

A PRINCIPAL'S INFLUENCE ON
TEACHER ATTRITION:
A CASE STUDY ANALYZING THE PERSPECTIVES OF
MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS AND THEIR LEADERSHIP
WITHIN A SOUTHWEST MISSOURI SCHOOL DISTRICT

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APPROVAL PAGE

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to discover factors within leader-subordinate relationships that may impact early teacher attrition. Relationships between the building administrator and middle school teachers were analyzed using a Leader-Member Exchange (LMX-7) survey. In addition to the survey, teachers provided qualitative data through the use of interviews. This study was designed to discover whether certain principal qualities influenced a teacher's decision to leave their school or the education profession entirely.

The mixed-methods study included a quantitative portion (surveys) and a qualitative portion (interviews and open-ended questions). Participants in the study described their relationships with current and previous principals. Teachers answered questions about what qualities would influence their decision to stay or leave their positions within education.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Limited research has been conducted on the building administrator's influence on teacher attrition (Boyd et al., 2011). The PK-12 educational organization as a whole has suffered from attrition for several decades. According to Alliance of Excellent Education (2008), high attrition rates were due to reasons other than retirement. The research also stated that less than twenty percent of individuals who retire count towards the attrition rates. "Only 16% of teacher attrition at the school level can be attributed to retirement. The remaining 84% of teacher turnover is due to teachers transferring between schools and teachers leaving the profession entirely" (Alliance of Excellent Education, 2008, p. 2). Furthermore, a third of teachers serving their first three years leave the profession in search of better opportunities (Brown & Wynn, 2009).

Studies have also been completed to determine what factors encourage teachers to stay within the field of teaching. Hurling, Resta, and Yeargain (2012) suggested that different types of programs have been implemented which provide assistance for new and existing teachers. Some of the steps taken to reduce teacher attrition include requiring mentoring programs for new teachers. Teachers who are new to the field of education may be paired with a teacher who has been teaching for at least five years. In addition to mentoring programs, districts have worked to improve their recruitment strategies. School districts work on recruitment by offering competitive salaries, salary incentives for certain subjects taught, and extra support in the classroom. An example includes teacher loan forgiveness programs which allow teachers who teach in certain areas for

more than five years to apply and have a certain portion of their student loans waived (Ed.gov, 2013) or forgiven. These schools must match criteria and are usually Title I schools or schools with students who have low socioeconomic status. Other factors include high proportions of free or reduced lunch status and a high mobility rate.

With factors such as forgiveness programs and competitive methods of hiring, attrition is still a factor affecting schools. One study found dissatisfaction with the conditions at their schools and lack of encouragement from administration were reasons teachers wanted to transfer to a new school (Alliance of Excellent Education, 2008). Even though teacher attrition has been studied in the past and there are many perspectives for why teachers leave the profession, one study suggested teacher attrition is “linked to relative factors including administrative support, staff relations, student behavior, and safety (Boyd et al., 2011, p. 304). Suber (2011) agreed that the factors mentioned above connect with reasons why teachers leave the profession. His study also provided perspective on the relationship between the principal and the classroom teacher.

A lack of information exists on the characteristics and qualities a principal exhibit when working with teachers and how this impacts whether teachers feel supported. Studies point out the importance of building relationships between the administration and teachers but do not clearly define qualities of a principal that are desired by the classroom teacher (Boyd et al. 2011). As a result, the leadership style and its effect on teacher attrition were examined. In order to further analyze leadership style and its effect on attrition within middle schools, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory was used. The LMX theory shows the relationship between teachers and school leaders within a middle

school setting and determined what factors contribute to teachers leaving their school earlier than retirement (Northouse, 2010).

Discovering how administrators influence teacher attrition could provide information to better serve the needs of building leaders and the teachers within their buildings. “Leadership is often characterized as one of the most extensively researched, yet least understood, phenomena of organizational behavior” (Hrivnak, 2009, p. 1). Past studies suggested there are connections between teacher retention and the role of the administrator. Boyd et al. (2011) found opinions of teachers show administrators have the greatest power over whether a teacher stays or leaves their position. Bolman and Deal (2008) explained that relationships can create the best atmosphere in an organization as well as the worst depending on how they are developed between the people. Therefore, relationships with principals are an important concept to consider when examining teacher attrition rates.

Statement of the Problem

The U.S. Department of Education’s mission is to “promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access” (Ed.gov, 2013, p. 1). With teachers leaving their classrooms quicker than experience can be gained, schools face a challenging task of filling positions with someone who has the same or more experience than the teacher who left. The lack of retention creates concern for the levels of achievement within schools due to the revolving door of teachers coming and going. It is one thing to transfer from one school to the other when teachers are given resources and curriculum to teach. On the other hand, some schools hire teachers and allow them to determine what to teach and how to

teach (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). This autonomy might seem like a good opportunity for a new teacher, but having no background experience can easily shift into a difficult situation to manage. When these problems occur, new teachers often feel as if they are in the wrong field. An administrator can empower a new teacher in this situation by providing him or her with the tools to become successful. If an administrator acts as though they are burdened by the additional assistance needed by the new teacher, the teacher may feel as though the job is not for them.

Recognizing characteristics of principals and how those characteristics affect teacher attrition may have a lasting impact on student achievement. Identifying principal qualities and determining whether those characteristics influence teacher attrition could provide opportunities for professional development. This opportunity could ultimately create a better environment for the organization thus providing a better environment for students to reach higher achievement. In addition to increasing teacher retention and student achievement, the building administrator is more likely to build relationships with other stakeholders including parents, business partners and community members.

“Teachers are needed to meet the classroom needs of disadvantaged children and the accountability standards of various states in particular, teachers are needed to narrow the achievement gap between high and low socioeconomic students” (Dill & Stafford, 2008, p. 1). If teachers are more inclined to stay in their schools for longer periods of time, student achievement might improve. As teachers leave the profession entirely or transfer to other schools, the quality of education for the students often decreases due to the inconsistent nature of the teaching (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study involved discovering factors within leader-subordinate relationships that may impact early teacher attrition. Specifically, the researcher looked at the relationship between the building administrator and middle school teacher. The study also looked for comparisons between the leader's perspective on leader-member exchange and the teacher's perspective of leader-member exchange. "High teacher turnover rates result in: a deficit of quality teachers and instruction; loss of continuity and commitment; and devotion of time, attention, and funds to recruitment rather than support" (Brown & Wynn, 2009, p. 37). Therefore, it is ideal for the building administrator to have an understanding of what their role is when considering teacher retention. The objective of this research was to discover characteristics of the building administrator and how those characteristics influence teachers to stay or leave their teaching assignment for reasons other than retirement.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding the study are:

1. When utilizing the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory to examine the relationship between leaders and subordinates at the middle school level, what factors exist that contribute to the attrition of middle school teachers?
2. What qualities do middle school teachers need from their principals in order to prevent attrition?

3. How do the phases of Leader-Member Exchange influence teacher attrition?
 - a. Phase One: Stranger
 - b. Phase Two: Acquaintance
 - c. Phase Three: Partnership

Conceptual Underpinnings for the Study

Studying how characteristics of principals impact teacher attrition can be analyzed using the human resource frame discussed by Bolman and Deal (2008). The human resource frame helped shape this case study by providing insight to organizations through the lens of people and how they work within organizations. The foundation of the human resource frame is people (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Leaders, specifically principals, should be doing as much as possible to keep highly trained, effective teachers in the classroom if it provides the best learning environment for the students. “Effective managers need multiple tools, the skill to use each, and the wisdom to match frames to situations” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 19). Knowing which principal characteristics encourage teachers to stay in their classrooms could help leaders reflect how their behaviors impact their teachers.

In addition to Bolman and Deal’s human resource frame on leadership, the research was guided by the Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX). This theory is centered on the interactions between the “leaders and the followers” (Northouse, 2010 p. 147). The goal was to discover how the leader-subordinate relationships impact teacher attrition within a middle school setting. Northouse (2010) commented on how LMX helped leadership work towards encouraging creativity in people by bringing the organization closer. It was also suggested that organizations who work to have quality

relationships with their employees often times see better productivity. Harris, Wheeler, and Kacmar (2009) stated how the leader-member exchange encourages job satisfaction, job performance, and fewer turnovers. When leaders form good working relationships with the members within their organization, the organization thrives (Northouse, 2010). Alongside LMX, Transformational Leadership (Northouse, 2010) was examined briefly. Relationships were considered a vital component to this study. With Transformational Leadership's focus on attaining a goal while considering emotions, values, and ethics, LMX, Transformational Leadership, and attrition were examined.

It is the responsibility of the leader to build relationships with all subordinates instead of just a few; this idea is termed leadership making (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991). If relationships are created with all stakeholders, people begin to feel accepted into the organization. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1991) suggested that leadership making “develops progressively over time in three phases: (1) the stranger phase, (2) the acquaintance phase, and (3) the mature partnership phase” (pp. 32-34). Several factors are evident in each phase. The stranger phase follows a more formal approach. Subordinates do as instructed and follow rules as indicated by the leader. Evolving from the stranger phase is the acquaintance phase. The leader and subordinates start working as a team. During the second phase of the cycle, they exchange information in order to reach their objectives but are not working as equals. The third and final phase is the mature or partnership phase. Within this relationship, the leader and subordinates are a team and are working towards the same goals. Support and loyalty are present from both leaders and subordinates (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991).

The purpose of the leader-member exchange is to allow leaders to be more attentive to their own behaviors while making sure employees' needs are met. Making sure employees' needs are met allow for an atmosphere where trust and loyalty can work together for a successful educational organization. An LMX survey may be provided to determine where the organization stands on relationships between the leader and the subordinates within an organization. Having a high leader-member exchange shows an organization that the leader has quality relationships with the employees. Having a low leader-member exchange results in a leader having a poor quality relationship with the organization's employees. These results may be found by providing a leader and the organization's employees a leader-member survey.

Using the Human Resource frame as the study's conceptual framework and the Leader-Member Exchange Theory to help shape the concept of the study, the researcher looked at five factors to help determine a reason for early attrition within middle school settings. The components which guided the research included information on teacher attrition, teacher satisfaction with educational career, teacher career characteristics, principal roles with teacher attrition, and information on the Leader-Member Exchange Theory. Harris et al. (2009) suggested a highly developed relationship benefits an organization based on evidence of satisfaction and retention.

Design and Methods

In order to answer the research questions, the design for this case study was developed using a mixed methods approach in design. Participants within this study included middle school teachers. The quantitative component was addressed using a Leader-Member Exchange survey. The survey determined how attrition was related to

leader-teacher exchanges. Results of the surveys were evaluated. Once the surveys were complete, the qualitative portion could be completed. The qualitative portion of this study included interviews with the teachers to determine which characteristics of middle school administrators prevent teacher attrition. The interviews also allowed the researcher to determine whether there was a preferred cycle within the leadership making phases of Leader-Member Exchange.

Assumptions

The following assumptions have been provided to better acknowledge what could be occurring without the study taking place. It was assumed that the role the principal had on middle school teacher attrition influenced the middle school teacher's desire to stay or leave the school. It was also assumed that the participants within this study will answer truthfully given that they will volunteer their time and their information will be kept confidential. The study was limited to only middle school teachers. Therefore, it was assumed that the only participants within this study would be teachers who teach grades sixth through eighth. It was assumed that the participants provided information based on all of their leader member experiences and not just their current experience.

Definitions of Key Terms

Defining key terms was added in order to help with the understanding of this case study. Some terms are defined based on the school district used throughout the study.

The following terms include:

Administration/Administrator. Individuals with this title include the building administrator(s). An administrator could include a principal or assistant principal. For

the purpose of this study, the researcher preferred the teacher participants focus their attention on the principal when answering questions.

Attrition. The term attrition refers to anyone in any profession who leaves due to retirement or other reason. For the purpose of this study, the researcher looked at the attrition of teachers in a middle school setting. Therefore, attrition includes teachers who retire, change schools, or leave the teaching profession.

Contract. A teacher contract includes the time of service a teacher is expected to work at a school within a specific district. This time spans the entire school year with the addition of a few days for teacher preparation.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). The Leader-Member Exchange is a leadership theory used to show the relationship between leaders of an organization and the leader's subordinates (Northouse, 2008). For the purpose of this study, the researcher considered the principal the leader and the teachers as subordinates.

LMX Phase One: Stranger Phase. Within the context of Leader-Member Exchange, phases are identified which a leader and subordinates go through while working in an organization. Within the first phase, stranger, subordinates do as they are told with no team work between the leader or subordinate (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991).

LMX Phase Two: Acquaintance Phase. Within the context of Leader-Member Exchange, phases are identified which a leader and subordinates go through while working in an organization. Within the second phase, acquaintance, subordinates and the leader start working as a team while accomplishing tasks. The subordinates and leader are not quite equal within the acquaintance phase (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991).

LMX Phase Three: Partnership Phase. Within the context of Leader-Member Exchange, phases are identified which a leader and subordinates go through while working in an organization. Within the third phase, partnership, subordinates and the leader work towards the same game and form a team. The group works as equal individuals (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991).

LQLMX. As stated in Kaiser, LQLMX stands for low quality Leader-Member Exchange based on the LMX 7 survey (Kaiser, 2010).

MQLMX. As stated in Kaiser, MQLMX stands for moderate quality Leader-Member Exchange based on the LMX 7 survey (Kaiser, 2010).

HQLMX. As stated in Kaiser, HQLMX stands for high quality Leader-Member Exchange based on the LMX 7 survey (Kaiser, 2010).

Middle School. This term refers to a school which serves the educational needs of students who are between elementary and high school. Grade levels vary between school districts. For the purposes of this paper, the middle school level is identified as grades sixth, seventh, and eighth grade.

NCLB. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was an act passed by federal government in 2001 to help reduce the achievement gap found in schools around the country (Ed.gov, 2013).

Qualtrics. Qualtrics was software which allowed a survey tool to be created and distributed to participants. Data are collected and are analyzed based on how the creator wants to use the information (Qualtrics, 2013).

Retention. This term referred to employees who stay within a particular organization for a given amount of time. For the purposes of his paper, retention refers to a teacher who continuously teaches at a particular school for at least three years.

Stakeholder. A stakeholder includes any individual who has an interest in an organization. For the purposes of this study, stakeholders include parents, teachers, administration, community members, students, and others who have interest in the organization.

Success. For the purposes of this paper, success was identified as students who have reached their grade level or beyond when tested. As a school, success is identified as having all students reach grade level or beyond. School districts work closely with state level representatives who determine whether a school is successful on different levels or not.

Tenure. Tenure refers to passing a certain length of time within an organization. Tenure in a PK-12 educational organization is identified by someone who has completed five years and has started on their sixth year of teaching within a district.

Transformational Leadership. Transformational leadership theory promotes change within an organization using inspiration and values to shape the needs of members within an organization to reach a goal (Northouse, 2010).

Significance of the Study

Investigating connections with middle school teachers and their building administrator's influence on attrition led to the unraveling of certain characteristics seen by the researcher. Once the characteristics are known, middle school administrators can take necessary steps to build better relationships with their teachers. As a result, the

attrition rate would decrease. In addition to increased teacher retention and improved student achievement, the building administrator also has the opportunity to build relationships with educational professionals in the feeder schools as well as the surrounding higher education facilities. Knowing how the principal influences the teachers within the building could also impact other stakeholders such as parents, community members and business partners. Once building administrators understand how they influence teacher attrition, steps could be taken to strengthen relationships between building administrators and teachers, thus creating higher retention.

The U.S. Alliance for Education (2008) stated that U.S. urban school districts spend approximately \$70,000 a year on teacher transfers. In addition, schools spend as much as \$8,750 when a teacher leaves a school district. As a country, we are spending approximately eight million dollars on teacher attrition. It is estimated that close to 157,000 teachers leave the education field every year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). It is stated that nearly 250,000 teachers change jobs in order to find better opportunities. With the numbers increasing, it is evident that the need to find a solution for teacher attrition is eminent.

Summary

In conclusion, there are currently no studies which document the influence the building administrator has on teacher attrition. With little research, leaders do not have clear guidance on how their behaviors and leadership characteristics effect whether teachers decide to stay or leave the education field. As a result, the attrition rate could be impacted by the role of the leader. With a third of teachers within their first three years

leaving to find better opportunities, education systems cannot afford to ignore the possibility of how principals are contributing to the attrition statistics.

In many cases, a teacher has a group of students for one year. During one year, a teacher has many roles including teaching, mentoring, instructional specialist, school leader, and many others (Harrison & Killion, 2007). When new teachers enter the profession, they must learn how to juggle all of these roles in addition to surviving their first few years as an instructor. If principals do not consider their own behaviors and leadership characteristics and the impact they have on teachers, the attrition statistic may increase.

