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An Exploration of Latinx Generation Z Secondary Teachers' Lived Experiences, Motivations, and Retention Factors to Teach in the Rio Grande Valley

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AN EXPLORATION OF LATINX GENERATION Z SECONDARY TEACHERS' LIVED
EXPERIENCES, MOTIVATIONS, AND RETENTION FACTORS TO TEACH
IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

A Dissertation

by

KIMBERLY B. BANDA

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
August 2022

AN EXPLORATION OF LATINX GENERATION Z SECONDARY TEACHERS' LIVED
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August 2022

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ABSTRACT

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Generation Z teachers have encountered pivotal events in their lives that have empowered them into becoming change agents in society. They have entered the classrooms during a time of great change in education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing teacher shortages in schools. Generation Z teachers have had to adapt to the changes in education and endure the challenges of transitioning back to face-to-face instruction. As school districts prepare for the post-pandemic era, it is important to capture the lived experiences of Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers to understand the motivation and retention factors that influence their decision to remain in the classroom.

This qualitative phenomenological study explores three Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers' from the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. Through semi-structured interviews, rich descriptions of the teachers' experiences, motivations, and retention factors are discovered. To retain and motivate the newest generational cohort of teachers, in a multigenerational workforce, district leaders may want to consider reevaluating their frameworks to increase motivation and teacher retention in the school districts. The findings reveal how important it is for district leaders to recognize the Generation Z teachers' efforts, provide them with strong support systems and mentorships, and create a campus culture of compassion and empathy.

DEDICATION

My sincere gratitude and thanks to my parents, Dolores and Jesse Banda for their immense encouragement and support over the past several years of my education journey. Their constant support and love afforded me the motivation to successfully complete this endeavor, as a first-generation doctoral graduate. Mom, thank you for your constant prayers, encouragement, strength, and love that you provided me throughout my entire education journey. You have always been my number one cheerleader, and I am forever grateful to you. Dad, thank you for your prayers, humor, compassion, and understanding throughout this entire endeavor. I am truly blessed with a strong support system.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	ix
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION	1
Background of the Problem	2
Purpose of the Study	4
Social Cognitive Theory	5
Self-Efficacy	6
Social Constructivism Theory.....	9
Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).....	10
Significance of the Study	11
Positionality Statement	13
Limitations	15
Delimitations.....	16
Definition of Terms.....	17
Summary	18
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW	20
History of Supporting New Teachers	21
Pre-Professional Age.....	21
The Age of Autonomous Professional	22
The Age of Collegial Professional	22
Fourth Professional Stage	22
Influential Events of Generation Z	23

September 11 th , 2001.....	24
Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting.....	24
Controversial Presidential Elections in the U.S.A.	25
President Barack Obama.....	25
President Donald Trump.....	26
Controversy and COVID-19 in the 2020s.....	27
The Crisis of Teaching in the 2020s.....	30
Teacher Motivation.....	32
Intrinsic Motivation.....	33
Extrinsic Motivation.....	34
Teacher Retention.....	35
Generation Z: Traits and Qualities.....	37
Digital Natives.....	37
Utilizing Technology in the 21 st Century.....	38
Forms of Communication.....	40
The Influence of Social Media.....	42
Higher Education.....	43
Generation Z Teachers.....	46
Digital Literacy Skills.....	46
Work Expectations.....	49
Growth Opportunities.....	49
Work Motivation.....	51
Summary.....	51
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY.....	53
Research Problem.....	53
Purpose of the Study.....	55
Research Design.....	55
Setting.....	57
Participants.....	58
Participant Criteria.....	59
Participant Recruitment.....	59

