THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP STYLE AND TEACHER

MORALE IN A RURAL SOUTHERN SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

Timothy Ryan Meeks

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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APPROVED BY:

Rebecca Lunde, Ph.D., Committee Chair

Teisha Waller, Ed.D., Committee Member

ABSTRACT

Classroom teachers continue to be an integral component to the success of any school and to the success of its students. Numerous studies indicate that the morale level of teachers can have an impact on their effectiveness in the classroom. Furthermore, the leadership of the school principal can shape the culture of any school and thus have a direct impact on teacher morale. This study sought to determine if a relationship exists between self-reported morale of school teachers and perceived leadership style of high school principals. Additionally, the study attempted to determine if a relationship exists between self-reported morale of school teachers and perceived leadership style of school principals with regard to the teacher's experience level. The study was framed by Maslow's theory of human motivation, which describes a hierarchy of needs where ones most basic needs must be met before moving on to the next level of needs. The research hypotheses were evaluated using a standard multiple linear regression analysis. Results of the study suggest that there is no significant, predictive relationship between teacher morale and a linear combination of principal leadership style and years of experience in education. Recommendations for future research include replication studies using a larger sample population, different educational settings, or a qualitative approach.

Keywords: teacher, morale, principal, leadership, rural

Dedication

This research study is dedicated to my amazing, supportive wife, Sarah.

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List of Abbreviations

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Purdue Teacher Opionaire (PTO)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This research study sought to determine if a relationship exists between the leadership style of school principals and the morale level of the teachers in the school. Chapter One includes an introduction of the study and a discussion of the parameters of the study. The study research questions are discussed in this chapter.

Background

Research indicates that a quality classroom teacher is one of the most important elements to improving student achievement (Brown & Wynn, 2009). Additionally, Brown and Wynn (2009) stated that teacher quality is the most important factor in student achievement. Another theme found often in education literature is that experienced teachers have a better understanding of pedagogy and instructional methods than new teachers (Hughes, 2012). Numerous studies conclude that somewhere between 30% and 50% of teachers leave the teaching profession within the first five years of teaching (Battle & Looney, 2014; Curry & O'Brien, 2012; Fonatine, Kane, Duquette, & Savoie-Zaja, 2012). Furthermore, studies that cite the higher number often come from low-income schools (Clark, 2012). Additionally, high turnover rates for new teachers create a cycle of inexperienced teachers moving into classrooms each year. Being a new teacher can be an overwhelming experience; there are many aspects to the teaching profession that educational preparation programs simply cannot emulate. There are many specific reasons that teachers state for leaving the profession, but most of them can be summed up in the category of job satisfaction (Buchanan et al., 2013).

In recent years, the United States Department of Education as well as individual state departments of education have placed more and more emphasis on teacher accountability for

student performance on standardized tests (Stillman, 2011). Teachers have always been tasked with teaching content and assessing what students learn, but most recently teachers have begun to be evaluated based on their students' performance on standardized tests. Teacher accountability measures began to increase with the advent of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) that went into effect in 2001. Research shows that the No Child Left Behind legislation has somewhat taken autonomy out of the classroom, and teachers, especially those who serve in underperforming schools, have increasingly been told what and how to teach (Stillman, 2011). The legislation shifted the focus toward teacher accountability for student performance. While NCLB began by measuring teacher performance for teachers of core academic subjects (reading, math, science, social studies, and English language arts), several states have added standardized tests for other content areas so that every teacher now has a standardized assessment for his/her subject. Current research indicates that this added level of accountability has raised the level of stress that teachers feel (Brown & Wynn, 2009). School administrators are feeling this pressure as well, and they must find the delicate balance between holding teachers accountable for results and supporting and motivating teachers by providing a positive school culture (Brown & Wynn, 2009).

The job description of a school principal is ever evolving and constantly changing with the implementation of new curriculum standards and the increasing demands of accountability measures (Dumay & Garland, 2012). Just as teachers are tasked with motivating students to master a myriad of standards, principals must also motivate their faculty in an underappreciated and sometimes thankless profession (Dumay & Garland, 2012). Numerous studies have found that the leader of an organization has an impact on the employees, which in turn, has a direct

impact on organizational outcomes; therefore, the principal of a school has a direct impact, positive or negative, on student performance (Bird, Wang, Watson, & Murrey, 2009).

Using Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory as a framework may assist in determining what factors have an influence on the morale level of teachers. According to Maslow, one's most basic, or physiological, needs must be met prior to progressing on the continuum to achieve higher levels of growth and development (Hamel, Leclerc, & Lefrancois, 2009). Maslow's hierarchy ranges from physiological needs of food, water, clothing, and shelter to safety and security, love and belonging, and self-esteem and self-actualization. The highest level of needs on Maslow's hierarchy is self-actualization, where one is concerned about the needs of mankind and how to make the world a better place for everyone (Hamel et al., 2009). Maslow's (1943) theory provides insight to the study of teacher morale by providing evidence of the needs of teachers that must be met for them to meet the needs of their students.

Problem Statement

Brown and Wynn (2009) found that approximately one third of teachers leave teaching within the first three years of the profession. The study also indicated that nearly 50 % of teachers leave the profession by the fifth year in the classroom. Additionally, a 2012 study by Hughes (2012) indicated that 30% to 50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years. Hughes (2012) further found that the percentage of teacher attrition is closer to 30% in suburban and rural areas while urban school districts report the number of teachers leaving the profession within the first five years is closer to 50%. While there are varying reasons why teachers choose to leave the profession, a large number of teachers cite a lack of support as the main reason for their departure from the classroom (Shaw & Newton, 2014). Teachers who have the perception that they are not receiving adequate support are more likely to experience low

levels of morale. In contrast, teachers who feel that they are supported and appreciated by their principal tend to have higher morale levels and are less likely to leave the teaching profession (Brown & Wynn, 2009).

Shaw and Newton (2014) conducted a research study to determine if a correlation exists between principal leadership and teacher job satisfaction. They concluded that a strong correlation exists between perceived leadership, teacher job satisfaction, and teacher retention; however, this study did not take into account the experience level of the participants of the study. Webb (2014) concluded that there was no significant correlation between teacher morale and perceived principal leadership. This study did not indicate the level of teaching experience of the participants of the study.

Very little literature is available with regard to principal leadership style and teacher morale based on years of experience of the teachers. Cochran-Smith et al. (2011) concluded that there have been almost no studies that link teacher retention or attrition to years of teaching experience. Nolan and Stitzlein (2011) concluded that very little research has been done to determine what builds morale in the context of education. Teacher attrition has become a major concern in the field of education and teacher morale is a key concept in keeping teachers in the field (Mee & Haverback, 2014). The problem is there is little research regarding the influence of principal leadership on teacher morale based on the experience level of the teacher.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study was to examine the relationship between principal leadership style, teacher morale, and the years of experience of the teacher in a rural school district. Currently, there is a gap in available research pertaining to the morale level of teachers and principal leadership practices taking into account the level of experience of the

participants of the study (Stough, Montague, Landmark, & Williams-Diehm, 2015). When examining the relationship between teacher morale and principal leadership style, the researcher focused on the years of experience of the teacher. This study contributes to the current literature by identifying the relationship between teacher morale and principal leadership style based on teacher experience level. In a study involving veteran high school teachers, Kelly, Thornton, and Daugherty (2004) defined veteran teachers as those teachers having more than five years of classroom teaching experience (Kelly, Brandes, & Orlowski, 2004). Stough et al. (2015) conducted a study based on experienced teachers as those having 10 or more years of classroom teaching experience.

The predictor variables for this study were the principal's leadership style that was self-reported using the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and the years of teaching experience of the participant. For the purposes of this study, principal leadership style is defined as the type of leadership portrayed by the school principal and was identified by the highest LPI score for each principal surveyed (Webb, 2014). Leadership style served as a predictor variable. The criterion variable was the teacher morale as measured by the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire (PTO). For the purposes of this study, teacher morale is defined as the level of satisfaction with one's current employment and was measured by the collective PTO score for each teacher surveyed (Webb, 2014).

The study was conducted by gathering survey data from teachers in a rural school district. The sample population consisted of the entire population of schoolteachers from the district. There are approximately 203 full-time, certified teachers and four full time principals from four different schools: one high school, one middle school, one elementary school, and one primary school. The researcher conducted a multiple regression analysis of the data to examine the

relationship between principal leadership style, teachers' years of experience, and teacher morale. The Leadership Practices Inventory survey was used to determine leadership style by using the five leadership practices developed by Kouzes and Posner (2003). Kouzes and Posner (2003) offered the following five leadership practices to school principals: (a) *model the way*, (b) *inspire a shared vision*, (c) *challenge the process*, (d) *enable others to act*, and (e) *encourage the heart*.

Significance of the Study

In recent years, teachers increasingly feel hopeless with all of the difficulties and frustrations of the teaching profession (Nolan & Stitzlein, 2011). With the pressures of increasing standardized test scores, lowering the dropout rate, increasing attendance, and lowering the achievement gap, teachers are steadily losing hope in their chosen profession and suffering from low morale (Nolan & Stitzlein, 2011). Hytten (2011) suggested that rebuilding hope and raising morale in the teaching profession requires visionary leadership. According to Allen et al. (2015), "School districts that are searching for research-based methods of school improvement should begin by examining campus leadership styles and taking note of their effect on the school climate and student achievement" (p. 7).

This study may add to the current literature on principal leadership practices as it relates to teacher morale. There is a large amount of research on teacher retention that recommends mentor programs, internships, and professional development. However, there is a lack of current research regarding what characteristics of principals promote higher teacher morale (Nolan & Stitzlein, 2014). According to Wynn, Carboni, & Patall (2007), "Principals have a great deal of power and influence, perhaps even more than they realize, when it comes to beginning teachers and the level of support provided to newcomers to the school" (p. 224). As stated by Webb

(2014), "Current research fails to acknowledge the impact of principal leadership on teacher morale" (p. 37). Helping to inform what leadership characteristics will foster more positive teacher morale will make this study relevant and significant to the body of literature.

This major significance of the study is to add to the body of literature concerning teacher morale and principal leadership characteristics that contribute to improved teacher morale levels based on the years of experience of the teachers. The researcher sought to determine if certain leadership styles of principals correlate with teacher morale based on years of teaching experience.

School principals and educational researchers may benefit from the findings of this study by providing them with additional research on teacher morale level and principal leadership characteristics. Principals may use the results of this study to guide their leadership strategies when leading teachers with varied experience. This study is significant to the field of education because it allows educational leaders to identify factors that influence the morale level of teachers, leading to greater job satisfaction of teachers, improved teacher retention, and improved academic results from students.

Research Question

The research question for this study is:

RQ1: How accurately can teacher morale be predicted from a linear combination of principal leadership style and years of experience in education?

Definitions

1. *Leadership Style -* For the purposes of this study, principal leadership style is defined as the type of leadership portrayed by the school principal and will be identified by the

highest LPI score for each principal surveyed (Webb, 2014). Leadership style will serve as a predictor variable.

2. *Teacher Morale Level* - For the purposes of this study, teacher morale is defined as the level of satisfaction with one's current employment, and will be measured by the collective PTO score for each teacher surveyed (Webb, 2014). Teacher morale level will be the criterion variable for this study.

3. *Teacher Experience Level* - The teacher experience level served as a predictor variable for purposes of this study. New teachers were identified as those teachers with zero to five years of classroom teaching experience (Stough et al., 2015). Experienced teachers were identified as teachers with more than five and less than 10 years of classroom experience (Stough et al., 2015). Veteran teachers were identified as those teachers with more than 10 years of classroom experience (Stough et al., 2015).

4. *Rural High School* - According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2008), rural schools are classified based on location and population. Schools in locations more than 25 miles from an urban area with a population less than 50,000 are considered rural schools. Currently, the NCES reports that there are approximately 8,000 rural school districts across the country with an enrollment of approximately 11 million students.

5. *School Climate* – School climate is the quality of school life, which is based upon people's experience of school life and is a reflection of organizational structure, teaching and learning practices, interpersonal relationships, values, goals, and norms (Curtis, 2012).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter Two includes a review of literature related to the areas of principal leadership

practices, teacher morale, and school culture. The chapter includes three sections: Theoretical

Framework, Review of the Literature, and a Summary of the Literature Review. The theoretical

framework presented in this chapter is Maslow's needs theory. This theory pertains to the belief

that individuals' needs are based on a hierarchy of importance, in which each level of needs must

be met before progressing up the hierarchy (Maslow, 1943).

School morale is important since teachers tend to work more effectively when they feel

supported and appreciated (Esquith, 2014). Consequently, students are more apt to be successful

when teachers perform better (Esquith, 2014). Numerous studies in recent years have concluded

that teacher morale is an important aspect in maintaining a positive school environment where

teachers are productive and students continue to grow academically (MacKenzie, 2007). This

study will seek to examine the leadership practices of high school principals that have an impact

on the morale level of teachers.

Theoretical Framework

According to Maslow (1965), individuals must ensure that their most basic needs are

being met before satisfying other needs. In *A Theory of Human Motivation* (1943), Maslow

presented the idea that human actions are directed toward goal attainment. Maslow's 1954 theory

consists of a hierarchy of needs, each of which must be met prior to having the motivation to

move on to the next. In order for growth needs to be met, one must first satisfy lower level needs.

The hierarchy, beginning with the most basic needs, consists of physiological needs (food, water,

shelter, etc.), the need for safety and security, the need to feel loved and to belong, esteem needs

(the need to feel important), and self-actualization (Maslow, 1965).

Physiological needs include the elements necessary to survive. These needs include the

most basic of human needs such as air, water, food, and shelter. These needs are satisfied for

most people, but if they are not, they become predominant needs that require the majority of

one's energy and attention. Once these needs have been met, the need for belonging become

important to people. Belonging needs include the need to have friendships, relationships, love,

and support. When one has both physiological and belonging needs met, he/she begins to fulfill

esteem needs. Esteem needs include confidence, recognition, achievement, and self-esteem

(Maslow, 1943). The highest level of need is self-actualization and self-fulfillment. This is

behavior that is motivated by one's own desire for personal growth. When the highest level of

needs have been met, motivation does not decrease, rather it increases to seek out further

fulfillment in one's life (Maslow, 1968). Maslow (1968) stated that people who are

professionally successful would continuously seek additional means of becoming more

successful. Motivational drive increases with the success of achieving goals. Maslow's hierarchy

may be beneficial in providing an explanation as to the reason why teachers remain in the

education profession.

According to Maslow (1943), this theory can be applied to the classroom teacher because

in order to reach complete effectiveness, a teacher's basic needs must be met. The basic needs of

a teacher can be met based on the leadership style of the school principal. Teachers must be

motivated to remain in their position. However, the basic needs of a teacher must be met prior to

experiencing success and self-fulfillment. In order to move up the scale as a classroom teacher,

one must first have his or her most basic needs met, secure employment, and a safe work

environment. According to Maslow (1943), the more basic needs must be met before self-fulfillment and self-actualization can be attained. The need for self-actualization includes the need to help others. Essentially, for a teacher to be successful in helping students, lower level needs must be met for them to be successful in helping students. A teacher will only be able to achieve his or her full potential when the lower level needs are present and fulfilled (Marston, 2014).

The school principal has an influence over whether or not these needs are being met; however, the principal's influence increases at the next level of the need to feel loved and a sense of belonging. The need to belong and feel loved can be met through the school culture, which is established by the school principal (Chen, Wang & Neo, 2015). The relationship between the principal and the classroom teacher is critical to building and fostering a positive school culture and promoting improved teacher morale (Webb, 2014).

Tolliver (2018) used Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory as a framework for a study investigating factors that contribute to teacher job satisfaction and teacher retention. Tolliver (2018) stated that teachers must reach the higher levels of Maslow's hierarchy to begin to seek fulfillment in one's own life. Maslow (1968) stated that people who are professionally successful would continue to seek out means of becoming more successful. They will create new goals for themselves and explore ways to attain higher achievements for themselves and their students (Tolliver, 2018).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory will be the framework used to guide the researcher throughout this study.

Related Literature

Bennis and Thomas (2002) concluded that one of the most reliable indicators of true leadership is one's ability to conquer adversity and learn and grow from the most trying circumstances. As school leaders, principals are faced with adversity and trying circumstances on a consistent basis, almost daily. As such, school principals have the opportunity to become great leaders. Yukl (1982) had a different conclusion as to what makes a great leader. Yukl (1982) stated that leadership is comprised of motivation and ability. A leader must be intrinsically motivated to achieve success and must have the ability for technical skills, interpersonal skills, and conceptual skills (Yukl, 1982). Yukl (2002) stated that motivational traits are "energetic forces that initiate work-related behavior" (pg. 25). While Bennis and Thomas (2002) and Yukl (2002) differed in their explanations of leadership, Jones (2009) summarized that there is one leadership trait that is universally accepted among scholarly researchers of leadership. A leader's ability to exhibit interpersonal relationships is one of the most important factors of successful leadership (Jones, 2009). Interpersonal relationships are especially important in a school setting where teacher productivity is ultimately tied directly to the school climate and culture (Jones, 2009).

Numerous studies conclude that between 30% and 50% of teachers leave the education profession within the first five years of teaching (Hughes, 2012). Additionally, nearly half a million teachers leave the profession each year (Hughes, 2012). With the number of teachers leaving the profession, many parts of the country have experienced a shortage of qualified teachers over the past decade (Shaw & Newton, 2014).

Researchers over the past few decades have identified that teacher retention is closely related to the quality of the teacher's first teaching experience (Tolliver, 2018). In a 2014 study,

Esquith (2014) concluded that teachers who indicated a positive amount of support and training were more likely to remain in the education profession than those early career teachers who indicated they did not receive adequate support and training. The work of the principal and the school leadership can have a positive impact on teacher morale and, in turn, a positive effect on teachers remaining in the education profession.

Role of the Principal

The school principal has many responsibilities with regard to the leadership of the school, including the morale level of the teachers. One of a principal's major responsibilities is the recruitment and retention of an effective teaching staff (Tolliver, 2018). In recent research, two perspectives have dominated the study of the role of the school principal: instructional leadership and transformational leadership (Tolliver, 2018). Instructional leadership focuses on the principal's role in leading and monitoring the school's overall instructional program and developing a positive learning environment for both teacher and students (Tolliver, 2018). Transformational leadership focuses on a leader increasing an organization's capacity to successfully adapt to change (Tolliver, 2018).

Hauserman and Stick (2013) concluded through their research that the school principal is the single most important factor in determining school effectiveness. Jones (2009) stated that effective leadership consistently emerges in research as a crucial variable to student achievement and overall school effectiveness. The principal creates the conditions of the school climate in which teachers and students work best (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). Moreover, relationships between the school principal and the faculty are fundamental in creating a positive and productive learning environment (Moore, 2012). Kouzes and Posner (2007) described leadership as being based on trust and mutual respect between the leader and followers in an organization.

Therefore, power is not an essential element to effective leadership. The role of the principal is to create a shared vision to guide the organization toward a successful path and to create an environment where the followers feel empowered to work toward that vision, ultimately bringing success to the entire organization.

