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Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

Nannette W. Glenn, Ph.D.

Dr. Nannette Glenn, Dean
of the College of Graduate
and Professional Studies

Date: 11 / 05 / 2023

Dissertation Committee:

John Kellmayer

Dr. John Kellmayer, EdD, Chair

Irma Harper

Dr. Irma Harper, EdD

Jamie Petrilla

Dr. Jamie Petrilla, EdD

Abilene Christian University
School of Educational Leadership

A Qualitative Study Exploring Teachers' Perceptions Concerning Involvement in Professional
Organizations and the Decision to Remain in the Profession

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by
Cynthia D. Villalovos

November 2023

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my amazing, beautiful daughter, Sierra Turner Villalovos. Throughout your life you have been a huge part of every decision I made for us personally, educationally, and financially. No matter where my dreams of a better life for us took us or how many jobs, conventions, conferences, or events I lugged you to, you adjusted, made the best of it, and even assisted me as you got older. This experience was no exception. This would not have been possible without your patience and without you sitting next to me proudly as I read chapters during the Houston Rodeo. Thank you for filling in at home so that I could study and write. Thank you for being the most wonderful daughter. I look forward to being your Gibraltar on your future endeavors. I love you more than you can ever conceptualize.

To my parents, Frances and John Schroth and my grandparents, Sarah and Felix Villalovos, this body of work is dedicated to you. The four of you taught me to never give up on my dreams, to never quit, and to dream big. Thank you for all your love and dedication to me. All of you instilled a drive, work ethic, and bulldog mentality to never quit. Thank you for understanding all the times I sat reading or doing homework at family functions and for pushing me to keep going. Thank you for standing beside me with encouragement, hope, dedication during my last semester of my master's program when I had to travel 18 hours every weekend to complete the coursework to graduate. To my mom, who traveled with me every weekend and kept Sierra occupied and safe in that tiny hotel room. To my dad for committing to helping me throughout that entire semester. To my brother who filled in when mom could not.

To all the single mothers who are just trying to survive, DO NOT GIVE UP! It will be hard. It will take something in you that you think you don't have. YOU DO! Your success will show your children that they can accomplish anything. Find a way. It will not be easy. Never quit! You are raising our future. It might be scary. But, as Joyce Meyer once said, "Do it afraid!"

Finally, to my undergraduate mentor, Dr. Marla Banks. This dissertation is also dedicated to you. You gave me a love for teaching and learning. You encouraged me and mentored me to be the educator I am. You inadvertently inspired me to get my doctorate. You brought fields of study and even careers into my life. Thank you for your great leadership and for impacting 30 years of my life.

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Abstract

Teacher retention was a grave situation prior to the COVID-19 pandemic that has since become a global epidemic. Losing early career educators has had a cost that hinders the U.S. public school system. There have been previous studies detailing the plight of teacher retention throughout the years indicating the causes of teacher attrition. Each study gave examples of the detrimental costs of teacher retention from the perspective of the school district. The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis study was to explore the perceptive phenomenon of teachers' involvement activities in professional organizations and the decision to remain in the profession. A purposeful nonrandom sample of 12 early career educators in Texas primarily from the greater Houston area were interviewed along with 13 participants in the anonymous survey. The semistructured interviews were recorded and transcribed. The study findings overwhelmingly corroborated that early career educators need more than what they are getting on their campuses to ensure teacher retention. The study participants were asked questions about their lived experiences, what they want or need to be successful and to stay in the teaching field. The findings indicated that early career educators need additional, yet different, mentoring, support, networking, and resources from professional organizations. Early career educators were forthcoming with their lived experiences indicating what experiences and activities they were missing on their campuses. Sharing these experiences, opportunities, and activities will be beneficial to early career educators and give professional organizations a road map to increasing teacher retention.

Keywords: new teacher, retention, attrition, professional organizations, mentoring, professional development, support, networking, mental health, stress, burnout

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Teacher shortages can be explained by the fact that 90% of the teachers decide not to remain in their career for purposes other than retirement (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). New teacher attrition in the United States has soared to a level where as many as 50% exit the education field within 5 years (Bennett et al., 2013; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020). Early career teacher attrition occurs when educators depart their teaching careers for reasons other than retirement (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). Teachers who participate in alternative certification programs are 25% more likely to leave teaching (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). A significant number of early-career educators in the United States are departing due to the limited support of the administration and mentoring or the absence of preparedness (Bressman et al., 2018; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Christophersen et al., 2016; Kozikoğlu, 2018; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020). In addition to the lack of preparedness, mentorship is critical because teachers who feel valued by their administration remain in education at increasing rates (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020). Accordingly, the development from student teacher to first-time teacher is challenging due to the perceived expectations of being a teacher and their reality (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Harfitt, 2014; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020).

A significant cost associated with teacher attrition is the cost to school districts in onboarding and training new teachers. Individual urban schools spend \$20,000 or more a year to replace each teacher who leaves their profession (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Every teacher who leaves a school district for reasons other than retirement costs an average of \$13,000 to replace (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). There are estimates of 110,000 new educators per year (Garcia & Weiss, 2020). As a result, the consequences of teacher attrition

in any fashion significantly affect student learning (Cardichon et al., 2020; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Many school districts in Texas introduce mentor programs to increase teacher retention while the Texas Education Agency (TEA) attempts to overhaul the teacher certification program. These programs are essential because when educators feel valued, they are more inclined to continue in education (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Furthermore, professional organizations in Texas comparable to the Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE), Delta Kappa Gamma (DKG), and Texas Association of Bilingual Educators (TABE) have focused on mentoring, professional growth, development (Bond & Sterrett, 2014; Young, 2018), and service-learning (Busby et al., 2019; Chiong et al., 2017; Stanke et al., 2019) to address this issue.

Professional organizations can serve as additional ways to reduce the number of teachers leaving the career field. A benefit of being engaged in a professional organization is learning skills useful in a classroom setting (Bond & Sterrett, 2014). Collaborative working and networking that affect the future of teaching and learning are shared through professional organizations that provide professional development, current data, trends, and research-based information on the leading educational issues (Busby et al., 2019). Educational organizations enable new teachers to be actively engaged in service-learning, professional development, and networking resulting in increased retention (Busby et al., 2019; Chiong et al., 2017; Stanke et al., 2019).

Other researchers have addressed previous research to increase retention by promoting the implementation of service-learning as a tool for encouraging professional growth and increasing preparedness for teachers (Saenz-Armstrong, 2020; Stanke et al., 2019). Although the literature indicates that being an actively engaged teacher in a professional organization leads to

professional development opportunities and growth (Busby et al., 2019), there is a gap in teacher retention practice that has yet to be discovered. There is no significant research to show how engagement in professional organizations leads to teacher retention. Being an actively engaged teacher (member) and professional organizational member (teacher) leads to staying abreast of current trends, networking with other teachers from other districts and around the state, pursuing professional development opportunities with the intent to utilize the material, and profoundly impacting student learning by applying information and experiences obtained (Busby et al., 2019).

Professional organizations are essential to the retention of teachers as they encourage educators to pursue professional growth through service learning, professional development opportunities, and mentoring (Busby et al., 2019; Stanke et al., 2019). However, even though educational organizations provide programs and services to increase retention, organizations find it challenging to maintain engaged educators (ATPE, 2017).

Understanding how new educators can be encouraged to become engaged in educator organizations early in their teaching career is essential to reducing the teacher attrition disparity (Chiong et al., 2017; Young, 2018). The lack of young educators actively engaged is reflected in the ATPE (ATPE, 2017). Of its leaders, 73% are over 40 years of age, and fewer than 12% are under 34 (ATPE, 2017). This data details an aging workforce who will soon be looking toward retirement. From a recent survey where 2,089 members responded, 89% indicated that they are age 35 or over (ATPE, 2017). In 2019, Texas Delta Kappa Gamma inducted its first college student (DKGTexas, 2019). Millennials are predicted to be 50% of the workforce by 2020 and 75% by 2025 (Morgan, 2016). By 2023, millennials actually consisted of 35% of the workforce yet predicted to amass 75% by 2030 (Paczka, 2020). The Texas Alliance of Black School Educators (TABSE) reported that 4% of educators who exit their first teaching assignment do so

for the reasons of no engagement or mentoring (Harris County Department of Education, 2019). The data shows a correlation between novice and emerging educators being less active and engaged than their older and more experienced counterparts.

Statement of the Problem

Many early career educators remain in the profession for less than 5 years causing substantial numbers of educators to leave teaching for reasons other than retirement (Cardichon et al., 2020; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). Garcia and Weiss (2020) attributed 14% leaving their first teaching assignment due to the lack of mentoring or preparedness (Bressman et al., 2018; Cardichon et al., 2020; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Christophersen et al., 2016; Kozikoğlu, 2018; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020).

Service-learning assists teachers in obtaining professional growth and increasing teacher preparedness (Stanke et al., 2019). Service-learning in professional organizations consists of community-based service combined with learning goals directed to its membership (Stanke et al., 2019). These professional organizations are essential because they support educators towards professional growth through service learning, professional development opportunities, and mentoring (Busby et al., 2019; Stanke et al., 2019). In addition, being an actively engaged teacher in a professional organization leads to professional development opportunities and growth and can lead to retention (Busby et al., 2019; Chiong et al., 2017; Stanke et al., 2019; Young, 2018).

Nevertheless, the factors encouraging new educators into active engagement in professional organizations are yet to be discovered. Unearthing how new educators can be encouraged to become engaged in educator organizations within their first few years of teaching is necessary to close the teacher attrition gap (Chiong et al., 2017; Young, 2018). The discovery of leadership actions that inspire new educator engagement and involvement in educational

organizations is essential (Bond & Sterrett, 2014; Young, 2018). If active engagement and involvement in professional organizations of early career educators is not studied, teacher retention tools, such as service learning, professional development, and mentoring will have an insufficient effect. Consequently, the impact of limited involvement in professional organizations by new teachers could significantly contribute to the increase of teacher attrition.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study was to explore the perceptive phenomena of teachers' involvement in professional organizations and the decision to remain in the profession. Twelve educator participants from Texas, primarily in the Houston area, who have 5 years or less experience and are engaged in and those who are not engaged in a professional organization were included in this study. Open-ended interviews were conducted via synchronous interviews. Transcripts were read, analyzed, and coded using Dedoose. The codes (categories) were used as the foundation for themes. I coded and analyzed transcripts to accurately identify new educators' themes regarding engagement and involvement in a professional organization.

Research Questions

RQ1. What are the factors causing teacher attrition as perceived by early career educators, and how might professional organizations impact these factors to increase teacher retention?

RQ2. What are the perceptions of early career teachers on the importance of professional organizations and the effect they have on teacher retention?

RQ3. What are the benefits of joining a professional organization according to the perception of an early career teacher?

Definition of Key Terms

Attrition. In the context of this study, attrition occurs when educators leave teaching for reasons other than retirement (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017).

Early career educator. Educators having 5 or less years of teaching (Bennett-Forman & Hoffman, 2020).

Engaged. Participation in professional organizations as a member, active member, or contributing member (Busby et al., 2019).

Mentoring. As a wise counselor, mentors function as a critical professional learning tool used by groups, including initial teacher educators and senior leaders (Ellis et al., 2020).

Migration. Teachers who transfer to another school (Flowers, 2019).

Professional development/growth. A device used for cultivating practice(s) is called professional development/growth (Brunsek et al., 2020).

Professional learning communities (PLC). PLCs provide professional development focused on keeping teachers learning productively (Saenz-Armstrong, 2020; Wood & Whitford, 2010).

Professional organization. Professional organizations purposed with the mission to provide training, support, and related services to members of the educational environment (Busby et al., 2019).

Service learning. Service-learning is an educational method that integrates learning objectives, progressive learning experiences, and meeting societal needs (Stanke et al., 2019).

Student teacher. A college, university, or graduate student participating in an educator preparation program is a student-teacher (McDonald, 2019; Van Overschedle & Wiggins, 2017).

Teacher retention. Research that focuses on how factors and teacher demographics affect whether teachers stay in their schools, move from school to school, or leave the profession other than retirement is called teacher retention (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017).

Turnover. The change in staff from one year to the next is called turnover (Holme et al., 2017).

Urban schools. Schools that generally have a sizeable ethnic student population, suffer from inequality and socioeconomic segregation, have large class sizes, and high numbers of community poverty, unemployment, public assistance, income disparities, and a significant number of single-mother homes are labeled as urban schools (Welsh & Swain, 2020).

Summary

It is unclear how involvement in professional organizations affects the phenomenon of remaining in the profession through the perceptions of new educators (Saenz-Armstrong, 2020). Significant numbers of educators leave teaching within the first 5 years (Bennett et al., 2013; Cardichon et al., 2020; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). Educators who are transitioning into their second and third year of teaching experience hardship that is derailing teacher retention at a staggering rate due to the lack of mentoring or preparedness (Bressman et al., 2018; Cardichon et al., 2020; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Christophersen et al., 2016; Kozikoğlu, 2018).

The literature has shown transition activities through professional organizations lead to retention. Schlossberg's transition theory shows that being actively involved in professional organization activities can benefit new teachers' transition successfully into veteran teacher status and teacher retention (Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). This research could be the catalyst for discovering educational organization involvement for new and young educators. In addition, the research will be valuable in learning how that involvement could lead

to their retention. Knowing this information could lead to addressing the country's teacher attrition problem. Discovering what encourages new educators to engage in relationships with professional organizations can be crucial in teacher retention research, which was the goal of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter acquaints the reader with the literature describing teacher retention, its causes, and how educational organizations could assist in decreasing attrition. While the body of evidence lives where researchers record teacher retention or attrition, few relate the lived experiences to the role of professional organizations. Because professional organizations are a vital element to teacher attrition and teacher retention (Chiong et al., 2017; Young, 2018), consideration is justified.

Scope of Literature

The literature is presented in this chapter to introduce the reader to information regarding the issues surrounding teacher attrition. The literature sources were acquired through searches of the Abilene Christian University Library Databases, ProQuest, and EBSCOHost. The most used search terms were *teacher retention*, *teacher attrition*, *professional organizations*, *mentoring*, *leadership*, and *professional development*. Older works were encompassed when current material was futile and did not provide a wide range of topics. Additionally, searches included peer-reviewed articles.

The literature addresses an attempt to increase retention by suggesting that service-learning assists teachers in obtaining professional growth, increasing teacher preparedness (Stanke et al., 2019). Service-learning conducted in professional organizations consists of community service combined with learning goals directed to its membership (Stanke et al., 2019). These professional organizations are essential because they propel educators towards professional growth through service-learning, professional development opportunities, and mentoring (Busby et al., 2019; Stanke et al., 2019). In addition, being an actively engaged teacher in a professional organization leads to professional development opportunities and

growth and can lead to retention (Busby et al., 2019; Chiong et al., 2017; Stanke et al., 2019; Young, 2018).

This chapter begins by describing the issues surrounding teacher retention. The discussion includes the data surrounding teacher retention, recruitment issues, and financial and nonfinancial implications. Next, the causes of teacher attrition are examined, including preservice preparation, mentoring, and professional growth. Following the issues surrounding teacher retention, the literature shows how professional organizations give value to educators, assist in providing additional rigorous preservice experiences, offer leadership growth and professional development, and conclude with mentoring and networking opportunities. Additionally, Schlossberg's transition theory dialogue will connect to teacher retention.

Teacher retention has become a priority topic of discussion when examining educational issues. Globally, the world has become concerned with the level of teacher attrition occurring within the first 5 years of teaching (Whalen et al., 2019). Early career educator attrition in the United States has climbed to levels where 50% leave the education career within 5 years of teaching (Bennett et al., 2013). Research has shown that teachers in the U.S. are departing the teaching field due to the absence of administrator support and mentoring or the lack of preparedness to teach (Bressman et al., 2018; Cardichon et al., 2020; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Christophersen et al., 2016; Kozikoğlu, 2018; Ulferts, 2015).

These issues are plaguing the educational diaspora. A recent study showed a connection between mentor programs and teacher retention (Whalen et al., 2019). By year three, 25% of the teachers who did not receive mentors during their first-year teaching left the field (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Kaiser & Cross, 2011). Increased attrition reveals that new teachers in the United States stay in education for less than 5 years. In addition, large numbers of educators leave teaching for reasons other than retirement (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, the factors driving new educators into active engagement in professional organizations are yet to be discovered. Unearthing how new educators can be encouraged to become engaged in educator organizations within their first few years of teaching is necessary to close the teacher attrition gap (Chiong et al., 2017; Young, 2018).