Data Collection.....	60
Data Analysis.....	61
Participants' Profile.....	63
Field of Investigation: Motivation.....	65
Field of Investigation: Teacher Retention.....	65
Trustworthiness	66
Summary.....	67
CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS	68
Key Findings of the Field of Investigation of Motivation	69
Creating Authentic Relationships and Trusting Relationships in the Classroom.....	71
Fostering the Students' Well-Being and Teacher Support.....	73
Recognizing Teacher Successes to Increase Teacher Efficacy.....	78
Key Findings of the Field of Investigation of Teacher Retention	80
Implementing Effective Support Systems to Increase Teacher Retention.....	82
Conclusion	90
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION	91
Summary of the Study	91
Discussion of Findings	94
Field of Investigation: Motivation	94
Field of Investigation: Teacher Retention	98
Limitations	102
Recommendations for Future Research	103
Replicate this Study.....	103
Gender Differences	104
Teacher Shortages	104
Types of Support Systems.....	104
Compare Administration and Generation Z Teachers.....	105
Implications.....	105
Conclusion	107
REFERENCES	110

APPENDIX A..... 121
APPENDIX B..... 123
APPENDIX C..... 126
APPENDIX D..... 129
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH..... 133

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Gen Z Teachers Codes and Phrases: Field of Investigation: Motivation	70
Table 2: Gen Z Teachers Codes and Phrases: Field of Investigation: Teacher Retention.....	81

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The earliest of Generation Z have recently entered the workplace with unique experiences, distinctive characteristics, and digital literacy skills (Schroth, 2019). Sidorcuka and Chesnovicka (2017) state, “Generation Z is more about social connection, experience, education, knowledge, and even environmental sustainability” (p. 810). According to the literature and research, Generation Z teachers, specifically, have grown up in an era when the United States of America endured violence, terrorism, natural disasters, political controversy, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the crisis of teaching in the 2020s. “To appreciate Generation Z, it is important to understand the formative events that are unique to this generation, and how it has shaped them as learners and future employees” (Schroth, 2019). Generation Z has lived through significant events that other generations have not witnessed before. The literature asserted that their experiences and motivations may be out of the ordinary and misunderstood by others of previous generations.

This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to explore how Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers’ lived experiences influenced their motivation to teach and remain in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. Since there is a gap in the literature of Latinx Generation Z teachers, this study could add growth to the existing research on the youngest cohort of teachers entering the schools. Through the Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers’

lived experiences, school districts may understand how crucial it is to recognize their talent and realize their benefits (Singh and Dangmei, 2016, p. 2) to retain them at the school districts.

Background of the Problem

Based on the literature, Generation Z are digital natives who are “native speakers of the digital language of computers video games, and the Internet” (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). Generation Z is a “connected, clever, and education generation ever existed before, who have adopted technological developments” (Sidorcuka and Chesnovicka, 2017, p. 809). They have experienced life as digitally infused individuals who use technology in their daily lives. The research suggests that Generation Z has transformed classrooms due to their need for being highly engaged in the classroom. Generation Z expects universities to provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary for their future jobs. “World-class universities are developing innovative programs and new ideas to accelerate/improve the teaching and learning process (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020, p. 847). Once Generation Z graduates from college, they hope to land jobs that are flexible, satisfying, and that provide them with growth opportunities. According to Mihelich (2013), Generation Z needs to feel like they have the autonomy to demonstrate their work ethic and be recognized for their contributions. They want to be welcomed into the work community, be given the independence to implement their ideas without being rejected, and be fully supported by their colleagues and superiors. Day (2008) stated:

research [on teacher retention] tends to focus on factors affecting teachers’ decision to leave the teaching profession. Instead, what is required is a better understanding of the factors that have enabled the majority of teachers to sustain their motivation, commitment, and, therefore, effectiveness in the profession (p. 256).

There is limited research, specifically, focused on Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers' lived experiences, motivations, and retention factors that influence their decision to work in education. Although the existing literature suggests that they have high education standards and work expectations, there is not enough information focused on how to motivate and retain Latinx Generation Z teachers in the schools.