A study conducted in 20 schools in the western United States, Hughes, Matt, and O'Reilly (2014) concluded that principal support of teachers has a critical impact on teacher retention. The study shows that all areas of support are considered important to teachers, however, emotional and environmental support are rated the highest (Hughes et al., 2014). Additionally, "Personal growth and the ability to receive support from administrators regarding emotional, environmental and instructional support had an impact on a teacher's decision to stay or leave" (Hughes et al., 2014). While most principals feel as though they are supportive of their teachers, it is important for principals to understand how teachers perceive that they are being supported by the administration.

Leadership Defined

Leadership can mean different things to different people based on circumstances. The literature available on educational leadership is expansive and constantly changing (Webb, 2014). Stodgill (1948) conducted research on skills and traits of effective leaders and categorized them into five categories: capacity, achievement, responsibility, participation, and status. These categories were based on 124 studies conducted between 1904 and 1947. Stodgill (1991) developed a different set of traits for effective leaders based on 163 new studies of leadership. Stodgill (1991) concludes that effective leaders must have:

A strong drive for responsibility and task completion, vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals, venturousness and originality in problem solving, drive to exercise initiative in

social situations, self-confidence, willingness to tolerate frustration, ability to influence

others, and capacity to structure systems to the purpose at hand. (p. 79)

While this set of traits is more specific than the 1948 study, many of the traits are similar

in nature 22 years later.

According to Yukl (1982), in order to understand leader effectiveness, one has to look

beyond the traits or characteristics of leaders. The majority of leadership studies fall into three

categories of approaches. The trait approach seeks to find the personality traits or characteristics

of successful leaders; the power-influence approach attempts to explain leader effectiveness by

the amount of influence the leader holds and exerts; and the behavior approach seeks to identify

the pattern of behaviors that characterize successful leaders (Yukl, 1982). Yukl (2002)

categorizes successful leadership into two areas, personality and motivation. Like Stodgill

(1970), Yukl (2002) believes that successful leaders share certain qualities or characteristics.

However, Yukl (2002) goes on to study motivational traits that are shared by effective leaders.

Much like Stodgill (1970) and Yukl (2002), Bennis and Thomas (2002) conducted

research to understand the qualities and characteristics of successful leaders. While their findings

agreed with many of the leadership characteristics of previous researchers, Bennis and Thomas

(2002) studied the life experiences of successful leaders that helped them to gain those

characteristics. Bennis and Thomas (2002) conclude that one of the most reliable indicators of

true leadership is one's ability to find meaning in negative events and to learn from the most

trying circumstances. While some leaders are born with innate qualities and characteristics that

make them natural leaders, extraordinary leaders are built by their life experiences and how they

adapt and grow from adversity (Bennis & Thomas, 2002).

Collinson and Tourish (2015) state that leadership is simply defined as the ability to influence others. While that is an oversimplified definition of leadership, it does ring true as to what leaders from all areas of life are called to do. Research on leadership provides a multitude of definitions and explanations. For the sake of this study, leadership will be defined through the lens of the school principal. Hauserman and Stick (2013) conclude that the role of principal leadership includes vision building, developing group goals, providing intellectual stimulation and individual support, and culture building. According to Houserman and Stick (2013), "Principals must stimulate, nurture, and support teachers, be good role models, encourage cooperation, work collaboratively, emphasize facilitation, and support empowerment" (p. 190).

Of the numerous definitions of leadership provided by the literature, many provide a list of qualities or characteristics that make successful leaders. The position of school principal is such a multi-faceted job that it can be difficult to summarize the responsibilities in a few words or sentences.

Functions of Leadership

According to Collinson and Tourish (2015), the three main functions of leadership are to assert authority, take responsibility, and be accountable. Leaders have the responsibility to make decisions that will affect their organization and the people in it.

Based on the research of Collinson and Tourish (2015), the first function of leadership is to assert authority. Leaders assert their authority in many different ways; some leaders make all of the decisions, some leaders delegate their authority to others to make decisions, and other leaders share their authority in order to allow for group decisions. School principals can fall in to any of these categories. Many principals are visionary leaders who set the goals for the school and let others make decisions about the details and how they will achieve those goals, while

other principals want to be the person who makes all of the decisions about how they will achieve goals. However principals choose to make decisions, asserting authority is a critical function of leadership.

The next function of leadership, according to Collinson and Tourish (2015), is taking responsibility for the organization. A true leader must set the organization's goals and give guidance and direction to ensure that the goals are achieved. Schools are no different from any other organization; a leader must take responsibility for steering the ship in the right direction.

The third function of leadership is accountability (Collinson & Tourish, 2015). This function demonstrates integral characteristics of the leader, as they must accept the successes and failures of the organization. Great leaders give credit to others for the success of the organization and accept the blame for the things that go wrong.

Modern Leadership Theories

Carlyle (1841) coined the leadership theory known as the great man leadership theory. The great man leadership theory is based on the premise that great leaders are born with certain innate qualities that make them effective leaders. Carlyle (1841) identifies characteristics, skills, and qualities that are shared among great leaders and concluded that their leadership ability was destined by birth. Although this theory gained popularity in the late 1800's, the great man theory was disputed by numerous theorists, including Herbert Spencer (1896). Spencer (1896) wrote, "The genesis of a great man depends on a long series of complex influences" (p. 97).

The trait leadership theory states that leaders possess certain characteristics that allow them to excel in certain leadership situations (Stodgill, 1974). This theory concludes that these characteristics can be a result of heredity or learned from the environment. Some of the traits possessed by great leaders are intelligence, responsibility, creativity, and persistence. Zaccarro

(2007) stated that while principals and educational leaders have a diverse plethora of leadership characteristics, a majority of successful principals share a common core of traits such as those identified in the trait leadership theory.

In contrast to the great man theory (Carlyle, 1841) and the trait leadership theory (Stodgill, 1974), the behavioral theories of leadership focus on the behaviors of successful leaders rather than their traits and characteristics (Orr & Cleveland-Innes, 2015). The behavioral theories suggest the opposite of the great man theory in that great leaders can be made and anyone can learn to be a leader. The behavioral theories of leadership divide leaders into two separate categories: leaders who are task-oriented and leaders who are people-oriented (Orr & Cleveland-Innes, 2015).

The contingency leadership theory states that a leader's style should not be consistent in all situations, but rather the style should change or vary based upon the situation (Fiedler, 1967). This theory applies to the field of education in that principals may need a different style depending on the staff and students with which they are working and the goals they wish to accomplish.

The participative leadership theory involves teamwork among the stakeholders involved in the organization (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013). Participative leaders believe in shared decision making and empowering others within the organization and giving them a sense of ownership. This theory is based on the premise that everyone in an organization adds value to the organization and getting input from everyone will lead to better decision-making. This type of decision-making encourages social interaction, and in some cases, leads to a stronger commitment and more positive organizational culture than other leadership styles (Branch et al., 2013).

Many schools and educational institutions incorporate a participative leadership style, gaining input and insight from all stakeholders involved in the organization in an attempt to make the best decisions possible for the students of the school (Cisler & Bruce, 2013). Educational leaders can benefit from seeing an issue from all sides before making a plan of action.

The situational leadership theory is based on the leader's ability to adapt to different situations to meet the needs of a group or an organization (Cisler & Bruce, 2013). According to this theory, the more a leader is able to adapt their leadership style, the more successful they will be as a leader. Situational leadership is about meeting the needs of others and matching tasks assigned to the person with the appropriate skill set. When people have their needs met, they will likely be more productive which will then benefit the entire organization.

In the school setting, principals have dozens of faculty and staff members with different specialties and talents. There are hundreds of students of diverse backgrounds and varying levels of ability; additionally, the students' parents present additional needs within the school. It is the responsibility of the principal to make sure that the school runs smoothly and effectively while meeting the needs of a diverse population. Situational leadership can be effective in the school setting to help the principal adapt and meet the needs of an extremely diverse population.

The transactional leadership theory attempts to create a mutually beneficial partnership between the leader and the followers in an organization (Lumpkin, 2008). Transactional theories are built on a system of rewards and consequences that follow all actions and inactions within the organization. Transactional leadership gives full authority to the leader and the followers must simply follow orders to receive a reward by meeting the end result, or a consequence for not meeting the end result or goal. While transactional leadership may have its place, transactional

leadership tends not to be a successful leadership style used in the school environment (Moore, 2012). The current literature available indicates that transactional leadership has no significant influence on employee morale or workplace effectiveness (Moore, 2012)

The transformational leadership theory seeks to build a strong relationship based on trust between the leader of an organization and his or her followers. This theory was first proposed by Burns (1979), which evolved from Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Leech & Fulton, 2008). Current research indicates the increased need for employee involvement in making decisions (Leech & Fulton, 2007). The nature of transformational leadership is the process of creating change in an organization. The leader inspires the followers to achieve a shared vision, thus building intrinsic motivation for everyone involved. A transformational leader makes everyone in the organization feel that they are integral and that each person's job and input is important. Transformational leaders lead with a sense of purpose and inspire others through their enthusiasm. This type of leadership is popular in the educational setting, as it tends to inspire educators to seek the best for their students (Leech & Fulton, 2007).

Leadership Styles

Leadership style is the overall nature of a leader's philosophy. Leadership style is built over time and can evolve based on experiences of the leader and the needs of the followers (Webb, 2014). Leadership style may also change based on situations and circumstances. Effective leaders may choose a particular leadership style to meet the needs of the organization at a given time (Webb, 2014).

Based on the literature, the following are commonly accepted leadership styles: Autocratic leadership involves all decision-making coming from the leader. The leader holds all of the power of the organization and the followers, or workers, in the organization are

subordinate. The leader holds complete control over all aspects of the organization. The benefit

of autocratic leadership is that decisions can be made quickly. One negative effect of autocratic

leadership can be that followers feel as if they have no voice or input in organizational decisions

(Cook, 2014). Participative leadership is a style of leadership that involves a group of members

of an organization who function as a team to reach a desired goal. Decision-making is shared in

participative leadership and each group member is allowed to have input in decisions (Avci,

2015). Narcissistic leadership is based on meeting the needs of the leader, usually without regard

to the needs of others. This leadership style is generally based on the arrogance of the leader and

the need for power and admiration (Neider-Chester & Schriescheim, 2010). Laissez-faire

leadership is generally thought of as a lack of effective leadership. Leaders who adopt this style

of leadership empower organizational members to make their own decisions without clear

direction. However, while laissez-faire leaders share the decision-making, they also share

criticism when things do not go well (Webb, 2014). Top down leadership exists, to some extent,

in all organizations. Top down leaders create a hierarchy that identifies persons responsible for

certain decisions and actions within an organization. In a school setting, the hierarchy includes

the board of education, the superintendent, district administrators, school principals, school

administrators, and faculty and staff members (Webb, 2014). While many principals may

implement different styles for different situations, major decisions ultimately come from the top.

Toxic leadership consists of leaders who abuse their position of power and make decisions based

on their own interests and goals to the detriment of the organization (Kellerman, 2004). Most

toxic leaders often do not realize how their leadership is affecting the organization. Kellerman

(2004) identifies seven characteristics that define toxic leadership. Incompetence is a trait where

the leader does not have the knowledge or skill to build or sustain organizational effectiveness. A

leader who is unyielding and is unwilling to accept new ideas or adapt to changing needs of the organization is a rigid leader. Intemperance describes a leader with lack of self-control who often makes decisions based on emotion rather than judgment. The callous leader is uncaring and unkind. The needs of organizational members are ignored. A corrupt leader is not ethical and does not follow rules or procedures. This type of leader puts his needs ahead of the needs of the organization. The leader who isolates themselves and the organization to any and all outside influences is an insular leader. The insular leader does not take into account the needs of the community surrounding the organization. The leader that has no thought of others and will commit blatant crimes for his benefit demonstrates evilness (Kellerman, 2004).

Transformational leadership is based on the leader's ability to engage and motivate others and has been widely advocated as an effective method for school improvement (Allen, Grigsby, & Peters, 2015). According to Allen et al. (2015), "School districts that are searching for research-based methods of school improvement should begin by examining campus leadership styles and taking note of their effect on the school climate and student achievement" (p. 8). Transformational leaders have the ability to unite team members in the pursuit of a common goal and to motivate even the most uninterested employees (Allen et al., 2015). While there is no universally agreed-upon definition of school climate, Goff, Goldring, and Bickman (2014) found that the most influential component of school climate is the leadership style of the principal. The relationship between leadership and school climate can be difficult to understand, but in their 2015 study, Allen et al. (2015) assert that more often than not, successful schools have leaders who have the characteristics of a transformational leader.

Leadership Practices

According to Kouzes and Posner (2007), leadership is founded on the basis of trust. Principals and teachers who trust each other can work together more efficiently in service of their schools and communities (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). The more that people trust their leaders and each other, the more willing they are to take risks and make changes necessary to keep the organization successful (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). In a study conducted on the topic of transformational leadership, Kouzes and Posner (2007) described five principles they feel make and exemplary leader: *model the way*, *inspire a shared vision*, *challenge the process*, *enable others to act*, and *encourage the heart*.

In order to be an effective leader, one must live by the words that he or she speaks (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). "Titles are granted, but it's your behavior that wins you respect" (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 14). In any organization, the members of the organization are constantly watching the leaders to model the way. Actions and behaviors of the leader have a much greater impact than the words that are spoken. If the words of a leader do not align with actions, respect is lost. A leader's deeds are far more important than words; words and deeds must be consistent (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Principals must model the behaviors that they wish to impress upon their teachers.

Leaders must be able to see and to share with others a clear image of the future (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). If a leader wants to inspire a shared vision, they must be able to inspire others to share their vision and motivate them to help create it. Kouzes and Posner (2007) state, "Leaders cannot command commitment, they can only inspire it" (p. 104).

Successful leaders challenge the process, they venture out and try new things. They do not sit idly by and wait for success to happen (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). To be successful, leaders

must be willing to try new strategies, to empower others to take risks, and to challenge the process.

The vision of a leader does not become reality without help along the way; it requires a team effort, trust, and strong relationships (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Successful leaders enable others to act. In order to accomplish tasks in any organization, leaders must give others the tools necessary to be successful.

When tasks become difficult in any organization, it can be easy to become exhausted, frustrated, and to simply give up (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Great leaders understand this and must inspire others to continue on when they want to give up. Great leaders must recognize contributions and celebrate successes. Great leaders encourage the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Role of the Principal in School Leadership

According to Kelley et al. (2005), the most important determining factor in the success of any learning environment is the leadership of the principal. In order to accomplish the goal of improving academic performance and creating successful schools, the role of the principal, as an effective leader must be examined. Dinham (2007) reported that the principal should be open to new opportunities and willing to take risks so that teachers feel empowered to create meaningful and engaging lessons for their students. Exceptional leaders find multiple opportunities to recognize students and staff, communicate their vision for the school, facilitate continuous improvement, and provide resources that the teachers and students need to be successful (Moore, 2012). They seek input from all stakeholders, faculty, staff, students, parents, and members of the community, in order to make informed decisions that benefit the entire school community.

Effective principals also support professional development of themselves and their staff members so that each person can continually grow and model being a lifelong learner.

Principal leadership is an important factor in determining teacher morale levels, especially in teachers new to the profession (Brown & Wynn, 2009). Principal support plays a critical role in beginning teachers' decision to quit or remain in the profession (Brown & Wynn, 2009). In a 2009 study regarding the role of the principal in teacher retention, Brown and Wynn (2009) conclude that the specific types of principal support that have the strongest positive association with retention are having a mentor, having common planning with teachers of the same subject, having regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers, and being part of an external network of teachers. Additionally, Brown and Wynn (2009) conclude that the school principal is the single greatest influence over the culture of a school, and it is the school culture that has the greatest impact on teacher morale.

A successful school administrator is responsible for ensuring that classroom instruction is effective and meets the needs of diverse student populations (Allen et al., 2015). In order to be effective, the principal must be the instructional leader of the school. He or she must communicate their expectations of effective instruction and monitor and evaluate teachers in the classroom setting. Additionally, the principal must remain up-to-date on effective instructional and assessment strategies and model these strategies on a consistent basis (Allen et al., 2015). The position of principal can be a very demanding job with pressures from many different directions, district administrators, parents, teachers, students, and community stakeholders. An effective principal must be able to manage different influences while making classroom instruction a top priority. Ahuja (2007) concluded through her research that successful student achievement is the result of strong instructional leadership.

Cisler and Bruce (2014) conclude that of the many responsibilities of a school principal, the most significant role of the principal is creating a safe learning environment. Survey participants in the study conducted by Cisler and Bruce (2014) indicated that the principal is the key component in influencing school climate. Teachers who feel that the principal creates a safe learning environment are more likely to have higher levels of morale (Cisler & Bruce, 2014).

Sustainable School Leadership

The current research in the field of educational leadership has identified various leadership traits that have contributed to overall school success (Bruggencate, Luyten, Scheerens, & Sleegers, 2012). Based on the research linking school leadership to student performance, (Bruggencate et al., 2012) conclude that the leadership of the school principal was second only to classroom instruction as it relates to school-based influences of student performance. Additionally, Bruggencate et al. (2012) found that principals must create a culture and share a vision of high expectations for learning in order for long term success to be sustainable.

In order to be effective over the long term, principals must seek to create a culture of sustainable success. Sustainable educational leadership is essential to the continual growth and improvement of a school beyond the leader's tenure (Cook, 2014). Sustainable leadership goes beyond temporary gains and assessment measures and looks toward building a positive school culture that will build lasting success and improvements in learning (Cook, 2014). Hargreaves and Fink (2003) developed seven principles of sustainable leadership to support building a culture of sustainable growth and improvement. They are as follows: 1) sustainable leadership creates and preserves learning; 2) sustainable leadership secures success over time; 3) sustainable leadership sustains the leadership of others; 4) sustainable leadership addresses issues of social justice; 5) sustainable leadership develops rather than deplete human and material resources; 6)

sustainable leadership develops environmental diversity and capacity; and 7) sustainable leadership undertakes activist engagement with the environment.

Effective leaders must function in the present, but also must develop and empower members of an organization to carry on and achieve continued success in the future.

Teacher Morale

"Teacher morale, which affects every aspect of the educational system, has not been a significant consideration in research due to the lack of understanding of its importance and the lack of a clear definition" (Moore, 2012, p. 30). Throughout the history of public education, teachers have had a certain level of autonomy in the classroom while major decisions regarding educational policy, curriculum, schedules, and budgeting are left to school administrators and boards of education. Over time, these decisions have had increasing influence on what goes on in the classroom, encroaching on the autonomy that teachers hold so dear. Moore (2012) states that teacher morale has eroded over time. Increasing assessments holding teachers accountable for test scores has created additional stress and anxiety for teachers, leading to a decrease in job satisfaction, which negatively affects teacher morale. A decrease in teacher morale is beginning to show a greater impact in the future of education in that, more and more teachers are advising students not to pursue a degree in education and to avoid the teaching field altogether (Moore, 2012).