Chapter Two will provide a literature review supporting evidence relating to teacher attrition and the lack of information as far as the role the principal plays on teacher attrition. Chapter Three includes a mixed design methodology using a qualitative and quantitative approach. The design allowed information to be gained and collected from teachers and principals to determine what leadership characteristics would encourage them to stay in their current school. Chapter Four includes interviews from middle school teachers as well as information from surveys from the teachers and principals. Chapter Five provides results from the interviews and surveys and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this review of literature, previous research imperative to the attrition of middle school teachers and the role the building administrator has on teacher attrition were examined. The related literature was organized into six primary areas including teacher attrition, teacher satisfaction, teacher characteristics, the role the principal has and how it affects teacher attrition, the leader-member exchange theory as it applied to principal-teacher relationships, and transformational leadership and its connection to leader-member exchange theory.

“Teachers do not enter the classrooms as finished products” (Black, 2004, p. 46). Instead of seeing teachers leave at the end of each year, leaders should find the reason for teachers looking for alternate teaching locations. In order to determine the causes of attrition, additional topics needed to be explored to gather an understanding of what roles principals have when teachers leave the education profession in situations other than retirement.

Evidence has been found linking high quality LMX relationships with subordinate satisfaction, performance, career outcomes, and retention (Hrivnak, 2009). When discussing relationships within organizations, “one side sees individuals as objects to be exploited by organizations. The opposing camp holds that the needs of individuals and organizations can be aligned, engaging people’s talent and energy while the enterprise profits” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 121). In order to determine the role the principal has

in middle school teacher attrition, subtopics were presented under each primary area to clarify literature that was significant to this study.

Teacher Attrition

Background

“Teachers cite lack of support and poor working conditions as primary factors” (Wiebke & Bardin, 2009, p. 34) for why teachers leave their positions early in their career. Darling-Hammond and Sykes (2003) found that approximately one third of teachers within their first few years of teaching leave the career. With the rate of teachers leaving the profession, building administrators should have an understanding of what causes teachers to leave prior to retirement. Attrition should not occur because of something that happens between the teacher and principal. In fact, building administrators should be doing everything possible to protect and keep effective teachers in the building. An effective teacher could be described as someone who is the best fit for students to be the most successful. Therefore, a teacher who is considered effective at one school may not be classified as effective at another school. Effective teachers are doing everything possible to do what is best for each student in the classroom. Administrators should be doing everything possible to keep effective individual teachers from leaving their schools.

“High teacher turnover rates result in (a) a deficit of quality teachers and instruction; (b) loss of continuity and commitment; and (c) the need to devote time, attention, and funds to recruitment versus support” (Brown & Schainker, 2008, p. 14). In addition to retirement, attrition provides information for building leaders who are interested in why teachers are leaving. Ingersoll and Smith (2004) stated that a teacher’s

ability to leave outweighs the reason to stay in the career. Some costs which outweigh the rewards of teaching middle school include higher salary in other professions, less stressful environments, and support provided by other employers. Peters and Pearce (2012) agreed, “Given the current climate of high levels of teacher attrition, it is critically important that we understand what keeps early teachers in the profession” (p. 249).

Additional studies suggested, “when given the opportunity, many teachers choose to leave schools serving large concentrations of poor, low performing and non-white students” (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2011, p. 303).

Educational leaders within buildings which serve low-income, low performing students should definitely have a system in place in order to retain effective teachers instead of seeing them leave for one reason or another. In 2000, a third of new teachers serving in their first year left at the end of that year to go to a new school (15% migration rate) or left altogether (14% attrition rate). (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2011).

Studies from Ingersoll, Smith, and Boyd (2004 & 2011) were completed to show why teachers were leaving. These studies suggested new teachers needed more preparatory or coaching opportunities. The lack of such programs drove newer teachers out of the profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Unfortunately, coaching opportunities helped slow attrition in some schools, but the rate of attrition continued to present a problem within middle school settings. Additional programs were brought into the schools to help with attrition. They were similar to coaching opportunities but different in their approach to how the teacher was helped. “Programs can vary widely from informal buddy systems in which mentors receive no compensation, training, or time

release to comprehensive, formal support provided by highly prepared mentors who are paid for their work” (Wiebke & Bardin, 2009, p. 34).

Characteristics of different schools may also create an environment where retention is a difficult reality. These features include free and reduced lunch rate, student mobility, number of referrals each year, the amount of parent involvement, type of support from administration and the type of special education services offered. Darling-Hammond (2003) agreed stating leaders with teachers who stay at a specific school are more likely due to a leader who creates a school environment where people feel like part of the family. Such qualities come from schools where the building administrator values a family-like feel within the building. Johnson and Birkeland (2003a) found “stayers were more typically employed by schools characterized by ‘integrated professional cultures’ that were “organized to engage teachers of all experience levels in collegial and collaborative efforts rather than schools organized around veteran- or novice-oriented activities” (p. 605).

Some middle schools have such high turnover rate among the student population where the actual amount of learning achieved becomes minimal due to the revolving number of students both entering in and leaving the school. Brown and Wynn (2009) explained that fluctuating student enrollment affects retaining qualified teachers. High mobility rates, the number of students leaving and entering the school, cause teachers to re-teach not only valuable content, but also rules and guidelines to follow in the classroom.

With educational budgets consistently being a topic of conversation within public schools, it was evident class sizes are becoming larger, increasing the number of teachers

is difficult, and job descriptions are becoming broader. Budget cuts have been a primary force for cutting the number of teachers within a building. Fewer teachers do the same amount of work. This reaction causes additional stress on teachers. With factors such as the budget and limited educators, leaders who understand how their leadership qualities influence the teacher's decision to stay at the school could be a factor for increased retention.

The decreasing budgets affect classroom sizes and add to the stressful day of the classroom teacher but it also prevents from certain individuals to help out the classroom teacher. Para-professionals are individuals who are placed in classrooms to help with students who have special educational needs and who may need more assistance. When budgets decrease, the ability to place para-professionals in a classroom also decrease. This can cause an atmosphere where the teacher feels isolated with little help from others within the building causing a reaction of wanting to leave to another building or leave the profession entirely (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008).

In addition to para-professionals being removed from the classroom from the budget, some buildings experience more behavior problems than other schools. Some teachers were trained to send students who exhibit poor behavior to the office each and every time. Other teachers were trained to manage behavior in a way to keep students in class for as long as possible. When the teacher sends a student to the administrator who provides consequences for misbehaving students, some teachers may feel isolated or without power if little to nothing happens to the student. Behavior problems such as these become reasons for teachers to want to leave certain schools as well (Brown & Schainker, 2008)

Kirby, Berends and Naftel (1999) found that certain teachers who taught a specific type of subject were more likely to leave due to the availability of finding jobs outside the field of education. Mathematic and scientific educators left more frequently than other subjects in their study. Although teaching was considered rewarding for individuals who enter into the profession, some get started and quickly realized the actual work in a lab or mathematic environment would be more productive than teaching in a classroom setting. Individuals who start a career in teaching want to inspire young individuals to do great things with their lives. With many middle schools around the country, teachers are not only trying to inspire students to do great things within certain fields but teachers also discover the need to teach morals, values, and information pertaining to different career choices.

The question is not why teachers are leaving, but what is causing them to leave. Brown and Wynn (2009) expressed the problem similar to a leak with no ability to fix the hole. Schools keep losing quality teachers but little attention is being spent on why. Several studies have been completed as to what causes attrition. However, few have been completed on the actual action performed by the administrators to help prevent teachers from leaving. One study found the effects of teachers who leave their positions but not necessarily what causes them to leave.

In one case study, a middle school principal was told by her superintendent that she had to do something about the number of teachers leaving her building. There was a history of teachers who left after one, two or three years in search of something different. The principal added different programs and changed parts of the teachers' schedules throughout the principalship. The middle school teacher attrition rate in her building was

still 30%. The principal believed she had done all the right things to find that what was done had not helped with the attrition rate (Brown & Schainker, 2009). In the study, the researcher did not explain any changes the principal had made with her own actions as a leader but only structural changes and subordinate changes.

In a different study, the researcher found the amount of money going into replacing the teachers who left to be quite large due to advertising, the hiring review process, paying for background checks, and completing orientations (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). Building administrators go through a serious amount of time and resources to hire highly qualified teachers. Once teachers are hired and in the building, administrators could build relationships to create a sense of family within the school community instead of assuming that all individuals will be able to do their job without teamwork.

In other research, a study found teachers to be influenced to stay at school locations when they were considered part of the culture and community of the school. Teachers were less likely to leave a school where they had support from their building administration. Teachers felt included and were more likely to stay if they were able to help with decision making and felt their voice would be heard from the administration (Ingersoll, 2001). Bolman and Deal (2008) stated, "Peak performance emerges as a team discovers its soul." School administrators should know what is going on in their building. Items such as budget, information pertaining to data, and the needs of the people are just a few. When leaders ignore the people aspect of the organization, a culture is not maintained (Bolman & Deal, 2008). When teachers are not part of a culture

or family within their place of work, it can sometimes lead to the mentality that he or she is isolated and not part of a bigger picture leading to a possibility of early attrition.

In conclusion, many researchers have found a missing link with teacher attrition over the last several years. Ingersoll (2001) found that approximately a third of teachers are unsatisfied with their educational career when their administration does not support the teachers. Examples of support may be when the teacher has an emergency at home and needs emotional support from their building administrator. Support can also exist inside the school involving other teachers who are on a team. If a teacher comes to a building administrator with concerns, the building administrator should find a way to support the individual.

Similar statistics were also presented in Wiebke and Bardin's (2009) study regarding teacher support which stated that by the time new teachers are done with their first year in their career, 33% are unsatisfied and decide to leave. The amount of time that has gone by throughout the two studies suggests the teacher attrition problem has been examined from different angles pertaining to changes that can be made on the teacher side. Little research was available for what could be done from the leadership side of trying to reduce the attrition problem in schools.

Many studies have been done to determine the patterns of teacher attrition. Kirby, Berends, and Naftel (1999) agree teachers are leaving for various reasons. School districts around the country are spending large sums of money on hiring teachers only to see them leave after a few years and budgets for education are not improving (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). Retaining quality teachers proposes a difficult realization

in education. A lack of research, however, exists on how the principal influences a teacher's decision to leave.

Teacher Satisfaction with Educational Career

Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs is important in an understanding of teacher satisfaction. The components of Maslow's hierarchy include physiological needs, safety needs, social or belonging needs, esteem needs, and self actualization needs (Bolman & Deal, 2008). "Needs energize and guide behavior and vary in potency at different times" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 123). Each need must be met in order to move on to the next level of the hierarchy according to Maslow (1954) and later stated in Bolman and Deal (2008). Therefore, in order to be satisfied, one must meet their physiological needs first, then their safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and finally their self-actualization needs.

Bolman and Deal (2008) stated, "Conditions or elements in the environment allow people to survive and grow" (p. 123). When conditions within an organization are conducive to satisfying the needs of the people within it, those individuals are more likely to be satisfied with their role within the organization. On the other hand, the school's environment and culture can lead to unsatisfied teachers. Stockard and Lehman (2004) found teachers who were in schools with more behavioral problems and less ability to have a voice with their administration were satisfied less than in schools where administrators provided the teachers with more support. Specifically, when the conditions within a school allow teachers to have their needs met, they most likely will be satisfied to the point of wanting to stay within their current school. Hord (1997) also found that factors within a school atmosphere such as satisfaction level are connected

deeply to how a leader builds connections with their staff. Being satisfied within an educational career can make the difference as to whether someone decides to get through the situation and stay or decides it is time to start looking for new and better opportunities.

Studies of middle school teachers have linked the amount of support from building administrators that result in job satisfaction. Support can take the form of building administrators listening to teachers and helping decide how to better educate students, involving job coaches and mentors, and building a sense of trust within the building. Wiebke and Bardin (2009) explained how “principal support is vital to maintaining credibility of mentors with their mentees and facilitating the time and resources needed to make mentors work” (p. 35) thus helping with the satisfaction of teachers with their career. Another study agreed and found similar results in their study saying teachers who receive support from their building administrators were happier and more likely to stay in the same school (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003b). One study found, “school administration plays a particularly important role in teachers’ career decisions” (Boyd et. al., 2011, p. 304). Therefore, leaders within schools are a vital piece to the success within middle schools and can impact whether teachers stay or leave.

Autonomy has also been linked to teacher satisfaction. Johnson noted teachers who have the ability to lead their classrooms with little guidance from their principals have a better chance of increasing the retention rate. Leading their own classrooms and having a voice with policy creation also allows teachers to have more satisfaction with their career (Johnson, 2006). In addition to policy making, “teachers are also more likely to stay in schools where they have the opportunity to contribute to school-wide decision

making—such as decisions about scheduling, selection of materials, and selection of professional development experiences” (Boyd et. al., 2011, p. 306). The educational factors lead to higher amounts of job satisfaction. Williams (2003) also found teachers to believe in the importance of building relationships with students, staff, and the principal; this was extremely relevant to “good teaching and job satisfaction” (p. 72).

Support from school leadership was the most influential factor for why teachers leave their schools (Boyd et. al., 2011). In fact, support from building administrators was ranked as the most important aspect of job influence decisions to leave teaching. In the same study, over 40% of both groups identified dissatisfaction with the building administrator as the most important factor (Boyd et. al., 2011). Johnson and Birkland (2003b) stated “respect and support from administration were key to a teacher’s satisfaction” (p. 23). Another study had similar results linking support from administrators as one of the most important factors to job satisfaction. Williams (2003) stated, “teachers were to be left alone to teach the way they want, to make decisions regarding their students and their classrooms, and to work with administrators who view them as experts in their subjects or grades” (p. 73).

A different study suggested decision making and including stakeholders, specifically teachers, were more likely to result in motivation which would then lead to job satisfaction (Somech, 2010). The “framework within the study (2010) showed how mediator components affected the outcomes of the teachers and the moderator components affected the strength of the relationships between teachers and others in the building” (p. 176). This study lead the researcher to understand the importance of including stakeholders in decision making and allowing everyone to feel connected to the

decisions that were made. The understanding of including stakeholders in decision making processes lead to increased job satisfaction.

“By fostering official and unofficial professional learning communities, principals can reduce teacher isolation; increase teacher responsibility and understanding; improve teacher satisfaction, morale, and commitment; and influence teacher retention” (Brown & Schainker, 2008, p. 14). The same study also explained the importance for building administrators to model high expectations with students in order to show the need for learning within the schools (Brown & Schainker, 2008).

In conclusion, past research stated teachers who are satisfied with their teaching positions are more likely to stay and continue teaching. Job satisfaction comes from many areas (Wong & Wong, 2004), but building administrators can make an impact of a teacher’s level of satisfaction similarly to student population, community of the school, and salary.

Teacher Characteristics

“New teachers need help. From day one, new teachers, largely on their own, are responsible for running a classroom and ensuring student learning, as well as fulfilling administrative requirements” (Wiebke & Bardin, 2009, p. 34). Characteristics presented by different types of teachers can be the determining factor as to whether one becomes successful or not especially if there is little to no help from the administration during the first few years on the job. One study found that teachers who serve in leadership roles themselves are less likely to leave due to their connection with other staff (Harrison & Killion, 2007). Such leadership roles include “being a resource provider, instructional specialist, curriculum specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school

leader, data coach, catalyst for change, and a learner” (Harrison & Killion, 2007, p.74).

With the ability to be a teacher with a leadership role, teachers have the capacity to be more autonomous. Teachers who are characterized by being leaders within the school are more likely going to stay in that particular school instead of leaving to find other opportunities.

In addition to leadership characteristics and finding a spot within the school’s culture, one study found the importance of coaching to assist in keeping teachers from burning out at a school (Whitlock, 2012). This study also reported that “twenty-five percent of teachers who are coached believed that getting feedback was the most effective component used by coaches” (Whitlock, 2012, p. 24). In addition, the study found coaching others was a characteristic found to be helpful with staying in the educational field.

Instead of looking at attrition and the teachers who leave a school to find better opportunities, one study did the opposite. Williams (2003) focused on determining what causes teachers to stay in the field of education. The researcher examined the role of 12 teachers within different districts in North Carolina. The teachers were identified by the leaders in the district as great teachers. All teachers had been teaching for approximately 15-20 years and had many years of experience. The teacher characteristics that were found in all of the teachers who were part of the study included being “introverted, confident, modest, boisterous, and soft-spoken” (Williams, 2003, p.71). On a more personal side, the researcher (2003) also found:

All teachers loved to laugh and have fun, ravenous learners whose minds are seldom idle, and they are determined, courageous, and resilient, and care so

deeply for their work... Teachers described teaching as a nonstop quest for novelty, variety, and new approaches- an art that offers endless opportunities for creativity and personal expression. (p. 72)

These teacher characteristics could help reduce the attrition rate among middle schools. The desire to continue to make changes to lessons offered to students allowed the learning to not become stagnant or predictable, allowing the teacher to stay alert while in the role of a teacher. In addition to not allowing their lessons to become stagnant, the teachers seemed to be flexible. As times change, so do the requirements and responsibilities of teachers within education. If teachers are satisfied with the idea that requirements will change and continue to be flexible, teachers will less likely become unsatisfied with their role in teaching students.