If the impact of new educators' active engagement and involvement in professional organizations is not studied, the tools of service learning, professional development, and mentoring, which lead to teacher retention, will have an insufficient effect. Therefore, the consequences of limited involvement in professional organizations by new teachers will increase teacher attrition.

Theoretical Framework

Every year hundreds of high schools hold fish camps to help incoming freshmen students transition into high school at higher proficiency rates. The same concept is needed for first-year educators to increase teacher retention. This study was influenced by Schlossberg's transition theory, specifically related to new teacher transitioning (Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). Attrition has been influenced by factors that readily change across an educator's career (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). Reducing stress is an area of development that must be acquired with early career educators (Whalen et al., 2019). Early career teachers should learn to transition through all the changes early in their careers (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). Change is managed differently by every individual. Change occurs throughout life and can include role changes or events (Patton et al., 2016). In addition, there are changes in relationships with people, role changes, careers, events, and nonevents (Patton et al., 2016). Early career teachers must traverse the tremendous changes that occur during the first few years (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017).

Changes recognized and deemed significant to a person are called transitions (Patton et

al., 2016). Transitions can occur as normal and natural life events, like becoming a teacher. Anticipated, unanticipated, or nonevents happen when starting a new career (Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015). Anticipated transitions are planned events. Graduating from college is an anticipated event. However, positive, or unplanned events are unanticipated transitions. Likewise, having negative feelings for colleagues is an unanticipated transition. A nonevent is an expected transition that does not transpire (Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). An example of a nonevent transition is when a new teacher has a highly positive interview yet does not receive an offer for their desired school district.

The impact of transitions is defined by how life-altering change affects an individual (Patton et al., 2016). Transitions impact people at varying levels of significance. Coping with transitions allows an educator to move in, move through, and move out of a change. The process of moving through and out of a transition is dependent on the specific areas (see Table 1). The four areas in Schlossberg's transition theory are situation, self, support, and strategies (Anderson et al., 2017). The ability to cope is determined by the positive or negative totality of the four areas. Foreseeing a teacher's capability to manage a transition necessitates an analysis of a teacher's shortfalls and strengths in four specific areas: situation, self, support, and strategies (Schlossberg, 2011).

Table 1*Schlossberg's 4 Ss*

Situation	Self	Support	Strategies
Trigger	Socioeconomic status	Intimate relationships	Modify the situation
Timing	Gender/Age	Family	Control the meaning of the problem
Who is Responsible	Ethnicity/Culture	Friends	Manage the stress related to the problem
Role Change	Health	Institutional or community-based	
Duration	Optimism and self-efficacy		
Concurrent Stress	Spiritual Outlook		

Note. From “The challenge of change: The transition model and its applications,” by N. K.

Schlossberg, 2011, *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 48(4), pp. 159–162,

(<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1920.2011.tb01102.x>)

Situations and Teacher Retention

Novice teachers experience new situations. Multiple situations can occur at once, like a role change or another stressor (Anderson et al., 2017). Every case is different based on how the situation is triggered: the timing of the situation, role change in the situation, the length of time for the transition or situation, whether there have been similar circumstances, any other stressors happening, and responsibility for the situation are all factors affecting the situation of the transition (Anderson et al., 2017; Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). The separation from the university educator preparation program can be a permanent and uncertain transition (Patton et al., 2016). A possible move and a new position are anticipated transitions

(Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015). The pursuing year yields new relationships with students, staff, and parents and the discovery of a new home base, both of which bring about unanticipated situations (Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015).

Self and Teacher Retention

A second factor in the transition is a sense of self. An educator who understands their history can better recognize their sense of self. What an individual brings to the situation is defined as self (Anderson et al., 2017; Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). Factors determining how well a person reacts to a transition are socio-economic status, age, gender, health, ethnicity, or outlook on life (Anderson et al., 2017; Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015). Factors that can be improved upon are psychological. Those factors include a teacher's resilience, spirituality, and optimistic views (Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015). The very nature of the novice educator's past and current environmental makeup can significantly determine their transitional resilience. An emerging educator's sense of self affects their transitional success and retention in the educational field.

Social Support and Teacher Retention

Next, social support is the most crucial area (Anderson et al., 2017; Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). People (i.e., novice teachers) who have a trusted, intimate support team (parents, mentors, professors, administrators, or peers) are prone to have an improved transition. Individuals with a range of supporters, including family, friends, coworkers, or church groups, have a more successful transition (Anderson et al., 2017; Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015). In addition to friends, coworkers, and church supporters, professional supporters from organizations and associations are support systems. Strategies are the last factor in determining how well a person transitions through a situation or event.

Strategies and Teacher Retention

Strategies to cope with a transition include how well a person modifies the situation, controls the meaning of the situation, and finally how a person manages stress (Anderson et al., 2017; Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015). Knowing how to manage transitions can lead novice teachers to have positive coping skills, increasing teacher retention. Discovering mentoring and professional development experiences in professional organizations will help new teachers make a positive transition in, transition through, and out of their first years of teaching (Anderson et al., 2017; Busby et al., 2019; Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015; Patton et al., 2016; Schlossberg, 2011; Stanke et al., 2019). Flexibility is adequate to transitioning through change and could increase teacher retention rates (Chiong et al., 2017; Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015; Young, 2018). Being able to modify the situation is vital. Any transition, including the move from college to their first teaching assignment, commences with a moving-in phase, which involves the acquisition of new procedures and expectations (Schlossberg et al., 1990). Then, direct action occurs (Patton et al., 2016). Managing the situation has to be considered. No one could remove the stress of the situation except the person most affected by it.

Teacher Retention Problems/Issues

The discussion begins with addressing the data surrounding teacher retention. There is discourse pertaining to the pandemic, recruitment issues, and financial and nonfinancial implications. Additional causes of teacher attrition include preservice preparation, mentoring, and professional growth. Subsequent sections of this chapter review the issues surrounding teacher retention. Additional literature explains how professional organizations give value to educators, assist in providing additional rigorous preservice experiences, offer leadership growth and professional development. The conclusion details the mentoring and networking opportunities provided by professional organizations.

Data

Most school districts in the United States exhibit teacher retention issues; this problem indicates the need to look at the data. The data will give administrators and elected officials the data detailing the situation facing America's education system. Retention refers to keeping the teachers with the most potential for student success (Allen, 2014). To understand the teacher retention problem, one should be aware of teacher attrition issues. Attrition is challenging for early career educators (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). The next cohort of new educators will soon attest to the research detailing that 45-50% of those educators leave the educational field within their first 5 years (Bennett et al., 2013; Kutsyruba et al., 2017; Perryman & Calvert, 2019). Every year there are scores of educators who leave the teaching field. Additionally, by year three, merely 80% of new teachers are continuing their teaching careers (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Attrition is a continual event where volumes of teachers leave their careers for causes other than retirement (Kutsyruba et al., 2017). As school districts around the country prepare to hire new educators, the shortage of teachers brings a heightened awareness (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). America is facing a shortage of teachers. Novice teachers who have under 3 years of experience leave at double the rates of veteran educators (Rosenberg, 2020). Research shows that younger teachers leave the field more than experienced teachers (Sass et al., 2012). There are varying data accounts pertaining to the attrition and retention of early career educators. Novice educators depart charter schools after the first year 25% of the time (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that 9% of public-school teachers and 20% of private school teachers leave teaching within 3 years (Dahlkamp et al., 2017). Additional research has detailed how charter schools lose teachers at a rate of 130% more than public schools (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017). The substantial number of positions needed to fill the teacher shortage affects every learning institution around the country.

Like many states, Texas has struggled to fill the teacher shortage. The governor of Texas has directed the Commissioner of Education and the Texas Education Agency to create a task force addressing teacher shortages (Abbott, 2022). Texas has been fighting the retention battle prior to 2017. The task force that will be formed will investigate any issue that a teacher vacancy causes (Abbott, 2022). Additionally, the task force will propose any policy recommendations (Abbott, 2022).

In Texas, 72.2% of the students are a minority, 58.8% are economically disadvantaged, and 50.8% are at-risk (TEA, 2018). A teacher is more prone to leave teaching in Texas if they have vast amounts of minority students (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Dupriez et al., 2016; Morton, 2015). Research has stated that high-poverty schools have teacher turnover rates of 50% higher than other schools (Cardichon et al., 2020; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Green & Munoz, 2016; Learning Policy Institute, 2017; Sass et al., 2012). Alternately, a study of Teach for America (TFA) teachers detailed that TFA teachers remained at their higher risk campuses more than did their non-TFA colleagues (Stoker, 2018). Texas is not alone in the plight of teacher attrition. Other states like North Carolina schools show a 26% turnover rate for middle school math and ELA educators (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). South Carolina data indicates that in 2017 of the teachers leaving the field of education, only 27% of the teachers migrated from one school to another (Garret, 2019). Likewise, many states find themselves in the battle to fill teacher shortages.

Extensive numbers of books and movies have outlined the struggles of educators who teach diligently in poor urban school districts. A case can be made that low socio-economic urban schools see a higher attrition rate. Turnover rates are higher for extreme poverty and high minority schools (Cardichon et al., 2020; Holme et al., 2017; Learning Policy Institute, 2017). Prevalent poverty schools yield approximately 31% turnover rates (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

Urban and rural schools are doubly affected by increased teacher attrition resulting in at-risk students left performing lower (Cardichon et al., 2020; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Flowers, 2019; Tran et al., 2020; Watlington et al., 2010). High teacher turnover in rural areas results in low student performance that rural communities cannot manage (Flowers, 2019). The problems facing schools with high attrition rates equally affect the education of an already at-risk population. One in six teachers in schools with large minority students is new (Cardichon et al., 2020). Urban school educators leave 70% of the time within 5 years (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). This vicious cycle leaves schools and students suffering a never-ending conveyor belt delivering new teachers and poorly performing students.

Pandemic

I would be remiss by not addressing the tremendous resignation of educators within the last 3 years since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers were not prepared for a pandemic of this nature and were forced to teach remotely or using a hybrid method. Teacher shortages were already an issue in the United States. The pandemic pushed the teacher shortage into its own epidemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers left the profession in masses causing administrators to hire unqualified educators (Bryner, 2021).

As some school districts returned in the fall of 2020, classrooms were filled with highly unqualified teachers across the country. California experienced a widening gap with school districts already struggling with teacher shortages. Due to the pandemic, California lost close to 50,000 educators by April 2020 (Carver-Thomas et al., 2020).

Like many states, Texas has struggled more to fill the teacher shortage since the pandemic. The governor of Texas has directed the Commissioner of Education and the Texas Education Agency to create a task force addressing teacher shortages (Abbott, 2022). Texas has been fighting the retention battle since 2017. The task force that will be formed will investigate

any issue that a teacher vacancy causes (Abbott, 2022). Additionally, the task force will propose any policy recommendations (Abbott, 2022).

Recruitment

Recruiting fresh new educators who will remain in the profession is the enigma of the 21st-century world of education. Top performing countries recruit the best minds from high school and college (Educate Texas, 2020). However, parents and students are uninterested in public school careers (Tran et al., 2020). Studies show that 23% of new teachers come from the top of academic classes, while South Korea, Singapore, and Finland recruit 100% of their educators (Educate Texas, 2020). As a result, educator preparation programs show a decline resulting in fewer teachers entering the education field. The rate of first year teachers dropped from 8.2% in 2018 to 7.9% in 2022 (TEA, 2018, 2023). Educators, who are early career educators (5 years or less), constitute 27% of educators (TEA, 2023). Table 2 details the years of experience for Texas Teachers. The research shows that 35% of teachers in Texas are within their first 5 years of service. After 5 years of service, teacher retention drops down to 21% (TEA, 2023). According to Table 2, fewer people become teachers (TEA, 2023). After year five, 6.1% leave the field of education (TEA, 2023). The data inherently depicts a valid reason to study the teacher retention problem in Texas.

Rural school districts are not immune from the problems facing large urban public schools. Other research states that rural superintendents consider recruitment and retention their most significant concern (Tran et al., 2020; Ulferts, 2015). Rural school districts have 60% more difficulty hiring qualified ELL and STEM educators (Tran et al., 2020). The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study is to explore the perceptive phenomenon of teachers' involvement in professional organizations and the decision to remain in the profession.

Table 2*Texas Education Agency Educator Years of Service*

Teachers by years of experience	Count	%
Beginning Teachers	29,215.8	7.9
1–5 years	98,764.8	26.7
6–10 years	76,197.2	20.6
11–20 years	105,811.4	28.6
Over 20 years	48,804.6	13.2

Note. Texas Education Agency. (2023, January 25). Texas Academic Performance Reports.

<https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/accountability/academic-accountability/performance-reporting/texas-academic-performance-reports>

Financial Implications

The costs to school districts and states continue to climb each year as teacher retention plagues public schools around the United States. Yearly teacher turnover costs over seven billion dollars in America (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). Teacher retention increases the cost of teacher induction programs (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Watlington et al., 2010). Mentoring programs also suffer from budget cuts due to the increased need for recruiting and induction efforts caused by teacher attrition (Flowers, 2019). Separation, recruitment, hiring, and training cost an estimated \$20,000 per new teacher in an urban setting (Learning Policy Institute, 2017). The cost of attrition per teacher in Chicago is estimated at \$18,000, with a total cost of over \$86 million per year (Yeatts-Lonske, 2018). Urban districts accrued teacher replacement costs of more than \$15,000 in Milwaukee (Flowers, 2019). Dallas County spends an estimated \$80 million every year on teacher turnover (Hoopfer, 2017). Extensive urban districts amassed teacher replacement costs of up to \$26,000 per teacher (Flowers, 2019). In Texas, it is estimated

that a new teacher costs a school district over \$8,000 to replace (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). North Carolina reported replacement costs for rural districts reaching \$10,000 per teacher (Flowers, 2019). Small rural school districts spend, on average, \$4,000 to replace each teacher (Yeatts-Lonske, 2018). The failure to retain educators can place the education structure at risk by redirecting funds from needed programs to recruit and retain teachers (Flowers, 2019). School districts can have vigorous costs when replacing teachers that directly impact future budgets affecting various educational programs.

Nonfinancial Implications

The cost of teacher attrition can be more costly than the financial deficits occurring. Nonfinancial costs can be more costly than monetary depletions. Attrition creates issues related to resources, schools, and students served by an ever-changing cohort of new educators (Perryman & Calvert, 2019). A nonmonetary cost is the loss of highly qualified teachers, psychological toll on teachers and staff, and achievement loss for students (Cardichon et al., 2020; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Watlington et al., 2010). Students would also suffer from a lack of consistency and not having highly qualified teachers (Cardichon et al., 2020; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). The reduction in student scores is predictive of teacher turnover (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Teacher shortages gravely affect at-risk students (Flowers, 2019; Watlington et al., 2010). Educators with reduced skills unfavorably affect student outcomes (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Replacing skilled educators with less qualified teachers is a nonfinancial cost school districts must face each year (Flowers, 2019). With high turnover rates, urban schools face replacing qualified educators with inexperienced new teachers (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). Novice teachers exhibited more difficulty in differentiating instruction for English language learners, special education, and gifted and talented students (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). Low achieving, high abject poverty, and rural schools cultivate

increasing numbers of entry-level teachers (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Another nonfinancial cost significantly affects at-risk schools (Flowers, 2019). Nonfinancial implications are equally daunting factors generated by teacher attrition.

Teacher turnover is higher in urban settings than in rural settings (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Although teachers are the essential asset affecting student learning, urban low-income schools continually have difficulty retaining teachers (Cardichon et al., 2020; Holme et al., 2017). In North Carolina middle schools, less qualified teachers replace math or ELA teachers (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). At-risk school districts face immeasurable academic consequences to lessen the teacher shortage gap.