Generation Z teachers entered the teaching profession during a time of great change in education which has been affected by a pandemic and teacher shortages in schools. There has been a paradigm shift causing new teachers to feel burned out in their first years. Walker (2021) presented a survey conducted by the National Education Association (NEA) which found that out of 2,690 members, 32 percent of the teachers stated that the pandemic has led them to plan to leave the classroom earlier than anticipated (Walker, 2021). In a study conducted by Steiner and Woo (2021), nearly one in four teachers left their teaching jobs by the end of the 2020-2021 school year. In addition, Steiner and Woo (2021) found that the mode of instruction was one of the highest-ranked causes of teacher burnout. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted lives, yet it has provided schools with a unique opportunity to achieve true digital transformation by reinventing education so that it works for all students more effectively, fully engaging them in deeper learning that's relevant to their lives and successfully prepares them for the future (Jez & Jez, 2022). Therefore, school districts have had to reevaluate their frameworks to increase teacher retention and support Gen Z teachers.

According to the literature, Generation Z teachers tend to have idealistic views that the work will be meaningful and that every colleague at work will respect and value their thoughts and ideas (Schroth, 2019). Often, Generation Z may be misunderstood by prior generations of teachers because they are a "unique cohort whose needs, expectations, perspectives, and

aspirations are different” (Seemiller & Grace, 2017, p. 25). The literature suggests that Generation Z become discouraged when they are rejected or feel their needs and expectations are not being met. Generation Z, by nature, desires to contribute to the community, receive feedback for their work, and aid their peers and colleagues. As change agents of their generation, they seek out opportunities to contribute and grow in education and the workforce. Rothman (2016) explained that Generation Z wants their learning to be personalized and reflective. As schools prepare for the post-pandemic era, it is important to capture the lived experiences of Generation Z teachers to understand their expectations and motivational factors that encourage them to remain in the classroom. Thus, through Generation Z’s lived experiences, school districts can discover what motivates them and what Generation Z teachers believe to be important retention factors at the schools (Singh & Dangmei, 2016). Understanding Generation Z teachers' experiences, characteristics, education, and work expectations can provide insight into what motivates Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers to remain in the RGV schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers from the Rio Grande Valley school districts, examine how their experiences influence their motivation to teach and identify the key factors to retain them. Although the literature described the influential events, characteristics, education, and work style of Generation Z, there was a lack of research to describe the Latinx Generation Z teachers lived experiences, motivations, and the key components that impact their decision to teach. There was even less research on Latinx Gen Z teachers. To retain this new generational cohort in the multigenerational workforce, school districts must understand what drives Latinx Generation Z teachers’ work values and workplace needs and expectations. With the COVID-19 pandemic and

teaching crisis going on, it was beneficial to understand how the Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers' experiences motivate them to teach and investigate the key factors to retaining them in the school districts, particularly, in the Rio Grande Valley.

This study focused on Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) in South Texas. The Rio Grande Valley is located in deep South Texas, a few miles from the Mexico border. The school districts in the RGV serve mostly low-income families and have limited funding and resources to compete with other districts across the state. Through this qualitative phenomenological study, I gained a deeper understanding of the Latinx Generation Z teachers by examining their lived experiences, motivations, and the retention factors that influenced their decision to remain in the RGV schools. Through the theoretical lens of Albert Bandura's (1986), Social Cognitive Theory, and Lev Vygotsky's (1978), Social Constructivism Theory, I explored the motivations of Latinx Generation Z teachers and identified key components to retain them in the RGV school districts. This exploration helped formulate and guide the following research questions in this study:

1. How do Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers' lived experiences influence their motivation to teach in the Rio Grande Valley school districts?
2. In sharing their experiences, what do Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers see as important components for retaining them in the Rio Grande Valley school districts?

Social Cognitive Theory

In the 1960s, Albert Bandura originally developed the social learning theory; however, later on, he added cognitive to the theory which led to social cognitive theory (SCT). Social cognitive theory is based on an individual who learns by observing others which influences how

someone engages and behaves in a setting. LaMorte (2019) stated, “SCT considers the unique way in which individuals acquire and maintain behavior, while also considering the social environment in which individuals perform the behavior” (p. 1). Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory described one’s personal factors, social environment, and behaviors. An individual’s personal factors would be one’s goals, attributions, and efficacy. Examples of the social environment would consist of feedback, modeling, and instruction. Lastly, the behaviors exhibited in the SCT focus on motivation and the learning process.