Many of the factors influencing teacher morale are external. Elected officials, even well meaning ones, attempt to improve education by increasing rules and regulations that take away teacher autonomy in the classroom (Esquith, 2014). There is also the ever-present media coverage of test scores and graduation rates, placing the blame for lackluster performance on teachers. While this may not be the intention, negative attention in the press places additional

stress on teachers. Esquith (2014) states that there are two major factors that will allow school administrators to keep morale high regardless of outside influences: a supportive principal and optimistic co-workers. An effective principal can help to manage the external influences on teacher morale and encourage teachers by providing a safe and supportive learning environment. Having a team-oriented staff that continually lifts each other up is also necessary for building and maintaining a positive school culture that values the morale of teachers.

Similar to Moore (2012) and Exquith (2014), Clark (2012) concludes that there are steps that school administrators can take to support teachers in the early years of their career. While many school systems have implemented mentor programs for novice teachers, Clark (2012) states that mentors should be carefully assigned to match the needs of the novice teacher and structured time must be set aside weekly for the mentoring to be effective. Clark (2012) also states that novice teachers need time to collaborate with a network of teachers so that they can learn from teachers with different perspectives.

Importance of Teacher Morale

Morale can push an organization forward toward success or drive an organization to failure through dissatisfaction and inefficiency (Ewton, 2007). "Current education trends have clearly taken a toll on teacher morale" (Noddings, 2014, p. 15). Teachers feel as though they are losing respect with new assessment, accountability, and evaluation measures that have changed significantly over recent years. Noddings (2014) states that recent changes to educational curriculum has lost sight of the truest aims of education, "to produce people who are morally good, intellectually competent, socially sensitive, spiritually inquisitive, and committed to living full and satisfying lives" (p. 16). While these aims are still as important as ever to the classroom teacher, they are not readily measured by an assessment; therefore, they are not taken into

account when evaluating a teacher's effectiveness. When teachers feel that their worth is judged

based on exam performance, without taking into account other influences on student

achievement, their morale will tend to be affected negatively.

Teachers realize that a school is much more than just a learning center and schools

produce more than just exam takers. A school helps to produce caring and competent adults who

will be leaders in the community (Clark, 2012). Teacher morale is critical in the effectiveness of

any school, and it is critical to growing and influencing the next generation of teachers (Clark,

2012).

School Culture

Every organization has a culture that develops over time based on a multitude of factors,

including: people, values, philosophies, perspectives, attitudes, myths, and expectations. The

formation of an organizational culture is complex and can be difficult to understand and even

more so to influence. The one thing that sets schools apart from other organizations is that the

leaders, teachers, students, and parents feel a sense of pride about their school (Doney, 2013).

Effective school principals lead the process of creating and maintaining a positive school culture

by building a positive atmosphere of trust among teachers, students, and parents, and developing

a vision that promotes success for all. According to Doney (2013), one of the keys for a positive

school climate is trust and mutual respect among all stakeholders in the school. Teachers and

parents must trust that the principal will make decisions based on the good of the whole.

Stakeholders must be able to have a voice in major decisions affecting the school as well as goal-

setting for the school. In order to maintain a positive school culture, principals must be effective

communicators who share successes and celebrate victories of both staff members and students

(Doney, 2013). Stakeholders have a need to feel valued and that their job has meaning.

Moolenaar, Daly, & Sleegers, (2010) determined that teachers' perceptions of their school climate were directly related to the leadership style of the school. Moolenaar et al. (2010) also indicates that principals can improve teachers' perceptions of school climate by exhibiting a more collaborative leadership style.

The literature available on school culture suggests that a positive school climate has a direct impact on teacher productivity and student learning levels (Vos, Van Der Westhuizen, Mentz, & Ellis, 2012). Furthermore, the behavior of the principal can have a positive impact on student achievement when the principal is supportive, collegial, and not overly restrictive (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011).

Levels of Teacher Morale

While morale is affected by a multitude of influences, the factors that influence morale can be grouped into three categories: personal morale, school morale, and professional morale (Webb, 2012). Personal morale is the component with the most variables that include such situations as family, health, and personal finances. This component of teacher morale varies from person to person and can fluctuate daily, weekly, or monthly depending on personal circumstances. Principals generally have very little influence over this component of morale; however, they can create a climate of support within the school such that teachers feel stability in the school that they may or may not receive through their personal morale (Webb, 2012). School morale is based on events and influences that occur in the school, school district, and community. School principals have the most direct impact on school morale (Hughes, 2012). Professional morale is regarded as the teaching profession as a whole. Professional morale can be affected by governmental regulations and policy as well as attention from the news media, positive or negative (Webb, 2012).

Much like Webb (2012), Hughes (2012) states that morale is influenced in different areas. Hughes (2012) creates three separate categories to explain teacher morale: teacher efficacy, school and organizational characteristics, and school culture. School efficacy deals with a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom; if a teacher feels that he is being successful, he is more likely to stay in the profession (Hughes, 2012). School and organizational characteristics deal more with the preparation and support that a teacher receives in the school building and the district in which they work (Hughes, 2012). Finally, school culture, according to Hughes (2012), is the most important factor when it comes to teacher retention. Hughes (2012) describes school culture as the working conditions in a particular school, which includes student discipline, parental support, professional prestige in the community, and collegiality among teachers.

While all three factors influence overall teacher morale, school principals have the greatest impact on school morale (Webb, 2012). Creating a culture where teachers feel valued and appreciated can have a positive impact on personal and professional morale as well (Webb, 2012). Similarly, Hughes (2012) states that principals have a great deal of influence when it comes to the morale level of teachers, especially teachers new to the profession.

Factors that Influence Teacher Morale

Strasser (2014) conducted a study to determine what factors influenced positive teacher morale. Teachers from schools with self-reported high morale levels were interviewed. Strasser (2014) compiled a list of five recommendations on how to build and sustain school morale. Strasser stated that school leaders must give teachers what they ask for, communicate with teachers, treat teachers like adults, allow gray areas, and remember that teacher morale is only a side effect.

Effective principals give teachers what they ask for (Strasser, 2014). For the most part, if a teacher asks for something, they need it. Administrators should support their teachers and give them the benefit of the doubt when it comes to requesting supplies. This type of support helps teachers to feel valued and appreciated and leads to an improved level of morale (Strasser, 2014).

Great principals communicate effectively (Strasser, 2014). To feel like they are an integral part of the school, teachers need to know what is going on and be involved in decisions that affect the school. Visibility is also critical to communication, as teachers need to see and speak with their administrators daily.

Good leaders treat teachers like adults (Strasser, 2014). Teachers are professionals and should be treated as such. Over-monitoring and constant criticism can lead to cynicism and low morale in teachers. Teachers do not like to be micro-managed. As long as they get the job done, administrators should allow teachers some flexibility and autonomy in the classroom.

Successful principals must be able to manage the organizational *gray area* to help relieve burdens from teachers when possible (Strasser, 2014). Administrators consistently receive directives and deadlines from the district and state level. Principals must be savvy enough to be able to handle the demands and meet the deadlines without placing extra burdens on the teachers. Effective principals can shift those burdens and plan efficiently so that deadlines are met through normal daily routines.

Remember that morale is only a side effect. Morale is not a school program or function, it is merely a by-product of being treated with respect.

Strasser (2014) concludes that low teacher morale comes with the feeling of their work not being respected. Teachers who feel that their work and their profession is respected are more likely to have a positive self-image and have a high level of morale.

Hughes (2012) suggested that years of teaching experience is a major factor in levels of morale and retention in the teaching profession. In her study of 782 teachers of varying experience levels, Hughes (2012) cites that veteran teachers (10 or more years of experience) are more likely to have higher morale than their less-experienced counterparts.

Additionally, Ohlson (2009) concluded that the average years of teaching experience is a factor in teacher morale levels. Teachers with more experience are better equipped to handle day-to-day issues that come up in the teaching profession such as student discipline; the data suggests that this experience leads to fewer discipline issues and therefore, less stress to the teachers (Ohlson, 2009). Ohlson (2009) concludes that the years of experience is a major factor in determining teacher morale.

Causes of Low Morale

There are numerous factors that influence teacher morale. While feelings of respect and support are factors that positively influence morale, there are many other factors that affect morale negatively (Hughes, 2012).

Classroom teachers have the great responsibility of educating students of differing backgrounds, ability levels, learning styles, and cultures. To go along with these student differences, teachers also have many different expectations of parents. When educating children, parental support is a key component to the success of the student (Hughes, 2012). Sometimes, however, parents may not be supportive of the teacher. Parents may not agree with the teaching style and, in some cases, parents may blame the teacher for poor performance of the student. Teachers who feel that they are not getting parental support in the classroom may have decreased levels of morale (Hughes, 2012). It is important for the principal to offer support when dealing with parent-teacher concerns. The principal must be able to view the issue from all sides so that

the parent and the teacher can feel that they are being supported and that the student is getting the best education possible (Hughes, 2012).

Another factor that can have a negative impact on teacher morale is student behavior. Liu and Meyer (2005) stated that student behavior is one of the most influential factors in determining teacher morale. Teachers that are struggling with student behavior issues are almost always using ineffective classroom management techniques. This is often a sign of a lack of administrative support, either in dealing with the student misbehavior or not providing classroom management guidance. Student misbehavior and classroom management problems are most common in new and inexperienced teachers. These teachers need to feel supported as they are developing their skills in both pedagogy and classroom management. By having the support of the principal as well as a mentor teacher, teachers are less likely to let behavior problems negatively affect their morale.

Teacher workload also has a direct impact on teacher morale. With each passing year, the demands and requirements on teachers increase without an increase in compensation. Many teachers feel overwhelmed and under-appreciated. MacKenzie (2007) states that teacher morale is decreasing because of increased assessment, accountability, and paperwork. The increased assessments and accountability measures, along with changing evaluation procedures, are adding to the stress level of teachers and leading to decreased job satisfaction and decreased levels of morale (Webb, 2014). Adding to the decline in morale due to workload, many feel that teacher compensation is not adequate. With the recent economic downturn in many states, teachers faced furlough days, shortening of the school year, and a freeze in yearly step increases. This too, has had a negative impact on teacher morale in recent years.

Additionally, teacher morale can be influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. When teachers feel forced to teach using methods that do not align with their beliefs about teaching and learning, they are less likely to enjoy their work (Rooney, 2015). Intrinsic rewards are gained through the pleasure that teachers gain through their enthusiasm and passion for their subject area and the satisfaction of having a positive influence over student success. These intrinsic rewards give the teacher the feeling that they are truly making a positive impact on the world (Tolliver, 2018). Extrinsic rewards are salaries, responsibilities, recognition, and leadership positions that teachers gain through successful work. Teachers have less control over these extrinsic rewards, which are in the hands of school leaders, specifically the principal.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

According to Hughes et al. (2015), hiring and keeping quality teachers is the most important job of a school principal. It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that each student has the most qualified and well-trained teachers possible. Ensuring satisfaction of the teachers is one of the most important tasks of the principal (Allen, Grigsby, & Peters, 2015). Teachers, who have a positive morale by feeling that their work is respected and appreciated, are more likely to remain in their current position. Having a positive school morale will also help to attract better teachers. Before accepting a position, teachers will talk to other teachers and community members about the culture of the school. Schools with a positive culture and a high level of teacher morale are more likely to recruit and retain the most effective teachers.

Brown and Wynn (2009) conducted a qualitative study in which principals, from schools with low teacher turnover, were identified as participants in the study. Teachers from the 12 schools of the identified principals were interviewed and asked about leadership characteristics of their principals. Brown and Wynn (2009) identified several commonalities that were shared by

all 12 principals including a shared vision, shared values, and teacher support. In addition to low teacher turnover, these schools had lower than average student discipline and teachers felt a higher than average sense of autonomy in the classroom. Teachers indicated that they participated in major decisions and helped to develop professional learning. Brown and Wynn (2009) conclude that the leadership characteristics of the principal can influence teacher morale and affect teacher retention.

In addition to the research of Brown and Wynn (2009), Cochran-Smith et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of the current research on teacher retention. Cochran-Smith et al. (2011) similarly conclude that teacher agency is a major influence over teacher retention, especially in novice teachers. When teachers feel that they have meaningful roles and they feel supported by their administration, they are more likely to stay in the profession (Cochran-Smith et al., 2011).

A study by Meristo and Eisenschmidt (2014) disclosed that a majority of teachers' self-efficacy is impacted by their perceptions of school climate. The results of the study indicate the need for principals to provide a supportive school climate, which is essential for the development of effective teachers (Ethier, 2017). Meristo and Eisenschmidt (2014) concluded that a teacher's perception of school climate is directly related to his or her self-efficacy beliefs and efforts toward improving student achievement. Self-efficacy beliefs have been cited by several studies as a major reason that novice teachers choose to leave the teaching profession within the first five years (Ethier, 2017).

Role of the Principal in Teacher Retention

Among the myriad of responsibilities of a school principal, retention of effective teachers sits high on the list. Although school size, location, socio-economic status, student demographics, school grade level, and school type all play an important role in teacher recruitment and retention, leadership style of the principal and school administrators have a significant impact as well (Tolliver, 2018). Several studies indicate that a principal's leadership often determines whether teachers are satisfied with their jobs (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2012; Urick, 2016).

The leadership style of the school principal is especially important in schools of high-poverty. According to a 2012 study by Beteille et al., teachers in high-poverty schools are less likely to transfer to a different school when they have a highly-effective principal. Lower levels of attrition are found in schools with highly effective principals (Bateille et al., 2012). Highly effective principals are aware of the benefit of having an effective teaching staff and take the time and resources necessary to provide support and empowerment to the teaching staff (Bateille et al., 2012).

The school principal plays a major role in the retention of a highly effective teaching staff. Administrators have a great responsibility in serving their community by creating and supporting a positive school environment where teachers feel empowered and will want to remain for many years to come.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

In conclusion, a review of literature was developed to locate and analyze current studies related to principal leadership and teacher morale and their impact in the school setting. The purpose for this is to provide a synthesis of research, convey correlations between principal

leadership and teacher morale, and to identify and communicate gaps in literature that currently exist with regard to principal leadership and teacher morale. While the studies in the literature review have provided evidence that principal leadership has an impact on teacher morale, there is a gap in the literature to provide information regarding the impact of principal leadership style on teacher morale based on the experience level of the teacher.

According to the current literature, positive teacher morale is vital in developing and maintaining a positive school environment where students are successful (MacKenzie, 2007). The literature also suggests that the leadership of the principal has an impact on school culture, which directly influences teacher morale levels (Esquith, 2014). This study will investigate whether a correlation exists between perceived principal leadership style and self-reported teacher morale. The framework for the study is the hierarchy of needs theory proposed by Abraham Maslow (1965). In order for a teacher to be effective, they must first have certain needs met such as safety, security, and a sense of belonging.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

The available literature on improving student achievement overwhelmingly states that the one component that has the largest impact is the quality of the classroom teacher (Brown & Wynn, 2009). Hughes (2012) found that as teachers gain classroom experience, they improve their pedagogical practices and student outcomes. Numerous studies conclude that approximately half of classroom teachers leave the profession within the first five years. This high rate of turnover creates a cycle of inexperienced teachers moving into classrooms each year (Clark, 2012). While there are a number of reasons cited for teachers leaving the profession, the main theme according to research is the morale level of teachers. According to Bird et al. (2009), the leadership of the principal has the greatest impact on teacher morale. This study seeks to determine if a relationship exists between teacher morale and principal leadership practices as it relates to the experience level of the classroom teacher.

The literature and research studies, regarding high school principal leadership practices and teacher morale, leave a noticeable gap in identifying the level of teaching experience as a variable when determining teacher morale. The intent of this study is to help fill that gap. This chapter will discuss the research questions and hypotheses, participants and setting, evaluation instruments, research procedures, research design, and data analysis techniques that were used in the study.

Design

This study used a quantitative, correlational research design. Correlational research involves collecting data to determine whether a relationship exists between two quantifiable variables and to what extent that relationship exists (Gay & Airasian, 1992). A correlational

design was most appropriate for this research because the researcher sought to determine whether a relationship exists between principal leadership style, teacher morale level, and teacher years of experience, and to what extent a relationship may exist (Gay & Airasian, 1992). Key variables used in the research are the self-reported leadership styles of the principal, the self-reported morale levels of the teachers, and the years of experience of the teachers in the sample group. Leadership style and teachers' years of experience served as predictor variables in this study. For the purposes of this study, principal leadership style is defined as the type of leadership portrayed by the school principal and was identified by the highest Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) score for each teacher surveyed (Webb, 2014). Teacher experience level was a continuous variable determined by the number of years that each teacher has completed as a full-time, certified classroom teacher. Teacher morale level is the criterion variable in this study. For the purposes of this study, teacher morale is defined as the level of satisfaction with one's current employment, and was measured by the collective PTO score for each teacher surveyed (Webb, 2014).

Two different surveys were administered to each certified teacher in a rural school system. The surveys were distributed using Dillman's Tailored Design Method (DTM) (2000). Dillman's model allows for anonymity for the teachers participating in the study (Houchard, 2005). The survey instruments that were used in this study, the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire (PTO) and the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), were chosen by the researchers based on their previous successful implementation in research studies (Moore, 2012; Rowland, 2008; Houchard, 2005).

Research Question

RQ1: How accurately can teacher morale be predicted from a linear combination of principal leadership style and years of experience in education?

Null Hypotheses

H_o1: There is no significant, predictive relationship between teacher morale and the linear combination of principal leadership style and years of experience in education.

H_o2: There is no significant, predictive relationship between principal leadership style, the linear combination of teacher morale, and years of experience in education.

H_o3: There is no significant, predictive relationship between years of experience in education and the linear combination of principal leadership style and years of teacher morale.

Participants and Setting

The participants of the study included certified teachers from the same district in a rural school system in Georgia. The sample population is a convenience sample due to the accessibility of the sample to the researcher. For this study, the number of participants sampled is 203 teachers, which according to Gall, Gall, & Borg (2007) exceeded the required minimum for a medium effect size with statistical power of .7 at the .05 alpha level. According to Gay and Airasian (2003), the available population from which a researcher can select for a study is a realistic choice. The target school district has a total of 203 certified teachers in grades K-12. The faculty consists of 169 female teachers and 34 male teachers. The sample population is 100% Caucasian. The sample population consists of 35 primary school teachers (kindergarten through second grade), 51 elementary school teachers (third grade through fifth grade), 55 middle school teachers (sixth grade through eighth grade), and 62 high school teachers (ninth grade through twelfth grade). The sample population represents four different schools in the same system and

four different principals. There is a wide range of experience levels from first-year teachers to veterans with over 30 years of classroom teaching experience. The sample will be a representation of the target population of schoolteachers.

The setting for the study was a rural school district with one high school, one middle school, one elementary school, and one primary school. The school system involved in the study was chosen because of their demographics and academic performance, which are both in close range of the state average. The district was chosen because of the accessibility to the researcher. The school has a College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) score and graduation rate that is within three points of the state average. The SAT and ACT test averages are similar to state averages. The high school was examined and information was gathered from the school system website, the school system Human Resources Department, and the Georgia Department of Education College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) Report.