One study found that teachers who have certain teaching characteristics predict turnover. Some factors include absentee rate, preferred method of teaching, and number of years of teaching experience. In fact, turnover was higher among younger teachers within their first few years of teaching than teachers who had been teaching for a number of years (Boyd et. al., 2011). The idea of teaching in a classroom with thirty middle school students may seem overwhelming to many people. However, teachers who were able adapt to the classroom environment were also able to keep going, thus growing their educational career. Teachers who were unable to look beyond the initial impact of the classroom were unfortunately left to feel as though they picked the wrong career.

Williams (2003) stated the importance of autonomy as a link to attrition. "The work of teachers is both solitary and communal" (Williams, 2003, p. 72). If teachers are not confident about being in a room on their own with 20-30, possibly more students,

those teachers will have a difficult time committing to a career in education (Williams, 2003). Overcoming the intensity of that many students in one room can make the difference of whether a teacher becomes successful or not. Teachers who complete teacher preparatory training courses have an idea of what a classroom is all about. However, there are few if any courses that offer the ability to start a classroom from day one. Therefore, there is no way to determine how successful an individual teacher will be their first day let alone their first year. A new teacher must show their confidence from day one of their first year and then intertwine the other components such as knowledge, humor etc. (Williams, 2003).

Wong and Wong (2004) explained the stages a new teacher goes through when they start teaching on their own. They explained how all teachers go through four stages. Some teachers experience longer lengths of time at different stages, but none-the-less, all teachers experience all stages unless they leave the profession. The stages go in order of fantasy, survival, mastery, and impact (Wong & Wong, 2004). Teachers are sometimes stuck in one phase longer than others. Teachers who need additional support in the classroom might be having a hard time with the survival state. If teachers have a particularly tough group of students, surviving day to day may be the challenge. The difficult part for leaders to grasp is to try and get teachers to adapt and move on to the mastery stage of teaching. For some teachers, they stay in the survival stage the entire first year or longer. When teachers are surviving from one day to the next and it lasts for a length of time such as an entire school year, it has been suggested that teachers start looking for other opportunities (Wong & Wong, 2004).

Teacher characteristics do not stop with the four stages of teaching (Wong & Wong, 2004) or dealing with the difficult task of teaching. Teachers have many resources available for them to become successful. Research has been conducted on what tools are the best for teachers and when and how to use them. Jones (2007) provided copious amounts of examples and ideas for allowing teachers to become more successful in the classrooms. Teachers have to decide whether they will open up their availability to learn about such tools and adapt to the needs of their students. If teachers are determined on setting up their classrooms and teaching in specific ways only to find out they are not succeeding, these characteristics will lead them to an unsuccessful career (Jones, 2007). Several school districts around the United States spend large amounts of money on programs and resources for professional development. Teachers who are new to their career may find it difficult to try all of the different resources. Teachers who represent flexible characteristics are likely to try a number of teaching methods and get closer to the mastery level of teaching (Wong & Wong, 2004).

In summary, studies suggest teacher characteristics and qualities affect a decision for teachers to stay or leave their teaching profession. Stated by Wiebke and Bardin (2009), teachers who manage their own classrooms in ways where students have high expectations and teachers build quality relationships are more likely to build a mentality of staying in the field of education. Research suggests having the right tools in a classroom can help create an environment of success for new teachers (Jones, 2007). Therefore, teacher characteristics play a role in teacher attrition as well.

Principal Roles with Teacher Attrition

According to Beteille, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2012) the Obama Administration set aside billions of dollars in order to reinvest in school leadership. This was done to see growth academically and to help with the progress schools are trying to achieve throughout the country in order to become globally competitive. The study found that leadership in schools is an important factor in order to see success with student achievement (Beteille, Kalogrides and Loeb, 2012). With the amount of pressure on schools during this time of standardized testing, it is important to make sure principals and teachers are working hard to help teachers educate students to their fullest potential.

If building administrators are not fulfilling the role the teachers need in order to stay in the education profession, principals should find out what can be done to help with middle school teacher retention. “Relationships with principals influence teachers’ feelings of personal and professional wellbeing, with both negative and positive effects” (Peters & Pearce, 2012, p. 249). The study does not, however, explain how this occurs. Barth (2006) agreed the quality of relationships between the teachers and administrative staff shows a greater influence on student achievement than any other factor.

Another study suggested “Teacher perceptions of the school administration have by far the greatest influence on teacher retention decisions” (Boyd et. al., 2011, p. 303). The importance of finding out what the teacher and staff perceptions are within the building could help bring information to the principal as far as what is needed for the teachers to be successful at a particular school. Similar to the situational approach theory, principals must assume that different situations within educational organizations must use different approaches of leadership (Northouse, 2010).

“To be an effective leader requires that a person adapt his or her style to the demands of different situations” (Northouse, 2010, p. 89). Therefore, building administrators must know each and every individual in their building. In the study which found why great teachers are still in the profession, teachers constantly made changes to their teaching strategies in order to stay effective (Williams, 2003). It would be fair to suggest building administrators make changes to their leadership styles to help support their teachers and staff according to Situational Leadership (Northouse, 2010).

In a different study, the role of the principal was described by bringing the right people into the school to educate students. “Principals were strategic in choosing applicants who would support one another, who would work well together, and who would act as an extension of their family” (Brown & Wynn, 2003, p. 48). In this study, leaders believed their role would be mostly accomplished based on picking the right people and carrying out the mission of the school by how those individuals would fit with the existing staff. Little to no other impact was made. Other studies found that not only picking the right people made a difference, but helping those new hires along the way made a huge impact. “Principals’ support for mentoring and induction programs, particularly those related to collegial support, appears to play a prominent role in beginning teachers’ decisions to quit or remain on the job” (Brown & Schinker, 2008, p. 14).

According to Hord (1997), leaders who share their values and ideas with the staff have a greater capability of connecting the student’s success back to the teacher’s ability to educate and lead within their classrooms. In a study building administrators stated, “Being an advocate, protector, and mentor are important as is talking with new teachers

regularly, visiting their classrooms often, and being visible” (Brown & Wynn, 2003, p. 51). It was extremely important for leaders to share their ideas with teachers in order for everyone to be on the same page. “Support means a lot of different things; discipline, organization, affirmation, resources, curriculum, instruction; everything you do as a principal, falls under the umbrella of support” (Brown & Wynn, 2003, p. 51). The power of sharing values and the many other components of education allowed for teachers to feel supported.

Brown and Wynn (2003) found when they asked principals why teachers left their schools, many of the teachers explained the reason to be a lack of support. “Supportive conditions determine when, where, and how the staff regularly comes together as a unit to do the learning, decision making, problem solving and creative work” (Brown & Wynn, 2003, p. 53). One principal explained, “Principals need to bend, mold, and twist in whatever direction is needed for the circumstances at the time” (Brown & Wynn, 2003, p. 54). In the same study, principals mentioned the importance of “establishing relationships, of building community, and of instilling confidence through honesty, fairness, and consistency” (Brown & Wynn, 2003, p. 55). The attitude of bending to meet the needs of the teachers and staff also connects with situational leadership and the importance of making sure leadership changes to meet the needs of the educational community.

Supportive leadership of principals has been identified as one of the necessary human resources for restructuring staff into school-based professional communities (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Hord (1997) suggested a leader should not lead a school by themselves, but they should share the responsibility with the school’s teachers. Hord’s

mentality of sharing the leadership intertwines the idea that all individuals can have a voice and share the mission within a building. This brings out the voice in all individuals. Brown and Wynn (2003) agreed that the importance of involving teachers in day to day decision making creates an atmosphere of trust and a sense of accountability on the leader side of the organization.

In addition to sharing the leadership with the entire building as mentioned by Hord (1997), a shared leadership also builds a stronger culture in the community of the school. Being a culture also involves learning as a group and being flexible to every group of students who enter the building each year. Marquardt (2011) discussed the importance of staying active in the learning process by reflecting on what has happened and making changes to different aspects of the organization. Supportive leaders should be flexible similarly to the teachers in order to do what is best for the students.

“The conditions and resources needed to support new teachers in their continuous learning, growth, and professional development include shared decision making on substantive issues, collaborative work with others to reach shared goals, and expanded teacher leadership capacity” (Brown & Schinker, 2008, p. 14). Leaders who create a family of teachers who can trust each other to do their part in the classroom allows for an educational environment to be more conducive for teachers who wish to stay in specific schools (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Administrative support can assume a variety of forms—ranging from providing teachers with professional development opportunities to protecting them from district office mandates (Boyd et. al., 2011). In one study, “teachers felt unsupported when administrators were inconsistent with discipline for students” (Whitlock, 2012, p. 69). This led to teachers not trusting their leaders. In turn,

teachers felt the need to find a school where trust was an important factor. In a different study teachers said, “Effective principals value these teachers as individuals, take seriously and support their ideas for innovations, and trust them to do their jobs conscientiously without a great deal of oversight” (Williams, 2003, p. 74).

The characteristics of a leader impact the attitudes and perspectives of the teachers and staff within an educational organization. Based on prior research, teachers want a relationship with their leaders. Williams (2003), Whitlock (2012), and Boyd et. al. (2011) suggested this could be achieved when the principal incorporated trust, the willingness to provide autonomy, and support on multiple levels.

In conclusion, several studies suggest building administrators support their staff in various ways. Brown and Schainker (2008), stated support from building administrators is vital in teacher retention. Weibke and Bardin (2009), agree the importance of support for classroom teachers is encouraged in order to see teachers stay within a particular school.

Leader-Member Exchange Theory

LMX Theory Background

Leadership can be one of the most dynamic factors within an organization. Hrivnak (2009) believed the relationship between the leader and the follower was the most important aspect to an organization’s success. “Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) posits that leaders develop individual relationships with their direct reports rather than using average leadership styles of behaving in the same manner to each” (Kaiser, 2010, p. 1). The Leader-Member Exchange is a leadership theory used to show the relationship between leaders of an organization and the leader’s subordinates (Northouse, 2008).

“Leadership as a relational process can be more fully appreciated by understanding how these relationships develop, the differences that emerge within these relationships, and how these effects extend beyond direct dyadic relationships to more complex, indirect social configurations” (Hrivnak, 2009, p. 1). LMX has several phases and relationship components. The development of leader-member exchange has changed during the last few decades (Kaiser, 2010). Research has provided information that support from the building administrator within the school can make a difference in whether a teacher decides to leave or stay (Peters & Pearce, 2012). Surveying teachers using leader-member exchange surveys would allow educational leaders to dig deep into the understanding of their role in the attrition of middle school teachers.

In-group/Out-group

Northouse (2008) explained the group mentality of Leader-Member Exchange as an in-group or out-group possibility when working in organizational teams. Hrivnak (2009) noted the leader and follower relationship is based on groups within the organization. The groups were referred to as in-group and out-group relationships. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) based the individuals who were considered part of the in-group as those who were able to help make decisions for the organization. Those considered part of the out-group were not part of the decision making team and were often times left with little help from the leader. Kaiser (2010) found that the in-group and out-group approach to leadership often leads individuals within an organization to build better relationships with their leaders.

“The in-group receives more autonomy, feedback, and support, while enjoying a relationship of mutual trust” from the leader (Kaiser, 2010, p. 7). Hrivnak (2009) found

that the individuals within an in-group will have more responsibility and say in decision making. The out-group is made up of a relationship where rules influence the work to be done instead of self directed professional judgment as in the in-group (Kaiser, 2010). Hrivnak (2009) stated, “Relationships with out-groups, or low LMX, members are generally characterized as being more formal and based on economic change” (p.7). Kaiser (2010) also noted that the relationship between a leader and a member within the organization is made as soon as five days are spent between the individuals. Kaiser explained that “not all individuals within an organization will want to be in the in-group as some prefer to have less supervisory interaction” and remain in the out-group (Kaiser, 2010, p. 21).

LMX Phases

During Leader-Member Exchange, the leader develops different types of relationships with the individuals or subordinates, within an organization. Northouse (2008) stated three phases within LMX relationships: stranger, acquaintance, and the partnership phase. The Leader-Member Exchange perspective recognizes that leadership is embedded within social relationships (Hrivnak, 2009). Within the context of Leader-Member Exchange, phases are identified as leaders and subordinates relationships’ progress within the organization relationship.

Within the first phase, the stranger phase, subordinates do as they are told with no team work between the leader and subordinate (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991). Kaiser (2010) stated that leaders initially are “strangers within a transactional relationship, that there is no reciprocity and interactions are contractual” (p. 20). At the beginning of a relationship between a leader and member of the organization, low quality relationships (LQLMX)

exist (Kaiser, 2010). Within the second phase, the acquaintance phase, subordinates and the leader start working as a team while accomplishing tasks. The subordinates and leader are not quite equal within the acquaintance phase (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991). The acquaintance phase begins when the leader or subordinate propose improving the relationship. After the proposal, equality begins when information is shared (Kaiser, 2010). The second LMX phase exhibits a moderate level of quality (MQLMX) between the building administrator and subordinates within an organization. Within the third phase, the partnership phase, subordinates and the leader work towards the same goal and form a team. The group works as equal individuals (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991). During this third phase of leader-member exchange, the building administrator and subordinates contribute at a partnership level. There is trust and allegiance between the leader and subordinates (Kaiser, 2010). Once the building administrator and subordinates reach this level of interaction, the highest quality of leader-member (HQLMX) exchange has been reached. “Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory stands out for its focus on the dyadic relationship central to the structure of most modern organizations” (Hrivnak, 2009, p. 2).

Transformational Leadership and Leader-Member Exchange

Building the highest quality of leader-member exchange allows for a leader to go through a transformational change in leadership. Kaiser (2010) stated that the Transformational Leadership theory exists when there is a high quality relationship between the leader and member. Northouse (2010) stated:

Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. It includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as

human beings. Transformational leadership involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them. It is a process that often incorporates charismatic and visionary leadership. (p. 171)

Transformational Leadership allows a leader to go through a process of connecting with subordinates. Relating to members within an organization allows for a leader to evolve through the phases of the Leader-Member Exchange: starting with stranger, transferring to acquaintance, and then hopefully ending with a partnership between the leader and member of the organization.

Summary

When attempting to create an organization filled with lasting stakeholders, a trusting community who feels the culture of the building is a positive retreat, a building administrator may have to develop a transformation. Kotter (2012) suggested developing a sense of urgency whenever change is needed. “By far the biggest mistake people make when trying to change organizations is to plunge ahead without establishing a high enough sense of urgency in fellow managers and employees” (p.4). In organizations such as schools, the need exists to develop a way to keep teachers from leaving the profession. With a third of teachers leaving their career shortly after their first year, the urgency to determine what building administrators can do to help reduce the exiting strategy for teachers exists.

Looking at the background of attrition in education, teacher satisfaction, teaching characteristics, the principal’s role in educational leadership, and the leader-member exchange theory provided insight to the study being addressed. Allowing the researcher

to make connections between the leader and members within the organization as to how their relationship connects with attrition will help allow leaders to make decisions on what is best for the individual and hopefully allow teachers to become stronger educators. “Organizations need people (for their energy, effort, and talent), and people need organizations (for the many intrinsic and extrinsic rewards they offer” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 137). A balanced effort from the leader (building administrator) and the subordinate (teacher) provides an atmosphere where the client (student and stakeholders) benefits.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

“*No Child Left Behind*” (*NCLB*) was introduced into public school systems in order to close the achievement gap of students (Ed.gov, 2013). In order to meet the needs of the federal *NCLB Act*, districts are in need of hiring qualified teachers and retaining them over longer periods of time (Dill & Stafford, 2008). Unfortunately, teachers are leaving quicker than schools can hold onto them. In 2008, Alliance for Education believed that the inability to determine what causes teachers to leave prior to retirement generates the dilemma of not being able to educate students to their highest potential. More importantly, as the current teachers get ready to retire, fewer qualified teachers will be available to take their place (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). Therefore, building administrators within middle schools must be aware of how their role as a leader impacts teacher attrition within their schools in order to help improve the retention rate, thus helping provide better education to students.

An analysis was completed on the perspectives of leadership of middle school teachers and how the Leader-Member Exchange phases influence teacher attrition. Bolman and Deal (2008) stated “organizations exist to serve human needs rather than the converse” (p. 122). For this reason, it is imperative that principals determine how their role as the leader within a middle school impacts teachers’ decisions to transfer, switch jobs, or retire. Thus, the principal’s role on teacher attrition was explored.

Purpose

The purpose of this mixed methods case study was to discover what role middle school building administrators have on teacher attrition. By analyzing the expectations middle school teachers have on their building administrators, the researcher hoped to find a relationship between the leader and the teacher in relation to attrition. The research questions assisted the researcher in discovering how the relationship between the building administrator and teacher influences attrition, the qualities teachers prefer in building administrators, and how the phases of Leader-Member Exchange theory affect the desire for a teacher to stay at a particular school.