When schools have revolving doors affecting staff, school climate can be detrimental to the school setting. Confidence and community are restored when turnover is lowered on a campus with high retention, which disturbs collaboration and preparations (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). Having a connection to community is a response by long-term teachers (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). Professional learning communities (PLCs), any type of grade level or subject team, might suffer from a lack of consistency. When PLCs are touted as the most hopeful tool to support functional school improvement, the loss of a PLC is detrimental (Wood & Whitford, 2010). New educators have difficulty collaborating with all campus stakeholders (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). Great mixes of uncertified or less experienced educators affect collaboration (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Campuses with constant turnover yield teachers who have trouble forming campus relationships, hope, and a collective vision (Holme et al., 2017; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Teacher attrition causes a loss of human capital and social structures (Holme et al., 2017). Teaching requires the most educated in an essential profession that yields the gravest challenges and demands in obtaining teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). New teachers need continued professional development and are often challenged with navigating

a school and new curriculum (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). Yearly teacher attrition rates reveal a narrow scope of a deeper compounded problem affecting schools (Holme et al., 2017). Although the research describes the tremendous phenomenon plaguing the United States known as teacher retention, the cause of teacher attrition must be studied.

Causes of Teacher Attrition

While discovering the teacher attrition issue, researchers have discovered the causes affecting such travesties in American public schools. First, schools with the highest need experience instability and a constant staffing turnover (Holme et al., 2017). The United States does not have a complete applicant pool to recruit from, as other top-performing countries do (Educate Texas, 2020). Additionally, teachers in the United States are leaving the field due to the lack of mentoring and preparedness (Christophersen et al., 2016; Ulferts, 2015). New teachers do not receive the tools necessary to help retain them (Allen, 2014). A mentor is someone who can provide help, function as a guide, and share their knowledge to help new teachers grow (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ellis et al., 2020). Accordingly, approximately three-quarters of early career educators in the United States either relocate to a separate campus (migration) or exit the profession in the first year of teaching (Kozikoğlu, 2018). Teachers transferring to another school is defined as teacher migration (Flowers, 2019). Finally, roughly half the novice teachers in a study indicated negative connotations regarding their school administrators, which can be associated with the lack of mentoring (Kozikoğlu, 2018). While massive problems plague the teacher retention diatribe, the issues focus on preparedness, mentoring, and professional growth and development.

Preparedness

Scholarship conversations surrounding preservice teachers are needed when discussing teacher retention. The U.S. Department of Education shared that 63% of educators felt

unprepared for the classroom (Hughes, 2017). Novice teachers have not had the time or experience to collect needed materials and resources (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). One of the four teacher turnover influences discovered by the National Commission of Teachers was preparation (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). In one study, new educators felt ill-prepared for their content's curriculum requirements (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). Copious amounts of time are experienced in preparation by first-year teachers (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). The U.S. Department of Education calls for a more rigorous clinical experience (Hughes, 2017). Preservice educators experience much of their knowledge while on the job, yet with countless numbers exiting the field, they cannot refine their teaching abilities (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). Novice teachers acquire much-needed preparation through professional development and networking. Preservice educators garner wide preparation experiences through attending conferences (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Educator preparation programs should model best practices so that teachers are effective on their first day in the classroom (Hughes, 2017).

University programs have long been under a magnifying glass. A significant focus has been on preservice teachers and the programs meant to prepare them to teach in a real-world setting. Due to teacher shortages, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) changed teacher certification programs (TEA, 2020). Graduates can prepare by taking the Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) results to learn what healthy school environments look like (Van Overschedle & Wiggins, 2017). Scholarship conversations between state agencies and universities are necessary. Preservice teachers cultivate a leadership mentality during their early years with the help of their professors (Bond & Sterrett, 2014). Educator Preparation Programs (EPP) are held accountable for the success of student-teacher graduates (Van Overschedle & Wiggins, 2017). Universities and public schools should collaborate better to prepare teachers (Bond & Sterrett, 2014). A California report shows that inadequate preparation

and mentoring are critical reasons teachers leave the teaching field (Camp, 2019). The transition from student to teacher is significantly impacted by the role of principals (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). Preservice education programs significantly reduce the gap in teacher retention.

Mentoring

Novice teachers need extra support to help them maneuver their early years of teaching. Recent research details the importance of new teachers understanding school culture (Whalen et al., 2019). It is crucial to provide mentoring during an educator's first year (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). Stress and insufficient support negatively impact early career teachers resulting in them leaving the profession (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). Part of mentoring includes helping new teachers navigate through school policies and procedures as well as those unwritten rules of a school's culture (Whalen et al., 2019). Mentoring is one of the four significant influences identified by the National Commission of Teaching affecting teacher turnover (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). Mentoring should encompass nurturing, development, and acknowledgment of the challenging teaching and learning tasks for new educators (Carlough, 2016; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020). The nature of mentor programs determines whether a first-year teacher becomes a successful teacher, an ineffective teacher, or leaves the field (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). Mentoring can significantly impact teacher attrition.

Mentoring programs are taking root in many school districts to help grow novice educators. Clear goals to hire, retain, and mentor successful educators make districts more marketable (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). Collaborative teams and extra support are needed to make rookie teachers successful (Rosenberg, 2020). New teachers lack collaborating skills with all related stakeholders (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). A good mentor program should provide the tools to help a new teacher navigate school policies and effective teaching practices. A mentor teacher can provide knowledge that bridges the gap from the university to the classroom. Having access

to mentors and an effective mentor program makes novice educators more successful (Whalen et al., 2019). A quality mentor would be someone who genuinely wants to be a mentor and is invested in mentoring new educators. Beginning teachers with quality mentoring are retained more readily (Cardichon et al., 2020; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Resta et al., 2013; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020). Successful mentor programs offer instructional coaches who plan, model lessons, obtain feedback, and receive support in demanding situations (Rosenberg, 2020). Teacher turnover can be reduced by 50% when there is support for novice teachers that include incentives for master teachers (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). Many school districts introduce mentor programs and PLCs at the beginning of a new educator's career.

New teacher support is pivotal to the success of new teachers. Often, mentors or principals lack the time needed to support early career teachers (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). When novice teachers have an unsupportive environment, they are discouraged from staying in teaching (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). Studies have shown a link between a positive self-image and a novice teacher's support (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017; Schlossberg, 2011). Lack of support is a crucial component of the rise in teacher attrition (Camp, 2019; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020). The Texas Education Agency (TEA) passed HB 3. This bill details how school districts must utilize some HB 3 monies to create a mentoring program for teachers with less than two years of teaching experience (Houston Independent School District [HISD], 2020).

Mentoring programs geared towards new educators express a sense of value and worth to those new educators. Self-efficacy empowers teachers to adapt to the needs of struggling students in greater detail (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). In 2013, Texas administered the Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Survey. The survey determined that retention increased when new teachers had mentoring support (Van Overschedle & Wiggins, 2017).

Louisiana has a mentor program for rookie teachers, including block collaborative planning, co-teaching, and a mentor (Rosenberg, 2020). Workplace supports like mentoring are being implemented in California to help retain teachers (Camp, 2019). In addition, school districts across America realize the positive impact of good mentoring programs.

A strong principal can increase teacher retention for novice educators. A North Carolina study shows that school leadership is the most impactful predictor of teacher retention (Flowers, 2019). A study shows administrators' influence on the hiring process (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). Principals increased teacher retention by providing leadership and support (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). Systemic supports like mentoring should be implemented to reduce teacher attrition (Camp, 2019; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020). Retention increased for successful new teachers who had elevated levels of trust in their administrators (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). When teachers felt administrative support and mentoring, retention increased (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020; Van Overschedle & Wiggins, 2017). Unsupportive administrative environments created "sink or swim" situations for first-year teachers (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). Accordingly, there was a connection between morale, stress, and commitment to job satisfaction.

Diversity, Inclusivity, and Mentoring. Minority students are increasing enrollment in public schools across the United States. Since 2014, roughly 50.3% of learners were students of color (Young & Young, 2020). The acceptance and inclusive foresight of diversity epitomizes inclusivity. The investigation of preservice Black male educators is warranted due to the lack of research in existence (Young & Young, 2020). Inclusivity empowers followers and nurtures profound relationships, reducing turnover rates (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). Research has associated servant leadership and follower inclusion with cultivating a sense of belonging (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). These two factors are cohesive, empowering diverse employees in diverse

work environments (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). Diverse teaching staff is necessary to maintain the instruction of all learners (Young & Young, 2020).

More mentoring should be geared towards a large minority population of educators to assist in retention efforts. Studies have shown that more Black male teachers are recruited to work with Black students (Young & Young, 2020). Support for African American educators in urban schools indicates successful teachers (Camp, 2019; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Successful programs exist to retain Black male educators (Young & Young, 2020). There is a need for discourse on retention and mentoring programs for Black women educators (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Dingus, 2008). Understanding the experiences of Black educators is necessary to optimize efforts to support teachers of color (Young & Young, 2020). A culturally constructed mentoring program will **enhance professionalism, educator roles, and leadership** (Dingus, 2008). Additional research has been found describing the low retention rate for minority teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sass et al., 2012).

Black men represent only 2% of classroom teachers (Young & Young, 2020). In Texas, an estimated 42% of the educators are a minority, while the Houston area averages 48% of minority teachers (TEA, 2019). By 2044, minority groups will make up half of the citizens in the United States (Young & Young, 2020). Therefore, the inclusivity of minority educators in Texas can improve teacher retention in this population of educators. The demographic data are indicated **in** Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3*Texas Education Agency Teacher Demographics*

Teachers by ethnicity	Houston area %	State %
African American	21.2	10.6
Hispanic	21.1	27.7
White	52.4	58.4
American Indian	.3	.3
Asian	3.4	1.7
Pacific Islander	.3	.2
Two or More Races	1.3	1.1

Note. Texas Education Agency. (2019, December). Texas Academic Performance Report: 2018–19 Region Staff Information.

Table 4*Texas Education Agency Student Demographics*

Students by ethnicity	Houston area %	State %
African American	18.4	12.6
Hispanic	50.8	52.6
White	21.0	27.4
American Indian	.4	.4
Asian	7.2	4.5
Pacific Islander	.1	.2
Two or More Races	2.1	2.4

Note. Texas Education Agency. (2019, December). Texas Academic Performance Report: 2018–19 Region Staff Information.

Value and Job Satisfaction. Educators are revered and valued (Educate Texas, 2020). Being valued and having job satisfaction are discussed in education. In top-performing nations, educators are sought after and are compensated as other valued professionals (Educate Texas, 2020). School administrators are significant pieces of mentoring puzzles affecting novice teachers (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). Feeling valued by the administration encouraged early career educators to remain in education (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017). Educators who do not feel valued, whether through actions of administration or support through mentoring, were more apt to leave their profession. Therefore, educational leadership was the most predicted factor determining retention for experienced teachers (Van Overschedle & Wiggins, 2017). Not feeling valued was why 46% of teachers leave (Craig, 2014). Conversely, feeling valued significantly affected the retention of educators at every level of teaching.

Attrition decreases when an early career teacher has job satisfaction (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). Preventative assistance helped to reduce defeatist attitudes and increased educator satisfaction and retention (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). A study by Flowers (2019) showed that teachers who were very or somewhat satisfied had support from their administration. A North Carolina study indicated that having the support of administrators led to teachers being very or somewhat satisfied in their job (Flowers, 2019). In a survey of educators leaving one district, 45% mentioned the lack of administrative support as to why they left (Cancio et al., 2013; Craig, 2014). Moreover, teachers who were satisfied with the administration were 15% more likely to remain teaching (Bozeman et al., 2013). In another study of 40,000 teachers surveyed, the majority listed **supportive leadership**, **materials**, and **working conditions** as significant reasons to stay (Zhang & Zeller, 2016).

Harsh working environments have long affected the happiness of educators. When a teacher's environment is not conducive to teaching and learning, there is increased attrition (Van

Overschedle & Wiggins, 2017). Job satisfaction can affect teacher attrition. Teacher retention is affected by happiness and wellbeing (Flowers, 2019). Job satisfaction is an intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that prompts retention in educators (Flowers, 2019). Low job satisfaction led to teacher attrition which promoted teacher overload and, in turn, became a vicious cycle of teacher retention issues (Flowers, 2019). Approximately four million educators have expressed dissatisfaction with their work (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017). Research has indicated that school climate and retention are related (Dahlkamp et al., 2017). The school environment significantly impacts job satisfaction (Flowers, 2019).

Additionally, new teachers who experienced negative job fulfillment frequently exited the profession of teaching, intensifying the urban teacher turnover problem (Green & Munoz, 2016). Teachers left in the wake of a mass exodus in the field of education are required to satisfy the shortage and are given an overload of responsibility, which contributes to the absence of job satisfaction and attrition (Flowers, 2019). Further studies have shown a connection between science teacher job satisfaction and retention (Bozeman et al., 2013).

Accordingly, there is a connection between morale, stress, and commitment to job satisfaction. Educators who are part of the decision-making process indicated job satisfaction (Flowers, 2019). Autonomy directly affects job satisfaction (Green & Munoz, 2016). In North Carolina, working conditions, including student misbehavior, were negatively affecting job satisfaction (Flowers, 2019). Fulfillment with working conditions influenced teachers' job satisfaction and retention (Bozeman et al., 2013). Therefore, job satisfaction can significantly determine the retention of educators in any school district.

Professional Growth and Development

Professional development programs assist teachers in mastering their craft. Strategies that provide new teachers with scholarship opportunities of their profession are more successful

(Rosenberg, 2020). Teachers can collaborate, observe, and utilize feedback. Professional development can be a catalyst for inducing educator training (Brunsek et al., 2020; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020). Teachers are working through the issues facing districts with low socio-economic schools and unusually high numbers of minority students. One need experienced by a new teacher is for their principal to provide collaboration opportunities and share competencies through professional development (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). Additionally, these professionals acquired foresight and competencies (Saenz-Armstrong, 2020; Smulyan, 2016). For teachers and schools to stay pertinent in the ever-changing face of education, educators must consistently and repeatedly study (Saenz-Armstrong, 2020; Wood & Whitford, 2010). **Development can include planning collaboratively, mentors, and instructional coaching** (Rosenberg, 2020).

Smulyan (2016) reported that teachers become leaders after they grow as professionals, collaborate, and become political liaisons outside the classroom. Literature has shown that school reform centers on teacher professional development provided by PLCs (Wood & Whitford, 2010). **Providing the experiences needed for first-year teachers will be difficult to sustain if unplanned and not embedded as part of professional development** (Allen, 2014; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020).

Professional development breeds confidence in novice educators. Combined with service learning, pedagogy propels teachers into intrinsic professional growth to become more influential (Stanke et al., 2019). Teachers' professional development support is associated with higher retention (Bozeman et al., 2013; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020). PLCs help schools become professional development establishments (Wood & Whitford, 2010). Employing districts are responsible for teachers' professional development (Allen, 2014; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020). **Novice teachers who work in a professional culture are an integral influence on retention** (Bozeman et al., 2013; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020).

Engagement in Professional Organizations

Educational organizations are an avenue to reduce teacher attrition. Participating in professional organizations increased commitment and influenced teacher retention (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Nonprofit educator organizations have consumers who pursue value and benefit (Mchatton et al., 2011). Educator Preparation Programs can reduce teacher attrition by including attendance in professional organizations (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Educational nonprofits focus on involvement, purpose, and cultural competencies (Osula & Ng, 2014). An involved professional organizational member prepares a well-informed educator of current trends, statewide networking opportunities, professional development prospects, and a profound impact on student learning by applying information and experiences acquired (Busby et al., 2019). Professional organization events may seem trivial, but there are significant changes leading to mentoring, networking, and the preparation of new teachers, which increases teacher retention (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Therefore, professional development and networking through an educational organization could prevent the decline of teacher attrition.

Value

A servant and inclusive leader assists beginning teachers in feeling valued and empowered (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). Nonprofit educational organizations should empower educators and members to create trust while increasing retention rates. Research has shown a correlation between authentic leadership, diversity, inclusion, and employees wanting to be a part of the in-groups (Cottrill et al., 2014). Novice educators who feel integrated into their school culture and feel respected thrive (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). Preservice teachers want to align with an organization they believe in and mirrors their values (Bond & Sterrett, 2014). The alignment leads to the desire to champion the organization (Bond & Sterrett, 2014).