The sample population includes 34 male teachers and 169 female teachers, and 203 Caucasian teachers. There are nine teachers in kindergarten, 10 teachers in first grade, 10 teachers in second grade, 12 teachers in third grade, 12 teachers in fourth grade, 14 teachers in fifth grade, 12 teachers in sixth grade, 12 teachers in seventh grade, and 12 teachers in eighth grade. At the high school level there are 10 math teachers, 8 English teachers, eight science teachers, seven social studies teachers, five career and technical education teachers, three fine arts teachers, three health and physical education teachers, and two world language teachers. In terms of experience, 101 teachers have from zero to five years of experience, 49 teachers have more than five and less than 10 years of experience, 32 teachers have more than ten and less than 20 years of experience, and 21 teachers have more than 20 years of experience.

Instrumentation

This study utilized two survey instruments, the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) (Bentley & Rempel, 1972), and the Perdue Teacher Opinionaire (LPI) (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Both instruments have been used numerous times by researchers in different studies (Moore, 2012; Rowland, 2008). The PTO was originally developed in the 1960s as a way to gather honest teacher opinions and has been a popular choice by educational researchers over the years (Houchard, 2005). The third edition of the LPI was published in 2003 and is used in research primarily to delineate teachers' views on the actions, leadership styles, and behaviors of their principals (Webb, 2014).

The Purdue Teacher Opinionaire (PTO)

The Purdue Teacher Opinionaire measures teacher morale in 10 different areas. The PTO contains 100 items that are used to measure responses to questions about teacher morale in 10 categories. The categories include rapport with the principal, satisfaction with teaching, rapport among teachers, teacher salary, teacher load, curricular issues, teacher status in the community, community support for education, school facilities and services, and community expectations.

For each statement on the PTO, the possible responses are: (A) agree, (PA) probably agree, (PD) probably disagree, and (D) disagree. The surveys will be scored using the following scale: (A) agree = 4, (PA) probably agree = 3, (PD) probably disagree = 2, (D) disagree = 1. The total score will determine teacher morale level; a higher score indicates a higher morale level.

The reliability coefficient for the PTO ranges from .62 to .87 for the five subscales (Moore, 2012). Bentley and Rempel (2008) reported the reliability coefficient of .87 by using a test-retest procedure to measure reliability. Rosner (2010) also reported the reliability of the survey at a coefficient of .87 by using the test-retest procedure. Based on the evidence available

in the current literature, this survey is a valid measure of the teacher morale level and is appropriate for the participants in this study, high school teachers (Moore, 2012; Rowland, 2008; Webb, 2014). The copyright for the PTO has expired; therefore, the instrument is available for use without permission from the author (Moore, 2012).

The Leadership Practices Inventory

The Leadership Practices Inventory Instrument is a survey that consists of 30 items that will be used to measure responses to questions about the principal's leadership practices as perceived by teachers. The responses will be ranked on a 10-point Likert scale. Each of the questions are linked to one of the five leadership categories: *model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act,* and *encourage the heart*. Each question on the survey has 10 possible responses that will be scored by assigning a number value to each response: Almost never = 1, Rarely = 2, Seldom = 3, Once in a while = 4, Occasionally = 5, Sometimes = 6, Fairly often = 7, Usually = 8, Very frequently = 9, and Always = 10.

The range of possible scores is 30-300. Leong (1997) found that the range for test-retest reliability ranged from .93-.95 for the five leadership practices on the leadership practices inventory. It can be difficult to measure validity of a leadership survey because it is impossible to define what constitutes effective leadership (Leong, 1997). However, based on the evidence available in the current literature, this survey is a valid measure of teacher perceptions of principal leadership characteristics and is appropriate for the participants in this study (Moore, 2012; Rowland, 2008; Webb, 2014). Kouzes and Posner (2002) reported reliability coefficients of .88 and .92 by using the test-retest procedure. Permission to use the LPI has been granted by the Wiley Corporation. The approval letter is included in the appendix.

Procedures

The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study by submitting and defending the proposal to the dissertation committee of Liberty University. The proposal was then submitted to the Liberty University IRB for approval.

A tailored design was used to encourage response by all participants. According to Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009), a tailored design approach to survey research can encourage high quantity and quality of response to the surveyor's request.

Prior to beginning the study, the researcher obtained written permission to conduct research from the superintendent of the participating school district. Upon receiving approval to conduct the research study, the researcher spoke with the principals of the participating schools to determine their expectations and policies for distributing and collecting survey materials for teachers in the school.

Upon receiving approval from the school district and the school principal, the researcher sent an introduction letter via email to each of the teachers employed by the school. The school principals provided a teacher roster with email addresses for each teacher. Sending information about how the survey results will be used to benefit the participants can encourage survey participation (Dillman, et al., 2009). The participants were informed that the surveys used are valid and reliable and have been used in similar studies to determine levels of teacher morale. The researcher included an informed consent letter and demographics survey to each participant in the study to be completed prior to conducting any survey research. Surveys created through Google forms were first sent via email and then delivered to teachers from the principal. A follow-up email was sent to the participants exactly one week after the initial distribution to thank the participants for their participation and encourage those who have not completed the

survey. One week later, another email was sent to the study participants with a link to the

surveys on Google forms. Online surveys are more easily completed by research participants and

have gained popularity in recent years (Webb, 2014). The researcher sent the survey early in the

school year. Teachers are asked to participate in numerous surveys throughout the school year.

After they have completed a few surveys, the likelihood of participation in another survey drops

(Dillman, et al., 2009).

      The researcher included in the introduction letter that $1 will be donated to the local

chapter of United Way for each survey response received. The participating school system is a

partner with the local United Way Chapter. By offering a donation to a local charity, the

researcher will identify with the survey population and appeal to shared values that may help to

appeal to participants to participate in the survey (Dillman et al., 2009).

<div align="center">**Data Analysis**</div>

      The researcher reported information about the number of members of the sample

population who did and did not return the survey (Dillman et al., 2009). The researcher

conducted a respondent/no respondent analysis to determine the response bias of the survey data.

      The researcher collected data from the cross-sectional survey of participants. Data was

collected and recorded in a spreadsheet. IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

(SPSS) software was used for recording and analyzing the data collected by the researcher. Each

completed survey instrument was recorded into appropriate categories. Each PTO survey

received a teacher morale score, the LPI, which will be broken down into each of the five

leadership practices, and the experience level of the teacher completing the instrument will be

recorded.

The researcher used SPSS to screen the survey collected for outliers, missing values, and normality. A scatter plot was used to test for bivariate outliers, linearity, and normal distribution. A multiple regression analysis requires that the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables be linear, therefore assumptions may be tested using a scatter plot to test linearity (Moore, 2012). After the data was collected, screened, and recorded, the research hypothesis was evaluated using a standard multiple linear regression analysis. Multiple linear regression analysis tests for a linear relationship between one or more predictor variables and one criterion variable (Ary et al., 2006). Multiple regression is the most appropriate for this study because it is used to determine the correlation between one criterion variable, teacher morale level, and two or more predictor variables, principal leadership style and years of teaching experience (Gall et al., 2007). Multiple linear regression analysis has been used successfully in previous studies examining teacher morale and leadership practices (Moore, 2012; Leech & Fulton, 2008; Webb, 2014).

The researcher used an alpha level of 0.05 to test the hypothesis and the null hypothesis. Using an alpha level of 0.05 will reduce the possibility of a Type I error (Creswell, 2003).

It is assumed that all respondents to the survey will respond honestly and thoughtfully to survey questions. It is assumed that all participants have a sincere interest in participating in the research and do not any other motives (Wargo, 2015). Surveys were self-administered by the participants of the study; therefore, the researcher did not have control over the delivery of the survey questions (Dillman et al., 2009).

Summary

This study intends to contribute to the research on the relationship between teacher morale and principal leadership by examining a rural high school in Georgia. There is a considerable gap in the literature available regarding principal leadership and teacher morale

when using levels of teaching experience as a variable. This chapter details the methods that will be used for this study. The study will be quantitative using a correlational research design. The type of research and context of the study are discussed in this chapter. Research questions and hypotheses are listed and explained. Additionally, the survey instruments are described in detail. The researcher will incorporate a tailored design to encourage response by all participants. A description of the participants and the setting for the study is given in this chapter as well. Survey data will be collected and analyzed using a multiple linear regression analysis test.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study was to examine the relationship between principal leadership style, teacher morale, and the years of experience of the teacher in a rural school district.

The predictor variables for this study were the principal's leadership style as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and the years of teaching experience of the participant. The criterion variable will be the teacher morale level as measured by the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire (PTO).

Chapter Four includes a description of the sample population, results of the data analysis, a detailed report of the results of the study, and a summary of the research question analysis. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to analyze the research question and determine the correlation between teacher morale level, principal leadership style, and years of teaching experience of the participants.

Research Question

RQ1: How accurately can teacher morale be predicted from a linear combination of principal leadership style and years of experience in education?

Null Hypotheses

H$_o$1: There is no significant, predictive relationship between teacher morale and the linear combination of principal leadership style and years of experience in education.

H$_o$2: There is no significant, predictive relationship between principal leadership style, the linear combination of teacher morale, and years of experience in education.

H$_o$3: There is no significant, predictive relationship between years of experience in education and the linear combination of principal leadership style and years of teacher morale.

Descriptive Statistics

Initially, the total sample included 203 certified public school teachers at four schools located in a rural school district in Georgia. One hundred seven participants did not return the survey. The final sample was made up of 96 certified public school teachers. Table 2 includes the participant summary. All of the surveys returned were valid and were used in the study. The teachers that participated in the survey had an average of 14.44 years of teaching experience.

The collected data were the responses to the LPI and the PTO. The mean and standard deviation for each predictor variable of principal leadership style and teachers' years of experience, along with the criterion variable of teacher morale level, are displayed in Tables 3 - 4.

Table 1

Participant Summary

	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	*N*	Percent	*N*	Percent
PTO * Experience	96	100.0%	0	0.0%	96	100.0%
PTO * LPI	96	100.0%	0	0.0%	96	100.0%

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation for Teacher Morale/Experience

PTO			
Experience	Mean	*N*	Std. Deviation
1.00	293.3333	3	11.54701
2.00	137.3333	3	104.50040
3.00	185.6667	3	111.60794
5.00	228.0000	5	65.72671
6.00	278.0000	4	40.00000
7.00	244.6667	3	46.18802
8.00	291.0000	10	11.97219
9.00	270.0000	2	.00000
10.00	255.0000	6	39.34971
11.00	272.0000	1	.
13.00	178.8571	7	16.03567
14.00	209.4000	5	27.72724
15.00	270.0000	1	.
17.00	280.5000	2	23.33452
18.00	234.4286	14	31.72651
19.00	300.0000	3	.00000
20.00	188.5000	2	157.68481
21.00	257.0000	1	.
22.00	255.0000	2	9.89949
23.00	257.0000	2	.00000
25.00	260.3333	3	2.88675
26.00	262.0000	1	.
27.00	240.3750	8	11.66114
28.00	287.5000	4	19.00000
30.00	259.0000	1	.

Total	244.0833	96	53.88246

Table 3

Mean and Standard Deviation Teacher Morale/Principal Leadership

PTO			
LPI	Mean	*N*	Std. Deviation
.00	230.0000	1	.
92.00	248.0000	3	.00000
93.00	248.0000	1	.
163.00	180.0000	4	.00000
173.00	270.0000	3	.00000
174.00	210.8000	5	33.09381
175.00	256.5000	8	16.57020
186.00	258.0000	4	.00000
197.00	269.7143	7	9.62140
198.00	280.0000	1	.
200.00	197.0000	4	.00000
201.00	188.5000	8	119.19851
202.00	283.6667	9	18.68154
204.00	297.0000	2	.00000
205.00	281.4444	9	21.31379
206.00	300.0000	4	.00000
208.00	188.0000	3	.00000
209.00	188.0000	1	.
213.00	257.0000	4	.00000
226.00	218.0000	3	.00000
227.00	227.0000	4	6.00000
229.00	166.0000	4	.00000
261.00	298.0000	4	.00000
Total	244.0833	96	53.88246

In category one of the PTO, Rapport with the Principal, the average score was 1.94 with a standard deviation of .43. Teachers with 11-20 years of teaching experience reported the greatest rapport with the principal while teachers with 0-10 years of experience reported the least rapport with the principal.

In category two of the PTO, Satisfaction with Teaching, the average score was 1.87 with a standard deviation of .25. Teachers with 0-10 years of experience indicated the most satisfaction with teaching while teachers with 11-20 years of experience were the least satisfied.

In category three of the PTO, Rapport among Teachers, the average score was 2.10 with a standard deviation of .25. Newer teachers indicated a better rapport among teachers than those with more than 20 years of experience.

In category four of the PTO, Teacher Salary, the average score was 1.78 with a standard deviation of .37. Satisfaction with teacher salary was the lowest rated category for the entire survey. Teachers with 0-10 years of experience displayed the least satisfaction with salary while teachers with 21-30 years of experience or more were the most satisfied.

In category five of the PTO, Teacher Load, the average score was 2.03 with a standard deviation of .39. Teachers with 0-10 years of experience indicated more satisfaction with teacher load than teachers with 11-20 years of experience. Teachers with more than 20 years of experience indicated the least satisfaction with teacher load.

In category six of the PTO, Curricular Issues, the average score was 2.10 with a standard deviation of .48. Teachers with 0-10 years of experience indicated the least satisfaction with curricular issues while teachers with 11-20 years of experience were most satisfied with the curriculum.

In category seven of the PTO, Teacher Status, the average score was 1.90 with a standard deviation of .27. Newer teachers indicated more satisfaction with teacher status than those teachers with more than 10 years of experience.

In category eight of the PTO, Community Support for Education, the average score was 1.82 with a standard deviation of .45. Teachers with 0-10 years of experience indicated the most satisfaction with community support while teachers with more than 20 years of experience indicated the least satisfaction with community support for education.

In category nine of the PTO, School Facilities and Services, the average score was 2.03 with a standard deviation of .46. Teachers with 0-10 years of experience expressed the most satisfaction with school facilities and services.

In category ten of the PTO, Community Pressures, the average score was 1.95 with a standard deviation of .52. Teachers with 1-10 years of experience indicated the least satisfaction with community pressure while teachers with more than 20 years of experience indicated the most satisfaction with community pressure.

When the PTO was compared to teachers' years of experience, teachers with 0-10 years of experience as a classroom teacher had the highest level of self-reported morale with a total PTO score of 198.69 out of a possible score of 300. Teachers with 11-20 years of experience had a teacher morale level score of 195.06. Teachers with 21-30, or more, years of experience in the classroom had the lowest teacher morale score of 187.72.

The means and standard deviations for the LPI are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Mean and Standard Deviation for Principal Leadership Style/Experience

Experience	Mean	*N*	Std. Deviation
1.00	202.6667	3	4.93288
2.00	196.0000	3	8.66025
3.00	188.3333	3	21.93931
5.00	180.2000	5	23.55207
6.00	252.5000	4	17.00000
7.00	237.6667	3	20.20726
8.00	198.4000	10	9.13114
9.00	173.0000	2	.00000
10.00	188.5000	6	22.22386
11.00	175.0000	1	.
13.00	205.4286	7	29.39874
14.00	201.0000	5	2.23607
15.00	173.0000	1	.
17.00	202.0000	2	.00000
18.00	192.6429	14	14.18345
19.00	202.0000	3	.00000
20.00	201.5000	2	.70711
21.00	213.0000	1	.
22.00	144.5000	2	74.24621
23.00	213.0000	2	.00000
25.00	201.0000	4	8.00000
27.00	145.3750	8	87.11066
28.00	204.3333	3	.57735
30.00	205.0000	2	.00000
Total	194.4271	96	36.26503

In category one of the LPI, *model the way*, the average score was 8.17 with a standard deviation of .29. In category two of the LPI, *inspire a shared vision*, the average score was 7.99 with a standard deviation of .56. In category three of the LPI, *challenge the process*, the average score was 8.15 with a standard deviation of .43. In category four of the LPI, *enable others to act*, the average score was 8.11 with a standard deviation of .19. *Enable others to act* received the most consistent answers among survey participants and received the lowest standard deviation of the five categories. In category five of the LPI, *encourage the heart*, the average score was 8.42 with a standard deviation of .28. *Encourage the heart* was the highest rated category among all teachers who participated in the survey.

When compared with years of experience of the teachers surveyed, teachers with 0-10 years of experience in the classroom had the highest average score on the LPI of 251.88. Teachers with 21-30, or more, years of teaching experience had the next highest average score on the LPI with an average score of 235.42. Teachers with 11-20 years of teaching experience had the lowest average score on the LPI of 242.96.

<div align="center">

Results

</div>

Null Hypothesis One

The first null hypothesis stated there was no statistically significant, predictive relationship between teacher morale and the combination of principal leadership style and the years of experience in education of the participants. An exploratory data analysis was conducted to determine whether the null hypothesis was accepted or rejected. The histograms in Figures 1-3 show the frequency of scores of the three variables. All three variables showed a reasonable, normal distribution of scores with years of experience being more platykurtic in the distribution.
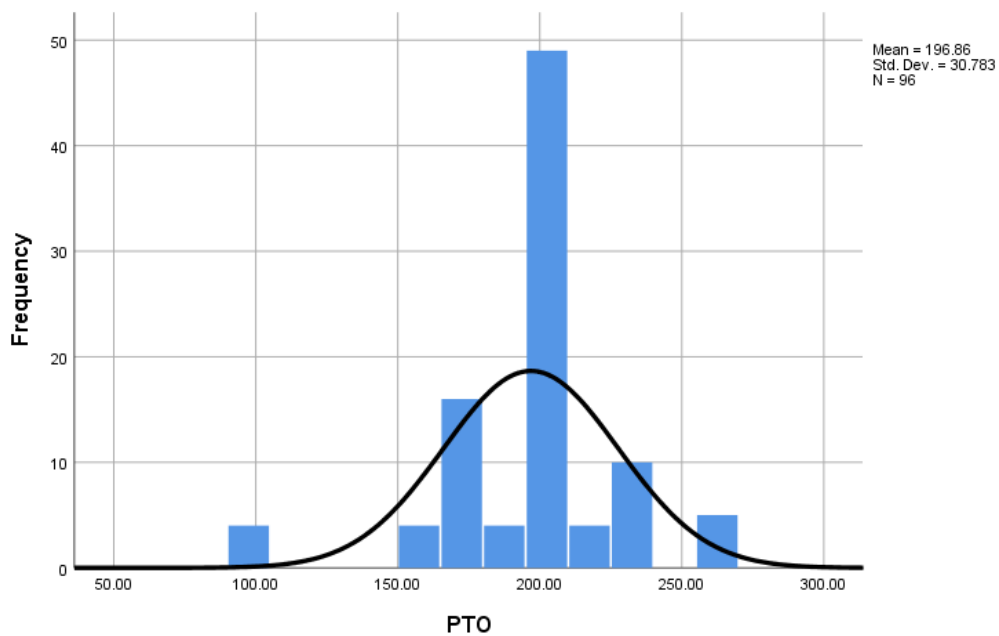
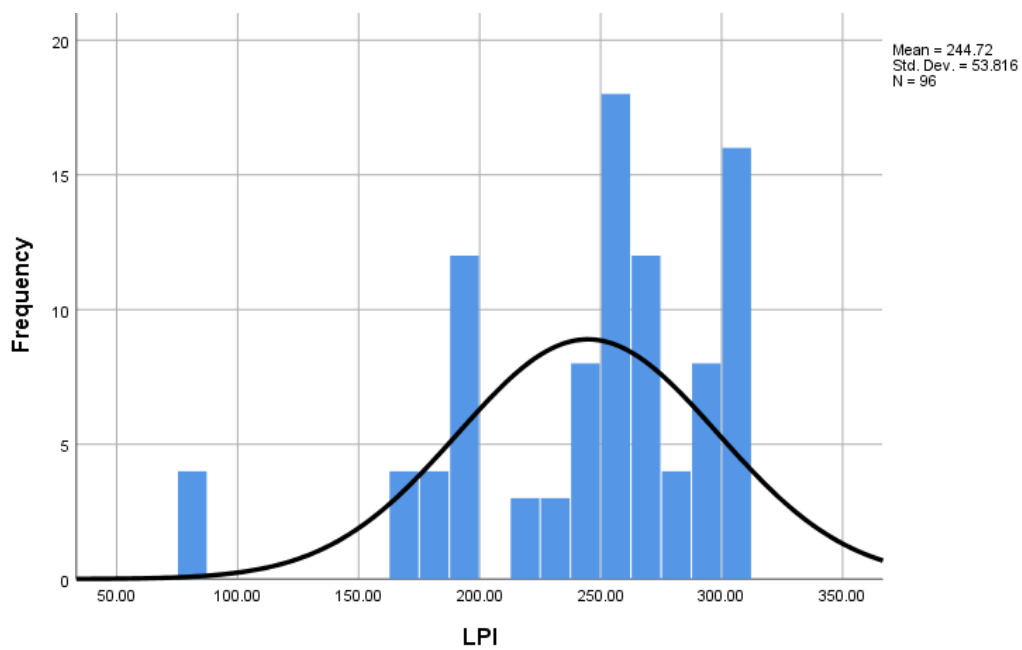*Figure 1.* Histogram for teacher morale (PTO).