Research Questions

Within the context of this study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. When utilizing the Leader-Member Exchange theory to examine the relationship between leaders and subordinates at the middle school level, what factors contribute to the attrition of middle school teachers?
2. What qualities do middle school teachers need from their principals in order to prevent attrition?
3. How do the phases of Leader-Member Exchange influence teacher attrition?
 - a. Phase One: Stranger
 - b. Phase Two: Acquaintance
 - c. Phase Three: Partnership

Design of the Study

In order to address the research questions, a mixed methods approach to gathering data was used. This study was designed around a case study. “Case studies are a strategy

of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (Creswell, 2009, p.13). The study included a school district in southwest Missouri. The district offers educational services to approximately 24,000 students. Educational facilities within the district include 5 high schools, 9 middle schools, and 38 elementary/intermediate schools. Comparatively, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reported 286 middle schools in the state of Missouri (DESE, 2014). Each building has approximately 50 teachers. In addition, the district also offers educational support including 9 alternative programs for behavior support, gifted education, and other specialty programs. Within the middle schools, there were approximately 5,000 middle school students and approximately 180 middle school teachers. Middle school was the primary focus for the data set. Various data collecting tools were used in order to fulfill the data requirement. The surveys and interviews were analyzed in order to explore the relationships of building administrators and teachers within different middle school settings.

Participants and Sampling Procedures

The research focused on early attrition of middle school teachers. Consequently, middle school teachers were asked to participate in order for data to be gathered. A letter was sent to the principals of nine middle schools within a large accredited school district in southwest Missouri and asked for participation in the study (see Appendix A). The letter to the principal included a link allowing the principal to select whether they wanted the teachers within their building to participate or not participate in the study. The option to participate was uploaded into Qualtrics, a software program which stores data. Once permission was granted from the principals of each school, a letter was sent through

email to every teacher in each school asking for volunteers to participate in the study (see Appendix B).

Teachers surveyed. After the middle school principals approved the research, middle school teachers were sent an email describing the research. Therefore, approximately 180 teachers were provided an opportunity to participate in the study. The teachers for this study included any certified individual who was classified as a full-time or part-time teacher. Paraprofessionals and support staff were not provided the research information for the study. The letter sent to each teacher included a link directing teacher participants to the informed consent (Appendix C). Once teachers provided consent, they were directed to a series of survey items which would continue depending on their answer choice (Appendix D). The information provided by the teachers was stored in the Qualtrics database.

Teachers interviewed. The last question of the survey asked if participants would take part in an interview conducted by the researcher. The interview portion of the study would allow the researcher to obtain a clear picture of how the building administration influenced a teacher's decision to stay or leave their teaching position. This portion of the survey allowed for a participant to select yes or no. If the participant said they would not like to participate in the interview portion of the study, a final prompt would thank each teacher for their time and exit the survey (See Appendix D). If a participant clicked yes, they would be asked to provide a contact name and email. The participant's contact information would be gathered within the Qualtrics program. The researcher would make contact with participants in order to gather additional information if they indicated their desire to participate in the interview portion of the study. It was the goal of the

researcher to obtain ten participants to interview in order to gain a richer understanding of the teacher's perspective on their reasons for leaving a specific educational setting.

Data Collection

In order to complete the research for discovering the influence building administrators have on teacher attrition in middle school settings, different methods of data collection were used. After informed consents were provided and teachers provided consent, the teacher participants were prompted with a Leader-Member Exchange survey, an item regarding attrition, and an item regarding the participant's desire to leave their teaching position or stay. Prior to seeing the survey items, teacher participants were given the opportunity to decline their participation in the study. They were thanked for their time and the window would close.

Each participant started the survey with an LMX 7 survey (see Appendix D). The survey included an additional item acknowledging teacher attrition. The combination of questions provided data to explain the influence the building administrator has on teacher attrition. Once participants reached the end of the Leader-Member Exchange survey items and attrition item, each participant was asked the question, "Have you in the past or currently, wanted to leave your middle school teaching position because of the building administration?" (See Appendix D). The item allowed the researcher to determine whether a teacher participant had the desire to leave a middle school based on the decisions made by the building administration throughout their teaching career. If the teacher chose no, indicating they had never wanted to leave their position, that participant would be thanked for their time and the window would close. If the participant selected yes, they would be asked a final question.

Each teacher participant who indicated they would seek other teaching positions due to their middle school building administrator would be asked if they would participate in an interview. If teacher participants indicated they would not want to participate, they were thanked for their time and the survey was complete. If teacher participants indicated they wanted to participate in an interview, they were prompted to provide their name and contact information in email or phone format (See Appendix D).

If teacher participants agreed to participate in the interview, an interview protocol was used to ensure consistency in the data collection (Appendix E) during a time when both the researcher and participant agreed. The information provided by the participants was automatically entered into Qualtrics and kept confidential. The researcher would have no knowledge of what the participants stated during their surveys.

Data collection procedures. For the purposes of this study, the completion of the process of an Institutional Review Board (IRB) through the University of Missouri was required. Once the university IRB process was completed and approved, a research request was provided to the district. After the district approved the research request, the researcher had to ask permission (gate-keeper) from the nine individual middle school principals requesting teacher participation (see Appendix A) and then the teachers (see Appendix B) would be able to participate if desired.

Survey process. Once all of the requests for research were submitted and approved, the researcher was able to start gathering data from the teacher participants. The middle school principals were emailed a letter to seek approval for their teachers to participate (Appendix A). The teachers were then sent a letter stating the purpose of the study (Appendix B). Teachers could proceed with the study by indicating through an

item provided on the email they gave consent to participating in the study using a link at the bottom of the email (Appendix C). The informed consent provided a detailed explanation of what participants would be doing to participate in the study. Each teacher participant was advised they could discontinue their involvement in the study at any time. The acknowledgement of consent would then allow teacher participants to start answering questions about the study (Appendix D).

After the survey was completed, teacher participants were asked if they wanted to continue with their involvement in the study by participating in an interview (Appendix E). The interview protocol allowed the researcher to answer the second and third research questions. Participants were given an information sheet regarding the LMX phases (see Appendix G) in order to assist with their knowledge of the Leader-Member Exchange theory phases.

Interview process. During the process of the interviews, the researcher used semi-structured formal interview procedures in order to maintain control of the interview but also allowed participants to lead into other topics which could become valuable within the goals of the study (Hatch, 2002). Teacher participants indicated during the survey whether they wished to participate in the interview portion of the study. Once participants gave their contact information, the researcher made contact with each participant and set up an appointment time. During the set time, participants were asked questions using an interview protocol (see Appendix E). At the beginning of each interview, teacher participants were reminded they could remove themselves from the study at any time during the interview. Each participant was given a copy of the interview questions (Appendix E).

Human subjects protection and other ethical considerations. It is extremely important to uphold a professional and safe atmosphere for the participants. When performing research on human subjects, educational institutions expect a course on social and behavioral research to be completed (CITI, 2013). This course is offered through Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative or CITI and is connected to the university where the researcher attends. The course includes a series of web instructions followed by quizzes to insure accurate knowledge of all components. CITI provides researchers with information on what is ethically acceptable in research situations as well as what is not.

After completion of the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative, information regarding the study was presented to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board (Campus IRB) ensures all human subject research follows federal regulation of the Department of Health and Human Services, Food and Drug Administration, State and Local Laws and Campus IRB policies and procedures (University of Missouri IRB, 2013). After the review board reads each research study, the decision is made whether the research can begin or if changes need to be made in order to protect the participants.

Consequently, research using human subjects must go through a lengthy process in order to begin. Even after an IRB approval is given, school districts must also approve research. Once all of the approvals have been provided, all guidelines must be adhered to in order to stay compliant with the IRB federal regulations. The process is thorough, but it is greatly needed in order to protect the rights of individuals who participate in research.

Research began after approvals are granted with finding participants and gaining permission by explaining informed consents. The informed consent (see Appendix C) included any risk associated with participating in the study, information provided to the participant about their ability to terminate their inclusion in the study at any time, and also provided contacts for the researcher and researcher's advisor. It was the full intent for the participants to feel safe, respected, and able to voluntarily leave the study at any time. The IRB process provides a sense of security for all participants and the researcher.

Data Analysis

The survey items each participant was given allowed the researcher to answer research question one, "When utilizing the Leader-Member Exchange theory to examine the relationship between leaders and subordinates at the middle school level, what factors contribute to the attrition of middle school teachers?" The researcher gathered data from the participant interviews to answer research question two, "What qualities do middle school teachers need from their principals in order to prevent attrition?" The third research question, "How do the phases of Leader-Member Exchange (Stranger, Acquaintance, and Partnership) influence teacher attrition?" was also answered using the interview questions.

Quantitative analysis. The quantitative portion of the study was gathered using the survey results provided by the middle school teacher participants. The survey included items asking whether teachers desired to leave a teaching position based on their building administration and then asked questions about attrition and relationships based on the Leader-Member Exchange theory. The LMX survey contained 7 response items utilizing a 5-point Likert scale. The highest a teacher participant could score was a score

of 35. Teacher participants who scored at the higher end of the 5-point Likert scale had a positive relationship with their building administration. Those who scored at the lower end of the 5-point Likert scale had a negative relationship with their building administration (Northouse, 2008). A mean and standard deviation for LMX total scores were calculated to provide descriptive analysis for LMX data.

After the middle school teacher participants answered the LMX survey, they would be asked to answer an item regarding attrition (Appendix D). The sum of the LMX survey (Items 1-7) would be analyzed in response to the attrition items to determine if there was a connection between the relationships of the building administration and the middle school teacher's decision to leave their teaching position. In order to determine the "strength of the relationship" between the LMX survey and the attrition survey item, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used (Field, 2009, p. 179). The researcher used a "one-tailed test due to the directional hypothesis" (Field, 2009, p. 176); the better relationship a teacher has with their building administrator, the less likely they will leave their teaching position. The two variables being used in the analysis included the teacher participant's score (from Items 1-7) on the LMX survey and their answer on the attrition survey item (Item 8). In addition to the correlation analysis, the frequency and percentages of responses will be provided for Item 8.

Qualitative analysis. The purpose of the interview was to gain a depth and breadth of understanding and see a deeper understanding of the connection between attrition of middle school teachers and what influence the building administrator has on a teacher leaving. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Studies suggested using

different methods for analyzing interviews including transcription, coding, and triangulation (Hatch, 2002).

After each interview, transcription was completed along with coding and triangulation with the intention of finding a common theme among participants. The common themes discovered throughout the data collection process showed what components of the leader-member relationship were most important in order to retain teachers within a middle school setting. This process helped the researcher discover the qualities a middle school teacher would desire from their building administrator to prevent teacher attrition. The researcher used interview Items 4, 5, 6, and 7 to answer research question two. The interview process helped the researcher discover which phases impacted teacher attrition the most by analyzing interview items 10 through 15, which provided feedback to research question three.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is one in which information was facilitated into a useable format. This will occur once the participants provide their perspective on relationships between teachers and the principal. Semi-structured interviews and a Leader-Member Exchange survey were given to participants. Throughout this time, the researcher hoped to gain information to identify certain leader characteristics and qualities of leadership that impacted whether a teacher chose to leave a school, district, or the field of education.

The researcher has taught in a middle school for five years. Throughout the five year time frame, the researcher has experienced four principals. In the five year time period, the researcher has seen people stay in their teaching positions as well as leave for

various reasons. Some teachers left for retirement while others left to transfer schools at the end of the contract year. A teacher contract suggests a teacher stay at the school where the contract was signed until the end of the school year. In many cases, this time frame is from August through May or June. The researcher has witnessed, on several accounts, teachers who have left in the middle of a contract year in order to leave the profession entirely or seek better opportunities. The bias of the researcher included the perspective that relationships between the teacher and the principal impact whether a teacher will stay or leave a school.

Trustworthiness

The researcher believed that in order to gain a clear picture of evidence to support the case study, all ramifications must be handled in an ethical and responsible way. Information provided by the participants was kept confidential and used in a manner to answer the research questions. Information was gathered from thirty different teachers and their principals. This allowed the researcher to collect the most unobtrusive data (Hatch, 2002).

To ensure validity of the data and study, interpretations of data were made based on the themes that arose throughout the transcripts of the interviews. “Triangulating unobtrusive data with data from other sources is one way to improve confidence in reporting findings based on such information” (Hatch, 2002, p. 121). Data from the interview participants will be labeled in such a way to eliminate the possibility of discovering who participated in the study. The LMX surveys will also be labeled in a way that is non-identifiable. As described by Hatch (2002), “developing and consistently using some kind of organizing or indexing system is very important” and will be used

throughout the study (p. 124). For the purpose of this study, the researcher organized the unobtrusive data by assigning numbers to each interview and survey. Information was categorized using Qualtrics. Therefore, the researcher did not have paper copies of data sets unsecured. In addition to secured data, every participant was required to provide consent.

Limitations and Assumptions

Limitations

The findings in this case study were subject to the following limitations. Due to the district's amount of recent turnover from advancement to retirement, not all participants considered their current placements when answering interview questions. Teacher participants were able to answer interview or survey questions based on any teaching position held while in the district. The researcher's current school will not be included in the study. The size of the study was limited to one district.

Assumptions

The following assumptions help guide the hypotheses the researcher believes will surface throughout this study. It is assumed the participants within this study will answer truthfully given that they will volunteer their time and their information will be kept confidential. The study was limited to only middle school teachers. Therefore, it is assumed the only participants within this study will be teachers who teach grades sixth through eighth. This prevents a large portion of the district from participating in the study. It is assumed the participants will provide information based on previous and current leader member experiences and not limit their answers to current experience. It is assumed certain characteristics and qualities found throughout the interviews will be

associated with the score on the LMX surveys. Based on information offered by Bolman and Deal, it is assumed the higher the Leader-Member Exchange survey score, the more relationship characteristics will surface throughout the interview.

Summary

A mixture of quantitative and qualitative procedures was developed for this study. An LMX survey was administered to middle school teachers in addition to a survey item regarding attrition throughout the different middle schools within the district in order to evaluate the Leader-Member Exchange between the principal and teacher. Additionally, interviews with middle school teachers were conducted to determine qualities and characteristics of principals and the influence they may have on attrition. The interviews also helped determine which LMX phase was more preferred in an educational setting.

Once the information was gathered from the participants, the interviews were transcribed, coded, and triangulated in an effort to ensure validity and reliability of the instruments used. The surveys were distributed to the teachers and were scored. In addition to discovering whether certain qualities and characteristics exist with high leader-member relationships, another objective was to determine how the cycle of the Leader-Member Exchange phases impacts teacher attrition. An analysis was completed to connect attrition to leadership relationships using a quantitative measurement. Interviews were conducted to determine what qualities strengthen the desire for teachers to stay in their teaching positions. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data was analyzed to determine the role the building administrator has on middle school teacher attrition.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DATA ANALYSIS

Purpose

Discovering how principals influence middle school teacher attrition is one way to perhaps make a difference in a student's success and achievement through their pursuit towards a college and/or career ready pathway. The term attrition refers to anyone in any profession who leaves due to retirement or other reason but does not include the act of being terminated from the position. This definition of attrition suggests teachers leave for various reasons including satisfaction factors such as salary, administration, resources, and location. Studies have shown how relationships between building principals and teachers provide a substantial piece of the satisfaction teachers have within their schools (Boyd et al., 2011). Studies have not however shown what characteristics or qualities are specifically desired among building principals from the perspective of the middle school teacher.

A successful student is one who is prepared to move towards the next year of education or ultimately be prepared to start their journey towards higher education or start their career. The U.S. Department of Education guides educators throughout the country to follow a unified goal for all educators to follow. The Department of Education (2013) promotes student achievement by making sure every student is ready for their next step whether that step is college, a career, or moving towards their next grade level. The level of achievement within schools becomes a concern when one out of every three new teachers leaves the profession (Alliance, 2008). Many people who have researched the

conditions of attrition are concerned for the achievement of students in the long run. Brown and Schainker (2008) presented their findings to show the impacts regarding the turnover rates and how they affect the quality of instruction and commitment towards the students.

Currently, there is no evaluation of middle school teacher attrition and the influence principals have on teachers leaving their schools. Discovering the influence principals have on middle school teacher attrition is important to improve the achievement of students. Therefore, the purpose of this research study is to discover the qualities and characteristics of principals which influence a teacher to be encouraged to transfer to a different school or leave the profession entirely.

Research Questions

A gap within research exists in determining what characteristics exist that may influence a teacher's decision to leave their school. This lack of research presents a challenge in the world of education and should be completed in order to determine an increase in middle school teacher retention. To ascertain information regarding the characteristics and qualities of building principals resulting in a teacher's decision to leave the school or the profession, the following research questions were explored:

1. When utilizing the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory to examine the relationship between leaders and subordinates at the middle school level, what factors exist that contribute to the attrition of middle school teachers?
2. What qualities do middle school teachers need from their principals in order to prevent attrition?

