards a re-conceptualization of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs: tackling enduring problems with the quantitative research and moving on. 10.1080/1743727X.2012.742050

Wynn, S., Carboni, L. W., & Patall, E. (2007). Beginning teachers' perceptions of mentoring, climate, and leadership: Promoting retention through a learning communities perspective. *Leadership & Policy in Schools, 6*(3), 209-229. 10.1080/15700760701263790

Yada, A., Tolvanen, A., Malinen, O., Imai-Matsumura, K., Shimada, H., Koike, R., & Savolainen, H. (2019). Teachers' self-efficacy and the sources of efficacy: A cross-cultural investigation in Japan and Finland. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 81,* 13-24. 10.1016/j.tate.2019.01.014

Appendix A

Preliminary Email to Superintendents

Hello,

My name is Jennifer Prado, and I am currently a doctoral student at Arkansas Tech University. I am contacting you as the superintendent because I would like for your middle school teachers to participate in an interview. The purpose of the interview is to understand how school climate affects the teacher self-efficacy of middle school teachers. I will conduct the interviews via videoconferencing platform (e.g. WebEx or Google Meet). Both the school district and teachers will be given pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality for all parties involved. If you would be so kind to allow the middle school teachers to participate in the interview it would be greatly appreciated. You may contact me by either responding to this e-mail or giving me a phone call at 479-XXX-XXXX.

Appendix B

Preliminary Email to Middle School Building Principals

Hello,

My name is Jennifer Prado, and I am currently a doctoral student at Arkansas Tech University. I am contacting you to ask if you would be willing to forward an email requesting participants for an interview for my dissertation study. The purpose of the interview is to understand how school climate affects the teacher self-efficacy of middle school teachers. I will conduct the interviews via videoconferencing platform (e.g. WebEx or Google Meet). If you would be so kind to forward this request for interview participants, it would be greatly appreciated. You may contact me by either responding to this e-mail or giving me a phone call at 479-XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to talking with you.

Appendix C

Preliminary Email to Prospective Interviewees

Hello,

My name is Jennifer Prado, and I am currently a doctoral student at Arkansas Tech University. I am contacting you to ask if you would be willing to participate in an interview for my dissertation study. The purpose of the interview is to understand how school climate affects the teacher self-efficacy of middle school teachers. I will conduct the interviews via videoconferencing platform (e.g. WebEx or Google Meet), and it will take 30 - 60 minutes. You may contact me by e-mail (XXXXXXXXX@atu.edu) or call/text (479-XXX-XXXX).

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to talking with you.