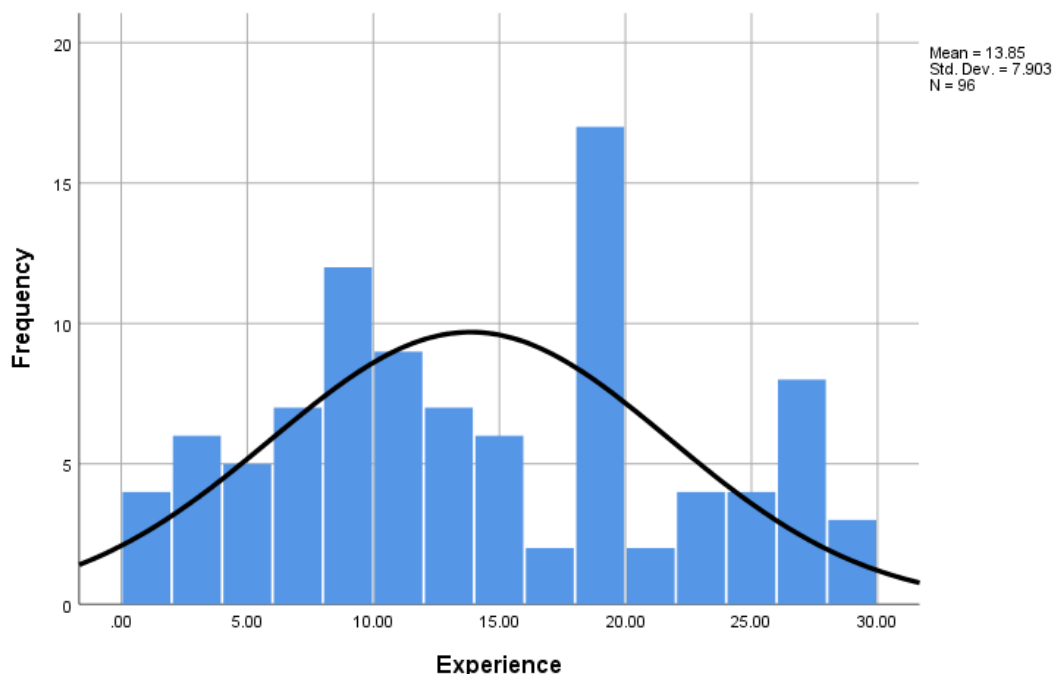*Figure 2.* Histogram for principal leadership style (LPI).

Figure 3. Histogram for teacher years of experience.

Data screening. Prior to data analysis, SPSS v.25 was used to run statistical tests on the predictor variables (principal leadership style and teachers' years of experience) and the criterion variable (teacher morale level) to detect outliers. The means and standard deviations of the PTO are presented in Table 2. The data was analyzed based on each null hypothesis.

Assumptions. Multiple linear regression analysis requires that several assumptions be met to ensure that the data can be analyzed using multiple regression. The first assumption is the assumption of bivariate outliers. The second assumption is the assumption of multivariate normal distribution. The third and final assumption for this study is the assumption of non-multicollinearity. The researcher used SPSS v.25 to test the assumptions of linearity.

The first assumption is the assumption of bivariate outliers, meaning that there are no influential cases biasing the model. This assumption tests for significant outliers that may influence the data and the results are displayed in Figure 4. A scatterplot was used to analyze the predictor variables of principal leadership style and years of experience (x, x), as well as each

predictor variable (x) and the criterion variable of teacher morale (y). Figures 4-5 demonstrate that the assumption of bivariate outliers was met.
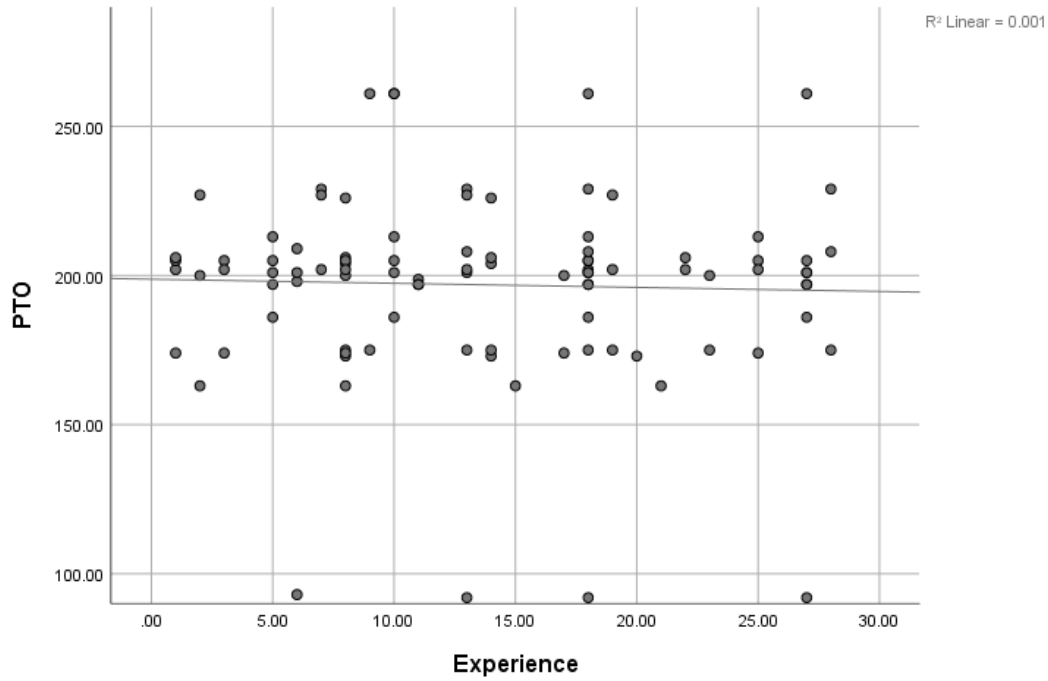

Figure 4. Linear scatterplot of years of experience (x) and teacher morale (y).
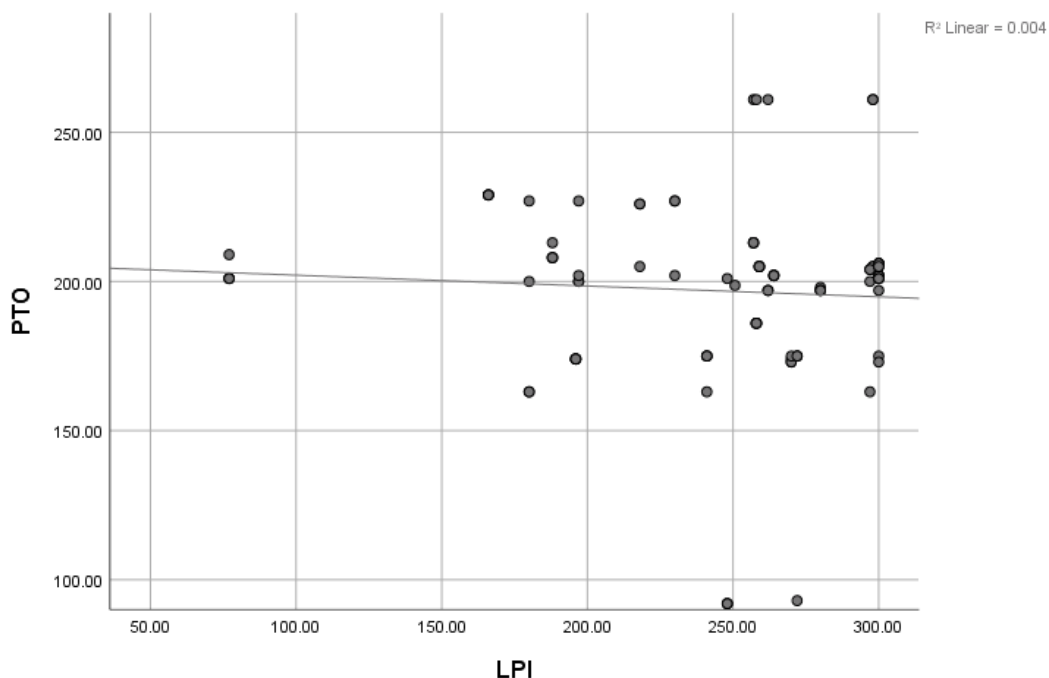
Figure 5. Linear scatterplot of principal leadership style (x) and teacher morale (y).

The second assumption is the assumption of multivariate normal distribution. The results

are displayed in Figures 6-7. Figure 6 displays the linear relationship between the teacher morale

(y) and principal leadership style (x). Figure 7 displays the linear relationship between teacher

morale (y) and the experience level (x). Using a visual examination of the data recorded in the

scatterplots, each set of data shows the classic *cigar shape* that indicates the assumption for

linearity was tenable. A normal distribution can be defined as a specific shape that can be an

equation, such as the classic cigar shape for normal distribution in a scatterplot (Gravetter &

Wallnau 2008). A linear relationship exists between both sets of variables; therefore, the second
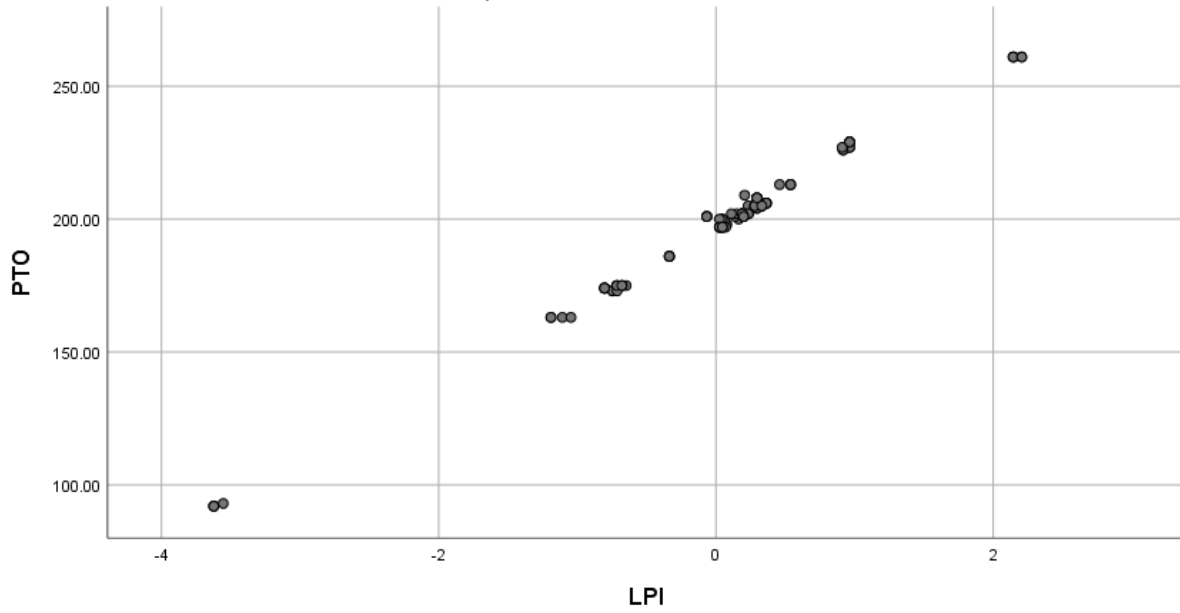
assumption was met.

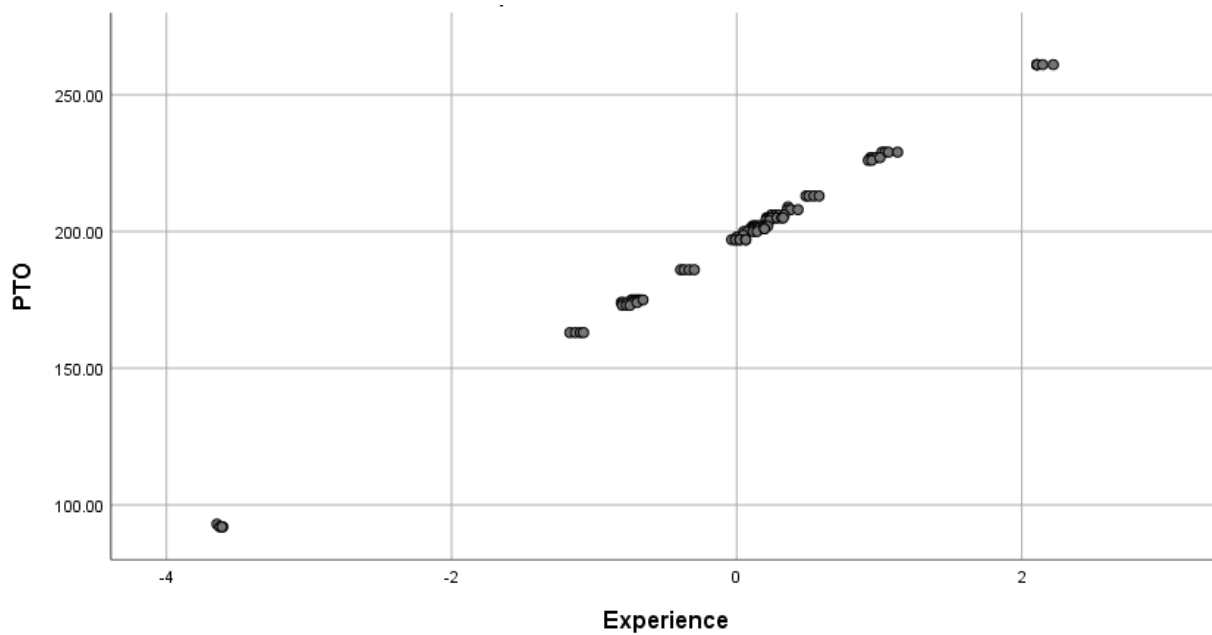*Figure 6.* P-Plot of principal leadership style (x) and teacher morale (y).

Figure 7. P-Plot of years of experience (x) and teacher morale (y).

The third and final assumption is the assumption of non-multicollinearity, or the absence

of multicollinearity, among the predictor variables of principal leadership style and years of

experience. The two statistics that measure this are Tolerance and Variation Inflation Factor

(VIF). The results of the third assumption test are displayed in Table 5. Tolerance is measured

from 0.00 to 1.00 with non-multicollinearity being coefficients closer to 1.00 and the violation of

the assumption being coefficients of 0.10 or less (Rovai, Baker, & Ponton, 2014). The variance

inflation factor (VIF) should be well-below 10. The data analysis showed that the Tolerance was

measured at .993 for both variables and the VIF score for the predictor variables in null

hypothesis one as 1.007. The assumption analysis shows that the assumption is met for null

hypothesis one.

Table 5

Collinearity Statistics

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	*t*	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	208.407	16.302		12.785	.000		
	LPI	-.038	.059	-.067	-.644	.521	.993	1.007
	Experience	-.159	.404	-.041	-.392	.696	.993	1.007
a. Dependent Variable: PTO								

Results for Null Hypothesis One. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to predict teacher morale based on principal leadership style and years of experience of the participant. Tables 6-8 display the multiple linear regression analysis for Null Hypothesis One. Table 6 provides the R, R^2, adjusted R^2, and the standard error of the estimate. A value of $R = .075$ indicates that there is not a good level of prediction. The value of $R^2 = .006$ indicates that principal leadership and years of experience explain less than 1% of the variability of teacher morale.

Table 6

Model Summary for $H_0 1$

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.075[a]	.006	-.016	31.02405
a. Predictors: (Constant), Experience, LPI				
b. Dependent Variable: PTO				

Table 7 displays the ANOVA analysis for null hypothesis one. The analysis of the ANOVA shows that the significance value is $p = 0.826$, which is above 0.05. A significant regression equation was found $F (2, 93) = .191$, $p > .001$, with an $R^2 = .006$. Therefore, there is not a statistically significant relationship between teacher morale and a linear combination of principal leadership style and years of experience.

Table 7

ANOVA Analysis for H^01

Model		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
1	Regression	368.458	2	184.229	.191	.826[b]
	Residual	89653.561	93	964.017		
	Total	90022.019	95			
a. Dependent Variable: PTO						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Experience, LPI						

Table 8 displays the coefficients analysis for null hypothesis one. The analysis of the coefficients shows a significance level of $\alpha = .521$ for the LPI and a significance level of $\alpha = .696$ for years of experience, both of which are outside of the range of the 95% confidence interval. The analysis shows the principal leadership did not significantly predict teacher morale, $t(96) = -.64, p = .521$. The analysis also shows that years of experience did not significantly predict teacher morale, $t(96) = -.40, p = .696$. There is no significant correlation between teacher morale and a linear combination of principal leadership and years of experience.

Table 8

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	*t*	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	208.407	16.302		12.785	.000	176.036	240.779
	LPI	-.038	.059	-.067	-.644	.521	-.156	.080
	Experience	-.159	.404	-.041	-.392	.696	-.961	.644
a. Dependent Variable: PTO								

Based on the analysis of the data, null hypothesis one failed to be rejected, indicating that there is no significant, predictive relationship between teacher morale and a linear combination of principal leadership style and years of experience.