3. How do the phases of Leader-Member Exchange influence teacher attrition?
 - a. Phase One: Stranger
 - b. Phase Two: Acquaintance
 - c. Phase Three: Partnership

Research Methods

Fink (2009) stated, “Surveys are information-collection methods used to describe, compare, or explain individual and societal knowledge, feelings, values, preferences, and behavior” (p. 1). A survey to collect information from teacher participants was useful when determining the relationship between the middle school teacher and the principal. “Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory takes still another approach and conceptualizes leadership as a process that is centered on the interactions between leaders and followers” (Northouse, 2010, p. 147). In addition, Hatch stated, “Qualitative interviewers create a special kind of speech event during which they ask open-ended questions, and encourage informants to explain their unique perspectives on the issues at hand” (Hatch, 2002, p.23).

The purpose of the research was to discover how the principal influences a teacher’s decision to leave a school from the perspective of the teacher. Therefore, it was important to gather quantitative and qualitative data from the teachers. Each component allowed the researcher to create a vision of which characteristics influence a teacher’s decision to stay or leave a particular school setting. It is a case study designed to include a mixed methodology.

A convenience sample of middle school teachers was used in one Southwest Missouri school district. Each participant was asked to complete a survey and an

optional interview. The process of being approved by the district included providing the materials submitted to the University of Missouri IRB review board. All data collection tools were provided to the district. To increase the validity of gathering teacher perspectives on principal qualities and characteristics, only teachers who were categorized as 6-8 grade teachers were included for data collection. Para-professionals and teacher-aids were not asked to participate. Accessing the names and contact information for the teachers was gained using the district email server.

The mixed methods case study was limited to only one school district due to the need to receive cooperation from the district as well as each middle school principal. In addition to each principal, every teacher participant had to provide consent in order to participate. Once approval was granted, the researcher used a Leader-Member Exchange survey and attrition item and administered it to the middle school teachers using a link from Qualtrics. The information provided prior to the survey included an explanation of the purpose of the research. If teachers decided to participate in the survey, they were given the opportunity to provide consent. After approximately two weeks of collecting survey results, teachers were given the opportunity to participate in an optional interview. This was done at the convenience and location of the participant's choosing. Hatch (2002) believed formal interviews should be completed in a location which encourages the participant to feel safe and secure regarding information given in the interview.

Data Demographics and Analysis

The purpose of the study was to discover whether principals have an influence on a middle school teacher's decision to leave the school or profession. After permission was given by the Southwest Missouri school district to perform research, each of nine

principals was sent a request to complete the research in their school. Once the principal approved the research, an informational email was sent to each teacher. Approximately, 270 teachers were sent the request to participate in the survey portion of the study.

This chapter provides results from a total of 91 surveys completed by middle school teachers. The survey included two open response items which were connected to the attrition item. The first open response item, (8a), included 40 participants. The second open response item, (8b), included 57 participants. After the two week survey window, an additional email was dispersed to approximately 270 teachers asking for their participation in an interview. Eight participants provided consent to the interview. Each teacher who participated in the interview was coded with the name “PI-1, PI-2, PI-3, PI-4, PI-5, PI-6, PI-7, PI-8” as in Participant Interview-One. Each teacher who included information in open response item 8a was coded using “8a-1 and continued through 8a-40.” Each teacher who participated in 8b was coded using “8b-1 and continued through 8b-57.” Codes were given in order to protect the privacy and security of the participants who agreed to take place in the research.

The data collected from the teachers participating in the survey were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) with a Pearson’s correlation coefficient (Field, 2009) as well as a one-tailed test due to the directional hypothesis (Field, 2009). The researcher believed the directional hypothesis would be “The better relationship a teacher has with their building administrator, the less likely they will leave their teaching position.” The two variables used in the analysis included the teacher participant’s score (from Items 1-7) on the LMX survey and their answer on the attrition survey item (Item 8). In addition to the correlation analysis, the frequency and

percentages of responses were provided for Item 8. Together, the qualitative results from the survey and the information from the interviews were intended to provide rich data to assist in answering the research questions. The following sections describe the results for each research question and the chart provides guidance for the research question analysis.

Table 1

Organization of all Research Questions and Results

Research Questions	Survey Questions	Interview Items	Data Analysis
1 (LMX)	1-7	2-4	Frequency Analysis, Triangulation
1 (Attrition)	8	8	Pearson's Correlation, Directional Hypothesis, Triangulation
2 (Qualities)		5-9	Triangulation
3 (LMX Phases)		11-17	Triangulation

Data Results for Research Question One

The findings provided the following detail for data analysis for research question one. “When utilizing the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory to examine the relationship between leaders and subordinates at the middle school level, what factors exist that contribute to the attrition of middle school teachers?” This research question

answered the perspectives of teachers regarding the relationship between the principal and teacher using survey items 1-7 utilizing frequencies and a Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. Survey items 1-7 were combined and then compared to the attrition item (survey item 8). A one-tailed test was used to determine whether a directional hypothesis existed. The two variables being used in the analysis included the teacher participant's score (from Items 1-7) on the LMX survey and their answer on the attrition survey item (Item 8). In addition to the correlation analysis, the frequency and percentages of responses were provided for Item 8. Table 2 provides an outline for the analysis of research question one that will be discussed in the proceeding sections:

Table 2

Organization of Research Question One and Results

Research Questions	Survey Questions	Interview Questions	Data Analysis
1 (LMX)	1-7	2-4	Frequency Analysis, Triangulation
1 (Attrition)	8	8	Pearson's Correlation, Directional Hypothesis, Triangulation

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

Quantitative. Survey question one stated, “Do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?” and was analyzed for connections to research question one. Participants could select “(1) Rarely, (2) Occasionally, (3) Sometimes, (4) Fairly Often, (5) Very Often.” The frequency for the selected answers is represented in Table 3.

Table 3

Frequency of Survey Item One: “Do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?”

Likert Response	Frequency	Percent
Not a bit	4	4.4
A Little	22	24.2
A Fair Amount	25	27.5
Quite a Bit	29	31.9
A Great Deal	11	12.1
Total	91	100.0

Of 91 teacher participants who responded to the survey item, “Do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?” 56% of teachers answered a fair amount or less; 44% answered quite a bit or more. Using the Likert scale to calculate the results, “not a bit” would result in a one, “a little” would result in a two, “a fair amount” would result in a three, “quite a bit” would result in a four, and “a great deal” would result in a five. The higher each amount for each item leads to a higher score on the

LMX survey. The higher the score on an LMX survey, the greater the relationship between the leader and follower. In the case of this study, the leader was the principal and the follower was the teacher. Based on the responses a little over half of the teachers who responded to the survey did not feel as though they usually knew how satisfied their principal was with them as a teacher.

Survey question 2 states, “How well does your principal understand your job problems and needs?” and was analyzed for connections to research question 1. Participants could select, “(1) Not a bit, (2) A little, (3) A fair amount, (4) Quite a bit, (5) A great deal.” The frequency for the selected answers is represented in Table 4.

Table 4

Frequency of Survey Item Two: “How well does your principal understand your job problems and needs?”

Likert Response	Frequency	Percent
Not a bit	4	4.4
A Little	23	25.3
A Fair Amount	25	27.5
Quite a Bit	26	28.6
A Great Deal	13	14.3
Total	91	100.0

Of 91 teacher participants who responded to the survey item, “How well does your principal understand your job problems and needs?” 57.2% of teachers responded

with “A fair amount or less.” 42.1% of the teachers selected “Quite a bit or more.” Using Likert scale to calculate the results, “Not a bit” would result in a one, “A little” would result in a two, “A fair amount” would result in a three, “Quite a bit” would result in a four, and “A great deal” would result in a five. The higher each amount for each item leads to a higher score on the LMX survey. The higher the score on an LMX survey, the greater the relationship between the leader and follower. In the case of this study, the leader was the principal and the follower was the teacher. Based on the survey responses, over 50% of the teacher participants responded with a selection which indicated a poor relationship between the teacher and principal.

Survey question 3 states, “How well does your principal recognize your potential?” and was analyzed for connections to research question 1. Participants could select, “(1) Not at all, (2) A little, (3) Moderately, (4) Mostly, (5) Fully.” The frequency for the selected answered is represented in Table 5. Of 91 teacher participants who responded to the survey item, “How well does your principal recognize your potential?” 39.6% of teachers responded with “Moderately or less.” 60.5% of teachers responded with “Mostly or higher.” Using the Likert scale to calculate the results, “Not a bit” would result in a one, “A little” would result in a two, “Moderately” would result in a three, “Mostly” would result in a four, and “Fully” would result in a five. The higher each amount for each item leads to a higher score on the LMX survey. The higher the score on an LMX survey, the greater the relationship between the leader and follower. In the case of this study, the leader was the principal and the follower was the teacher. Over 50% of teacher participants selected a survey item indicated a positive relationship between the teacher and student.

Table 5

Frequency of Survey Item Three: “How well does your principal recognize your potential?”

Likert Response	Frequency	Percent
Not a bit	5	5.5
A Little	11	12.1
Moderately	20	22.0
Mostly	36	39.6
Fully	19	20.9
Total	91	100.0

Survey question 4 stated, “Regardless of how much formal authority your principal has built into his or her position, what are the chances your principal would use his or her power to help you solve problems in your work?” and was analyzed for connection to research question 1. Participants could select, “(1) None, (2) Small, (3) Moderate, (4) High, (5) Very High.” The frequency for the selected answers is represented in Table 6. Of 91 teacher participants who responded to the survey item, “Regardless of how much formal authority your principal has built into his or her position, what are the chance that your principal would use his or her power to help you solve problems in your work?” 40.7% of teachers selected moderately or less. 58.3% of teachers selected high or very high. Using the Likert scale to calculate the results, “None” would result in a one, “Small” would result in a two, “Moderately” would result

in a three, “High” would result in a four, and “Very high” would result in a five. The higher amount for each item leads to a higher score on the LMX survey. The higher the score on an LMX survey, the greater the relationship between the leader and follower. In the case of this study, the leader was the principal and the follower was the teacher. Of the 91 teacher participants, more than 50% of teachers believed their principal would bail them out in order to solve a problem. These selections indicate a positive relationship between the principal and teacher.

Table 6

Frequency of Survey Item Four: “Regardless of how much formal authority your principal has built into his or her position, what are the chances that your principal would use his or her power to help you solve problems in your work?”

Likert Response	Frequency	Percent
None	1.0	1.1
Small	18	19.8
Moderately	18	19.8
High	28	30.8
Very High	25	27.5
Total	90	98.9
Missing Item	1	1.1
Total	91	100.0

Survey question 5 stated, “Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your principal has, what are the chances he or she would “bail you out” at his or her expense?” and was analyzed for connection to research question 1. Participants could select, “(1) None, (2) Small, (3) Moderate, (4) High, (5) Very High.” The frequency for the selected answers is represented in Table 7.

Table 7

Frequency of Survey Item Five: “Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your principal has, what are the chances that he or she would “bail you out” at his or her expense?”

Likert Response	Frequency	Percent
None	9	9.9
Small	28	30.8
Moderate	31	34.1
High	20	22.0
Very High	2	2.2
Total	90	98.9
Missing Item	1	1.1
Total	91	100.0

Of 91 teacher participants who responded to the survey item, “Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your principal has, what are the chances that he or she would ‘Bail you out’ at his or her expense?” 74.8% of teachers selected “Moderate” or

less while 24.2% selected “High or Very High.” Using the Likert scale to calculate the results, “None” would result in a one, “Small” would result in a two, “Moderate” would result in a three, “High” would result in a four, and “Very High” would result in a five. The higher each amount for each item leads to a higher score on the LMX survey. The higher the score on an LMX survey, the greater the relationship between the leader and follower. In the case of this study, the leader was the principal and the follower was the teacher. With survey item five, “Small” was chosen more often than any other choices with “High” in close second as the most often chosen. More than 50% of teachers selected an item indicated a poor relationship between the teacher and principal.

Survey question 6 stated, “I have enough confidence in my principal that I would defend and justify his or her decision if he or she were not present to do so” and was analyzed for connection to research question 1. Participants could select, “(1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly Agree.” The frequency for the selected answers is represented in Table 8. Of 91 teacher participants who responded to the survey item, “I have enough confidence in my principal that I would defend and justify his or her decision if he or she were not present to do so.” 40.7% of teachers selected “Average” or less. 58.3% teachers selected Agree” or higher. Using the Likert scale to calculate the results, “Not a bit” would result in a one, “A little” would result in a two, “A fair amount” would result in a three, “Quite a bit” would result in a four, and “A great deal” would result in a five. The higher each amount for each item leads to a higher score on the LMX survey. The higher the score on an LMX survey, the greater the relationship between the leader and follower. In the case of this study, the leader was the

principal and the follower was the teacher. More than half of the teacher responses indicate a positive relationship between the teacher and the principal.

Table 8

Frequency of Survey Item Six: “I have enough confidence in my principal that I would defend and justify his or her decision if he or she were not present to do so.”

Likert Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	2	2.2
Disagree	5	5.5
Neutral	30	33.0
Agree	36	39.6
Strongly Agree	17	18.7
Total	90	98.9
Missing Item	1	1.1
Total	91	100.0

Survey question 7 stated, “How would you characterize your working relationship with your principal?” and was analyzed for connection to research question 1.

Participants could select “(1) Extremely Ineffective, (2) Worse than Average, (3) Average, (4) Better than Average, (5) Extremely Effective.” The frequency for the selected answers is represented in Table 9.

Table 9

Frequency of Survey Item Seven: “How would you characterize your working relationship with your principal?”

Likert Response	Frequency	Percent
Extremely Ineffective	2	2.2
Worse than Average	8	8.8
Average	35	38.5
Better than Average	33	36.3
Extremely Effective	12	13.2
Total	90	98.9
Missing Item	1	1.1
Total	91	100.0

Of 91 teacher participants who responded to the survey item, “How would you characterize your working relationship with your principal?” 49.5% of teachers selected “Average” or less. 49.5% of teachers selected “Better than Average” or higher. Using the Likert scale to calculate the results, “Extremely Ineffective” would result in a one, “Worse than Average” would result in a two, “Average” would result in a three, “Better than Average” would result in a four, and “Extremely Effective” would result in a five. The higher amount for each item leads to a higher score on the LMX survey. The higher the score on an LMX survey the greater the relationship between the leader and follower. In the case of this study, the leader was the principal and the follower was the teacher.

Responses from teacher participants indicated a split between positive and negative working relationships between the principal and teacher.

In addition to the frequencies described for each survey item, a score was calculated for the LMX-7 surveys. The higher the score the better quality the relationship is between the principal and teacher. The lower the score the less quality the relationship is between the principal and teacher. Table 10 represents the scores calculated from the 91 surveys.

Table 10

LMX-7 Survey Scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
LMX Score	90	1.57	4.86	3.38	0.81
Total	90				

Qualitative. Interview item 2 asked, “How long have you been teaching and how many principals have you worked for?” and was triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 1. Codes were used to protect the identity of the participants. PI-1 (Participant Interview-1) has worked for twenty years and taught for nine principals. PI-2 has taught for one year and has worked for one principal. PI-3 has taught for nine years and worked for four principals. PI-4 has taught for 13 years and has worked for six principals. PI-5 has taught for 12 years and worked for four different principals. PI-6 has taught for six years and worked for five principals. PI-7 has taught

for 30 years and has worked for 10 principals. PI-8 has taught for 23 years and worked for 10 principals.

Interview item 3 asked, “How would you describe your current principal’s leadership style?” and was triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 1. The teacher participants described many characteristics regarding their principal’s leadership style. PI-1 and PI-3 stated similar characteristics and explained how the teachers had autonomy. “My principal is pretty laid back and he lets you make your own decisions” (PI-1). “Our principal kind of leaves decisions up to the staff” (PI-3). Another participant explained how their principal was always, “Very aware of what was going on in a good way,” (PI-2). Participant four explained how their principal was “empowering” and how the principal made “everyone feel like professionals” (PI-4). Additionally, PI-5 stated how their principal was good at “encouraging and supporting the teacher.” PI-6 explained how their principal was hard to get to know because they were gone a lot but he does make decisions when he is in the building.” PI-7 stated how important personality is when being a principal and stated the “principal was visionary.” Finally, PI-8 expressed how their principal was approachable.”

Interview item 4 asked, “How would you describe previous principals you have worked for?” and was triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 1. The teacher participants explained many characteristics of previous principals. PI-1 explained previous principals as if they were on a continuum. Some of the principals were “loved by everyone because they made sure they were visible,” while others were “micromanagers.” Many other teacher participants stated previous principals were micro-managers as well. PI-5, PI-7, and PI-8 all stated previous principals were

micromanagers. “Not being supportive” was a characteristics described by PI-3, PI-4, PI-6, and PI-7. “I’ve worked for principals who would cover their own butt and not worry about the teachers in their building,” was expressed as being a characteristic of a previous principal.