Educator Preparation

Educational organizations can bridge the widening gap between the university and the first year of teaching. Engaging stakeholders and partnerships build excitement and improves education practices, engages leaders, and fosters support to educator programs (Educate Texas, 2020). Preservice students who participated in professional organization events received significant preparation for their future careers as teachers (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Strengthening educator preparation is a component of professional organizations (Hunzicker, 2018). Other organizations that help prepare educators should create field encounters based on requirements (Educate Texas, 2020). Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) need to actively seek supplementary scenarios to prepare teachers (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). The Texas Teaching Commission deemed the engagement of stakeholders to increase effective teaching initiatives (Educate Texas, 2020). Professional organizations bridge public schools and universities (Hunzicker, 2018). Preservice students who become certified teachers experience better outcomes (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). A professional organization provides a seamless transition from university to workplace. Universities and public schools should collaborate in preparing teachers better. Leading in a university-level professional organization promotes a more marketable candidate for future employment (Bond & Sterrett, 2014). Professional development entrenched into education preparation programs is crucial to teaching (Educate Texas, 2020). Professional organizations increase retention by providing educational scholarship and practice (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Real-world experiences, networking, leadership skills, and mentoring can increase teacher retention.

Preservice teachers develop educational experiences and proficiencies, including time management and collaborating with diverse stakeholders. Preservice teachers know that experiences received while belonging to a professional organization would assist with career

development in education and obtaining a position (Bond & Sterrett, 2014). Nurses utilize tools provided by professional organizations needed to administer excellent services (Sullivan & Stevenson, 2009). For example, a Colorado professional organization teamed up with universities to develop programs that develop the STEM needs of new teachers for the benefit of students (mindSpark Learning, 2018).

Active teacher engagement in professional organizations has intensified the rise of teacher leaders (Hunzicker, 2018). In addition, universities enlarge the curriculum further than the classroom to include student professional organizations where leadership skills are developed (Bond & Sterrett, 2014). In one study, students noted that professional organizations helped them garner leadership skills such as multi-tasking skills, flexibility, listening skills, and planning (Bond & Sterrett, 2014).

Leadership Growth

New teachers who develop leadership skills are equipped with additional tools to be effective teachers. Dealing with unmotivated members in professional organizations encouraged leaders to implement a differentiable number of strategies that can also be used in the classroom when dealing with challenging students. The belonging nature encourages preservice teachers to lead (Bond & Sterrett, 2014). Professional organizations are a setting for emerging teacher leaders (Hunzicker, 2018). University members receive leadership information and experience from professional organizations (Bond & Sterrett, 2014). Leadership and leading the class is the foundation of an educator's duty. Preservice teachers need leadership training while learning to teach. Teacher leaders can collaborate better with the administration and bridge the gap in public schools. Bond and Sterrett also noted preservice teachers need lived experiences and professional development. Over time, professional organizations provide opportunities to gain leadership

skills. In addition, preservice teachers who can collaborate with teacher leaders in professional organizations promote leadership development.

Professional Development

Research has detailed how professional organizations provide nurses with tools, standards, and leadership opportunities needed in their field (Sullivan & Stevenson, 2009). Professional development establishes a pledge to learn as an insightful practitioner (Educate Texas, 2020). Preservice teachers receive beneficial professional gains (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Continual professional development is essential to the future of teaching (Educate Texas, 2020). Preservice educators indicated in a recent study that professional development has a significant impact on retention. Professional development through professional organizations provides experimental learning (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Professional organizations have increased success when addressing educator prep and professional development (Perez Castillo, 2000). Professional development through professional organizations provides improved content expertise, analytical thinking, and cognitive benefits (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Increasing preservice experiences assist universities in providing skills that will produce more effective teachers. Service-learning assists teachers in obtaining professional development to increase preparedness (Stanke et al., 2019). Professional organizations at the college level provide significant professional development (Bond & Sterrett, 2014). The retaining of experienced educators occurs during professional development by supplying high-quality mentoring (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

Mentoring and Networking

New educators who have plentiful avenues of networking and mentoring can produce a more confident teacher. Rich mentorships for early career teachers are necessary for retention (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). A benefit of interacting with other professionals for new educators is

mentoring and networking (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Collegial relationships with school leaders are advantageous for early career teachers (Kutsyruba et al., 2017). In addition, mentoring and networking programs can have a monumental impact on the retention of novice educators.

Professional organizations at the college level offer to mentor and network on many levels with seasoned educators through conventions and events (Bond & Sterrett, 2014). College student participation in professional organization meetings and professional development is beneficial exposure (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Preservice teachers involved in educator organizations can receive knowledge and resources from networking and workshops (Bond & Sterrett, 2014). Participation in professional organization events generates a higher GPA in students, which indicates intellectual learning (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Increased collaboration and community are developed when preservice teachers interact outside their clinical classroom (Bond & Sterrett, 2014).

Collaborative working and networking that affect the future of teaching and learning are shared through professional organizations that provide professional development, current data, trends, and research-based information on the leading issues (Busby et al., 2019). Early career teachers need collaboration with colleagues to create a sense of community (Kutsyruba et al., 2019). Events by professional organizations produce lengthier career paths and higher retention rates for new teachers (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Professional organizations provide networking and share resources (Sullivan & Stevenson, 2009). Collaboration creates learning communities where early career teachers experience standard preparation and joint practices (Kutsyruba et al., 2017). Enhanced retention and scholarship are strengthened by networking activities within professional organizations (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Networking provides prolific opportunities (Kutsyruba et al., 2017). An advantage of being engaged in an educational

organization is useful in the classroom (Bond & Sterrett, 2014). Professional organization events breed opportunities for networking (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Attending events provided by professional organizations introduces novice teachers to professional networking associations (Dawson & Leytham, 2020).

Summary

Every year school districts spend thousands of dollars recruiting new teachers, yet they continue to need to do so (Hoopfer, 2017; Watlington et al., 2010; Yeatts-Lonske, 2018). Some of the reasons for attrition include the lack of mentoring, professional development (Busby et al., 2019; Stanke et al., 2019), and preparedness (Christophersen et al., 2016; Ulferts, 2015). Beginning teacher attrition in the United States has reached an all-time high creating an exodus of as many as 50% leaving the education field within 5 years (Bennett et al., 2013; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020). In addition, first-year teachers who did not receive adequate support or mentors left the teaching field by year three at an alarming rate of 25% (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Kaiser & Cross, 2011). New educators can be encouraged to become engaged in educator organizations within their first few years of teaching to close the teacher attrition gap (Chiong et al., 2017; Young, 2018).

New teachers need the tools necessary to transition into their emerging teaching careers (Allen, 2014; Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). Schlossberg's transition theory could identify the key to helping educators commit to their teaching career, thereby increasing retention. Transition theory postulates that people (i.e., novice educators) adjust to transitions created by their assets and needs. Schlossberg (2011) recommended a complete examination of the person's perceptions toward their situation, self, support, and strategies. Mentors and professional associations guide and share their knowledge to help new teachers grow and transition in, transition through, and transition out of their first few years of teaching (Ellis et al.,

2020; Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015). If novice educators can utilize professional organizations to help provide a support system coupled with learning to manage stress and use their demographics to transition through any situation, teacher attrition can decrease. Researchers have seen the transition in the first few years of teaching be unsuccessful for approximately 50% of novice educators (Bennett et al., 2013; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020). Schlossberg's transition theory may hold chunks of knowledge to assist beginning educators in improving and increasing teacher retention. Transition theory posits that people can adjust to a transition based on personal needs and assets. A careful analysis of a person's perceptions toward their situation, self, support, and strategies is suggested.

In this qualitative IPA study, I recognize novice teachers' lived experiences and challenges and possible connections to professional organizations. Data shows how mentoring, educator preparedness, professional development, and transitioning tools in professional organizations play a mediating role in teacher retention. While the body of evidence lives where researchers record teacher retention or attrition, few relate the lived experiences to the position of professional organizations. Because professional organizations are a vital element to teacher retention, it justifies consideration. Novice educator perspectives will help project future paths for predictive roles of educator organization's role in teacher retention. Discovering possible transition assistance for novice educators as they maneuver through their situation, self, support, and strategies is a task for educational organizations and a goal of the projected study.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Method

Studies indicate that 50% of teachers in the United States leave the field within 5 years (Bennett et al., 2013) due to a lack of mentoring and preparedness (Christophersen et al., 2016; Kozikoğlu, 2018; Ulferts, 2015). Urban school educators left 70% of the time within the first 5 years (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). Although mounting research-targeted retention strategies exist, there were significantly fewer investigations into how professional organizations increase teacher retention. Of all the teacher retention research, only a few studies focused on improving professional organizations to reduce teacher attrition. Essential to reducing teacher attrition was recognizing if professional organizations can inspire engagement in new educators (Chiong et al., 2017; Young, 2018). Maintaining engaged educators has become progressively challenging (ATPE, 2017). The attributes of creating an engaged organizational member are not yet known.

The purpose of this IPA study was to explore the perceptive phenomenon of teachers' involvement in professional organizations and the decision to remain in the profession. This study sought to ascertain the engagement activities of professional organizations that assisted early career teachers in deciding to continue in the teaching field. Furthermore, I intended for the information gathered in this study to assist professional organizations in utilizing activities that would engage new educators, thereby increasing teacher retention.

Research Questions

The central research focus was to uncover educators' perceptions about the usefulness of being engaged and involved in a professional organization related to teacher attrition. The following questions were the focus of the research:

RQ1. What are the factors causing teacher attrition as perceived by early career educators, and how might professional organizations impact these factors to increase teacher retention?

RQ2. What are the perceptions of early career teachers on the importance of professional organizations and the effect they have on teacher retention?

RQ3. What are the benefits of joining a professional organization according to the perception of an early career teacher?

Chapter 3 begins with a discussion of the research method for this study. Additionally, the research design is described and supported a selection of a qualitative IPA research methodology by explaining how the participants shared their lived experiences. The data analysis method is presented, followed by a discussion of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. **By analyzing the lived experiences of early career educators, I identified the factors leading these educators to be engaged and involved in a professional organization, thereby creating teacher retention. I analyzed the lived experiences of early career educators who were not engaged in professional organizations to discover the reasons why they remained in the field.** Originally, I sought six educators in Texas with less than 5 years of experience and who were actively engaged in a professional organization and an additional six educators who were not actively engaged in a professional organization. Ultimately, I enlisted eight educators in Texas with less than 5 years of experience who were actively engaged in professional organizations and four educators who were not actively engaged in professional organizations. An open-ended semistructured synchronous interview was conducted.

The remainder of this chapter offers thorough explanations of processes employed to discover responses to the research questions. Ethical considerations reported the distinction of the study. A summary followed limitations and delimitations. Finally, the informed consent form detail participant protections and is listed in the appendices.

Research Design and Method

Qualitative research contains data detailing what participants did or stated (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Participants' lived experiences provided insight through qualitative methods, which permitted the discovery of participants' knowledge, feelings, and activities (Rahman, 2017). In a study researching educators, there was a phenomenon focus, and I studied their lived experiences (Duhaney, 2019). The philosophical approach to learning about lived experiences was phenomenology (Smith et al., 2012) which is the pursuit of lived experiences that give value to a phenomenon by participants (Salmons, 2012). I sought to explore the lived experiences of early career educators engaged as well as those not engaged with professional organizations. An additional study researching the phenomenon of teacher professional identity development aimed to translate the lived experiences of this phenomenon into teacher retention (Cunningham, 2020). I sought to discover the phenomenon of engagement as well as nonengagement of novice teachers in professional organizations and how that precipitated retention.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

This study attempted to discover what encouraged new educators' engagement within professional organizations through IPA and thereby caused retention. An IPA study assisted in gathering awareness from educators whose lived experiences were pertinent to this study. Whereas other research designs could be utilized, I was interested in examining the distinctive perceptions and lived experiences of participants' knowledge by IPA research (Smith et al., 2012). The essence of an IPA utilizes interviews consisting of open-ended questions discovering each participant's lived experiences (Smith et al., 2012) with a professional organization. In this study, detailed student-teacher experiences reflecting on their data-driven e-portfolio, I utilized IPA to allow them to express their lived experiences (van Wyk, 2017). A critical element of IPA was the amount of information about lived experiences (Smith et al., 2012).

IPA enabled me to understand novice educators' perceptions and experiences (Moustakas, 2010). IPA recognized that the participant and I could not be removed from the research environment (Giorgi, 2010; Smith et al., 2012). However, IPA permitted the me to locate unexplored territory and discover new data that gave a voice to phenomenon narratives, thereby setting aside one's previous knowledge (Giorgi, 2010; Smith et al., 2012).

Through an IPA, I explored early career educators' lived experiences in a professional organization (Smith et al., 2012). Conducting qualitative IPA research discovered the predicting involvement factors needed to unveil the perceptions and events held by new educators and their engagement in professional organizations. In IPA, I was focused on the participant's scholarship of their encounters (Smith et al., 2012). IPA methodology helped describe and predict the exploration of educational coaches' experiences before their first placements (Tee et al., 2019). An IPA approach garnered a rich idiographic explanation and predicted the participants' lived experiences and perceptions (Tee et al., 2019). Exploring and understanding the meaning of the participants' experiences was essential to IPA research (Smith & Osborn, 2004).

One aspect of IPA was the hermeneutic level, where the future reader can see the complete IPA process of understanding the lived experiences of a participant and how it relates to the researcher's problem (Smith et al., 2012). Another aspect of IPA hermeneutic interpretation was where participants interpreted their experiences and thoughts while I interpreted their words (Smith et al., 2012). Reflective practices were intentional and learning from incidents was connected to the experience (Brubaker, 2016). Reflecting and evaluating experiences expanded educator repertoires while growing professionally (NCATE, 2002).

Hermeneutic phenomenology encourages researchers to utilize reflective explanations to attain a momentous interpretation (Van Manen, 1990). I hoped to capture momentous interpretations of each participant's events and perceptions (Moustakas, 2010). Information from

phenomenological studies developed subsequent investigations by revealing new concepts and exposing perceptions and lived experiences that were placed into a more significant grouping of collective experiences (Giorgi, 2010; Smith et al., 2012).

Population and Sampling

The IPA commitment was charged with comprehending how a phenomenon is understood from the viewpoint of a participant (Smith et al., 2012). A standard IPA sample size suggestion was between three and six participants (Smith et al., 2012). Phenomenology qualitative studies utilized participants who have experiences that illustrate the phenomenon in this study (Smith et al., 2012).

To make the research questions meaningful, eight of the participants were from a sample of engaged educators who belonged to a professional organization, while the other four did not participate in a professional organization (Smith et al., 2012), all of whom had 5 years or less teaching experience. In this qualitative IPA, nonrandom sampling was utilized (Smith et al., 2012). The participants consisted of early career educators who were actively engaged and those who were not actively engaged in professional organizations, yet both continued to teach. During the prescreening process (see Appendix A), potential participants answered questions about their professional organization experience and engagement. This study included 12 educators from Texas mainly from the Houston area who were early career educators. This qualitative IPA study utilized a specific nonrandom smaller sampling of participants (Smith et al., 2012; Terrell, 2016). The participants in the study included eight educators who engaged in a professional organization and four who were not engaged in a professional organization. Sampling included male and female educators from urban, suburban, and rural locations in various levels of school settings. I recruited more than 12 participants to allow for attrition.

Participants were carefully chosen from the pool of volunteers recruited from online

communities. I owned several social media platforms intended to be used to recruit participants. These included Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Being the owner of these social media platforms, I did not require additional documentation to obtain permission. A social media post (see Appendix B) was made on all these platforms and asked readers and participants to share or forward with prospective contributors (Terrell, 2016). Participants were chosen to provide a specific experience of the phenomena in this study (Smith et al., 2012). Contributors shared and recruited similar participants (Terrell, 2016).

Snowballing allowed for referrals by participants (Smith et al., 2012). Then, through snowballing, I utilized peer networks to identify ideal participants (Salmons, 2012). Snowball sampling is purposive and identifies a smaller group of specific participants (Smith et al., 2012). Snowball sampling of participants garnered credible perceptions (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018; Salmons, 2012; Smith et al., 2012). Once a potential participant contacted me showing interest, completed and signed the informed consent via Hello Sign, the prescreening questions were given. Through this type of recruiting method, I sought a group of participants to discover the lived experiences and perceptions of early career teachers (Smith et al., 2012). Finally, I sought out a purposeful sample of novice educators whose lived experiences helped to explain and provide information about a phenomenon (Salmons, 2012; Smith et al., 2012).