Null Hypothesis Two

The second null hypothesis states that there is no statistically significant, predictive relationship between principal leadership style, the linear combination of teacher morale, and years of experience in education. An exploratory data analysis was conducted to determine whether the null hypothesis was accepted or rejected. The histograms in Figures 8-10 show the frequency of scores of the three variables. All three variables showed a reasonable normal distribution of scores with years of experience being more platykurtic in the distribution.
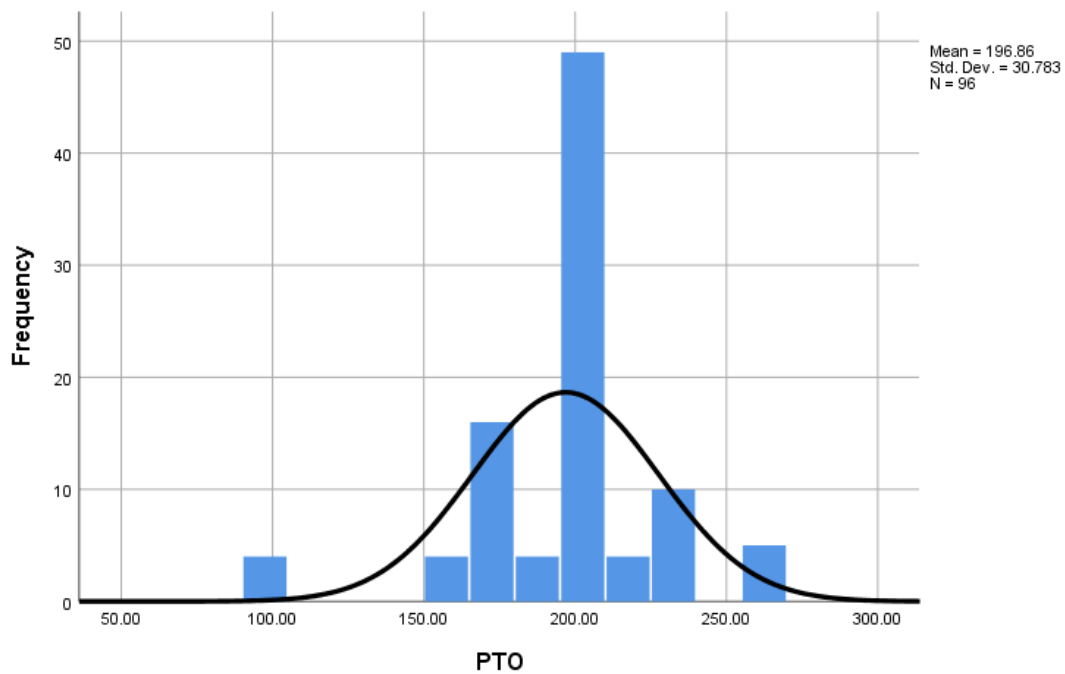
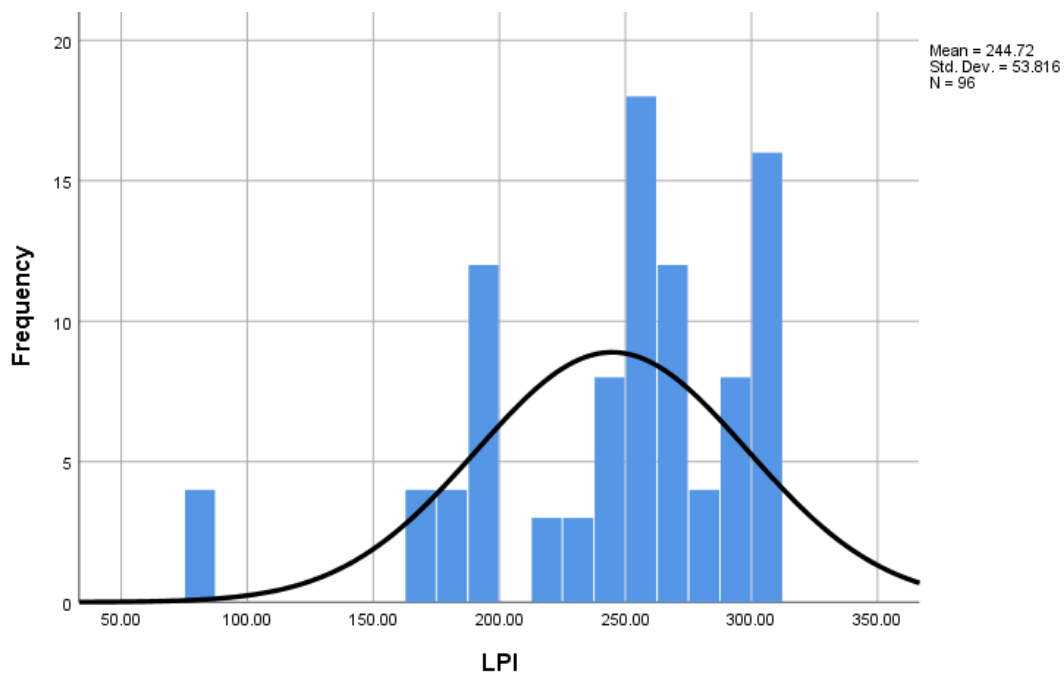*Figure 8.* Histogram for teacher morale (PTO).

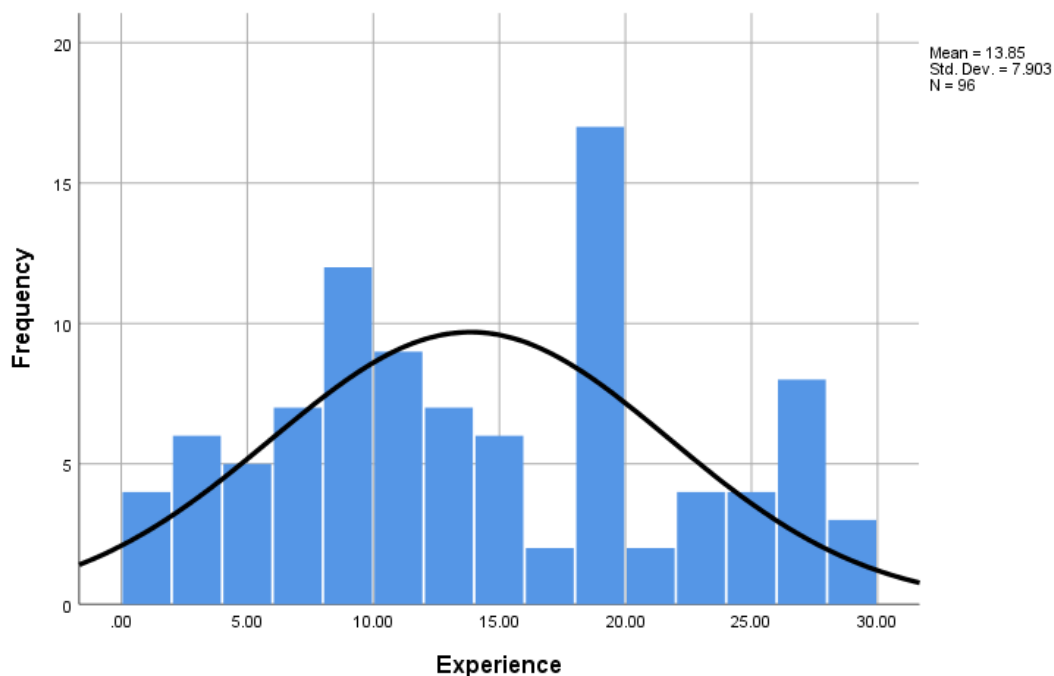*Figure 9.* Histogram for principal leadership style (LPI).

Figure 10. Histogram for teacher years of experience.

Data screening. Prior to data analysis, SPSS v.25 was used to run statistical tests on the predictor variables (teacher morale level and teachers' years of experience) and the criterion variable (principal leadership style) to detect outliers. The means and standard deviations of the PTO are presented in Table 2. The survey methods provided data that is reliable and without nonconformity or outliers. The data was analyzed in this section based on null hypothesis two.

Assumptions. Multiple linear regression analysis requires that several assumptions be met to ensure that the data can be analyzed using multiple regression. The following assumptions were tested to determine if the null hypothesis is accepted or rejected. The first assumption is the assumption of bivariate outliers. The second assumption is the assumption of multivariate normal distribution. The third and final assumption for this study is the assumption of non-multicollinearity. The researcher used SPSS v.25 to test the assumptions of linearity.

The first assumption of a multiple regression is the assumption of bivariate outliers, meaning that there are no influential cases biasing the model. This assumption tests for significant outliers that may influence the data and these are displayed in Figures 11-12. A scatterplot was used to analyze the predictor variables of teacher morale and years of experience (x, x), as well as each predictor variable (x) and the criterion variable of principal leadership style (y). Figures 9-10 demonstrate that the assumption of bivariate outliers was met.
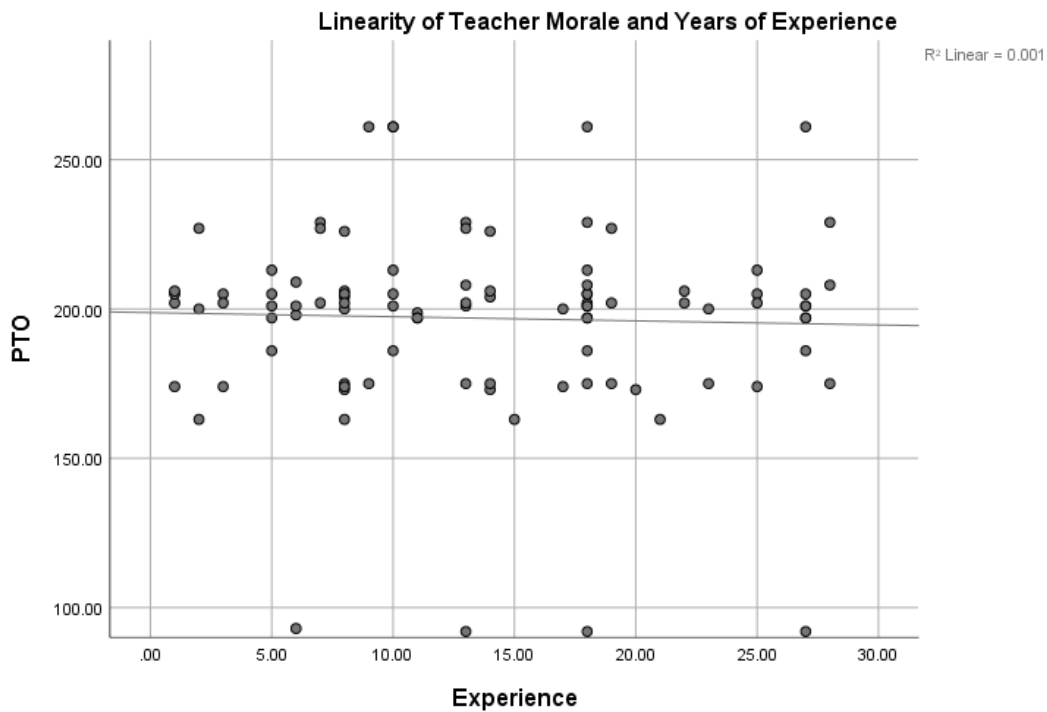

Figure 11. Linearity scatterplot of experience (x) and teacher morale (y).
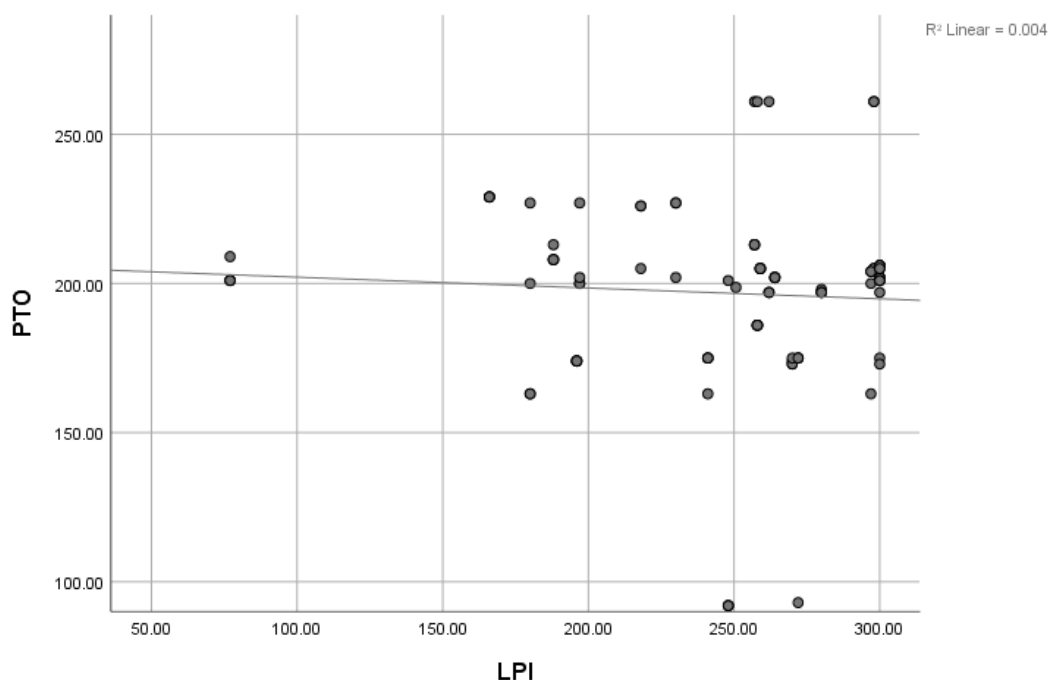
Figure 12. Linearity scatterplot of principal leadership style (x) and teacher morale (y).

The second assumption is the assumption of multivariate normal distribution. The results

are displayed in Figures 13-14. Figure 13 displays the linear relationship between the criterion

variable principal leadership style (y) and the predictor variable teacher morale (x). Figure 14

displays the linear relationship between the criterion variable principal leadership style (y) and

the predictor variable experience level (x). Using a visual examination of the scatterplot graphs,

each figure shows the classis *cigar shape that* indicates the assumption of linearity was tenable.

A normal distribution can be defined as a specific shape that can be seen in an equation, such as

the classic cigar shape of a normal distribution (Gravetter & Wallnau 2008). A linear relationship

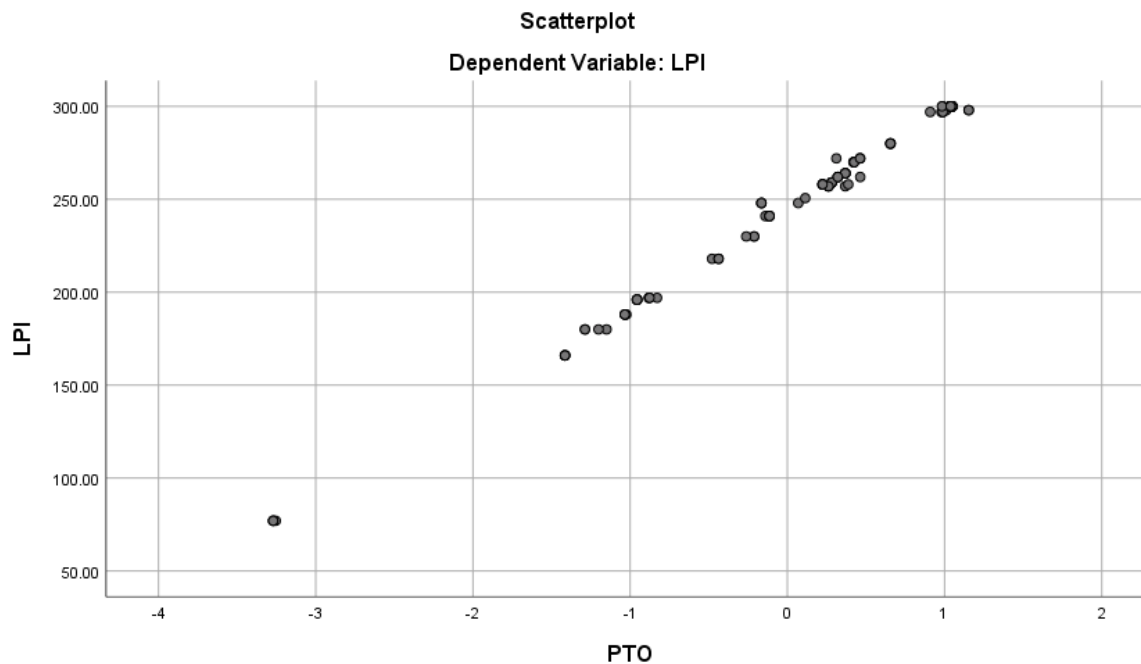exists between both sets of variables; therefore, the second assumption was met.

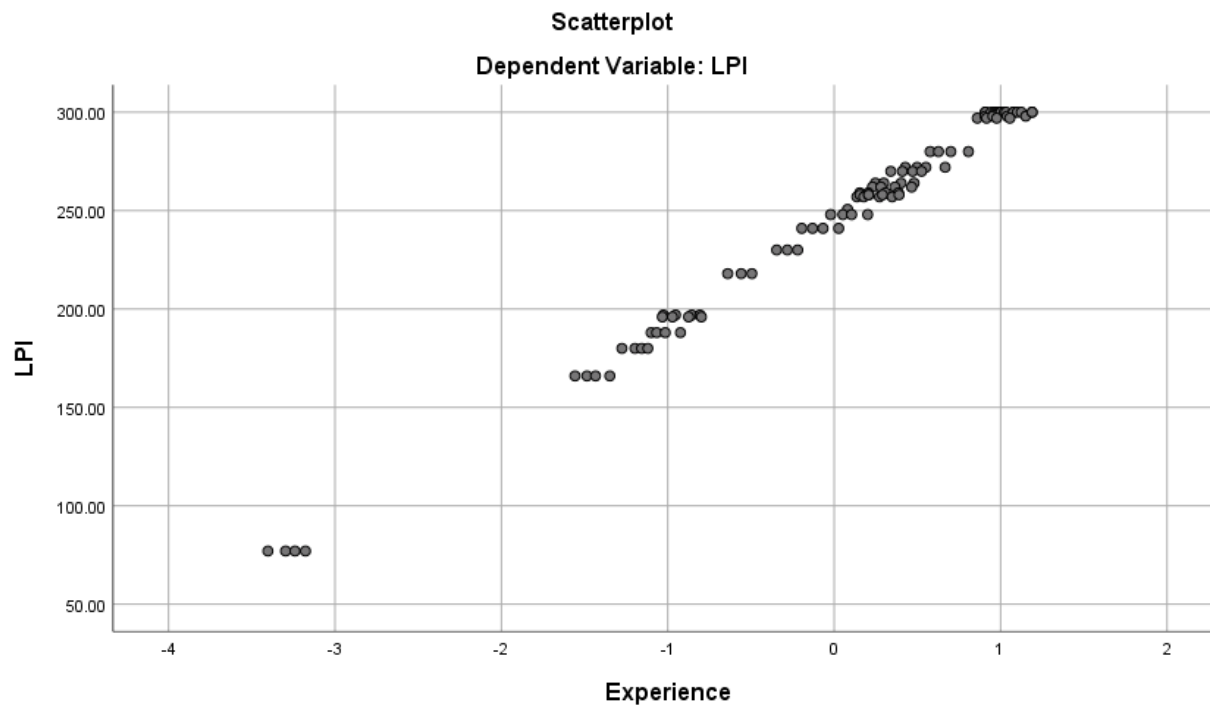*Figure 13.* P-Plot of teacher morale (x) and principal leadership style (y).