Throughout the interviews, I used Bandura’s (1977) SCT to describe how the participants learned from observing and interacting with their colleagues and students. The lived experiences of the participants provided rich examples of their social interactions with their students and colleagues which essentially influenced their behaviors and motivations at the campus.

Self-Efficacy

One of the constructs of social cognitive theory is self-efficacy which involves motivation. Self-efficacy is someone’s belief “in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1986, p. 3). An individual’s belief affects how they act, how motivated they are, and how they react to their successes and failures (Henson, 2001). “Self-efficacy beliefs regulate human functioning through cognitive, motivation, affective, and decisional processes” (Bandura, 2002, p. 270). Self-efficacy affects how well an individual motivates themselves and endure challenges, their emotional well-being, and their decisions in life. Bandura (1977) described four main components of self-efficacy that are based on an individual’s mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological state. Bandura (1977) described how an individual reacts to complete a specific task that they are unfamiliar with. The individual could either become fearful and stressed about

it or tackle the task head-on. When new teachers are met with a task and become anxious and stressed, they may become less motivated to complete tasks, resulting in low self-efficacy. On the contrary, when new teachers and mentors have a positive mentality and are confident, then they can work through the challenge together, resulting in high self-efficacy. Gibson and Dembo (1984) stated that teachers who “have confidence in their teaching abilities, should persist longer, provide a greater academic focus in the classroom, and exhibit different types of feedback” (p. 570). Therefore, a teacher’s self-efficacy is based on the expectations of the tasks, support, direct feedback from others, and the way both teachers physiologically respond to responsibilities.

Protheroe (2008) explained that a teacher with high self-efficacy is: (a) willing to take risks with instruction, (b) plans effective and organized lessons and activities, (c) overcomes challenging situations, (d) refrains from judging struggling students, and (e) supports challenging students. A teacher with high self-efficacy may have had positive experiences and successfully achieved their goals. Whereas a teacher with low self-efficacy is more stagnant and unwilling to tackle challenging tasks due to previous setbacks in their experiences over time.

Mastery experiences. “Mastery experiences which are generated in an actual classroom should have the strongest effect on teacher self-efficacy development because these experiences provide genuine evidence” (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016, p. 3) on whether the teachers can accomplish the tasks independently or with the help of the experienced teachers. The way a teacher perceives their tasks depends on how effective or motivated they are to work at the campus. At the beginning of the year, new teachers devise a plan with their mentors to set goals and discuss teacher pedagogies that can be utilized in the classroom. Bandura (1997, 2006) explained that self-efficacy affects individuals' behaviors when they set goals and determine how much work they are willing to put in to meet the goals and overcome difficult challenges. Depending on the

support they receive at the campus, teachers may have a difficult time accomplishing tasks independently. The teachers' self-efficacy can be low if they are unsuccessful in completing the task on their own, resulting in failure. On the contrary, when the new teacher believes they can conquer the task on their own, then their self-efficacy increases.

Vicarious experiences. Bandura (1993) stated, "seeing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort raises observers' beliefs that they too possess the capabilities to master comparable activities required to succeed" (p. 2). Through vicarious experiences, teachers can observe one's instructional practices and notice how they work through challenges. For instance, when a new teacher observes their colleague having difficulty teaching, then they expect to have the same issues, resulting in low self-efficacy. Rather, if their colleague does not encounter difficulties while teaching, then the new teachers believe they will be successful as well, resulting in high self-efficacy.