Attrition

Quantitative. Survey question 8 stated, “The principal within your school has influenced your desire to transfer to a different school because you were dissatisfied” and was analyzed for connection to research question 1. Participants could select, “(1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly Agree.” The frequency for the selected answers is represented in Table 11.

Once individualized LMX scores were created using SPSS, a Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient was used. A one-tailed test was also used in testing the directional hypothesis; as the LMX score increases, the likelihood of a teacher wanting to leave would decrease. The results supported the hypothesis of an inverse relationship between LMX scores and attrition ($r = -.431$, $p < .001$; $N = 86$).

The Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient showed a significant moderate inverse. As the LMX score from the teacher participant increased, their likelihood of leaving early decreased. Similarly, the LMX score from the teacher participant decreased, the likelihood of the teacher wanting to leave increased.

Table 11

Frequency of Survey Item Eight: The Principal within your school has influenced your desire to transfer to a different school because you were dissatisfied.”

Likert Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	22	24.2
Disagree	13	14.3
Neutral	26	28.6
Agree	19	20.9
Strongly Agree	12	13.2
Total	86	94.5
Missing Item	5	5.5
Total	91	100.0

Qualitative. Survey item 8 included two open-ended opportunities for participants to expand on their answers. Participants who chose to answer within the optional text box were coded as S-1, S-2, and so on. Participants who are coded as S-21 on the 8a survey item are also coded as S-21 on 8b. Teacher responses were analyzed and placed into themes.

Teacher Retention. Survey item 8a stated, “Please describe qualities about your principal that influences your desire to leave your teaching position.” This information was triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 1. There were 40 responses from different participants who answered question 8a.

Listen. S-26 stated, “Leave me to my own devices and listen.” One participant stated, “Compliment my work and notice my hard work” as being reasons to stay (S-23). Participant S-18 explained listening to be the most important quality to retain teachers. Many participants also listed being a good listener as a top priority (S-1, S-10, S-28, S-34, and S-48).

Knowledge. Participant S-34 stated it was important for their principal to have an understanding of the curriculum as well as the demands of the classroom. Similarly, S-41 stated the knowledge of Common Core was extremely important and not having the knowledge would create a culture of desired teaching.

Supportive. S-16 and S-27 agreed “avoiding problems and confrontational issues” is something that would push each of them to search for new positions. PI-3 also suggested the need to feel supported. “A lack of loyalty to the people at the school would make me want to leave” (PI-4). S-19 stated they did not feel they were a “valued professional and would start searching for new positions as they became available.”

Approachable. S-14 explained they would leave if “their principal were unpleasant and negative.” Another participant explained, “Be approachable and seeing things from an educator’s perspective,” are reasons to stay in their current position (S-21). S-32 stated their principal must support and encourage me for people to stay at their school. “Being approachable” is a factor many teachers listed as an important quality for retaining teachers (S-40, S-42, S-50, and S-46).

Teacher Attrition. Survey item 8b stated, “Please describe qualities about your principal that influences your desire to stay at your teaching position.” This information

was triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 1. There were fifty-seven teachers who participated in the open response question.

Favoritism. “Show favoritism” was a factor that a few participants stated as being a reason they would decide to leave (S-23 and S-35). “Being treated unfairly, inferior, and not seeing different abilities would create a culture” where S-13 would leave their school.

Lack of Support. S-17 expressed they would leave their teaching position if their principal was “not visible and interaction with teams was low.” S-35 and S-46 had similar view points on the amount asked of teachers. Both expressed their “feeling of overwhelming amounts of duties and things to be done from day-to-day” and how the principal needs to understand. One of the most often expressed reason mentioned by participants included not having back up in the classroom (S-17, S-23, S-30, S-44, S-47, S-51, S-56, S-60, and S-61.) Participant S-5 stated, “I have no reason to stay in my building. If my principal would support me or back me up, I would stay.” PI-2 believed, “Not supporting your teachers and not having my back would be reasons for me to leave.”

Micromanagement. Another participant, S-21, stated they would leave if their principal was “dogmatic.” Interview item 8 asked, “What characteristics demonstrated by a principal would make you think you did not want to work in your current school?” PI-1 stated, “Their attitude towards running a school would make me want to leave. It is not a corporate business.” PI-6 explained their desire to leave would be if their principal changed their mind often. “Being a micro-manager and not giving feedback would be my reason to leave” (PI-7).

Summary for Research Question One

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected in order to answer research question one, “When utilizing the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory to examine the relationship between leaders and subordinates at the middle school level, what factors exist that contribute to the attrition of middle school teachers?” The Leader-Member Exchange Theory was analyzed using survey items 1-7 and interview items 2-4. Attrition was analyzed using survey item 8 and interview items 8 and 17. After comparing the quantitative and qualitative data, themes were discovered between a principal’s qualities and a teacher’s desire to leave their school.

The themes associated with teacher retention include “Listening, Knowledge, Support, and Approachable.” The themes associated with teacher attrition include “Favoritism, Lack of Support, and Micromanagement.” Each theme provides evidence from teacher participants to support what factors exist with contributing to the middle school teacher attrition.

In addition to the qualitative data collected from the interviews and open response items, the quantitative portion also provided evidence to support factors which contribute to middle school teacher attrition. The Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient showed the higher the relationship based on the LMX-7 survey, the lower the chance was of a teacher leaving.

Based on the research question, “When utilizing the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory to examine the relationship between leaders and subordinates at the middle school level, what factors exist that contribute to the attrition of middle school teachers?”, specific factors exist with contributing to the early attrition of middle school teachers.

Data Results for Research Question Two

The research suggested the following as research question two. What qualities do middle school teachers need from their principals in order to prevent attrition? This research question answered the perspectives of teachers regarding the qualities they perceive to be the most important in a principal-teacher relationship using interview items 5-9. The interview items were triangulated to search for consistent themes throughout the participant responses. The following table provides an outline for the analysis of research question one that will be discussed in the proceeding sections:

Table 12

Organization of Research Question Two and Results

Research Question	Interview Items	Data Analysis
2 (Retention)	5-7	Triangulation
2 (Attrition)	8-9	Triangulation

Retention

Information was gathered from interview items five, six, and seven in order to determine characteristics and qualities teachers prefer from their principals. Evidence from the interviews was provided in the themes indicated. Interview item 5 asked “Describe qualities or characteristics of each principal and which one you enjoyed working for more.” This item was triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 2. Interview item 6 asked, “What are three qualities you believe to be the most important in a middle school principal?” and was triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 2. Interview item 7

asked, “Describe why each quality is the most important.” This item was triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 2. The following themes were discovered after reviewing the teacher responses.

Teacher Support. The interview participants shared their stories regarding their experiences regarding teacher support. Each participant was able to explain reasons why teacher support is an important quality when attempting to retain middle school teachers. PI-3 stated, “I have enjoyed working for a principal who is supportive. I have worked for principals who are not supportive and it is not an environment where I want to work.” PI-6 explained principals enjoyed working for as, “Supportive and good communicators.” Being supported by the principal as well as wanting to get to know your employees was a quality favored by many of the teachers who interviewed. PI-7 explained, “I definitely enjoyed working for a principal who got to know me as a person.” PI-2 stated, “Support is huge for me. I need to feel as though my principal has my back.” PI-8 stated, “I enjoy working for principals who give me feedback.” PI-3 stated the three most important qualities are “Support, consistency, and treating everyone the same.” “People need cared about. Teachers and kids need to know they are cared about. That leads to people doing what they are supposed to do” (PI-4). PI-6 stated, “The most important quality is taking care of the kids and their needs.” PI-8 stated, “Relationships are the most important quality in a principal.”

Availability. Availability was also described as an imperative quality for teachers to have from their principals. PI-2 explained, “Availability is extremely important. If you ask if the principal has a minute, the principal stops and gives the teacher some time to talk. The principal also has a great sense of humor. The third

quality is that we are truly a team.” PI-7 explained, “The most important qualities are: knowing what to do immediately and trusting your teachers.” Availability was described in a couple of different ways. Teachers made it clear that availability was a form of support and principals needed to be available in different ways in order for their teachers to feel as though each of them wanted to stay within their positions.

Fair Treatment. Many teachers explained an important quality was being fair to all kids and all staff. Fair treatment could look different but keeping everyone on the same level was important for teachers to consider staying at their schools. PI-1 explained, “The most important qualities are being friendly to everyone, fair treatment, and doing everything for the kids.” PI-3 explained, “The most important quality for me was for everyone to be fairly treated; the teachers, custodians, the administration; everyone.” The top three qualities for a principal to have are, “Compassion, fairness, and consistency” (PI-4).

Flexibility. Teachers also indicated they needed their principals to be flexible. Participants explained different scenarios for what flexible meant to each of them. Participant PI-5 stated, “Flexibility is huge.” PI-5 also believes the most important qualities are “flexibility, support, and vulnerability.” PI-2 stated, “In middle school it is so important for people to feel like they are on a team. Flexibility is huge. It is different in elementary and high school.” PI-6 believes, “Flexibility is so important because everything changes from day-to-day. You have to be able to serve the kids you have in that moment.” PI-7 stated a principal must be “Prescriptive. A principal must have the ability to make a decision based on different amounts of experience.” “My principal is not a micro-manager and I appreciate that. Our district is too big to micro-manage” (PI-

4). Different descriptions for flexibility were described by the teacher participants. Each described what flexibility means to them. When principals are flexible they are once again, supportive to their teachers. Based on teacher responses, this creates an atmosphere which helps with teacher retention.

Communication. Open communication was also described as a much needed quality used by school leadership. PI-6 stated, “Three qualities I find to be important include communicates well, need to listen, and take care of the kids.” Many teachers described communication as a reason to leave their school in search of different opportunities.

Consistency. The final most discussed leadership quality included consistency. Teachers discussed consistency from different perspectives but many stated they needed consistency in order to feel supported. PI-3 believes, “Consistency is huge. Middle school students do not have many things consistent in their life. School and discipline should be consistent. Above all, everyone should be treated the same.” PI-8 believed the most important qualities are “Feedback, consistency, and control.”

Attrition

Information was gathered from interview items eight and nine in order to determine perceptions on attrition. The themes discovered from the analysis include “Micromanagement, Support, Inconsistency, and Communication.” Interview item 8 asks, “What characteristics by a principal would make you think you did not want to work in your current school?” This item was triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 2. Interview item 9 asks, “Have you ever been

dissatisfied and left a teaching position because of those qualities?” Item 9 was triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 2.

Micromanagement. From the different perspectives of the middle school teachers, micromanagement was discussed from each of them. Each participant had a story or could discuss how micromanagement impacted their teaching career. Many suggested micro-managing was a characteristic that would lead them to search for new positions (PI-1, PI-5, and PI-7). “Micro-managing and lack of content knowledge are things that would drive me to want to leave my school” (PI-5). PI-1 stated, “If I could have gotten out sooner, I would. The micro-managing was awful and I hated it there.” PI-7 stated, “I get bored and I look for new opportunities.” PI-5 stated, “I would leave because I really like a new challenge, but I also like being in charge of my own classroom.” “Yes, I would leave. I was sick of being compared to other programs and that was what my principal was doing” (PI-6).

Teacher Support. Teacher support was a quality that could make or break teachers into thinking each would decide to stay or leave. If teachers felt they were supported by their principals, they were more-likely to stay at their school. However, if teachers felt they were not supported, teachers were more likely to leave. Both PI-2 and PI-3 explained being supported was the most important in their opinion. Another participant, PI-4, believed, “A lack of loyalty would increase the reason for the teacher to leave.” PI-4 stated, “I think if you are going to hire someone then you defend them until you cannot. If you are not loyal then it is time to leave” (PI-4).

Inconsistency. Inconsistency was an element of importance to many of the teacher participants. Teachers believed principals should be consistent with all matters

regarding discipline, school procedures, and district policies. “I would leave if my principal was a flip-flopper; someone who changed their minds all of the time” (PI-6).

Communication. Communication became a theme as it was discussed often throughout the interviews. This quality was discussed as one that would either provide an environment where teachers stay within their schools or decide to leave in search of other positions. PI-8 stated, “I need feedback from my principal. If I don’t get feedback then I don’t know where I stand.” PI-2 explained reasons for leaving past non-educational experiences for “Not connecting with the people.”

Summary for Research Question Two

Qualitative data were collected in order to answer research question two, “What qualities do middle school teachers need from their principals in order to prevent attrition?” Research question two was broken up into two sections including “(1) Retention regarding qualities and characteristics and (2) Attrition.” The retention section focused on teacher’s perspectives on retaining teachers regarding a principal’s leadership qualities and characteristics. The attrition section focuses on teacher perceptions regarding attrition.

The qualities of a principal were analyzed using interview items five, six, and seven. Attrition was analyzed using interview items eight and nine. After comparing the responses from the participants, connections were made between a principal’s qualities and a teacher’s desire to leave their school. Themes were discovered after analyzing each response and the associated items. Characteristics and qualities perceived as being influential to a teacher leaving their teaching position included “Micromanagement, Lack of Teacher Support, Inconsistency, Lack of Loyalty, and Communication.” Teachers

expressed reasons they would stay in their school include, “Being flexible, Communicates, Supports, Being Fair, and Being Consistent.”

Data Results for Research Question Three

The research suggested the following as research question three, “How do the phases of Leader-Member Exchange influence teacher attrition? Phase One: Stranger, Phase Two: Acquaintance, and Phase Three: Partnership. This research question answered the perspectives of teachers regarding the phases teachers and principals go through during a school year using interview items 10-17. The interview items were triangulated to search for consistent themes throughout the participant responses. The following table provides an outline for the analysis of research question one that will be discussed in the proceeding sections:

Table 13

Organization of Research Question Three and Results

Research Question	Interview Items	Data Analysis
3 (Relationship)	11, 16	Triangulation
3 (LMX Phases)	12-15	Triangulation
3 (Attrition)	17	Triangulation

Relationship

Data were gathered from interview items 11 and 16. Interview item 11 asked, “Using the phase information provided to you, please describe a role you and your principal have currently.” Interview item 16 asked, “Which phase better relates to you

and your principal?” Item 11 and 16 were triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 3.

Teacher participants were asked to describe the role they have had with their principals. Each teacher was able to describe a variety of factors of how their relationships have been shaped. Participants also went into detail regarding qualities the principal has demonstrated. The teachers provided details for why they would continue teaching at that particular school based on the relationship between the teacher and principal. PI-7 stated, “I think the principal of middle and elementary school should be more knowledgeable about both levels. It is hard to reach different phases when there is such a different population in the school.” “I feel as though my principal and I are able to communicate and find a conclusion to an issue without making it worse. It is all about the communication” (PI-3).

PI-1 explained the relationship between the principal and teacher as one where “The principal asks for opinions and confirms what the principal already believes to be true.” “I feel like I can go to the principal and ask for suggestions, but the principal is still able to give direction,” stated PI-2. PI-5 is able to go to the principal and ask for feedback, opinions, and suggestions. PI-6 stated the relationship between the principal and teacher was “Evolving. I think we figure things out enough to work through tough or easy times.” I believe we have a mutual enough relationship to work with the kids and complete the goal (PI-8). The group works as equal individuals.” PI-4 believes “Working alongside the principal helps create a better relationship. We are there to help the kids. We help because we want to not because it has been assigned to us.”

Relationships are a large component as to whether a teacher decides to stay at a school or leave. Once teachers had an opportunity to describe the principal's role in relation to the teacher, the participants were given information pertained to the Leader-Member Exchange phases (Appendix F). The teacher responses were noted based on the different Leader-Member Exchange phases.

Stranger Phase. The following participants suggested the "Stranger Phase" was more associated with how the teacher and principal connected. The "Stranger Phase" was described as "Teachers do as they are told with no team work between the principal or teacher." There is still respect there as a boss." Although the participants had experiences in the "Stranger Phase" with their principals, most described their current roles closely matched with a phase other than "Stranger Phase."

Acquaintance Phase. The following participants suggested the "Acquaintance Phase" was more associated with how the teacher and principal connected. The "Acquaintance Phase" was described as "Teachers and the principal start working as a team while accomplishing tasks. The teachers and principal are not quite equal within the acquaintance phase but more so than the stranger phase." PI-1 believes their role closely resembles "Acquaintance because it just hasn't moved up into a trusting partnership phase." PI-2 believes the principal and the teacher closely resemble the "Acquaintance phase. PI-6 believes their principal teacher relationship matches more of an "Acquaintance phase due to the lack of trust." "I believe we are within the stranger phase because of the principal's lack of knowledge on the middle school side of the school." "My principal and I are in the acquaintance phase. We get the job done" (PI-8).