Figure 14. P-Plot of years of experience (x) and principal leadership style (y).

The third and final assumption is the assumption of non-multicollinearity, or the absence of multicollinearity, among the predictor variables of principal leadership style and years of experience. The two statistics that measure this are Tolerance and Variation Inflation Factor (VIF). The results of the third assumption test are displayed in Table 9. Tolerance is measured from 0.00 to 1.00 with non-multicollinearity being coefficients closer to 1.00 and the violation of the assumption being coefficients of 0.10 or less (Rovai et al., 2014). The variance inflation factor (VIF) should be well-below 10. The data analysis showed that the Tolerance was measured at .999 for both variables and the VIF score for the predictor variables in null hypothesis one as 1.001. The assumption analysis shows that the assumption is met for null hypothesis two.

Table 9

Collinearity Statistics

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	275.588	37.555		7.338	.000		
	PTO	-.116	.180	-.066	-.644	.521	.999	1.001
	Experience	-.578	.703	-.085	-.823	.412	.999	1.001
a. Dependent Variable: LPI								

Results for Null Hypothesis Two. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to predict principal leadership style based on teacher morale and years of experience of the participant. Tables 6-8 display the multiple linear regression analysis for Null Hypothesis Two. Table 6 provides the *R*, R^2, adjusted R^2, and the standard error of the estimate. A value of .106 for *R* indicates that there is not a good level of prediction. The value of R^2 of .011 indicates that teacher morale and years of experience explain less than 1% of the variability of principal leadership style.

Table 10

Model Summary for $H_0 2$

MODEL	R	R^2	ADJUSTED R^2	STD. ERROR OF THE ESTIMATE
1	.106[a]	.011	-.010	54.08526
a. Predictors: (Constant), Experience, PTO				
b. Dependent Variable: LPI				

Table 11 displays the ANOVA analysis for null hypothesis two. The analysis of the ANOVA shows that the significance value is 0.591 (i.e., $p = .591$), which is above 0.05. A significant regression equation was found, $F (2,93) = .191$, $p > .001$, with an $R^2 = .011$. Participants predicted principal leadership style is equal to 275.558 - .578 experience - .116 teacher morale where experience is recorded as number of years and teacher morale is recorded as the TPO score. Participants' LPI score decreased .116 for each year of experience gained. Therefore, there is not a statistically significant relationship between principal leadership style and a linear combination of teacher morale and years of experience.

Table 11

ANOVA Analysis for H^02

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3089.988	2	1544.994	.528	.591[b]
	Residual	272045.036	93	2925.215		
	Total	275135.024	95			
a. Dependent Variable: LPI						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Experience, PTO						

Table 12 displays the coefficients analysis for null hypothesis two. The analysis of the coefficients shows a significance level of $\alpha = .521$ for PTO and $\alpha = .412$ for experience level, both of which are outside the range of the 95% confidence interval. The analysis shows the teacher morale did not significantly predict principal leadership (Beta = -.07, t (96) = .52, $p = .521$). The analysis also shows that years of experience did not significantly predict principal leadership (Beta = -.09, t (96) = .41, $p = .412$). There is no significant correlation between principal leadership and a linear combination of teacher morale and years of experience.

Table 12

Coefficients for H$_0$2

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	275.588	37.555		7.338	.000	201.011	350.165
	PTO	-.116	.180	-.066	-.644	.521	-.474	.242
	Experience	-.578	.703	-.085	-.823	.412	-1.974	.817
a. Dependent Variable: LPI								

The second null hypothesis failed to be rejected in that there is no significant, predictive relationship between principal leadership style, the linear combination of teacher morale, and years of experience in education.

Null Hypothesis Three

Null hypothesis three examines the relationship between years of experience in education and the linear combination of principal leadership style and years of teacher morale. An exploratory data analysis was conducted to determine whether the null hypothesis was accepted or rejected. The histograms in figures 15-17 show the frequency of scores of the three variables. All three variables showed a reasonable normal distribution of scores with years of experience being more platykurtic in the distribution.
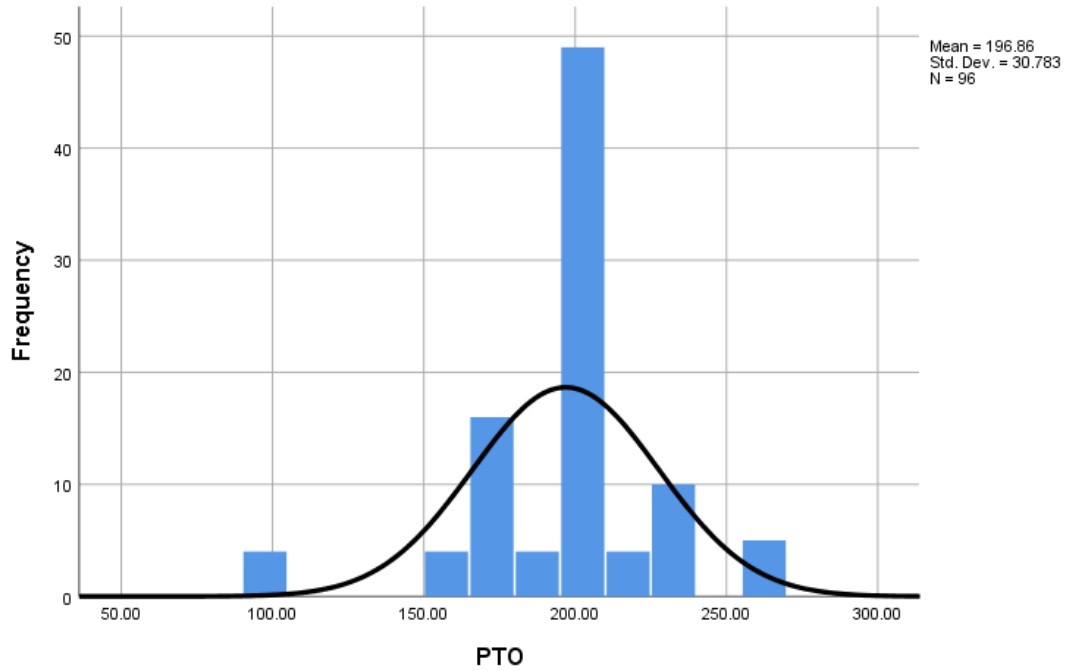
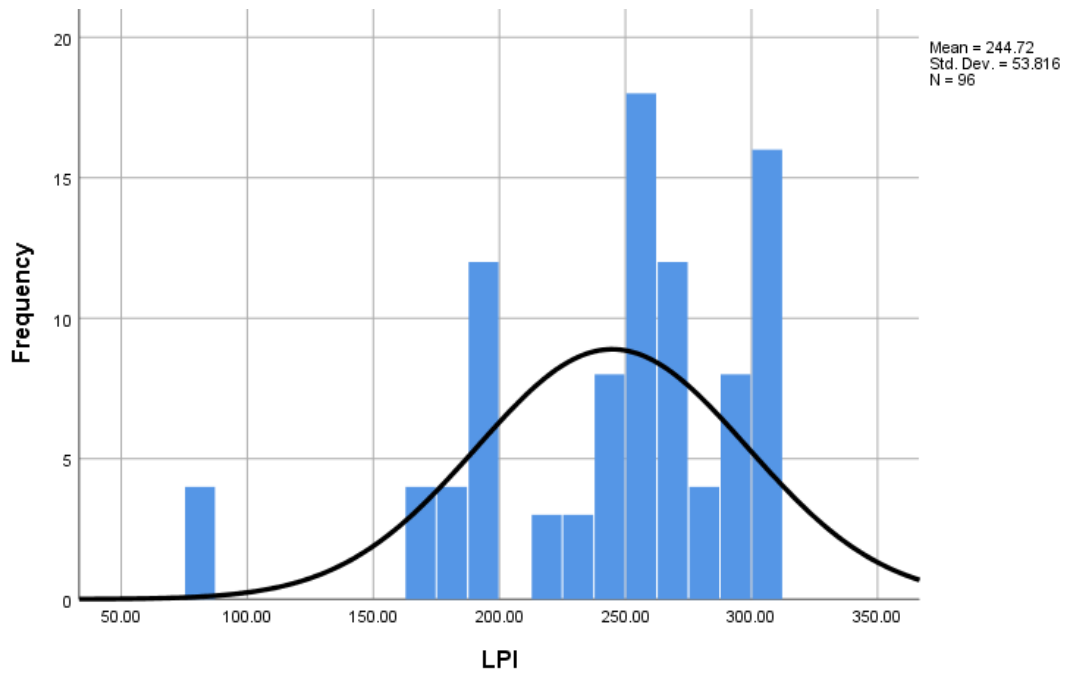*Figure 15.* Histogram for teacher morale (PTO).

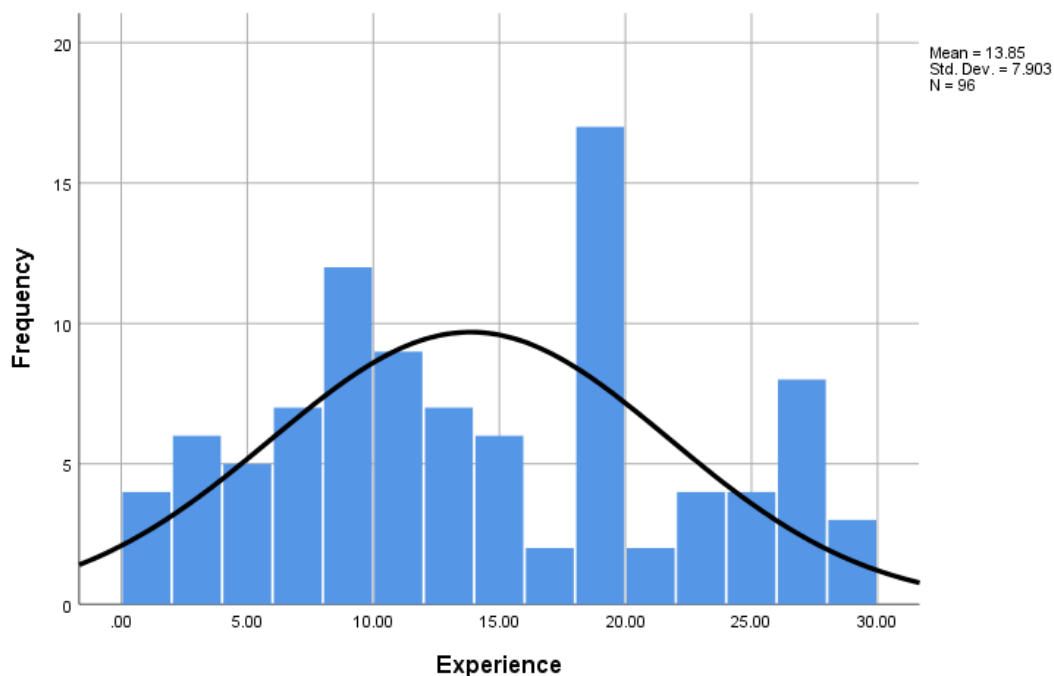*Figure 16.* Histogram for principal leadership style (LPI).

Figure 17. Histogram for teacher years of experience.

Data Screening. Prior to data analysis, SPSS v.25 was used to run statistical tests on the predictor variables (teacher morale level and principal leadership style) and the criterion variable (teacher's years of experience) to detect outliers. The means and standard deviations of the PTO are presented in Table 2. The survey methods provided data that is reliable and without nonconformity or outliers. The data was analyzed in this section based on null hypothesis three.

Assumptions. Multiple linear regression analysis requires that several assumptions be met to ensure that the data can be analyzed using multiple regression. The following assumptions were tested to determine if the null hypothesis is accepted or rejected. The first assumption is the assumption of bivariate outliers. The second assumption is the assumption of multivariate normal distribution. The third and final assumption is the assumption of non-multicollinearity. The researcher used SPSS v.25 to test the assumptions.

The first assumption of a multiple regression is the assumption of bivariate outliers. This assumption tests for significant outliers that may influence the data and the results are displayed in Figures 18-19. A scatterplot was used to analyze the predictor variables of teacher morale and principal leadership style (x, x), as well as each predictor variable (x) and the criterion variable or years of experience (y). Based on the analysis of the scatterplot, the assumption was met in that there were no extreme bivariate outliers.
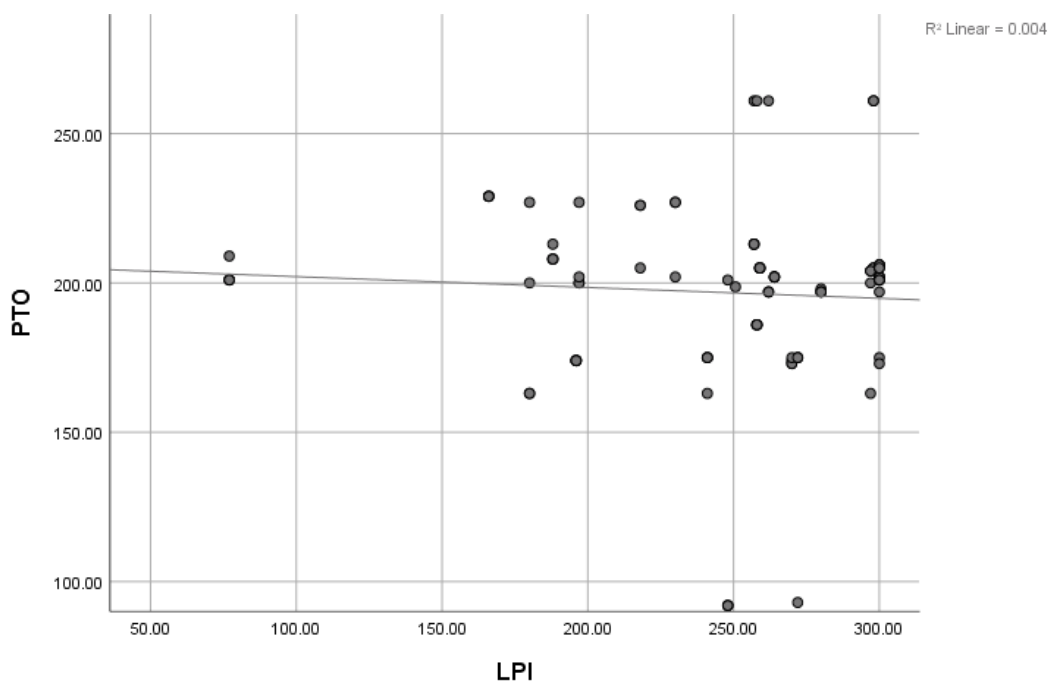

Figure 18. Linearity scatterplot, teacher morale (y) and principal leadership style (x).
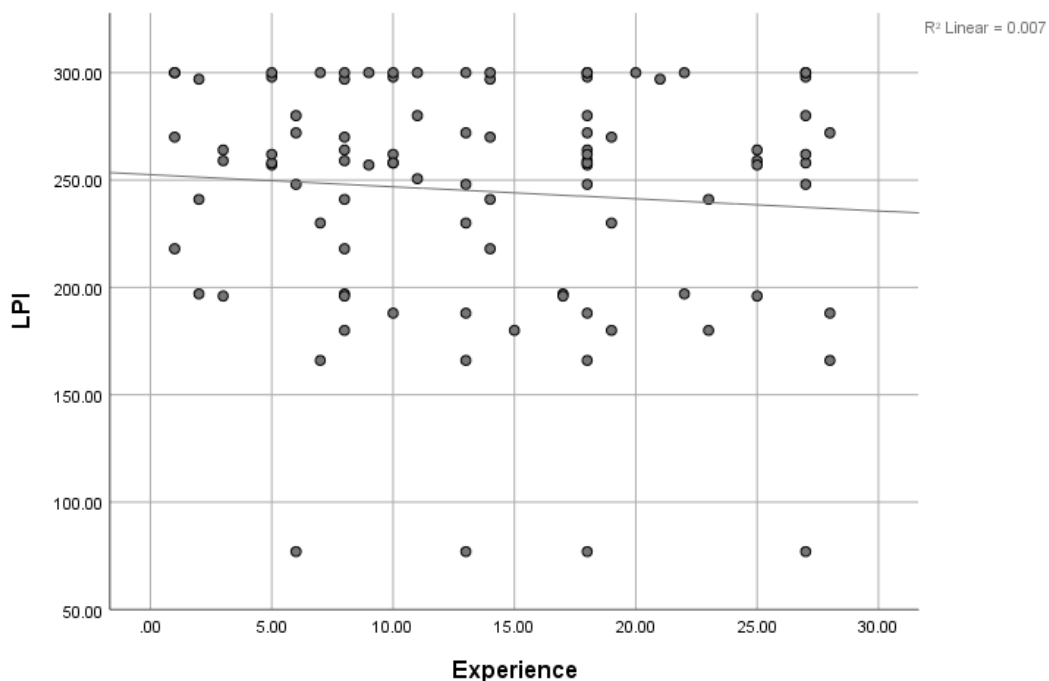
Figure 19. Linearity scatterplot, years of experience (x) and principal leadership style (y).