Social persuasion. Capa-Aydin et al. (2018) described social persuasion as verbal encouragement and positive feedback that encouraged individuals "to exert more effort and help them overcome their self-doubts" (p. 1225). The teachers' self-efficacy is impacted by their colleagues, students, and administrators. When experienced teachers or administrators acknowledge the successes of the new teacher, then this feedback can increase the new teachers' efficacy. However, when there are constant negative responses or feedback, then the new teachers' efficacy decreases, and their efforts lessen. Those who instill confidence in new teachers may notice an increase in their efforts to complete and perform challenging tasks.

Physiological state. In Bandura's (1977) final component, physiological state, he mentioned, "People rely partly on their state of physiological arousal in judging their anxiety and vulnerability to stress" (p. 198). New teachers' self-efficacy can be influenced by a new task,

causing anxiety and stress. Teachers who are expected to create their lessons with minimal support or opportunities for training and communication tend to have a low self-efficacy. Communication at the campus can be challenging, and new teachers are left to navigate through their first years of teaching with little or no support. At times, it can be nerve-wracking to implement new pedagogical practices and develop strong relationships to ensure student success when teachers feel burned out or overwhelmed. Sparks (1988) asserted that teachers with a high-self-efficacy are confident to implement innovative practices, even if the task is daunting. When teachers associate their nervousness with a positive feeling, then they maintain a high self-efficacy. However, new teachers who are stressed by the demands and pressures to meet their goals may feel nervous or ill which can negatively affect their performance and self-efficacy.

Yost (2021) stated, “A teacher with high self-efficacy tends to provide the most beneficial learning environment for his or her students” (p. 195). Teachers with high self-efficacy are committed to conquering obstacles and remain focused on their goals. The teachers with low self-efficacy lack motivation and avoid challenging tasks as they relate them to previous experiences of failure. For this study, Bandura’s (2002) self-efficacy was used to understand how a teacher’s motivation positively impacts their desire to teach at the school district. Support from colleagues and administration can either positively or negatively impact a teacher’s self-efficacy and affect how they implement instruction and develop connections. Therefore, by using this lens, I was able to understand how their interactions with others influenced their motivations and decision to continue teaching at the school districts.

Social Constructivism Theory

Vygotsky’s (1978) social constructivist theory is a form of constructivism that focuses on factors such as language, culture, beliefs, and skills that are important to learning. Vygotsky

theorized that learning is constructed in a social context of learning (Kalpana, 2014). Fostering and supporting relationships provide the person with an opportunity to learn and grow. For instance, when a new teacher works with their colleagues, they become an active learner. They are afforded the opportunity to develop skills and confidence through collaboration. New teachers are constantly acquiring new knowledge and skills based on their interactions and daily experiences on the campus (Zeki & Sonyel, 2014). The constructivist learning process assists the teachers with forming their beliefs and views of education. The nature of the new teachers' social learning depends on the social interaction they have with knowledgeable mentors at the campus. When new teachers are assigned a mentor, who understands the content and instruction, then the new teacher will learn how to elevate their practice from their mentors. Social constructivist teaching practices could be modeling, peer collaboration, discussions, and other methods of social interaction at the campus (Kim, 2001). Thus, new teachers gain knowledge and skills by observing and communicating with their peers, students, and administrators.

In this study, Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theoretical framework was used to explore the social interactions and collaborative opportunities given to the Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers at the campus. By using this lens, it allowed me to understand the motivations that impacted the participants' culture, beliefs, language, and skills in their social environment. I was also able to identify the social factors that influence their decision to remain at the school districts through the social constructivism theory.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Shabani et al. (2010) stated, "ZPD is understood by Vygotsky to describe the current or actual level of development of the learner and the next level attainable through the use of mediating semiotic and environmental tools and capable adult or peer facilitation" (p. 238).

Generally, ZPD refers to a child learning from their peers, but in this study, it is used to explore the Latinx Generation Z teachers' peer to peer learning experiences with their colleagues. The Generation Z teachers were considered active learners at their campus. Each participant talked about their experiences obtaining new skills from their social interactions with their mentors and colleagues. As Vygotsky (1978) theorized, ZPD supports the importance of having a positive, cultural, working environment that allows individuals to learn from others and eventually become independent learners. As I interviewed the participants, I came to understand how collaborating with their peers helped them to construct new lessons and activities on their own.