Partnership Phase. The following participants suggested the "Partnership

Phase” was more associated with how the teacher and principal connected. The “Partnership Phase” was described as “Teachers and the principal work towards the same goal and form a team. PI-3 believes because of the communication the principal and teacher are in a “Partnership phase.” PI-4 believes, “Due to the communication and effort, I believe my principal and I are in the partnership phase.” PI-5 stated there was a feeling of trust and a goal oriented vision between the principal and teacher. Therefore, PI-5 believes the phase that mostly matches their relationship is the partnership phase.

LMX Phases

Teachers were asked to describe different experiences related to each phase. They were then asked to explain how they felt supported within each phase.

Stranger Phase. Interview item 12 asks, “Describe a time when you experienced the “stranger” phase and how well did you feel supported in your role as a teacher?” This item was triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 3. Each participant was given a description of the phases (Appendix F). PI-1 stated, “I didn’t feel supported at all in the stranger phase.” PI-1 also explained, “The principal didn’t want to get to know me at all. We never had conversations about anything other than to correct my actions.”

PI-2 explained, “I do not have an example of the stranger phase because I was able to do all of my practicum’s and teaching in one building.” PI-3 explained, “I can think of a time when something happened in my class that turned into a big deal. I wasn’t given any information about what happened afterwards and I didn’t know how to arrange the students. I felt like I was in the stranger phase because of the lack of communication.”

“I can describe a time I experienced the stranger phase. I started out at a new school and my principal was communicating to me as he always did. After a sporting event, another coach talked to him about some coaching issues and the principal quickly started treating me differently. It felt like a “good-ol boy” situation. There was a lack of trust there and a lack of loyalty” (PI-4). Another participant, PI-5, does not believe they have experienced the stranger phase because “I make sure I get to know my principal; I think it is important.” PI-6 believes being in the stranger phase depends on the teacher. “It is important to get to know him as an individual, and you have to implement that the same way the principal does. My example is the beginning of the year. I felt as though there were so many things going on that my principal didn’t have a chance to get to know me or my kids.” PI-7 explained, “The primary reason why I left was because my principal did not get to know me as an educator and we were stuck in the stranger phase. I don’t appreciate when principals complete evaluations based off of two walk through snapshots.” “I didn’t feel supported at all in the stranger phase. I generally didn’t know the principal nor did they know me” (PI-8).

Acquaintance Phase. Interview item 13 asks, “Describe a time when you experienced the ‘acquaintance’ phase and how well did you feel supported in your role as a teacher?” Item 13 was triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 3. Each participant was given a description of the phases (Appendix F). PI-1 stated, “I believe an example of the acquaintance phase could be described from my current principal. The principal always asks for our opinions and goes in the other direction.”

“I would have to say an example of the acquaintance phase would be working on curriculum” (PI-2). “We were doing it as a team but I was guided by the principal” (PI-2). PI-3 stated, “I believe my example would be how my principal is not part of the team. He provides directives and he talks and discusses what everyone needs to do and we do it but it is not a partnership. I would say it is more like an acquaintance.”

“When I was able to help my principal with curriculum, we were on the same page. We were working on something together. That time made me feel as if we were on the same page” (PI-4). “With the acquaintance phase, I feel that the principal is working with you but that is it. A team doesn’t really exist” (PI-5). “I think you are in the acquaintance phase when you are working towards the same goal and helping kids. I believe teachers feel much more supported” (PI-6).

PI-7 took a different angle on the phases and explained the acquaintance phase as “The beginning of my career, I thought I could do anything. It was important for me for my principal to reel me back in and get back on track. That in my mind was the acquaintance phase.” “I think the acquaintance phase is a way to know what your principal wants from the teacher. I’ve always felt I was in the acquaintance phase” (PI-8).

Partnership Phase. Interview item 14 asks, “Describe a time when you experienced the ‘partnership’ phase and how well did you feel supported in your role as a teacher?” This item was triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 3. Each participant was given a description of the phases (Appendix F). “I can definitely explain an example from the partnership phase. One of my principals always knew how to make people happy in their work place. There was

always a mutual line of respect. The principal went to the teachers for advice and the teachers went to the principal for advice. It was mutual” (PI-1).

Due to the number of years in the field, PI-1 did not believe they had experienced the partnership phase. PI-3 explained their experience of the partnership phase by stating, “We had an issue with a student and my principal stepped in and helped with the conference. Everyone was explaining how the student needed to change his behavior. While the conversation was still going, new information became present to allow the principal and teacher to change their tone with the student. It was nice to see the teacher and principal working together to do what is best for that student. That felt like a partnership.”

“The principal I have now takes the time to get to know the people in the building. I have had the opportunity to work with my principal in an administrative role. I started volunteering for things and was able to build my respect more for my principal. That led to a feeling of partnership” (PI-4). “I think with the partnership phase, you both are on a two-way street. You both give 100% all the time” (PI-5). “I felt a partnership with my principal when I could go to them and get feedback any time I wanted. There was a sense of trust” (PI-6). “I believe an example of the partnership phase includes me being able to have a principal that knows my experience and background as an educator. I felt that there was a sense of trust within the relationship” (PI-7). “I don’t think I have ever been in the partnership phase” (PI-8).

Experience with All Three Phases. Interview item 15 asks, “Describe a time when you had the chance to experience all three phases with a principal.” This item was triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 3. Each

participant was given a description of the phases (Appendix F). “I don’t think I have ever gone backwards, but I can say I had an experience where I started at acquaintance and went up to partnership. Building connections is what brings you up to partnership,” explained PI-1.

Due to the number of years in the field, PI-1 could not elaborate on experiences they had encountered through all three phases. PI-2 said, “I imagine it would be something like adapting to each other’s personality. Once you get to phase two, you have earned each other’s respect. Phase three is kind of like an ‘old married couple,’ you know the good and bad.” Another participant had a different experience due to the phases going backwards. “My principal and I were at the partnership phase. I had an issue that I approached my principal regarding other teachers. After a conversation, I felt as though I needed to defend myself. It went from partnership to acquaintance to stranger phase real fast. I believe if the principal would have communicated better, this would have resolved better” (PI-3).

“I would have to say that we started out in an acquaintance phase and then we went to a stranger phase. I didn’t want to go to work. I hated that job. I now know what it is like to work for a great principal” (PI-4). “I get over the stranger phase real quick have experienced going back and forth between the partnership and acquaintance phase. I think a lot of it depends on the task being completed” (PI-5).

“I did experience all three phases, but I think I was able to because I put the effort into it. The principal allowed me to form that relationship. It is very important to get to know your principal” (PI-6). “I don’t see the phases as vertical movement but more as horizontal. I see them tied into your experience” (PI-7). “I had a boss give me some

latitude in a project we were working on. We were working on a goal together. That was very fulfilling” (PI-8).

Attrition

Interview item 17 asks, “Would you retire early, transfer, or leave education entirely if you principal demonstrated characteristics from a particular leadership phase?” Item 17 was triangulated in order to search for themes in connection with research question 3. Each participant was given a description of the phases (Appendix F). After listening to the stories and experiences of the teacher participants, all but one participant answered they would be unable to stay at a school if the leader stayed in the “Stranger Phase.” PI-1 stated, “If I were getting close to retirement, I would leave education entirely.” When asked how long each participant could work with a principal who led within the “Stranger Phase” style, many said about a year and no longer. PI-1 explained how they could “not stomach the idea of working with another principal who did not take the time to get to know their people.”

Participant, PI-2 stated, “I would not be comfortable with phase one, but if I had to, I could work with the principal for a year.” PI-2 also explained, “I would want to give them some time to get to know me and myself get to know the principal, but I could not go much longer than that.” Participant PI-3 stated, “Without a doubt, stranger phase would make me want to leave.” PI-3 also stated, “I just need to be able to communicate and move on.”

Another participant, PI-4, stated, “People want to feel supported and important. They cannot within a stranger phase relationship.” PI-5 explained, “The lack of trust would make me want to leave. I don’t think I could keep working for very long if the

person was in the stranger phase. I could stay a year or so.” PI-6 stated, “Nothing would cause me to leave because teachers outlast principals.” PI-7 explained, “The stranger phase would lead me to leave my position.” Finally, PI-8 stated, “It would take about a year in the stranger phase for me to want to leave.”

Summary for Research Question Three

Qualitative data were collected in order to answer research question three, “How do the phases of Leader-Member Exchange influence teacher attrition? Phase One: Stranger, Phase Two: Acquaintance, and Phase Three: Partnership.” The relationships between teachers and principals as perceived by the teachers were analyzed using interview questions 11 and 16.

Relationships. Many participants described the relationship between a teacher and principal as an evolving factor that is based on how much effort the teacher and principal want to put into it. Each participant described their relationship with current and previous principals. Teachers described their principals need to have certain qualities within their relationships in order for teachers to stay at their school. Qualities include showing teachers support, being consistent, showing loyalty, and not micromanaging.

LMX Phases. The LMX phases a teacher and principal go through were analyzed using interview items 12-15. Connections were also made about the LMX phases and which phase would result in teacher attrition. Many teachers experienced each phase with each principal they worked with. Based on responses from teachers, the “Acquaintance Phase” was experienced longest and more often. The “Partnership Phase” was difficult to remain within indefinitely. Teachers stated experiences would go from

“Partnership Phase to Acquaintance Phase” and “Acquaintance Phase to Partnership Phase”

Attrition. Attrition was analyzed using interview items 17. Many of the teachers had experiences with the Stranger Phase, but they were content with their current principals who shared the Acquaintance Phase. Based on the teacher responses, the Stranger Phase could not be tolerated for longer than a year.

Summary

Throughout this chapter, a data analysis has been provided. The objective of the research was to discover whether a principal has an influence on middle school teacher attrition. A mixed-methods approach to gathering data was conducted. A survey including a Likert scale and optional open response items was completed by 91 out of 270 middle school teachers. In addition, 8 teachers participated in an optional interview. Chapter five provides a detailed summary and discusses other research opportunities.

Research Question One

Research question 1, “When utilizing the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory to examine the relationship between leaders and subordinates at the middle school level, what factors exist that contribute to the attrition of middle school teachers?” was answered using a quantitative LMX-7 and attrition survey as well as qualitative open response and interview items. The qualitative surveys and interview items resulted in themes associated with teacher retention include “Listening, Knowledge, Support, and Approachable.” The themes associated with teacher attrition include “Favoritism, Lack of Support, and Micromanagement.” Each theme provides evidence from teacher

participants to support what factors exist with contributing to the middle school teacher attrition.

Research Question Two

Research question 2, “What qualities do middle school teachers need from their principals in order to prevent attrition?” was answered using qualitative survey and interview items. Characteristics and qualities perceived as being influential to a teacher leaving their teaching position included “Micromanagement, Lack of Teacher Support, Inconsistency, Lack of Loyalty, and Communication.” Teachers expressed reasons they would stay in their school include, “Being flexible, Communicates, Supports, Being Fair, and Being Consistent.”

Research Question Three

Research question 3, “How do the phases of Leader-Member Exchange influence teacher attrition? A. Stranger Phase, B. Acquaintance Phase, C. Partnership Phase” was answered using qualitative interview items. Based on the results from the teacher responses, relationships between teachers and their principal influence a teacher’s decision to stay or leave their teaching position. Using the phase information, the teacher participants clearly stated the “Stranger Phase” could not be tolerated for much longer than a year. Building relationships between the teacher and principal are important factors in order to retain teachers.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

Schools around the country have suffered from the amount of attrition occurring from various reasons. According to Alliance of Excellent Education (2008), approximately one out of every three new teachers leaves the profession. Although there are many factors influencing the reasons teachers decide to leave their schools or leave the profession entirely, the challenge for principals to face include how they as leaders are influencing the attrition rate.

Research consistently points to the quality of teachers affects the achievement of students (Ed.gov, 2013). Studies also point to the fact that teachers need multiple years of on the job training in order to become efficient in the classroom (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). With teachers leaving their classrooms, educational leaders are forced to find replacements who can educate the students in an efficient manner. Many factors contribute to teachers wanting to leave their classrooms or the field of education. However, factors such as the principal's influence on attrition has not been investigated. The rate of teachers leaving has provided the opportunity to explore how principals influence middle school teacher attrition.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher perspectives on how principals influence teacher attrition. The research questions for this study were framed around (a) Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX) (Northouse, 2010), (b) Leader-Member

Exchange Phases (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991), and the (c) Human Resource Frame (Bolman & Deal, 2008). A mixed-methods approach was used to gather data for Leader-Member Exchange and attrition. A quantitative survey was used to discover the LMX scores of teacher participants. Qualitative interviews were completed to discover qualities that led to attrition from the principals. In addition to learning about principal qualities, the interviews also led to new information regarding the LMX phases.

Findings from the study provided insight about influences a principal may have on teacher attrition. In this study, survey data were collected from teachers of middle schools located within a Missouri Southwest school district over a three week period. An LMX survey was sent to all middle school teachers in a web-based format for teachers to reply to the survey electronically. A total of approximately 270 teachers were identified and received the survey with 91 responding to the survey. The return rate for the sample for the study was thirty-three percent. The survey asked teachers to provide their perspectives on Leader-Member Exchanges and attrition with the option to provide examples of why they may stay or leave their school.

In addition to the survey, interview data were also collected from teachers of middle schools located within a Missouri Southwest school district over a two week period. A request was sent to all middle school teachers in a web-based format for teachers to respond to electronically. A total of 270 teachers were identified and received the request to participate in the interview with eight responding with agreement to participate. The participation rate for interviews was three percent. The interviews had an assortment of questions asking teachers about the experiences with their principals,

perspectives on the LMX phases, and what would bring the teacher to leave the school or education.

The research examined teacher perceptions, attitudes, and reasons they would want to change jobs in eight schools. Given the research purpose, a mixed methods approach seemed to be the most comprehensive method to gather information through a LMX survey instrument distributed to all the middle school teachers and then the completion of an optional interview. The purpose of the study was to identify if a principal influences teacher attrition in the middle school level. The study examined the responses from the Leader-Member Exchange surveys and compared the scores to the attrition item using a Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The study then examined the teacher responses from the optional interview looking for themes. The responses from the survey and interview were gathered to determine if connections existed between qualities exhibited by principals and teacher attrition.

Research Questions

The following research questions shaped the case study, “A Principal’s Influence on Teacher Attrition: A Case Study Analyzing the Perspectives of Middle School Teachers and their Leadership within a Southwest Missouri School District:”

1. When utilizing the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory to examine the relationship between leaders and subordinates at the middle school level, what factors exist that contribute to the attrition of middle school teachers?
2. What qualities do middle school teachers need from their principals in order to prevent attrition?

3. How do the phases of Leader-Member Exchange influence teacher attrition?
 - a. Phase One: Stranger
 - b. Phase Two: Acquaintance
 - c. Phase Three: Partnership

Summary of Findings

Descriptive Results

The following sections provide a breakdown of the findings for the 91 teacher participants who completed the survey and the eight teachers who participated in the optional interview. The sections are organized by district demographics, Leader-Member Exchange and Attrition and quantitative and qualitative responses.

District Demographics

The case study looked at one Missouri Southwest's school district. The district educates approximately 24,000 students. There are 36 elementary schools (grades K-5), an intermediate school (grades 5 and 6), nine middle schools (grades 6-8), five high schools (grades 9-12), and an assortment of choice programs. Specifically, only middle schools were part of the study. Approximately 270 teachers were given an opportunity to complete the survey. The survey had eight questions asking for information regarding the relationship between the teacher and the principal and how the relationship influences attrition. The survey used was an LMX-7 and also included an extra item regarding attrition. Of the approximate 270 middle school teachers, 91 teachers participated in the survey. Eight of the 270 middle school teachers participated in the interview.

Leader-Member Exchange and Attrition

The survey was composed of eight questions asking teachers to reflect on the working relationships with their current and past principals. The survey (Appendix D) consisted of seven items from an LMX-7 survey. The eighth item included a question regarding attrition. The survey score each teacher receives allows for a better understanding of the quality of the principal-teacher relationship. The score was then tied into the attrition item to determine whether a high quality relationship led to a better rate of retention or the reverse, a low quality relationship led to a high amount of attrition. Information regarding the theory behind Leader-Member Exchange and the surveys completed by the teacher was found using *Leadership Theory and Practice* (Northouse, 2010). Interviews were done in addition to the survey in order to collect a deeper sense of how the quality of the relationship influences attrition.

Research Question One

Leader-Member Exchange was calculated using an LMX-7 survey. The higher the score on the LMX-7 survey, the higher the quality of a relationship the teacher perceived the principal and teacher experienced. The lower the score on the LMX-7 survey, the lower the quality of a relationship the teacher perceived the principal and teacher experienced.

The findings from the quantitative LMX-7 survey and attrition item suggested when a teacher's LMX score was high their attitude towards leaving the school was low. The findings also suggested when a teacher's LMX score was low their attitude toward leaving the school was higher. These quantitative findings represented a significant moderate inverse.