The second assumption is the assumption of multivariate normal distribution. The results are displayed in Figures 20-21. Figure 20 displays the linear relationship between the criterion variable, years of experience (y), and the predictor variable, teacher morale (x). Figure 21 displays the linear relationship between the criterion variable, years of experience (y), and the predictor variable, principal leadership style (x). Using a visual examination of the scatterplot graphs, each figure shows the classis *cigar shape* that indicates the assumption of linearity was tenable. A normal distribution can be defined as a specific shape that can be seen in an equation, such as the classic cigar shape of a normal distribution (Gravetter & Wallnau 2008). A linear relationship exists between both sets of variables; therefore, the second assumption was met.
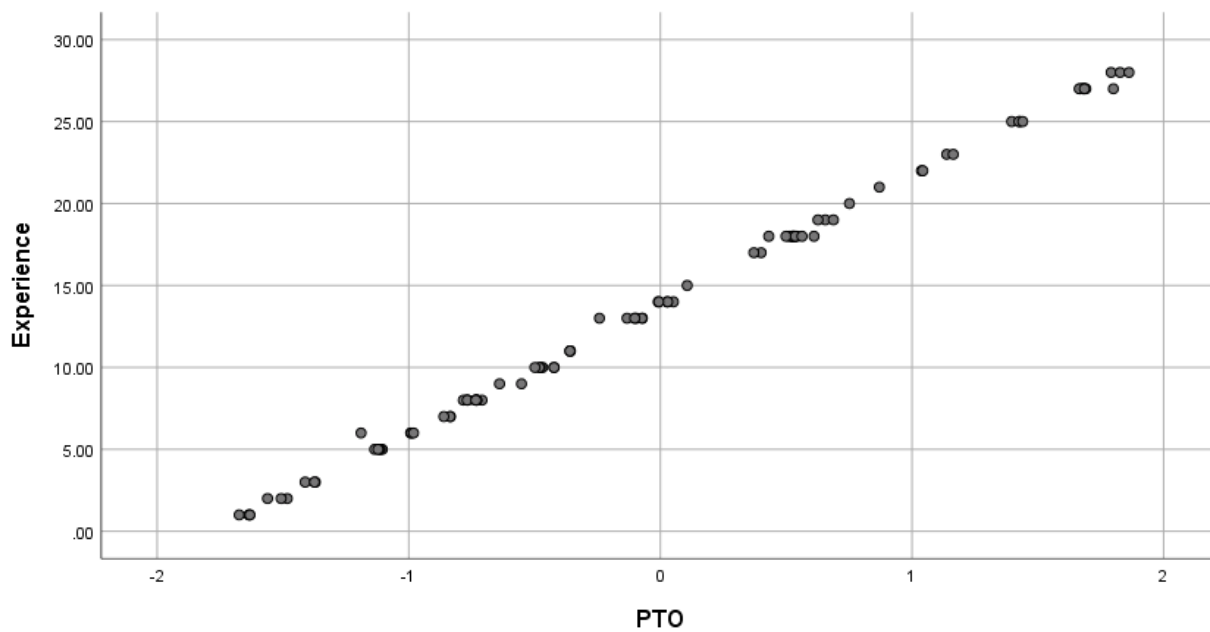
Figure 20. P-Plot for teacher morale (x) and experience (y).
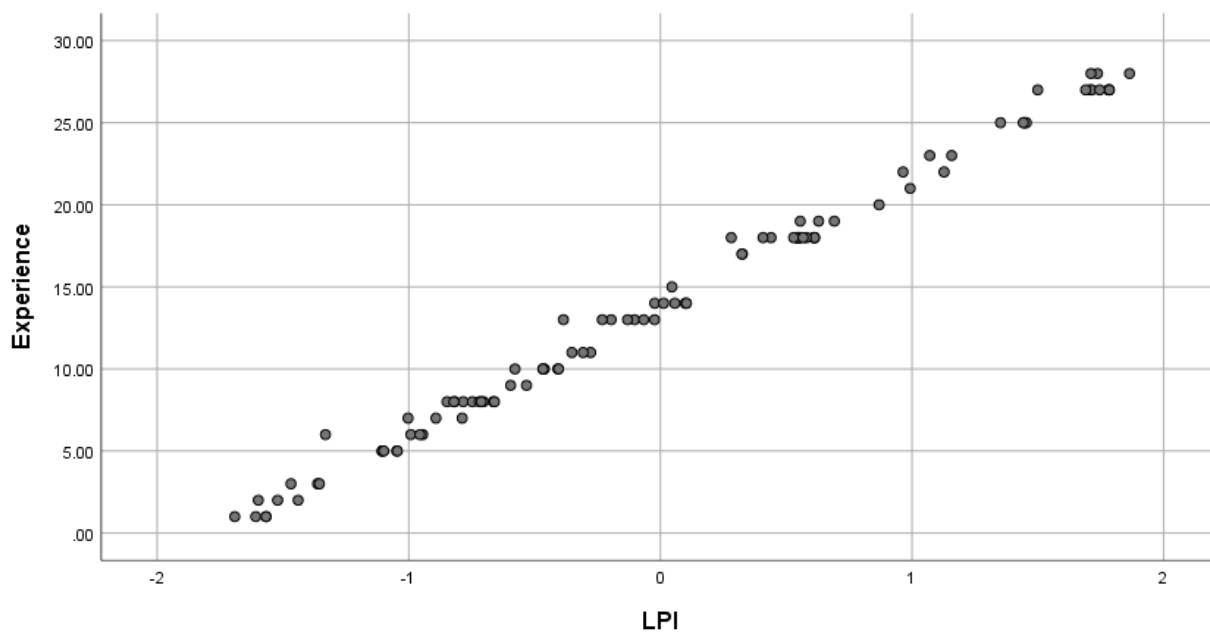
Figure 21. P-Plot for principal leadership style (x) and experience (y).

The third and final assumption is the assumption of non-multicollinearity, or the absence of multicollinearity, among the predictor variables of principal leadership style and years of experience. The two statistics that measure this are Tolerance and Variation Inflation Factor (VIF). The results of the third assumption test are displayed in Table 13. Tolerance is measured from 0.00 to 1.00 with non-multicollinearity being coefficients closer to 1.00 and the violation of the assumption being coefficients of 0.10 or less (Rovai et al., 2014). The variance inflation factor (VIF) should be well-below 10. The data analysis showed that the Tolerance was measured at .996 for both variables and the VIF score for the predictor variables in null hypothesis one as 1.004. The assumption analysis shows that the assumption is met for null hypothesis three.

Table 13

Collinearity Statistics

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	*t*	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	18.967	6.656		2.850	.005		
	PTO	-.010	.027	-.041	-.392	.696	.996	1.004
	LPI	-.013	.015	-.085	-.823	.412	.996	1.004
a. Dependent Variable: Experience								

Results for Null Hypothesis Three. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to predict teacher morale based on principal leadership style and years of experience of the participant. Tables 15-17 display the model summary for the multiple linear regression analysis for null hypothesis three. Table 14 provides the R, R^2, adjusted R^2, and the standard error of the estimate. A value of $R = .092$ indicates that there is not a good level of prediction. The value of $R^2 = .008$ indicates that principal leadership and teacher morale explain less than 1% of the variability of years of experience.

Table 14

Model Summary for $H_0 3$

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.092[a]	.008	-.013	7.95399
a. Predictors: (Constant), PTO, LPI				
b. Dependent Variable: Experience				

Table 15 displays the ANOVA analysis for null hypothesis three. A significant regression equation was found ($f(2, 93) = .397, p > .001$), with an $R^2 = .008$. Participants predicted years of experience are equal to 18.967 - .010 (PTO score) - .013 (LPI score). The analysis of the ANOVA shows that the significance value is $p = 0.673$, which is above 0.05, and therefore, there is not a statistically significant relationship between years of experience and a linear combination of teacher morale and principal leadership style.

Table 15

ANOVA Analysis for H₀3

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	50.228	2	25.114	.397	.673[b]
	Residual	5883.731	93	63.266		
	Total	5933.958	95			
a. Dependent Variable: Experience						
b. Predictors: (Constant), PTO, LPI						

Table 16 displays the coefficients analysis for null hypothesis three. The analysis of the coefficients shows a significance level of .005. The analysis shows the principal leadership did not significantly predict years of experience (Beta = -.09, t (96) = -.82, p = .412). The analysis also shows that years of teacher morale did not significantly predict years of experience (Beta = -.04, t (96) = -.39, p = .696). There is no significant correlation between teacher morale and a linear combination of principal leadership and years of experience.

Table 16

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	*Beta*	*t*	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	18.967	6.656		2.850	.005	5.750	32.183
	LPI	-.013	.015	-.085	-.823	.412	-.043	.018
	PTO	-.010	.027	-.041	-.392	.696	-.063	.042
a. Dependent Variable: Experience								

The third null hypothesis failed to be rejected in that there is no significant, predictive

relationship between years of experience in education and the linear combination of principal

leadership style and years of teacher morale.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This study sought to determine if a relationship exists between the leadership style of the school principal and the teacher morale level, of the teachers in the school, based on the experience level of the teacher. Numerous studies report that up to 50% of teachers leave the education profession within the first five years and most teachers that leave the profession report low morale levels (Battle & Looney, 2014; Curry & O'Brien, 2012). Current literature indicates that the school principal has the greatest impact on teacher morale (Bird et al., 2009). This chapter provides a discussion that supports the results that were derived for each of the null hypotheses in the study. The implications section provides evidence that this dissertation has added to the body of knowledge pertaining to teacher morale level and principal leadership style. The specific limitations of this study are also discussed in this chapter. Lastly, recommendations for future research in this area are discussed in this chapter.

Discussion

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study is to examine the relationship between principal leadership style, teacher morale, and the years of experience of the teacher in a rural school district. The Perdue Teacher Opinionairre (PTO) and the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) were used as the instruments for data collection from the study participants. Correlations between the two instruments and the years of teaching experience of the survey participants were discussed in this study. The relationship between the variables in the study was analyzed by conducting a multiple regression analysis using SPSS v.25.

This study was framed by Maslow's (1943) *Theory of Human Motivation* . According to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, humans must have their most basic needs satisfied prior to

moving on to the next level in the hierarchy. This theory was appropriate for this study in that teachers must have their basic needs of belonging, relationships, and support satisfied prior to fulfilling their role as an effective classroom teacher. The school principal has the most influence over meeting the needs of teachers, such as establishing positive relationships and offering support (Wang & Neo, 2015). The morale level of teachers can be described using Maslow's (1943) hierarchy in that they have different levels of needs that must be met by the school principal in order to be effective.

Teacher morale is a crucial component of teacher success, student success, and overall school success. Teachers who are satisfied with their work are more likely to be successful at improving student achievement and teachers who are less satisfied are less likely to improve student achievement (Nolan & Stitzlein, 2011). The school principal is the most influential person in the school over the morale level of teachers (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). Effective leadership by the principal consistently emerges in the research as the crucial variable to teacher morale, teacher effectiveness, and student achievement (Jones, 2009).

This study attempted to look into the effect that principal leadership has on teacher morale. Effective leadership from the principal position is required to rebuild and raise the morale of teachers in any school (Hytten, 2011). The LPI survey instrument was designed to measure the effectiveness of principal leadership as reported by teachers in the school. The PTO survey instrument was designed to measure teacher morale level.

The survey data indicated that teachers with 0-10 years of classroom teaching experience had higher levels of morale than teachers with 11-20 years of classroom teaching experience. Teachers with 21-30, or more, years of classroom teaching experience indicated the lowest morale level of the three groups. Of the 10 categories represented in the PTO, the highest rated

category among all survey participants was curricular issues. Teachers with 11-20 years of teaching experience were the most satisfied with their school curriculum. The least favorable category in the PTO survey was teacher salary, with teachers that had 0-10 years of experience indicating the least satisfaction among all survey participants.

The LPI survey instrument indicated that teachers with 0-10 years of classroom experience rated their principals higher than both teachers with 11-20 years of experience and teachers with 21-30, or more, years of experience. Among all teachers who participated in the study, the highest rated category for principal leadership was *encourage the heart*. The survey questions in the *encourage the heart* category of the LPI, deal with the level of support and encouragement that teachers receive from their principal.

Null Hypothesis One

The research question for this study asked: How accurately can teacher morale be predicted from a linear combination of principal leadership style and years of experience in education? The first null hypothesis stated: There is no significant, predictive relationship between teacher morale and the linear combination of principal leadership style and years of experience in education. To investigate the null hypothesis, a multiple regression analysis was conducted using SPSS v.25. The researcher was not able to reject the null hypothesis, $F (2, 93) = .191$, $p > .001$, $R^2 = .006$, and the results of the study revealed that there is not a significant, predictive relationship between teacher morale and the linear combination of principal leadership style ($M = -.06$) and years of experience in education ($M = .004$).

According to the data analysis for null hypothesis one, teacher morale can be accurately predicted by a combination of principal leadership style and years of experience less than 1% of the time. The survey results indicate that morale level fluctuates across each experience level.

Teachers with 0-10 years of experience reported the highest morale level and teachers with 21-30 years of experience reported the lowest morale level. When broken down into categories, teachers with 0-10 years of experience indicated the least amount of satisfaction with the pressure from parents and the community in their teaching position. Feelings of respect and support from parents and the community is a major factor that influences teacher morale (Hughes, 2012). Teachers with 0-10 years of experience also reported the least satisfaction with their salary. Many teachers who report having low morale indicate that compensation is not adequate for the time and effort expended as a teacher (Webb, 2014). While the study did not find a statistically significant relationship between teacher morale and a combination of principal leadership style and years of experience, this study will add to the body of literature on teacher morale and possibly provide a springboard for future research on the topic.

In contrast to this study, Rowland (2008) conducted a similar study and concluded that teacher morale and principal leadership showed a significant positive correlation overall. Similar to this study, Rowland (2008) concluded that the lowest scoring category of teacher morale was satisfaction with salary. The Rowland (2008) study did not take into account the years of experience of the teachers in the sample and the population was comprised of only middle school teachers, whereas this study included teachers from Kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Null Hypothesis Two

The research question for this study asked: How accurately can teacher morale be predicted from a linear combination of principal leadership style and years of experience in education? The second null hypothesis stated: There is no significant, predictive relationship between principal leadership style and the linear combination of teacher morale and years of experience in education. To investigate the null hypothesis, a multiple regression analysis was

conducted using SPSS v.25. The researcher was not able to reject the null hypothesis, F (2,93) = .191, $p > .001$, $R^2 = .011$, and the results of the study revealed that there is not a significant, predictive relationship between principal leadership style, the linear combination of teacher morale ($M = -.06$), and years of experience in education ($M = .07$).

Leadership is founded on the basis of trust; principals and teachers who trust each other can work more effectively in service to their schools and communities (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Principal leadership is one of the most important and influential factors in determining teacher morale levels (Brown & Wynn, 2009). Results from the LPI indicate that teachers with 0-10 years of experience were most satisfied with the leadership style of the principal with the highest category being, *encourage the heart*. This data indicates that participants of the study feel that the most important quality of a principal is to be supportive and encouraging. For veteran teachers with more than 10 years of experience, the highest rated leadership category was *Enable Others to Act*. This indicates that veteran teachers are more likely to want autonomy from their principal, which is to be treated as professionals. Teacher autonomy is one of the major factors in determining overall teacher morale level (Hughes, 2012).

Ethier (2017) concluded that there was a statistically significant difference between teacher perception of school climate between high performing schools and low performing schools. Ethier (2017) states that teachers in high performing schools have a more positive perception of school climate than teachers in low performing schools. This would indicate that teacher morale could be impacted by the overall academic performance of the school. However, Ethier (2017) did not take into account the experience level of the teachers in the sample population. Furthermore, the sample population was comprised of only elementary school teachers.

Null Hypothesis Three

The research question for this study asked: How accurately can teacher morale be predicted from a linear combination of principal leadership style and years of experience in education? The third null hypothesis states: There is no significant, predictive relationship between years of experience in education and the linear combination of principal leadership style and teacher morale. To investigate the null hypothesis, a multiple regression analysis was conducted using SPSS v.25. The researcher was not able to reject the null hypothesis, F (2, 93) = .397, $p > .001$, $R^2 = .008$, and the results of the study revealed that there is not a significant, predictive relationship between years of experience in education, the linear combination of principal leadership style ($M = .07$), and years of teacher morale ($M = .004$).

Ohlson (2009) reports that one of the major factors in determining teacher morale level is the years of experience of the teacher. Teachers with more experience are better equipped to handle issues that come up in the day-to-day operations of the classroom such as student discipline and parent concerns (Ohlson, 2009). When analyzing the causes of teacher morale, teacher job satisfaction, and teacher retention issues, experience level is a critical factor to consider. Based on the results of this study, newer teachers with 0-10 years of experience reported different feelings around teacher morale and principal leadership than their veteran colleagues. Newer teachers reported the lack of parent and community support and low salaries as the major factors in low morale, whereas more experienced teachers were more concerned with autonomy in the classroom. Teachers who feel that they are not getting parental support may have decreased levels of morale (Hughes, 2012). While this study concluded that years of experience of a teacher is not an accurate predictor of teacher morale, it creates a model for future research in the areas of teacher morale and teacher retention.

Implications

Current research provides little evidence of the impact of principal leadership on teacher morale (Webb, 2014). This study sought to fill that gap in the current research. The results of this study add to the body of literature regarding teacher morale in that the experience level of the teacher is not an accurate predictor of morale level.

This study contributes to the literature and research on teacher morale by informing the categories of morale as described by the PTO based on the experience level of the teacher. It is important to take the experience level of a teacher into account when examining teacher morale as novice teachers leave the profession at higher rates than their veteran peers (Nolan & Stitzlein, 2011). Shaw and Newton (2014) conducted a research study to determine if a correlation exists between principal leadership and teacher job satisfaction. They concluded that a strong correlation exists between perceived leadership, teacher job satisfaction, and teacher retention; however, this study did not take into account the experience level of the participants of the study. School principals and educational researchers may benefit from the findings of this study by providing them with additional research on teacher morale level and principal leadership characteristics. Principals may use the results of this study to guide their leadership strategies when leading teachers with varied experience. This study is significant to the field of education because it allows educational leaders to identify factors that influence the morale level of teachers, leading to greater job satisfaction of teachers, improved teacher retention, and improved academic results from students.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was the sample size was selected based on a convenience sample. There were 96 participants in the study from a single school system in rural Georgia.

Initially, the researcher anticipated participation from four school systems with a total of 28 schools. The researcher requested permission to survey teachers from all four school systems. One system granted permission for the researcher to survey its teachers, one system did not respond after three requests, and two systems declined to participate in the study.

This study did not separate teachers into groups based on grade level, content area, race, or gender. The study was open to all certified teachers in the participating school district.

Recommendations for Future Research

Teacher morale level and principal leadership style could be researched on a more extensive scale by including a larger population of participants. There are many factors that influence teacher morale, so future research may take into account factors like the academic achievement of the school, the years of experience of the principal, the grade levels of the school, and the demographics of the faculty. The inclusions of a larger sample size would provide a more in depth understanding of how teacher morale level is influenced by the leadership style of the school principal. A future study may also include the incorporation of subgroups such as race, gender, and grade level of the teacher. This study included all grade levels and did not factor in race or gender. Lastly, to better understand teacher perception of principal leadership style, as well as teacher morale level, a future study could be conducted with a qualitative data collection method to include interviews with teachers and focus groups.

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APPPENDICES

Appendix A

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Appendix B

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Appendix C

CONSENT FORM

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP STYLE AND TEACHER

MORALE IN A RURAL SOUTHERN HIGH SCHOOL

Timothy Meeks
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study about principal leadership style and teacher morale. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a high school teacher in a southern rural high school. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Timothy Meeks, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is: How accurately can teacher morale be predicted from a linear combination of principal leadership style and years of experience in education?

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participants will answer a series of questions regarding your eligibility for the study, and if applicable, a series of questions directly applicable to the study. This survey should not take longer than 20 minutes.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to

participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Timothy Meeks. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at tmeeks@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Rebecca Lunde, at rmfitch@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix D

Recruitment Email to Teachers

Date: July 8, 2019

To: School System Teachers

From: Timothy Meeks

Re: Educational Survey Research

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to determine if a relationship exists between principal leadership style and teacher morale, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are a certified teacher, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey instrument. It should take approximately 30 minutes for you to complete the survey. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please click the survey link at the bottom of this page.

A consent document is provided as the first page you will see after you click on the survey link. The consent document contains additional information about my research, but you do not need to sign and return it. Please click on the survey link at the end of the consent information to indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

The researcher will donate $1.00 for each participant who completes the survey to the local United Way Chapter.

Sincerely,

Timothy Meeks
Doctoral Candidate

Click here to access the survey.

Appendix E

Demographic Information

1. Are you currently a certified public school teacher?

2. How many years have you served as a certified public school teacher?

3. Please indicate your gender.

4. What is the primary grade level that you teach for the majority of the day?

     K-2

     3-5

     6-8

     9-12

Appendix F

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