Significance of the Study

Generation Z teachers are the youngest and newest cohort of teachers in education and are different from previous generations of teachers. "Generation Z seems to have different expectations and motivating factors than the earlier generations" (Singh & Dangmei, 2016, p. 4). Unlike the previous generations in the workforce, Generation Z teachers grew up in a hyperconnected world where they communicated and compared themselves to others and sought out answers and feedback in a quick manner. Generation Z's unique characteristics make them different from their predecessors, especially in the workforce (Nabahani & Riyanto, 2020). The existing research suggested that Generation Z wanted jobs that were flexible, satisfying, and provided growth opportunities. However, there was limited research about the personal lived experiences of the Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers from the Rio Grande Valley and how their experiences affected their motivation to work and remain in the teaching profession.

Understanding Latinx Generation Z teachers' lived experiences and motivations provides school districts with critical information to support them at the secondary campuses. Generation Z teachers have been used to "multitasking through pages, interacting with pictures, charts,

sounds, and YouTube trail videos before actually reading a text” (Barbuceanu, 2020, p. 138).

Generation Z teachers teach the youngest of their generation. They understand that “Gen Z has a low tolerance for being without digital recourse, because technology is very important to them, as they use it to find information from all different areas of their lives, including education” (Szymkowiak et al., 2021, p. 3). As digital natives, they recognize the difficulties of having to gain the attention of Generation Z students in the present day and much harder to get them to put down their electronic devices because they, too, are digital natives. Therefore, it was crucial to understand Generation Z teachers and their characteristics to sustain growth and groom them to become future leaders in the school districts (Singh & Dangmei, 2016).

The lived experiences of Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers can help district leaders develop ways to increase teacher retention during this transition to the post-pandemic era, specifically at the Rio Grande Valley secondary level campuses. This study may offer insightful information as to how Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers use their experiences to navigate through the new norm of education. District leaders can use the findings from this study to reevaluate their framework to increase teacher retention. School districts may want to use this to reframe their hiring practices, curriculum redesign, reevaluate teacher workload or provide teacher incentives. This research can inform districts about, not only Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers but, Latinx Generation Z secondary students as well. This is a generation of change, advocacy, and digital transformation. Thus, this qualitative phenomenological study dived deep into the lives of Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers and shared valuable information about what motivated them in the RGV school districts, and discovered ways to retain them by recognizing the assets they bring to the classrooms.

Positionality Statement

I am a Latinx Millennial, a digital native, and I have similar characteristics to Generation Z. I became tech-savvy at a young age and grew up in the era of Nintendo, pagers, the Internet, AOL Instant Messenger, and the first cellphones. Computers were only used at school or home for educational purposes; pagers were used to communicate with others in which you had to find a phone booth to call someone, and cellphones were only used for talking on the phone. Slowly, text messaging and the Internet were embedded into the cellphones, which made it easier to communicate with others in high school and college. As far as social media platforms, I was introduced to social media in college where I created my profile and learned how to upload music online. During that time, social media was used as a way of introducing yourself to the world, virtually.

I have taught Generation Z throughout my 16 years of teaching in the Rio Grande Valley. I became a first-year teacher at the age of 21 and was the youngest faculty member at my campus. I worked at a low-income school district with a majority of Latinx students. Unfortunately, as a young, first-year teacher, I was not accepted by my colleagues immediately and was given the most challenging students who were constantly absent or rebellious. I was not assigned an actual classroom and floated to eight classrooms every day. Aside from not having a secure classroom, I had the toughest time trying to get my students to attend class or turn in work. Slowly, my motivation decreased, and I thought about leaving the campus. The ideas and passion I brought forth to the department were quickly rejected, leaving me feeling defeated and second-guessing myself as an educator. I did not have the autonomy to execute my lessons, felt incompetent, and did not feel a part of my department. It took a month for me to be acknowledged by my peers. Fortunately, one teacher pulled me aside and recognized the ideas

and contributions that I brought forth to the classroom. Gradually, I was accepted into the department and became intrinsically motivated to teach. The interaction and recognition by my colleagues encouraged me to put forth the effort to contribute more to the campus and influenced my decision to remain in the classroom.