The qualitative surveys and interview items resulted in themes associated with teacher retention include “Listening, Knowledge, Support, and Approachable.” The themes associated with teacher attrition include “Favoritism, Lack of Support, and Micromanagement.” Each theme provides evidence from teacher participants to support what factors exist with contributing to the middle school teacher attrition.

Research Question Two

There are many qualities and characteristics that shape an individual. Teacher perspectives on which principal qualities influence teacher attrition were examined. The findings from this study suggest there are several qualities which promote teacher attrition. Generally, most teachers who participated in the interview agreed micro-managing was a specific quality that would influence a teacher to leave his or her school.

The findings also suggest a lack of knowledge of middle school students was a factor which could influence a teacher to leave the school. A lack of feedback was demonstrated by a few of the teacher participants as a reason to not stay longer than a year or two. The last quality many teachers expressed as an important feature that would lead a teacher to search for other opportunities was not treating everyone equal.

Throughout the interviews, teachers also explained qualities that needed to be expressed in order for the best relationships to be formed.

Characteristics and qualities perceived as being influential to a teacher leaving their teaching position included “Micromanagement, Lack of Teacher Support, Inconsistency, Lack of Loyalty, and Communication.” Teachers expressed reasons they would stay in their school include, “Being flexible, Communicates, Supports, Being Fair, and Being Consistent.”

Research Question Three

The Leader-Member Exchange Phases were analyzed using interview responses from teachers. Most teachers described the need to feel appreciated and cared for unlike what the “Stranger Phase” expresses. Based on the results from the teacher responses, relationships between teachers and their principal influence a teacher’s decision to stay or leave their teaching position. Using the phase information, the teacher participants clearly stated the “Stranger Phase” could not be tolerated for much longer than a year. Building relationships between the teacher and principal are important factors in order to retain teachers.

Discussion

This study was shaped around previous studies and what was believed to be a gap in the research. Supporting topics for the research included teacher attrition, teacher satisfaction, teacher characteristics, the role the principal has with building administration and how it affects teacher attrition, and the leader-member exchange theory as it applied to principal-teacher relationships. With the information that was gathered from previous studies as well as the findings from this study, a conclusion was made on how principals influence teacher attrition at the middle school level.

Previous studies suggest attrition is impacted by leadership. Implications have been made on how principals influence teacher attrition but are uncertain what factors make the biggest impact (Boyd et. al., 2011). Studies also point out the importance of building relationships between the administration and teachers but do not clearly define qualities of a principal that are desired by the classroom teacher (Boyd et al. 2011). Little information is available on how principals influence a teacher’s decision to stay or leave

their teaching positions. The goal of the U.S. Department of Education is to increase achievement for all kids (Dept. of Education, 2013). With a third of new teachers leaving their teaching positions quicker than students are able to reach grade-level or above achievement levels, leaders must find reasons which cause teachers to leave (Alliance for Education, 2008). With limited research being completed on a building administrator's influence on teacher attrition, a need to discover what qualities within a principal-teacher relationship existed (Boyd et al., 2011).

Teachers are more-likely going to stay in their teaching positions if they are satisfied with different factors of their job. After surveying 91 middle school teachers, it was clear how many teachers made decisions to stay or leave based on how satisfied each of them was with their principal. Teachers who were in schools with more behavioral problems and less ability to have a voice with their administration were satisfied less than in schools where administrators provided the teachers with more support (Stockard & Lehman, 2004). Many teachers believed they would leave their school if the principal did not provide an atmosphere where they could get satisfaction from the fast paced environment.

A teacher's characteristics within their teaching position may impact different ability to become successful in an education career. A few teachers in the study believed it was a two-way street when building relationships. Wiebke and Bardin (2009) believe newer teachers may need a little more assistance from principals. Teacher participants within the study agreed stating the trust and knowledge that comes with a principal is very helpful when a teacher is within their first few years of teaching. Another teacher stated the importance of connecting with the leadership and serving leadership roles

whenever possible due to the loyal feeling it provides to the students and staff of the school. A study stated similarly, when teachers serve in leadership roles themselves, they are less likely to leave due to their connection with other staff (Harrison & Killion, 2007). Principal's roles within their leadership position influence different factors of the success within their building. When principals connect with their teachers they are more likely to build relationships and create an environment where teachers want to stay in their position. "Relationships with principals influence teachers' feelings of personal and professional wellbeing, with both negative and positive effects" (Peters & Pearce, 2012, p. 249).

There are multiple factors involved in a Leader-Member Exchange. The Leader-Member Exchange is a leadership theory used to show the relationship between leaders of an organization and the leader's subordinates (Northouse, 2008). "Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) posits that leaders develop individual relationships with their direct reports rather than using average leadership styles of behaving in the same manner to each" (Kaiser, 2010, p. 1). The teacher participants completed a Leader-Member Exchange survey regarding their perspectives on their principal's leadership style. The surveys indicated an inverse reaction. As the LMX score increased, the likelihood of a teacher wanted to leave their position decreased.

Implications for Practice

The results of this case study suggested the quality of relationships between middle school teachers and middle school principals influence attrition. The Leader-Member Exchange survey shows a higher quality relationship as the score on the survey increases. The survey shows a lower quality of relationship as the score on the survey

decreases. There are clear connections between how high a teacher's LMX score is to how likely they are to stay in their building. Inversely, as the LMX score decreases, the possibility of attrition increases. While a middle school principal has many priorities, information from teachers within this study point to the need to improve relationships between the teachers and the principals in order for retention to increase among the middle school teachers. Hrivnak (2009) stated the importance of building relationships within an educational setting.

There are also connections between the Leader-Member Exchange phases and attrition of middle school teachers. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1991) believe relationships evolve through phases. With the three phases being "Stranger Phase," "Acquaintance Phase", and "Partnership Phase" many teachers within those who were interviewed believed it would be difficult to continue teaching at a school where the principal exhibited qualities from the "Stranger Phase". It is important for teachers and principals to understand how the Leader-Member relationship affects the possibility of attrition.

While there is a connection between a principal and their influence on middle school teacher attrition, there are also external factors that may lead to early teacher attrition which were not part of the study. These findings suggested as leaders become principals within a middle school, it is important to establish relationships as part of the day-to-day functioning of the school. While other priorities exist and take precedence over "ice-breakers" and "social-events", it is a valid argument to allow opportunities for the teachers and staff to get to know one another but especially the principal.

Feedback from middle school teachers both in quantitative responses and qualitative examples provided further evidence of the benefits of building relationships

between the teachers and the principal within middle schools. The majority of teachers in the study believed the relationship with a principal influences the desire for a teacher to leave the school in search of other opportunities. Although it is only opinions and feedback from the teachers, it provides an opportunity to continue the discussion in the future for additional research.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was conducted using one district in a Southwest Missouri school district. The sample included approximately 91 teachers out of a population of approximately 270 middle school teachers from eight middle schools. Although, the study included a very small number of teachers and schools, a broader and larger sampling of teachers would provide much greater evidence as to how a principal influences attrition. A larger sample and an adjustment of data collection could further the discussion of collaborative learning and leadership.

There is an opportunity to expand the study beyond the eight middle schools which were included. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recently reported having 286 middle schools in Missouri (DESE, 2013). There were approximately thirty teachers at each of the eight middle schools who participated in the study. If the same holds true for the other Missouri middle schools, there would be approximately 8,580 middle school teachers who could participate in a further study. Further exploration of perspectives of middle school teachers could provide an extensive array of qualities exhibited by a principal which promote retention rather than attrition.

In addition to more schools, an adjustment in the interviews could provide ample opportunities to discover what qualities a principal convey which influence teacher

attrition. With this study being a mixed-methods analysis of whether or not a principal influences teacher attrition, few interviews were completed. Due to the limitation of keeping survey data separate from interview data, individual LMX scores could not be compared to the responses given during the interview. There is an opportunity to expand the amount of interviews completed within each school and make connections between the LMX score and the individual's responses to the interview. More individualized data from each teacher in connection with their score could have been helpful in determining how the principal influences teacher attrition.

Conclusion

The results of the case study suggested middle school principals have to build relationships with the teachers in their building to create a sense of trust, support, and knowledge in order to prevent teacher attrition. With 16% of teacher attrition occurring from retirement and the rest being from teachers leaving their positions (Alliance of Excellent Education, 2008), it is evident factors exist which contribute to whether teachers decide to stay or leave their positions. Building strong relationships with teachers allows teachers to have a sense of knowing their principal cares about the individuals within the building thus creating an environment where students can learn and achieve.

In addition to a principal's influence on teacher attrition, the "Stranger Phase" was expressed as having the most influence on teachers leaving their building in search for better opportunities. When a teacher remains in the "Stranger Phase" for approximately a year or longer, the teacher will most-likely start looking for other schools. The "Stranger-Phase" can be described as a relationship where the principal

does not know the teacher's name, does not know the difficulties of a teacher's day-to-day activities within the classroom, and does not try to get to know the teacher as an individual. While other factors limit the amount of time a principal can spend on getting to know the teachers within the building, there are several opportunities which can be taken in order to strengthen the relationships in what can be a chaotic environment for everyone.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Introductory Letter to the Principals

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

Dear Middle School Principal,

My name is Katy Rudolph, and I am an Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis student at the University of Missouri in Columbia, MO. The research I wish to conduct for my doctoral dissertation involves exploring the role principals have on middle school teacher attrition. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Finch and Dr. Macgregor.

I am hereby seeking your consent to ask for participation from teachers within your building to complete a survey regarding Leader-Member Exchange and attrition. In addition to the completion of the survey, teacher participants will be asked to be interviewed.

Attached, I have provided you with a copy of my doctoral proposal which includes copies of the consent forms and survey tools to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board and the SPS Approval to do research in the district.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the district with a bound copy of the full research report. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 417-322-3779 and khrudolph@spsmail.org. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. If you wish to provide consent, please follow the link and list the school which you are the building administrator.

LINK: https://missouri.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0HxXlg9H5CeNhat

Sincerely,

Katy H. Rudolph
University of Missouri

Appendix B: Introductory Letter to the Teachers

Dear Middle School Teacher,

My name is Katy Rudolph, and I am an Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis student at the University of Missouri in Columbia, MO. The research I wish to conduct for my doctoral dissertation involves exploring the role principals have on middle school teacher attrition. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Finch and Dr. Macgregor.

I am hereby seeking your participation in the study. Your involvement in the study will include a survey which will take approximately 15 minutes. Once the survey is complete, you will be asked if you would like to participate in an optional interview which would last approximately one hour. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential.

I have provided you with a copy of my doctoral proposal which includes copies of the consent forms and survey tools to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the district with a bound copy of the full research report. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 417-322-3779 and khrudolph@spsmail.org. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. If you wish to provide consent, please follow the link and follow the instructions provided.

LINK: https://missouri.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_6PAcEdSvQurPmZL

Sincerely,

Katy H. Rudolph
University of Missouri

Appendix C: Teacher Informed Consent Form

Dear middle school teacher:

Thank you for considering participation in the study “What role does a middle school building administrator have with teacher attrition?” This study is being conducted to complete my Doctorate degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at University of Missouri.

The purpose of this mixed method case study was to discover what role middle school principals have on teacher attrition. By analyzing rapport between middle school principals and middle school teachers, the researcher hoped to find a connection between the leader and the teacher in relation to attrition. The research questions assisted the researcher in discovering the qualities teachers prefer in leaders and how the relationships between the principal and teacher influences attrition.

Before you make your final decision about participation, please read the following about how your input will be used and how your rights as a participant will be protected:

- Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any point without penalty.
- You need not answer all of the questions.
- Your answers will be kept confidential. Results will be presented to others in summary form only, without names or other identifying information.
- Your participation will take approximately one hour and ten minutes. During this time you will be asked to participate in an interview by the researcher and complete a survey regarding the exchange in communication between a leader and subordinate.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board. The committee believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject’s privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The project is being supervised by Dr. Finch and Dr. Macgregor, Graduate Advisors of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, University of Missouri 417-836-5192, KimFinch@missouristate.edu.

If at this point you are still interested in participating and assisting with this important research project please fill out the consent form below. Keep the top of this letter for future reference. You can contact me at 417-523-6111 or 417-322-3779 if you have questions or concerns about your participation. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Katy H. Rudolph
University of Missouri Graduate Student

I, _____, agree to participate in the study of what role does the principal have in teacher attrition, conducted by Katy Rudolph. I understand that:

- My answers will be used for educational research.
- My participation is voluntary.

- I may stop participation at any time without penalty.
- I need not answer all of the questions.
- My answers and identity will be kept confidential.

I have read the information above and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participation in this activity, realizing that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time.

Teacher Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D: Leader-Member Exchange Survey

LMX Survey Items:

1. Do you usually know how satisfied your principal is with what you do?

Rarely 1	Occasionally 2	Sometimes 3	Fairly Often 4	Very Often 5
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2. How well does your principal understand your job problems and needs?

Not a bit 1	A little 2	A fair amount 3	Quite a bit 4	A great deal 5
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3. How well does your principal recognize your potential?

Not at all 1	A little 2	Moderately 3	Mostly 4	Fully 5
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4. Regardless of how much formal authority your principal has built into his or her position, what are the chances that your principal would use his or her power to help you solve problems in your work?

None 1	Small 2	Moderate 3	High 4	Very High 5
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5. Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your principal has, what are the chances that he or she would “bail you out” at his or her expense?

None 1	Small 2	Moderate 3	High 4	Very High 5
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6. I have enough confidence in my principal that I would defend and justify his or her decision if he or she were not present to do so.

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
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7. How would you characterize your working relationship with your principal?

Extremely Ineffective 1	Worse than average 2	Average 3	Better than average 4	Extremely Effective 5
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8. The principal within your school has influenced your desire to transfer to a different school because you were dissatisfied.

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
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a. Please describe qualities about your principal that influences your desire to leave your teaching position.

b. Please describe qualities about your principal that influences your desire to stay at your teaching position.

9. Do you now, or have you in the past, wanted to leave your teaching position because your dissatisfaction with the building administrator?

<p>Yes <i>You will now be redirected to an opportunity to be interviewed</i></p>	<p>No <i>Thank you for your time.</i></p>
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10. Would you be available to interview with the researcher regarding the relationships you have had with your current or previous principal?

<p>YES <i>You will now be redirected to enter name and contact information.</i></p>	<p>NO <i>Thank you for your time.</i></p>
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Appendix E: Interview Protocol

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself.

2. If not answered in the prior sentence: How long have you been teaching and how many principals have you worked for?

3. How would you describe your current principal's leadership style?

4. If more than one principal: How would you describe previous principals you have had?

5. If more than one principal: Describe qualities or characteristics of each and which one you enjoyed working for more.

6. What are three qualities you believe to be the most important in a principal of middle school?

7. Describe why each quality is the most important?

8. What characteristics demonstrated by a principal would make you think you did not want to work in your current school?

9. Have you ever been dissatisfied and left a teaching position because of those qualities?

10. Describe your working relationship with your principal.

11. Using the phase information provided to you, please describe the role you and your principal have currently.

12. Describe a time when you experienced the “stranger” phase and how well did you feel supported in your role as a teacher?

13. Describe a time when you experienced the “acquaintance” phase and how well did you feel supported in your role as a teacher?

14. Describe a time when you experienced the “partnership” phase and how well did you feel supported in your role as a teacher?

15. Describe a time when you had the chance to experience all of the phases with one principal.

16. Which phase better relates to you and your principal?

17. Would you retire early, transfer, or leave education entirely if your principal demonstrated characteristics from a particular leadership phase?

Appendix F: Leader Member Exchange Phases Guidelines
(Provided to interviewed participants)

LMX Phase One: Stranger Phase. Teachers do as they are told with no team work between the principal or teacher.

LMX Phase Two: Acquaintance Phase. Teachers and the principal start working as a team while accomplishing tasks. The teachers and principal are not quite equal within the acquaintance phase but more so than the stranger phase.

LMX Phase Three: Partnership Phase. Teachers and the principal work towards the same goal and form a team. The group works as equal individuals.

VITA

Katy H. Rudolph was born in Tampa, FL where she lived with her family. Her elementary, middle, and high school education were all earned in Tampa, FL. She started her college journey at the University of South Florida. She married shortly after the start of her college journey and moved to several locations where she finally finished her undergraduate degree at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, TN. While completing requirements for her undergraduate degree, her husband served his country in Iraq. She started her teaching career in Hopkinsville, KY during this time. Shortly after, Katy and her husband relocated to Missouri where Katy completed her master's degree at Missouri State University. She continued her teaching career and taught science and math for five years. Teaching in the Missouri district led her to pursue her doctorate degree in education. While completing her doctorate degree at the University of Missouri-Columbia, Katy started working as an assistant principal. Upon completion of her doctorate degree, Katy's husband completed his master's degree. With the completion of several degrees, both pursued new opportunities in Seattle, WA.