This study involved novice educators; therefore, a smaller sample size met the needs of an IPA methodology. The participants included a purposely chosen group of 12 new educators. Originally, I wanted participants of whom six were engaged in professional organizations while six were not engaged; both groups shared their lived experiences and perceptions of retention during their first 5 years of teaching in Texas (Smith et al., 2012). After months of recruiting, I was able to recruit eight participants who had engaged in professional organizations and four who had not. IPA yields vibrant data using a small sample (Smith et al., 2012). While using the

snowball method of recruiting from my social media platforms, potential participants were prescreened to determine if they were involved in a professional organization and, if so, which organization. I had many followers who were members of both the Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) and Delta Kappa Gamma (DKG) on social media, and participants were sampled from both professional organizations.

Association of Texas Professional Educators

Committed to advancing public education in Texas, ATPE was the largest group of educators (ATPE, 2017). ATPE was a professional educator organization located only in Texas. They are a nonprofit and are found in nearly every school district in Texas. Any person who worked in a Texas public school can join ATPE. ATPE had approximately 100,000 members (APTE, 2017). They provide legal protection, advocacy, and resources like professional development, services, and discounts. Part of their mission is to attract, engage, and retain members (ATPE, 2017), which corresponds with the purpose of this study.

Delta Kappa Gamma Texas

The purpose of Delta Kappa Gamma (DKG) is to unite and honor female educators (DKGTexas, 2019). They want to encourage the advancement of female educators by providing scholarships. DKG provides personal and professional growth for its members (DKGTexas, 2019). DKGTexas had just over 9,000 members statewide (Alpha State Texas Educational Foundation [ASTEF], 2022). Another aspect of DKG is to help members stay abreast of educational trends and information. DKG wants its members to be well informed in all things educational as it pertains to politics, social, and economic issues (DKGTexas, 2019).

The participant demographics included participant number, gender, age, years of teaching experience, previous membership in professional organizations, and status within professional organizations (Salmons, 2012). Once the participants were chosen, the participant demographics

were explained in detail and used in Chapters 4 and 5 to further the data.

Informed consent was needed for participation in the data collection and the outcomes of the analysis (Smith et al., 2012). Participants had relevant information about the study, what was expected of them, and how I used the data were all part of the informed consent (Salmons, 2012). Once the potential participant had agreed, the informed consent was given (see Appendix C). Potential participants responded to a short series of prescreening questions after the informed consent was signed and received. The prescreening question responses helped select participants for this study. I explained the research study, research questions, and purpose to the candidates (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Each candidate was asked to focus and reflect on the interview questions (see Appendix D).

Instrument

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I conducted one online synchronous interview. The lowest risk for K-12 schools was virtual classes (Center for Disease Control [CDC], 2020). A recommended behavior that reduced the spread of COVID-19 was to stay home where suitable (CDC, 2020). For the 2021–2022 school year, Houston Independent School District established a Back-to-School Plan (HISD, 2020).

Individual online interviews could be asynchronous or synchronous (Salmons, 2012). Synchronous online communication was performed to recruit participants, and personal interviews were open-ended in-depth synchronous interviews. In addition, an open-ended semistructured synchronous interview was conducted. This study utilized semistructured interview questions allowing participants to share their experiences while allowing me to ask follow-up questions (Salmons, 2012; Smith et al., 2012; Terrell, 2016).

A committee of educators reviewed the interview questions. Suggestions were made to reword the questions. The experts consisted of current educators, staff of a professional

organization, and a marketing director of ATPE. None of the experts served as participants in this study. It was noted that the interview questions should elicit in-depth responses from participants.

Simultaneously, additional participants were sought to take an asynchronous anonymous survey (see Appendix E). The snowball method was used to recruit additional participants to take the anonymous survey. The data from the anonymous survey were analyzed in the same manner as the synchronous interviews. Early career educators in Texas who were engaged and who were not engaged in a professional organization were invited to complete the anonymous survey. Social media posts were made using the anonymous survey flyer (see Appendix F) and the anonymous survey informed consent (see Appendix G) was used simultaneously to recruit participants. Snowballing was also utilized to recruit participants in the anonymous survey.

Engaged educators were able to give a perspective of equal value to those who were not engaged, indicating how professional organizations assisted them in remaining in teaching. The participants reflected on interview questions through personal interviews. Participants were asked to respond to the interview questions. IPA was a design that I used to delve into participants' perceptions and experiences within similar stages of their careers (Moustakas, 2010; Smith et al., 2012). From the interview, I gathered the perceptions and lived experiences or themes of each participant (Moustakas, 2010).

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Semistructured interviews could have different vocabulary and sequencing (Salmons, 2012). I created the principal data received from online interviews and questions. Anonymity and personal health and safety were conducive to online interviews allowing participants to be comfortable in sharing their perceived experiences. Synchronous formatting encouraged a larger pool of applicants from various school districts (Salmons, 2012). IPA utilized the interview

perceptions of the participant and interviewer (Gourov & Lomas, 2019). Online interviews in a phenomenological study can be achieved by using synchronous or asynchronous interviews (Salmons, 2012). This study utilized interviews performed and transcribed through Zoom online videoconferencing by employing an online format that was familiar to most participants during the pandemic.

Once participants assumed their commitment to join in the study, a consent form (see Appendix C) was delivered and signed followed by prescreening questions. Prescreening questions were delivered asynchronously using Google Forms (Salmons, 2012).

A synchronous online interview encouraged the collection of participant replies, thereby producing potential activities and actions that professional organizations created to assist Schlossberg's transition theory in increasing teacher retention for early career educators. Each of the 12 early career educators participated in an individual interview. Participant submissions enhanced existing programs designed to increase retention and allow for proper development to expand future transitional activities. The improved transition activities helped to increase teacher retention.

Phenomenological studies urge researchers to be mindful of their preconceived ideas toward their research. Understanding that IPA studies generally begin with prior knowledge, I collected participant experiences to discover similarities or differing themes (Smith et al., 2012). Sharing any biases and openness to new knowledge reassured participants and was the essence of phenomenology (Smith et al., 2012). Isolating or setting aside my preconceptions and prior knowledge so that participants were not influenced was otherwise known as bracketing. It implored me to be receptive to newly acquired data (Smith et al., 2012). Phenomenological studies used epoché during data retrieval, which helped to ensure that an open mind was utilized, and previous knowledge was suspended. (Terrell, 2016). IPA builds on the foundation of what

was known to the participants or my environment (Smith et al., 2012). Bracketing prompted me to be mindful and receptive to any newly acquired data (Smith et al., 2012).

An IPA researcher starts with preconceived knowledge, obtains the participant's experiences, and then discovers any similar or differing data to the researcher's previous knowledge (Smith et al., 2012). Prior knowledge is used to understand participant data, not influence it (Smith et al., 2012). Researchers use IPA to ascertain the transitional experiences of beginning teacher participants. This IPA Study investigated transitional programs that professional organizations can produce for early career educators, increasing teacher retention.

IPA demands that every single word voiced by all individuals in the interview be transcribed (Smith et al., 2012). The Zoom transcripts were read, analyzed, and coded using Dedoose. A researcher should not merely record an interview but analyze the data as it was received and direct the discussion so that the purpose of the research was achieved (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). There was a six-step guide for interviewing suggested by Saldaña and Omasta (2018) to ensure the participant felt heard and appreciated:

- Pay attention to the participant.
- Listen intently.
- Do not give advice or argue.
- Listen to what the participant says, does not say, or was hesitant to say.
- Summarize and clarify on occasion.
- The interview was given in confidence (based on informed consent).

I analyzed the transcript of each participant singularly before common themes were connected (Smith et al., 2012). Then, I reviewed the transcripts for critical concepts (Terrell, 2016). I was attentive to patterns to detect evolving wide-ranging themes (Tee et al., 2019).

Additionally, I created concept maps to visualize each participant's thematic patterns. Codes formed general themes communicated by several participants. I tried to ascertain the meaning of key phrases (Terrell, 2016). Finally, I assigned codes from the interview transcripts to discover the highly relevant themes using Dedoose (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Coding and forming themes assisted me in correctly describing each participant's lived experiences and perceptions. The codes (categories) were used as the foundation for themes. Saldaña and Omasta (2018) posited that coding or themes represent a more profound impact on the meaning of the record. I used Dedoose to code and analyze transcripts to accurately identify the factors leading new educators to be engaged and involved in a professional organization, thereby creating a positive transition and retention of teachers. Interview transcripts were imported into Dedoose. Codes or relevant data created graphs in Dedoose (Adu, 2019). Dedoose analyzed the data to give me various charts and metrics (Adu, 2019).

Credibility

Credibility while vital was assessed differently than a quantitative method. Credibility ensured that findings were believable and from the participants' perspective. Triangulation transpired when more than one data supplier was utilized (Smith et al., 2012). Participants received the prescreening questions, which served to ensure triangulation along with the interview questions (Salmons, 2012). Furthermore, the IPA research had transferability by showing how the research helped in other settings (Smith et al., 2012). These results were beneficial to local school districts to increase teacher retention and professional organizations.

Dependability and Confirmability

The study demonstrated dependability and confirmability by leaving an auditable trail detailing the procedures implemented to gather data. I empowered the reader to reproduce the methods through analysis (Smith et al., 2012). The auditable trail assisted as a blueprint for

others to complete similar research. This process ensured the dependability of the results. Additionally, confirmability occurred during the study as I maintained an unbiased viewpoint (Smith et al., 2012). The IPA did not hinder prior knowledge. However, it celebrated my previous experience and enabled me to disclose any past influences fully. My personal predisposed opinions were recorded in the limitations section of this document. I utilized added information to form new knowledge (Smith et al., 2012). The IPA method required me to set aside predisposed biases consciously. Revealing biases to the readers ensured that I was cautious in remaining unbiased.

Transferability

Research has indicated that new teachers across the United States are leaving the teaching field at reportedly 50% within the first 5 years (Bennett-Forman & Hoffman, 2020). Teachers withdrawing from the educational field for reasons other than retirement was considered attrition (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). Insufficient administrative support and mentoring or a deficit of preparedness were key factors contributing to teacher attrition (Christophersen et al., 2016; Kozikoğlu, 2018; Ulferts, 2015). Additional factors contributing to teacher retention were the lack of mentoring or preparedness (Bressman et al., 2018; Christophersen et al., 2016; Kozikoğlu, 2018).

Professional organizations focused on mentoring, professional growth, development (Bond & Sterrett, 2014; Young, 2018), and service-learning (Busby et al., 2019; Chiong et al., 2017; Stanke et al., 2019) to meet the needs of its members and increase teacher retention. Professional organizations try to reduce the number of teachers leaving the career field by increasing their membership. The benefits to professional organization engagement were tools that enhanced learning and teaching (Bond & Sterrett, 2014). Productive collaborations and networking gained by professional organizations affect the future of teaching and learning

(Busby et al., 2019). Actively engaging in service learning, professional development, and networking in professional organizations resulted in increased retention (Busby et al., 2019; Chiong et al., 2017; Stanke et al., 2019). Therefore, the transferability of the results in this study conveyed the lived experiences like the previously researched data by others regarding teacher retention. The participants represented the generalizability of previously studied educators.

Studies utilizing IPA had samples allowing researchers to study differences and similarities of lived experiences (Smith et al., 2012). Qualitative phenomenological studies reduced biases through the epoché step by enabling me to be open-minded (Salmons, 2012). Studying the participants' lived experiences during a point in their career revealed extraordinary experiences or events that allowed participants to discover why they retain their teaching career.

Ethical Considerations

In agreement with Abilene Christian University's (ACU) policies and procedures, I obtained permission to collect data from ACU's Internal Review Board (IRB) before recruiting participants. In this study, each contributor received comprehensive data regarding the time needed, the nature of the study, the objectives of using the data, and information on the security of data and confidentiality. In addition, the informed consent form detailed the participant's ability to choose which interview questions to answer and which questions to exclude although all questions were asked. My contact and the dissertation chair's information were included in the informed consent form. I sent the informed consent form solely to prospective participants who validated their announcement of interest. A typed name from the prospective applicant was offered as a signature in an online situation.

Participants were treated ethically, respected, and had protection. Each participant benefited from obtaining the study outcomes. An exhaustive estimation of risk was conducted. I

completed the selection process fairly to ensure that a participant would not be chosen decisively based on risk (Terrell, 2016).

My analysis could be provided to each participant to allow verification of accuracy. Additionally, I gave the participants a summation of the study. The final and completed result detailed the phenomenon of the lived experiences of early career teachers who were and those who were not actively engaged in professional organizations and their decision to remain in teaching.

Limitations

Factors unrelated to engagement in professional organizations could cause teachers to remain in the classroom. Educators were leaving the teaching field at alarming rates due to COVID-19 (Lehrer-Small, 2021). As such, the governor of Texas charged the Education Commissioner to create a task force addressing teacher shortages (Abbott, 2022). Early career educators had varying lived experiences (preparedness, mentoring, professional organizations, etc.); therefore, retention rates varied. Professional development varied by school district. Sampling in a qualitative study has fewer participants who could produce divergent outcomes (Smith et al., 2012). Even though IPA procedures were utilized rigorously, limitations arose due to the geographic location of the participants used. Employing an interpretative methodology like IPA, participants in another geographic location could render different results while using equivalent information. As an educator actively engaged in professional organizations, epoché, collecting data with an open mind while not contaminating data with personal experiences (Terrell, 2016) might influence my personal experiences. My lived experiences and biases may influence some of the results more than others, unlike other researchers who have no lived experiences in professional organizations.

Positionality Statement

As the researcher of this applied dissertation, I believe it necessary to disclose my employment as the nature of my employment could potentially lead to bias as I collected and analyzed data. I am a Hispanic first-generation college graduate who grew up in west Texas. My family members were summertime migrant workers in California. I am an 18-year veteran educator who was a high school academy principal for 9 years and a high school teacher for an additional 9 years. Most of my experience was in large urban high schools with diverse student and teacher populations. I first joined the Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) as a college student and have remained a member throughout my educational experience. While working with ATPE, I have remained a member for the last 27 years. Throughout my years in ATPE, I have served as Houston ATPE president, Region 4 ATPE Secretary, been on numerous committees, and attended many trainings, and conventions. As ATPE staff, I have led professional development, trained leaders, and mentored educators. As a researcher, I recognize the possibility of bias and I was vigilant to ensure that potential bias did not influence the collection and analysis of data due to my employment in a professional organization. Membership in professional organizations was ascertained to assure impartiality towards other organizations.

Delimitations

Researchers were urged to relate delimitations in the research that negatively affected a study's outcome (Terrell, 2016). The subsequent delimitations detailed this intent. The study was delimited to 12 early career educators in Texas. The professional organizations were delimited to Texas. I had several social media platforms where followers were early career educators. A social media post was made recruiting early career educators who were engaged and not engaged in a professional organization. Potential participants were asked to share or forward the post to

other potential participants. The professional organizations used during the snowball efforts were ATPE and DKGTexas (DKGTexas, n.d.). ATPE had approximately 100,000 members (APTE, 2020), while DKGTexas had just over 9,000 members statewide (DKGTexas, 2016).

Summary

Because this research aimed to explore the perceptive phenomenon of teachers' involvement in professional organizations and the decision to remain in the profession, a phenomenological approach was appropriate. Furthermore, even though there were problems staffing educators, especially in urban areas, school districts did their best to recruit and retain teachers using any method possible (Feng & Sass, 2017). Therefore, it was appropriate for leaders in organizations to study and investigate avenues to assist in the retention of teachers.

Individual semistructured interviews enabled me and participants to utilize an interview plan while employing flexibility (Salmons, 2012). Such a format aided the participants in sharing their lived experiences without restrictions (Salmons, 2012). I gave little guidance. My role related the lived experience with literature and developed guides for teacher retention growth (Smith et al., 2012). Based on the research purpose, the IPA study explored the perceptive phenomenon of teachers' involvement in professional organizations and the decision to remain in the profession. The focus of the data collection process was individual semistructured synchronous interviews that helped to discover the perceptive phenomenon of engagement and involvement in professional organizations and the decision to remain in the teaching profession.

Synchronous videoconferencing interviews helped me gather lived experiences directly from educators (Salmons, 2012). Videoconferencing allowed me to observe nonverbal communication and clues (Salmons, 2012). Synchronous interviews enabled me to communicate back and forth with the participant. Asynchronous interviews using the prescreening questions was employed to select participants for the study.

Before recruiting participants and collecting data, I secured permission from ACUs IRB. The information garnered from educators offered ideas and suggestions for increasing teacher retention and how or if being actively involved in professional organizations contributed to said retention.

Chapter 4: Findings

This IPA study explored the phenomenon of teachers' involvement activities in professional organizations and the decision to remain in the profession. To understand the teacher retention dilemma in Texas, this qualitative IPA study was conducted to obtain the lived experiences of early career educators. The central aspect of the study included a qualitative interview that desired to answer the research questions:

RQ1. What are the factors causing teacher attrition as perceived by early career educators, and how might professional organizations impact these factors to increase teacher retention?

RQ2. What are the perceptions of early career teachers on the importance of professional organizations and the effect they have on teacher retention?

RQ3. What are the benefits of joining a professional organization according to the perception of an early career teacher?

The findings of the study are offered in this chapter. I detail the perceptions of 12 early career educators from school districts in Texas and explain their lived experiences as they pertain to teacher retention and professional organizations. Secondly, the study details data from an anonymous questionnaire completed by 13 early career educators in Texas.

Chapter 4 is structured in three main sections: participant information, qualitative findings, and emerging themes. The initial section details the participants involved in this study. The following portion illustrates the data from the qualitative interviews and an anonymous questionnaire. The final section extrapolates the emergent themes which reflect the participants' lived experiences.

Participant Information

The qualitative interview participants were early career educators selected from school

districts across Texas. Twenty-four early career educators were invited to participate in the qualitative interpretive phenomenological interviews. Twelve or 50% of the eligible participants completed the prescreening survey and were interviewed (see Table 5).

Table 5

Number of Study Participants

Type of survey	Prescreening survey	Interview	Survey
Invited to participate	24	24	
Number of participants	15	12	13

The anonymous survey participants were early career educators. Thirteen early career educators completed the qualitative survey. The qualitative survey included demographic questions detailing age group, gender, ethnicity, and highest level of education.

The qualitative interview included demographic questions detailing the years of service, type of educator preparation program involvement in professional organizations, membership in which professional organization, length of membership in a professional organization, and capacity of involvement (see Table 6).

Table 6*Interview Participant Demographics*

Participant number	Years of service	Traditional/ACP	Professional organization involvement	Which professional organization	Length of involvement	Capacity
1	0–5	ACP	Yes	ATPE	0–5	Volunteer
2	0–5	Traditional	Yes	DKG	0–5	Member
3	5–10	ACP	No	None	N/A	None
4	0–5	ACP	No	AFT	N/A	None
5	0–5	Traditional	Yes	ATPE	5–10	Leader
6	0–5	Traditional	Yes	ATPE	0–5	Member
7	0–5	Traditional	Yes	ATPE	0–5	Other
8	0–5	ACP	Yes	ATPE	0–5	Member
9	0–5	Traditional	Yes	ATPE	0–5	Leader
10	0–5	Traditional	Yes	ATPE	0–5	Member
11	0–5	ACP	No	None	0–5	None
12	0–5	Traditional	Yes	ATPE	5–10	Leader

The demographic details of the anonymous survey indicate participant number, years of service, age bracket, gender, ethnicity, and highest level of education (see Table 7). The anonymous survey did not ask specific questions about membership in a particular professional organization. However, there was a question that asked about the experience they had with a professional organization.

Table 7*Anonymous Survey Participant Demographics*

Participant number	Years of service	Age bracket	Gender	Ethnicity	Highest level of education
1	4–5	50+	Female	Hispanic	Doctorate
2	4–5	50+	Female	Hispanic	Masters
3	4–5	20–34	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors
4	2–3	35–49	Female	African American	Doctoral Student
5	2–3	35–49	Female	White	Masters
6	2–3	20–34	Female	White	Bachelors
7	4–5	35–49	Female	Hispanic	Masters
8	2–3	20–34	Female	African American	Bachelors
9	2–3	20–34	Female	White	Masters
10	4–5	50+	Female	White	Masters
11	0–1	35–49	Female	White	Bachelors
12	2–3	20–34	Female	Hispanic	Masters
13	4.5	50+	Female	White	Bachelors

Qualitative Findings

An IPA method was utilized by creating and applying qualitative interviews and a qualitative anonymous survey, sampling early career educators. The participants shared their perceptions and lived experiences. Synchronous semistructured interviews were conducted utilizing the Zoom platform, while transcripts were coded to determine emergent themes using Dedoose 9.0. Zoom transcripts were imported into the data analysis software Dedoose 9.0. The

research questions and interview questions provoked early career educators to share their perspectives and lived experiences relating to the plight of teacher retention and the ability of professional organizations to impact the retention of teachers. The primary qualitative data collection consisted of one 16-question semistructured interview conducted on 12 participants. Simultaneously, a qualitative asynchronous anonymous survey was conducted with a different set of participants. Early career educators in Texas were invited to complete the anonymous survey. The emergent themes from both qualitative data sources and all of the participants are detailed in this study.

Emergent Themes

The first research question examined the early career educators' perceptions about the factors of teacher attrition and the lived experiences of a professional organization's effect on teacher retention. The participants detailed the factors causing teacher attrition and activities professional organizations can contribute that assist early career educators in achieving success during their first years of teaching. In many cases, these are activities that school districts and administrators are not providing. One must look at this question through the lens of the causes of teacher attrition and how professional organizations can effect teacher retention. The second research question analyzes the importance of professional organizations and the activities provided that keep early career educators in the field. Lastly, the data details the third research question by addressing the benefits of professional organizations and how those activities can increase teacher retention. The overarching emergent themes are attrition factors and activities of engagement needed by professional organizations to assist teacher retention in early career educators. The themes are lack of support, networking, resources, support, mentoring, and creating a community. All emergent themes contribute to the awareness of factors that contribute to teacher attrition and can serve as a framework for professional organizations.

RQ1: Attrition Factors and Activities That Impact Teacher Retention

Throughout this study, participants had no shortage of the causes of teacher attrition. From the perspective of early career educators, there were many reasons affecting teachers' decisions to stay in the field. The leading causes of teacher attrition were the lack of support/mentoring which includes mental health issues, student discipline, and low salary. Mental health includes stress, burnout, and actual mental health-related problems.

Theme 1: Lack of Support/Mentoring

The first emergent theme dealing with the causes of teacher attrition and how professional organizations can affect teacher retention was the need for support. Many participants detailed the lack of support on their campus and that of their administrator. Participant 5 of the semistructured interviews described a situation where district coaches came to their classes and charged them with using a tool that did not work. No one supported them in correcting the problem, creating a vicious cycle. A lack of support in their classroom was a reoccurring topic, along with the lack of support by administration and parents. The anonymous survey details that 31% of the participants indicated that the lack of mentoring or help was a cause of teacher attrition in Texas.

Mental Health Issues. Overwhelmingly, the data revealed that early career educators were stressed and burned out. The data revealed that mental health issues were a concern and mentioned by all interview participants (see Table 8). Participant 10 of the semistructured interviews spoke about "treading water" and "trying to learn the curriculum and finding their footing." During the interviews, Participant 11 described, "Teachers are talking about how they have never been more stressed out than this year." Participant 11 shared about their mental health issues causing them to take time off work. "You're going to work a lot more than what you're going to get paid for" was another example of burnout described by Participant 9 during their

interview. Every participant in the semistructured interview shared their experiences about stress and mental health concerns (see Table 8). The number main reason for the cause of teacher attrition in Texas for the qualitative anonymous survey was listed as stress at 85%. It was mentioned by participants 158 times during the interviews (see Table 8).

Table 8

Burnout, Mental Health, and Stress Responses from the Semistructured Interview

Participant number	Burnout	Mental health	Stress
1	9	12	22
2	5	6	5
3	4	4	7
4	11	5	11
5	41	30	46
6	8	3	3
7	14	10	20
8	0	3	5
9	10	11	13
10	6	3	6
11	11	2	11
12	0	2	9
Totals	119	91	158

Note. The data represents the number of times an individual participant mentions a concept.

Student Discipline. A highly discussed topic during the interviews and anonymous survey concerned student discipline. Discipline or discipline-related issues were mentioned by each of the 12 participants during the interviews (see Table 9). Participants 3 and 5 described the

difference in student conduct post-Covid. They both illustrated a less engaged and more disruptive student who tended to have disrespectful outbursts. Early career educators needed help at the beginning of the year, discerning the amount of discipline necessary to manage their students properly. Participant 8 stated, “At the beginning of the year, I was a nice teacher. Then, as behavior started to arise, they started laughing and playing it off because I was nice, and it was harder to control them.” The anonymous survey yielded data that 85% of participants indicated student discipline was an issue or problem affecting teaching.

Table 9

Discipline, Disrespect, and Engagement Code by Participant

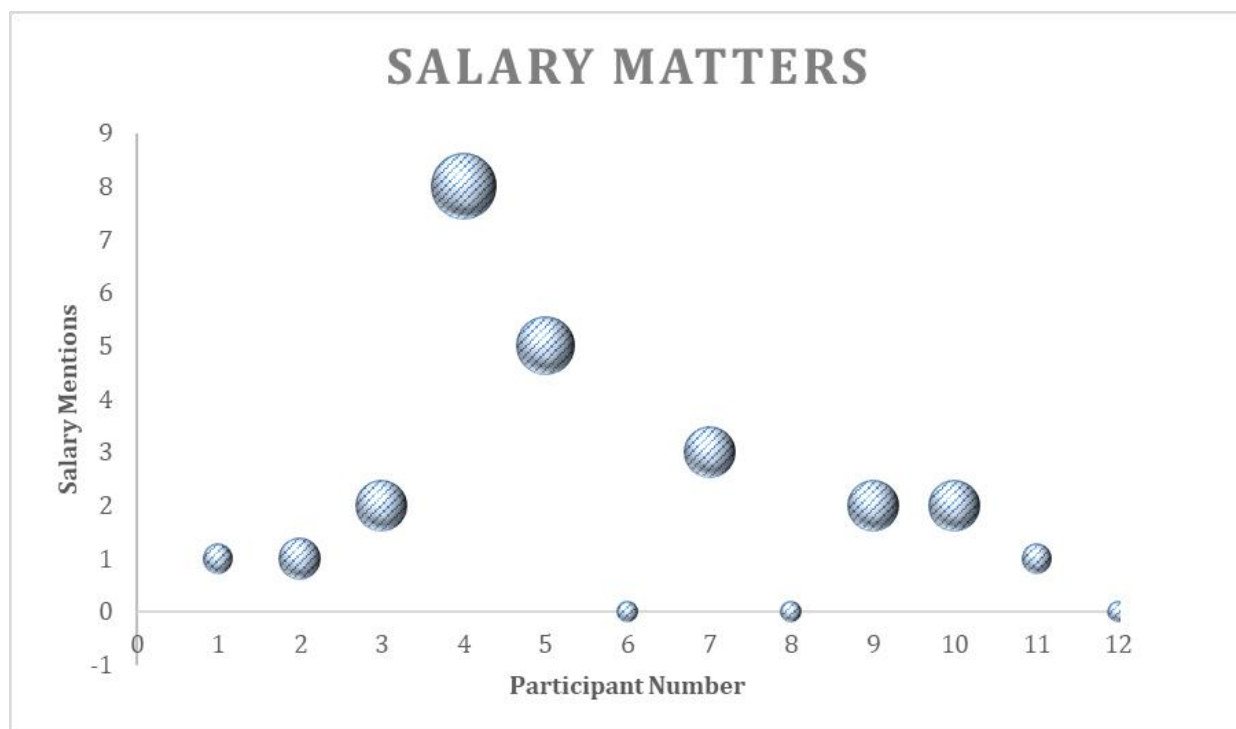
Participant #	Discipline	Disrespect	Discipline and engagement
1	4	1	8
2	5	1	6
3	10	0	9
4	0	1	1
5	20	7	21
6	1	0	1
7	3	3	2
8	2	2	6
9	8	3	8
10	9	5	9
11	8	3	8
12	6	0	0
Totals	76	26	79

Note. The data represents the number of times an individual participant mentions a concept.

Low Teacher Salary. The last topic depicting the increasing rate of teacher attrition and why early career educators feel professional organizations can have an effect was low teacher salaries. During the semistructured interviews, salary issues were discussed 25 times by participants (see Figure 1). Nine out of the 12 interview participants shared aspects centering on salary. Participant 5 indicated that the amount of work increased while their salary did not. It was suggested by Participant 4 that new educators should receive some monetary benefit to help offset the cost of starting their careers and putting their classrooms together. The anonymous survey indicated 69% of participants felt that one cause of teacher attrition was low pay. Participants in the anonymous survey also suggested that salary (77%) was an issue with teaching.

Figure 1

Salary Code by Participant



Note. The data represents the number of times an individual participant mentions a concept.

RQ2: Teacher Retention and Engagement in Professional Organizations

The second research question inquired about the perceived importance of professional organizations and how they could help teacher retention. There was discussion about networking and in many different scenarios. Each time networking was shared, it indicated a positive aspect in making early career educators more successful. Discussion alluded to a decrease in the learning curve gap achieved by engaging in professional organizations.

Theme 2: Networking

The semistructured interview participants indicated 97 times that networking was the main reason for engaging in a professional organization. Networking was crucial to the interview participants. The topic of networking arose organically twice during the interview questions. Therefore, networking presented itself twice in Table 10. The second mention of networking recorded 89% of participants regarded the importance of engagement in a professional organization (see Table 10). The lived experiences of Participant 7 pointed to an experience amplified by participation and engagement in their professional organization. Participant 7 stated, “Participation in ATPE has had a part in my growth as a new teacher.” Participant 7 shared how they would not have known certain things had it not been for their participation in a professional organization. Participant 8 shared that in preparation for the “real world of teaching, networking is the biggest thing” to do to involve yourself.

Table 10*Reasons for Engagement in Professional Organizations*

Participant number	Networking	Networking	Learning curve
	RQ2	RQ3	
1	19	13	6
2	6	8	4
3	9	10	4
4	12	12	10
5	6	9	15
6	2	2	2
7	15	13	9
8	6	2	4
9	10	8	2
10	4	2	4
11	4	2	3
12	4	8	14
Totals	97	89	77

Note. The data represents the number of times an individual participant mentions a concept.

Learning Curve. Participant 2 explained that learning “little things” through networking helped the beginning of the school transition flow in a much more conducive manner.

Additionally, participants felt that engaging in a professional organization was necessary due to the learning curve (77%) early career educators experience. While there is a significant reason to be engaged in professional organizations, the survey indicated that 31% of the participants agreed that being immersed in a professional organization would increase teacher retention.

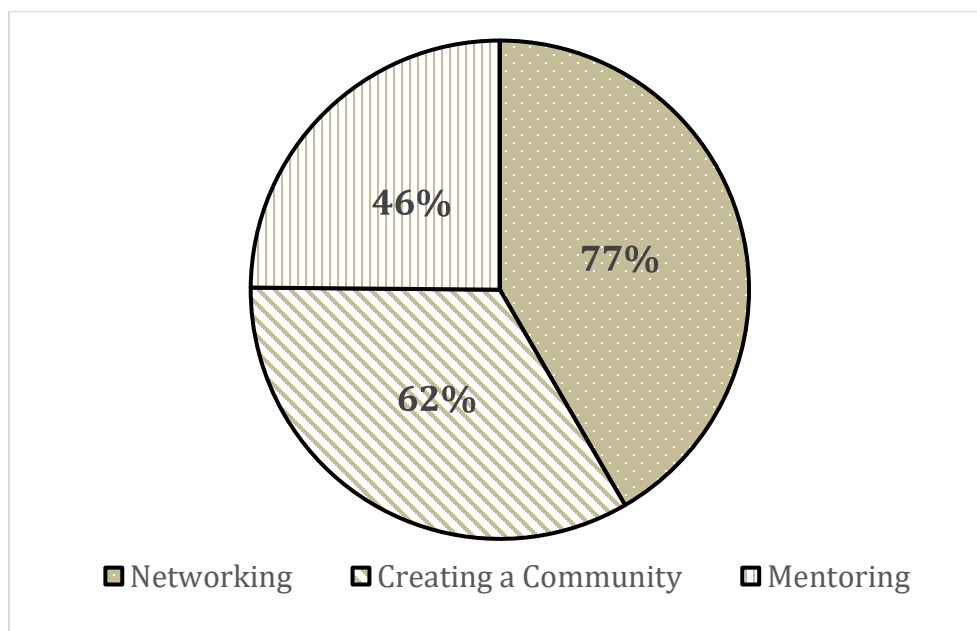
More importantly, the survey suggested that 46% of the participants were neutral on that topic. Fifty-four percent of the participants indicated that the issue of time prevented early career educators from engaging in professional organizations. The participants revealed that networking was a means for filling the learning curve gap.

RQ 3: Professional Organization Benefits

The third research question sought to determine if there were advantages for an early career educator when connecting with a professional organization. Participants shared what they felt were the benefits of actively engaging in a professional organization. The survey determined that networking was the most crucial benefit professional organizations could provide early career educators. In Research Question 2, the study revealed that networking was a reason why early career educators should be engaged in professional organizations. In Research Question 3, early career educators indicated that resources were essential to engagement in professional organizations. The third important benefit to engaging in professional organizations was support. Finally, the research indicated that part of networking was building a community of like-minded professionals.

Theme 2: Networking

“Being surrounded by other educators who understand your profession,” as stated by Participant 3, is a way to network and a benefit of engagement in a professional organization. Participant 1 shared having someone to talk to about various topics outside of school was relevant. Participant 8 detailed the fear of not knowing who you could trust with your questions or concerns as an example of the need for networking. One of the most important things about networking, as described by Participant 11, was getting help. The survey yielded networking as a benefit of professional organizations as indicated by 77% of the participants (see Figure 2).

Figure 2*The Benefits of Professional Organizations****Theme 3: Resources***

Resources were mentioned in two different areas of the semistructured interviews. The top benefit of being engaged in a professional organization was the resources that early career educators can receive. Resources were discussed 101 times during the semistructured interviews (see Table 11). Many participants spoke about mental health benefits that professional organizations could provide. Participant 3 shared the benefits of self-care activities like massages. During the survey, early career participants discussed how mental health support and resources could benefit teachers and increase teacher retention. Since the pandemic, Participant 1 shared the need to have activities to reduce stress provided by a professional organization, which would increase teacher retention. Professional organizations offered resources on curriculum, technology, and other professional development opportunities beneficial to early career educators, as shared by Participant 5.

Table 11*Benefits of Participating in Professional Organizations*

Participant number	Support	Resources
1	14	16
2	5	8
3	15	17
4	7	18
5	12	3
6	2	2
7	11	14
8	2	3
9	9	7
10	3	2
11	2	8
12	5	3
Totals	87	101

Note. The data represents the number of times an individual participant mentioned a concept.

Many conversations were shared about resources helping to close the learning curve gap. Modeling lessons, lesson planning, and lesson ideas were a resource Participant 3 felt was a necessary benefit that professional organizations could supply. The participants also felt that training in school programs, applications, and software would be a beneficial activity provided by professional organizations. Participant 3 shared that any classroom management resources benefit early career educators. Classroom management and student discipline were of concern to early career educators. The anonymous survey led to an understanding that resources helped bridge the reality of the learning gap for early career educators. The bridging of this gap was shown to be a retention tool that professional organizations can create.

Theme 4: Support

The second benefit of being engaged in a professional organization was the support given to early career educators. As shown in Table 11, the participants' discussion of support as a benefit of professional organization was evident 87 times. Participant 10 detailed that having someone to discuss classroom issues with or even having someone you can vent to without fear of it coming back against you was vital to early career educators. Participant 1 shared that they would have liked to have support with curriculum and student management. A participant in the survey shared that "many times teachers are told to perform miracles with little to no support" as a reason to engage in professional organizations and to increase teacher retention.

Theme 5: Mentoring

Participant 2 shared how the networking of a mentor was helpful. She felt that having someone who would "check up on you without any additional assignments made an early career educator feel connected." Participant 10 shared that having someone to give guidance on discipline, curriculum, and all the items that were not covered in college was needed during the first year of teaching. Thinking outside the traditional box of mentoring, Participant 7 mentioned that she would like to see mentoring be more about networking and building relationships. Participant 7 shared how teachers were so busy at the beginning of school that a team building exercise would have helped build relations and created networking opportunities to learn for new teachers. The survey indicated that 47% of the participants mentioned having mentors within a professional organization would increase teacher retention. The survey participants shared the demand for more mentoring to be provided by professional organizations. Of the survey participants, 54% believed mentoring was necessary and should occur during the school district's new teacher orientation. When asked what activities a professional organization should provide to increase teacher retention, 46% of the survey participants stated mentoring (see Figure 2).

Theme 6: Community

Having someone outside of one's job to talk to is monumentally vital for early career educators, as stated by Participant 10. Participants shared that this type of networking can assist new teachers. Participant 1 enjoyed the community environment created by the events held by professional organizations. "Being around like-minded people who relate to you is a benefit of professional organizations," as stated by Participant 1. "Being able to share your thoughts and war stories with other like-minded people is a benefit," as shared by Participant 8. Participant 8 shared that having a sound support system within your community was essential to teacher retention and something that professional organizations could provide. The survey revealed that 62% of the participants shared that professional organizations could increase teacher retention by creating a community for early career educators. During the survey, a participant shared that "creating a supportive environment" could increase teacher retention through engagement in professional organizations. On the contrary, 39% of the participants in the survey indicated they did not know the benefits of professional organizations.

Summary

This chapter presents the perceived lived experiences of early career educators. Two qualitative measures were used: the data from the semistructured interviews and the anonymous survey were presented. The three research questions were used respectively to organize the findings. Early career educators shared their perspectives detailing why teachers leave the field, revealing professional organizations' impact on teacher retention (RQ1) by addressing the lack of support, mental health issues, student discipline, and low teacher salaries. The data collected revealed networking and closing the learning curve gap engaging activities that keep early career educators in the field and engaged in professional organizations (RQ2). The data detailed three professional organization activities deemed beneficial by the research participants to increase

retention of teachers (RQ3), resources, support, and networking. The wealth of knowledge and experience professional organization members hold benefits early career educators. In Chapter 5, I will discuss the process used to analyze the data, share conclusions, and make recommendations to increase teacher retention through the engagement of professional organizations.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Teacher retention has gained traction over the last few years (Chiong et al., 2017). Professional organizations are essential to teacher retention (Chiong et al., 2017; Young, 2018). While teacher retention has been a growing concern over the last 10 years (Bennett et al., 2013; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Saenz-Armstrong, 2020), it has hit an all-time low recently (TEA, 2023). In most recent years, school districts in the Houston area have started the school year with a deficit of teachers (Kever, 2023). Politicians, universities, and professional organizations are continuing to discuss the teacher retention topic.

This IPA study explored the perceptive phenomenon of teachers' involvement in professional organizations and the decision to remain in the profession. This study aimed to determine if early career educators saw the importance of professional organization engagement and to ascertain the engagement activities that would impact teacher retention.

Chapter 5 is organized into four segments. The first segment interprets the findings from the research data, followed by research implications. An additional segment addresses the study's limitations. Lastly, the final segment details recommendations, and practical applications for professional organizations based on the data from this study and future research opportunities. The summary findings of early career educators' engagement activities in professional organizations and their impact on teacher retention concludes Chapter 5.

Interpretation of Findings

Each data set of this research revealed the continuous discussions into the retention of early career educators. The literature details the causes of teacher attrition which were substantiated by the data from this study. The participants in this study detailed the causes of teacher attrition and how professional organizations might be able to provide resources addressing teacher retention. The emergent themes uncovered from this research detail actions

and activities that professional organizations can coordinate to improve the retention of early career educators. These activities include providing support, networking, and various resources to close the learning curve gap and mental health resources. While participants found these activities provided by professional organizations to be beneficial, the research shows that many early career educators either need more time to engage or to gain knowledge of the available activities.

RQ1: What are the Factors Causing Teacher Attrition as Perceived by Early Career Educators, and How Might Professional Organizations Impact These Factors to Increase Teacher Retention?

Research Question 1 was created to determine teacher attrition factors and how a professional organization can impact teacher retention. The findings from the research participants indicated the factors causing teacher attrition and shared the significance of belonging to and engaging in professional organizations. Overwhelmingly, participants shared from their experiences the many reasons teachers leave the field. The findings of the study indicated that the lack of mentoring, mental health issues, student discipline, and low salary are factors causing teacher attrition. A recurring topic from participants was a profound need for professional organizations to fill in the gap of what novice teachers need to remain in the field.

The literature supported these findings by when a study shares that novice teachers indicated negative connotations regarding their school administrators, which can be associated with the lack of mentoring (Kozikoğlu, 2018). Mental health issues were detailed by participants and by the literature. Job satisfaction can affect teacher attrition. Teacher retention is affected by happiness and wellbeing (Flowers, 2019). Like the literature, the participants shared their perspective that engagement in professional organizations can contribute to teacher retention.

Participating in professional organizations has an influence in teacher retention and increases commitment (Dawson & Leytham, 2020).

RQ2: What are the Perceptions of Early Career Teachers on the Importance of Professional Organizations and the Effect They Have on Teacher Retention?

Research Question 2 was written to ascertain why early career educators engage in professional organizations. The findings from this study revealed that novice educators engage with professional organizations to network. The data indicated the need to engage in activities with professional organizations because they help decrease the learning curve for early career educators. They also felt that networking was an activity new educators needed to be successful during their early years. The participants emphasized that due to stress and time restraints, new teachers need the opportunity to be involved in professional organizations. From the perspective of the participants, they indicated a need for professional organizations to provide activities for early career educators offering them support, mentoring and resources to increase teacher retention.

Literature supports participating in professional organizations as tool to increase commitment and influenced teacher retention (Dawson & Leytham, 2020). Being involved in professional organizations provides networking opportunities and professional development (Busby et al., 2019). Professional organizations offer mentoring, networking, and the preparation of new teachers which leads to teacher retention (Dawson & Leytham, 2020).

RQ3: What are the Benefits of Joining a Professional Organization According to the Perception of an Early Career Teacher?

Research Question 3 was created to discover the benefits of connecting with professional organizations for novice teachers. The study revealed that there are four main advantages of belonging to a professional organization are resources, support/mentoring, networking, and

community. Once again, the study participants expressed that the resources received from engagement in professional organizations are paramount to the success of early career educators. Resources can vary, including curriculum, classroom management, and mental health tools. There is no lack of resources needed by early career educators. The participants in the study felt that the resources provided by a professional organization could fill in the gap of what is needed by new teachers. Filling this gap could increase teacher retention in early career educators.

Support and mentoring are the second benefit of being engaged in professional organizations. Having support in the beginning years of teaching is vital to the success of new teachers. Every participant indicated that a successful first year of teaching is purportedly due to someone who shows support, lends a listening ear, and gives advice. A successful new teacher has a trusted mentor who garners guidance on a litany of topics. The participants felt that professional organizations can provide a network of mentors to entertain questions and offer advice.

The third benefit of a professional organization is networking. It is equally important as a mentor's support. Sharing and learning is fundamental to the success of early career educators. Garnering beneficial information and teaching data from other educators contributes to success. School districts see the need for networking during PLC, department, and even faculty meetings. Imagine a productive networking environment with a far-reaching network of educators. Networking allows new educators to obtain information and an added perspective and help them succeed.

The final theme for Research Question 3 is community. Community can be developed when networking occurs; new teachers have support and mentors, and all the individuals are sharing resources while learning and growing as educators. The findings from this study detailed the need to be surrounded by like-minded individuals where something can be learned.

Participants shared that having someone to brainstorm, discuss, learn from, or vent to create a community that, some say, reduced mental health issues. All of which contribute to teacher retention. Educators seek out conventions and training events year-round that will contribute to their success. Therefore, community was deemed as a significant benefit of engaging in professional organizations by early career educators.

The literature supports community by indicating how professional organizations consist of community-based activities provided to members (Stanke et al., 2019). Long time teachers revealed that community is an important factor to teacher retention. The literature also indicated that collaboration and positive relations with other teachers are vital to teacher retention (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020).

Implications

The findings of this research indicate two opposing thoughts on the beneficial implications for professional organizations and early career educators on teacher retention. The findings from this study indicate the necessity of engagement activities provided by professional organizations for novice educators. While engagement activities dictate lasting benefits, the findings also reveal a lack of knowledge by the study's participants on the activities delivered by professional organizations. This indicates a need for professional organizations to find ways to publicize their resources that could be beneficial to early educators. Professional organizations could provide professional development, networking, legislative updates, lunch and learns, leader training, meet and greets, committee participation, and more.

Participants in this study shared details of a learning curve early career educators experience. This study's implications reflect activities that are beneficial to early career educators as created by professional organizations. The study's participants consistently detailed the importance of engaging in professional organizations. Participants indicated that 31% are

likely to leave the teaching field which is indicative of the literature (TEA, 2019). Professional organizations have the chance to provide resources and activities that early career educators need. By providing resources, networking, mentoring, and support, professional organizations can contribute to the retention of novice educators. Professional organizations can decrease the learning curve early career educators experience.

On the contrary, the findings of this study indicate that early career educators need to take full advantage of the engaging activities provided by professional organizations such as professional development, leadership training, networking events, or lunch and learns. Early career educators' lack of engagement and knowledge is a mutually important implication. Of the survey participants, 39% did not know the benefits of professional organizations. The anonymous survey indicates that 31% of the participants have never been a member. While novice educators find it necessary to engage with professional organizations, the findings of this study indicate a lack of knowledge of the benefits. The findings also indicate a time constraint limiting engagement.

Theoretical Framework Implications

The implication for the theoretical framework and Schlossberg's transition theory is for professional organizations to provide transition opportunities for early career educators to remain in the teaching field (Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). Moving from preservice teacher to first-time teacher is a significant anticipated transitional change. Early career educators experience many unanticipated or nonevent transitions like traversing colleagues, student discipline, curriculum, and the stress associated with being an educator (Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). The study's findings revealed the engagement desired by early career educators. Participants want professional development, community, networking, mentoring, and resources. Professional organizations can provide transition opportunities by

preparing new teachers for the new situation of being a new teacher. Professional organizations could create cultural events for new teacher participation and celebration, which produces a stronger sense of self to improve teacher retention. Self-care resources could provide self-transition tools to increase teacher retention. Healthy activities, contests, and team sports would contribute to the self transition. Providing social support is an activity revealed by participants as a necessary resource for teacher retention. Professional organizations could provide a community of social support for new teachers. Resources provided by professional organizations could assist new educators in developing strategies to increase teacher retention. Professional organizations could provide mentoring resources assisting in best practices and other professional development. Professional organizations could provide resources and tools to assist new educators in moving in, through, and out of each of the four transition areas.

Limitations

Whereas this study offered data imparting opportunities to increase teacher retention in early career educators, this study revealed limitations in addition to what was reported in Chapter 3. One source of limitations is the number of early career educators who completed the anonymous survey. Having more participants would have gleaned additional data-the anonymous survey needed to garner various ethnicities. The survey findings could have offered additional data had the participants been more diverse and had more male participants. The literature indicated that socio-economic background, gender, and ethnicity affect a person's transition process (Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). Furthermore, most of the survey participants have never been a member of a professional organization or they had only been a member in college. The findings revealed that 25% of the interview participants had not been involved or engaged in a professional organization.

Additionally, the findings could vary if the online interview had more participants and more participants who were not engaged in professional organizations. Originally, I wanted to recruit an equal number of early career participants who were and were not engaged in professional organizations. The study yielded more participants who had some engagement in professional organizations.

Another limitation included only having one round of interviews. While the findings would have given additional data, the fact that most participants have minimal experience is a large piece of data. Increasing the number of interviews and the number of survey participants could have added depth to the findings of the study.

A limitation was interviewing novice educators primarily in the Houston area of Texas. Data could be gleaned from participants in other parts of Texas or throughout the United States. The perceptions and lived experiences of early career educators could be different according to their location. The last factor that could limit the data received is that almost half of the interview participants came from alternative certification programs. This factor could be why the learning curve was an important theme.

Recommendations for Practical Applications

This chapter presents this study's qualitative IPA findings. The study has generated new data and conclusions regarding the significance of professional organizations and their impact on teacher retention. Professional organizations may find this study's findings advantageous in planning for its future and contributing to teacher retention.

Based on the implications of this research, recommendations for practical applications exist. The participants in this study detailed the need for the resources that professional organizations offer. The study corroborates the research that early career educators need and want support, resources, and networking to increase retention that can be provided by

professional organizations (Anderson et al., 2017; Busby et al., 2019; Flowers & Reczvnski, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). The study indicates that early career educators should be aware of the resources offered by professional organizations and be able to engage more in these organizations. This engagement may help increase teacher retention.

Recommendation 1: Engagement

The first recommendation from this study is for professional organizations to establish engaging activities by creating and providing a network of support, resources, mentoring, and community. Professional organizations should provide the following:

- networking tools for early career educators to voice their questions and to have seasoned educators answer;
- ways to create a community of like-minded individuals to give early career educators a safe place;
- a chance to bond with other educators through events such as networking, meet and greets, leadership events, social events, or surveys asking early career educators to share their needs;
- events, activities, and resources specifically geared toward early career educators;
- ways for seasoned teachers to check in on early career educators and receive benefits for their efforts;
- forums and social media platforms to share successful lessons and tools,
- networking after school and on weekends so early career educators have a chance to discuss topics and ask questions away from school with educators who have more experience; and
- collect and give school and teacher supplies for early career educators to lower the cost of

decorating and preparing their classrooms at the beginning of the year.

Professional organizations can survey early career educator members to ascertain what is needed or wanted. Making activities of support and engagement is crucial to creating a safe community for new teachers.

Recommendation 2: Target Audience

An additional recommendation is aimed again at professional organizations. The findings of this study revealed that engagement is beneficial. Nevertheless, many early career educators have yet to discover that engagement. Therefore, professional organizations should design:

- engagement activities geared toward college student members, preservice educators, and early career educators needs to be a priority;
- direct communication that directly targets these audiences;
- other forms of communication that are geared toward millennials or GenZ including various forms of social media tools that early career educators utilize generally; and
- avenues to reach more mature early career educators who came to education through alternative certification programs.

Recommendation 3: Further Research

The recommendations for future study stem from the findings and limitations of this research. The literature has indicated various needs to increase teacher retention for early career educators. The literature was limited as it relates to professional organizations. Therefore, further research on how professional organizations can increase teacher retention is necessary. This study uncovered how professional organizations can impact teacher retention. It is recommended for professional organizations to provide opportunities to:

- fill the retention gaps,
- meet the needs of early career educators for subject area expertise,

- network and have fun social events,
- garner leadership experience,
- learn about legislative issues, and
- learn helpful tools through professional development.

A further study on high quality engagement activities provided and created by professional organizations is recommended. This recommendation focuses on the needs of early career educators and what can increase teacher retention. Another aspect of this future research is ascertaining what engagement activities benefit early career educators most. This study revealed that early career educators:

- want support, mentoring, and resources,
- see the importance of networking, and
- utilize different social media platforms.

Future research should focus not only on how professional organizations market to early career educators but also on what medium early career educators want to participate in engaging activities. There are many mediums to provide learning tools such as TikTok, Instagram, webinars, Zoom, YouTube, or in-person events. The in-person and online events could take place after school, weekends, summer, or on demand to meet educator needs.

Summary

This research study endeavored to interpose the literature on teacher attrition in early career educators and how professional organizations might improve the retention of teachers. Using qualitative interviews and an anonymous survey, I garnered early career educators' perceptions and lived experiences about the factors causing teachers to leave the field and what activities could help them remain in the teaching profession.

This research study uncovered engagement activities where professional organizations could increase teacher retention. Early career educators in this study deemed these engagement activities extremely useful and critical in increasing teacher retention. The study participants expressed that providing networking, support, resources, and mentoring assistance to early career educators by professional organizations was helpful.

The plight of the teacher retention problem in Texas and across America encapsulates the significance of this study. When schools start the year with a deficit of teachers, a spotlight shines on the teacher retention issue. Understanding the effects of teacher attrition on teachers' mental strain is crucial to retaining early career educators. The cost implications that overshadow school districts to hire new teachers every year are less cost-effective than utilizing the allotted money on tools for early career educators like support, resources, and proper mentoring or networking experience. Aside from the cost parameters and strain on teacher retention, the impact on student learning is a spoke in a vicious wheel. This study addressed potential and current engagement activities that professional organizations could provide and expand upon. Providing additional resources, tools, networking, and mentor support to early career educators could help close the ever-widening teacher retention gap.

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Appendix A: Prescreening Questions

Demographics	Number	%
Length of Service		
0-5 Years	14	93.3
6-10 Years	1	6.7
Type of Degree		
Bachelor of Arts	2	
Bachelor of Science in Education	3	
Bachelor of Fine Arts	1	
Bachelor of Applied Arts and Science	1	
Missing	8	
Type of educator preparation program		
Traditional	8	53.3
Alternative Certification Program	7	46.7
Involvement in professional organizations		
Yes	12	80
No	3	20
Length of membership in a professional organization		
0-5 Years	11	73.3
6-10 Years	2	13.3
10+ Years	0	0
	2	13.3
Membership in which professional organization		
Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)	10	66.7
Delta Kappa Gamma Society International (DKG)	1	6.7
Other	1	6.7
None	3	20
Capacity of involvement		
Member	6	40
Volunteer	1	6.7
Leader	3	20
Other	1	6.7
None	3	20
Student	1	6.7

Appendix B: Recruiting Participant Post

WANTED. Early career educators with 5 years or less teaching experience in Texas and the Houston area who are not engaged in professional organizations to participate in online interviews via video conferencing.

The purpose of this IPA study is to explore the perceptive phenomenon of teachers' involvement in professional organizations and the decision to remain in the profession. Participants should expect to discuss their opinions on teacher retention, mentoring, teacher preparedness, administrative support and how active involvement in professional organization activities can help new teachers transition successfully to into future retention. Additionally, participants will have the opportunity to offer suggestions to improve the retention transition for new teachers to retain past Year Five. Each participant can select to preserve their anonymity. All other confidentiality protocols will be provided as far as the Internet allows. Participants can expect to spend approximately up to two hours on video conferencing.

Please respond by email xxxxxxxx@acu.edu to be sent the Informed Consent form in order to begin the screening process.

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

ACU IRB # _____

Date of Approval __/__/____

Date of Expiration __/__/____

Introduction:

You may be able to take part in a research study. This form provides important information about that study, including the risks and benefits to you as a potential participant. Please read this form carefully and ask the researcher any questions that you may have about the study. You can ask about research activities and any risks or benefits you may experience. You may also wish to discuss your participation with other people, such as your family doctor or a family member.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop your participation at any time and for any reason without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted for a dissertation at Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas. The purpose of this Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study is to explore the perceptive phenomenon of teacher's involvement in professional organizations and the decision to remain in the profession. There is no deception in this study. The researcher is most interested in your perspectives, recollections, and suggestions.

If selected for participation, you will be asked to attend two visits with the study staff over the course of two weeks. Each visit is expected to take One hour. During the course of these visits, you will be asked to participate in the following procedures: You will be asked to respond to a series of questions about your experience with teacher retention and professional organizations.

RISKS & BENEFITS: There are no risks to taking part in this research study. Although there are no known risks in this study, some of the information is personally sensitive and includes questions about your educational experiences, both success and failure.

Below is a list of the foreseeable risks, including the seriousness of those risks and how likely they are to occur:

- **Personally Sensitive:** Discussing these topics might be distressing for some people. However, you may withdraw at any time, and you may choose not to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable in answering.
- **Breach of Confidentiality:** Information will be gathered about your educational experiences, both success and failure.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research. No incentives are offered. The results will have scientific interest that may eventually have benefits to the retention of educators.

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY: Any information you provide will be confidential to the extent allowable by law. Some identifiable data may have to be shared with individuals outside of the study team, such as members of the ACU Institutional Review Board.

The data collected in this study are confidential to the extent provided by internet communication. You will be welcome to use a screen name during the interview and any follow up questioning. Only the principal researcher will have information matching your screen name to the name you wish to use in the final publication of the manuscript. At the conclusion of the

study, any recorded documentation that would enable someone to match the screen name to the individual will be destroyed through deletion of online material and shredding and burning of hard copy material. However, if you choose to allow the use of your real name, the option is open to you.

Please select one of the options below. You may change your mind at any time between now and the day the manuscript is submitted for publication. You will be notified when the manuscript is complete within a week of being sent to the publisher.

- Please provide an alias that will not reveal my identity.
 Please use my real first name and my last initial.

The primary risk with this study is breach of confidentiality. However, we have taken steps to minimize this risk. We will not be collecting any personal identification data during the survey. However, Google Forms may collect information from your computer. You may read their privacy statements here: <https://policies.google.com/privacy?hl=en-US>.

COLLECTION OF IDENTIFIABLE PRIVATE INFORMATION OR BIOSPECIMENS:

After identifying information is removed, your data may be used for future research, including by other researchers, without contacting you again.

CONTACTS: If you have questions about the research study, the lead researcher is Cynthia Villalovos, M. Ed and may be contacted at xxx-xxx-xxxx, xxxxxxx@acu.edu, and/or xxxxx xxxxxxxxxxx xxxxx, TX xxxxx. If you are unable to reach the lead researcher or wish to speak to someone other than the lead researcher, you may contact Dr. John Kellmayer, Dissertation Chair, xxxxxx@acu.edu. If you have concerns about this study, believe you may have been injured because of this study, or have general questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact ACU's Chair of the Institutional Review Board and Executive Director of Research, Qi Hang, Ph.D. Dr. Hang may be reached at

Qi Hang

xxxxxx@acu.edu

Acu's Executive Director of Research

320 Hardin Administration Bldg., ACU Box 29103

Abilene, TX 79699

Additional Information

There are 12 expected participants to be enrolled in the study.

Right to Withdraw. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You may omit questions in the survey or individual interview if you do not want to answer them.

We would be happy to answer any question that may arise about the study. Please direct your questions or comments to the principal researcher, Cynthia Villalovos, at one of the e-mail addresses listed above.

Your participation may be ended early by the researchers for certain reasons. For example, we may end your participation if you no longer meet study requirements, the researchers believe it is no longer in your best interest to continue participating, you do not follow the instructions

provided by the researchers, or the study is ended. You will be contacted by the researchers and given further instructions in the event that you are removed from the study.

After the responses have been received and any follow-up questions have been completed, you will receive a written copy of the analysis of your input. If you would like to make changes or feel that something you mentioned was not explained correctly, you will have the opportunity to collaborate with the researcher to correct the issue to your satisfaction. If you participate in a follow-up interview, the same procedure will allow you to make corrections to that analysis as well. The entire process should take no more than two hours of your time over a two-week period.

Appendix D: Synchronous Interview Questions

The central research focus is to uncover educators' perceptions about the usefulness of being engaged and involved in a professional organization related to teacher attrition. The purpose of this Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Teacher Retention/Attrition:

1. How would you define the teacher attrition problem in the United States?
2. From your experience, what do you think are root causes of teacher attrition?
3. Summarize your top three "complaints or problems" with teaching.
4. How has stress and mental health issues increase for educators?
5. Describe the training you received or would like to have received to prepare you for online & hybrid teaching or in a pandemic.
6. Predict or advise the top three actions new teachers should take within their first years of teaching.

Transitional Process:

1. Identify the benefits of a new teacher orientation.
2. Explain the learning curve and what it takes to be a teacher.
3. How would you modify a new teacher orientation for new educators to make it more beneficial?

Professional Organizations:

1. How did you come to join a professional organization?
2. Identify the benefits of a professional organization.
3. Give examples of how a professional organization is relevant to the early career teacher.
4. How have you interacted with professional organizations during your career?

5. Identify two actions, activities, or resources (from your experience) that professional organizations could do to increase teacher retention.
6. How can mental health assistance for educators be provided by professional organizations?
7. What activities can an organization put on that a busy teacher would want to attend?

Appendix E: Qualitative Anonymous Survey

1. Select your years of teaching experience:
2. Why did you want to become a teacher? Top 2 answers
3. How would you define the teacher attrition problem in Texas? Top 3 answers
4. Describe what keeps you in the teaching field.
5. Pick your top three issues with teaching?
6. What are the purposes of New Teacher Orientation? Click all that apply .
7. What prevents early career educators from participating in professional organizations?
8. From your experience, do you feel professional organizations increase teacher attrition?
9. What has been your experience with professional organizations.
10. What activities could a professional organization create to increase teacher retention? Check all that apply.
11. Describe a perfect teaching experience.
12. If you could design a plan to increase teacher retention through engagement in professional organizations, what would it look like?
13. Theorize what the key elements of a new teacher transitional process would be and how they might contribute to teacher retention?
14. How likely are you to leave the teaching field in the next 5 years?
15. Detail and Demographic Information for Research Purposes - I understand that all information will be pooled and kept anonymous and confidential.
17. Specify your age group:
18. Please identify your gender:
19. What is your ethnicity?
20. Select your highest level of education:

Appendix F: Survey Flyer



You are cordially invited to participate
in a **research study**

**A Qualitative Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Study
Exploring Teachers' Perceptions Concerning Involvement in
Professional Organizations and The Decision to Remain in the
Profession.**

Are you an early career educator with five years or less teaching experience, who may or may not be engaged in a professional organization, and you teach in the Greater Houston area? Please read the Informed Consent before completing this asynchronous, anonymous Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) Teacher Retention Survey.

The purpose of this Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study is to explore the perceptive phenomenon of a teachers' involvement in professional organizations and the decision to remain in the profession. The researcher is most interested in your perspectives, recollections, lived experiences, and suggestions. There is no deception in this study. You will not be asked for any personal identifiers. All participant responses will be anonymous. All data collected will be analyzed for research purposes. If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, please contact my Dissertation Committee Chair or me.

Cynthia Villalobos, B.S., M.Ed., Ed.D. Doctoral Candidate
College of Education
Abilene Christian University
16533 Dallas Parkway, Suite 800
Addicks, TX 75001
[REDACTED]

Dr. John Kellmeyer, Dissertation Chair
[REDACTED]



Qualitative Study Questionnaire

Appendix G: Anonymous Survey Consent Form

Consent for Anonymous Survey

A Qualitative Study Exploring Teachers' Perceptions Concerning Involvement in Professional Organizations and The Decision to Remain in the Profession

You may be able to take part in a research study. This form provides important information about that study, including the risks and benefits to you as a potential participant. Please read this form carefully and ask the researcher any questions that you may have about the study. You can ask about research activities and any risks or benefits you may experience. You may also wish to discuss your participation with other people, such as your family doctor or a family member.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop your participation at any time and for any reason without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted for a dissertation at Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas. The purpose of this Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study is to explore the perceptive phenomenon of teacher's involvement in professional organizations and the decision to remain in the profession. There is no deception in this study. The researcher is most interested in your perspectives, recollections, and suggestions.

This survey is anonymous. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose to participate, do not write your name on the questionnaire. No one will be able to identify you. No one will know you participated in this study. Nothing you say on the questionnaire will in any way influence your present or future. If you choose to participate, your survey will be completed online. Your participation in the survey indicates you read this consent and are agreeing to participate in this anonymous survey.

RISKS & BENEFITS: There are risks to taking part in this research study. Although there are no known risks in this study, some of the information is personally sensitive and includes questions about your educational experiences, both success and failure. Below is a list of the foreseeable risks, including the seriousness of those risks and how likely they are to occur: Discussing these topics might be distressing for some people. However, you may withdraw at any time, and you may choose not to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable in answering.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research. No incentives are offered. The results will have scientific interest that may eventually have benefits to the retention of educators.

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY: Any information you provide will be confidential to the extent allowable by law.

CONTACTS: If you have questions about the research study, the lead researcher is Cynthia Villalovos, M. Ed and may be contacted at xxx-xxx-xxxx, XXXXX@acu.edu. If you are unable to reach the lead researcher or wish to speak to someone other than the lead researcher, you may contact Dr. John Kellmayer, Dissertation Chair, XXXXX@acu.edu. If you have concerns about this study, believe you may have been injured because of this study, or have general questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact ACU's Chair of the Institutional Review Board and Executive Director of Research, Megan Roth, Ph.D. Dr. Roth may be reached at (xxx) xxx-xxxx
XXXXXXXX@acu.edu
320 Hardin Administration Bldg., ACU Box 29103
Abilene, TX 79699

Cynthia Villalovos, B.S., M.Ed.
Doctoral Candidate
College of Education
Abilene Christian University
16633 Dallas Parkway, Suite 800
Addison, TX 75001
DATE OF IRB APPROVAL: 11.10.22
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