I was assigned to teach the first group of Generation Z students during my sixth year of teaching at a high school in the RGV. The digital natives entered the classroom with iPhones and were constantly connected to the Internet and social media. The district had purchased laptops for students to use in the classroom. As a Millennial teacher, I had to transform my way of thinking and teaching to be able to reach the new generation of learners. I had to utilize technology effectively in my lessons and navigate through the emergence of the digital age. I knew that this was just the beginning of the digital world of education.

I transferred to another campus, in the RGV, in my seventh year of teaching and realized that Generation Z students were highly motivated and digitally infused learners. The campus was completely different from my previous one. At this campus, the students were self-motivated, my colleagues were immediately receptive to my ideas, and I had tremendous support and trust from my administrators. I was motivated to go to work and develop digital lessons to increase student engagement and achievement. I realized that I had the autonomy to do more as a teacher, felt competent working with my colleagues, and that I was a part of the campus community since day one. I noticed that the Generation Z students at this campus were problem-solvers. If one student was having a difficult time with an assignment, the other students would quickly assist them and teach them another way. When the students were preparing for exams, they cheered each other on and worked together to make sure everyone passed and graduated.

My Generation Z students challenged me to elevate my practices. I was intrinsically motivated to perfect my craft of teaching and create a positive, digital, learning environment for my Generation Z learners. I decided to pursue and obtain my Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction and complete a principal certification program. Similar to Generation Z, I looked for opportunities to grow professionally. One administrator at the campus encouraged me to pursue leadership roles in education. He advised me to apply for roles that involved helping other teachers grow in the profession. Soon after, I became an independent education consultant and mentored teachers in my content area.

This particular topic of exploring Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers' lived experiences, motivations, and retention factors to work in the school districts was of great interest to me because I worked for a teacher preparation program. This full circle led me to pursue this topic because I have taught Generation Z for about 10 years. In my former role as an instructor, I witnessed the transformational progress of Generation Z learners from high school to college. I further explored how Latinx Generation Z teachers' lived experiences and transition from college to teaching have influenced their motivation to teach and how to retain them in the schools.

Limitations

One limitation of this phenomenological study was that it was restricted to a small sample size of three Latinx Generation Z teachers in the Rio Grande Valley school districts, who were in their first years of teaching. Numerous invitations for this study were sent out, and I recruited three participants during the summer months. I was hoping to obtain at least two to eight participants from each county, but I was fortunate enough to interview three participants, who were from three counties in the RGV.

The second limitation was that it consisted of only female participants who agreed to participate in this study. No males responded to the invitation for this study. Male perspectives would have added breadth to the exploration, purpose, and overall significance of this study.

The third limitation was that the study was centralized in the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. Generation Z teachers are employed in different regions of the state and nation and could be explored.

The fourth limitation was that the study focused on Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers and did not offer the K-5 Generation Z teachers an opportunity to share their lived experiences, motivations, and retention factors.

Delimitations

A delimitation means the boundaries of the study. The study focused on one generation of teachers, ages 21-25, however, the school districts have multigenerational teachers that have different perspectives of teaching. Their motivations and retention factors may have differed from Generation Z; therefore, the study was not generalized to other generations of teachers.

The second delimitation of this study was that it focused only on secondary level Generation Z teachers. Elementary, middle, and high school teachers have distinctive roles and responsibilities, so the experiences of the secondary level (6th-12) Generation Z teachers may be completely different from the other teachers who teach lower-level grades.

The third delimitation was that this study took place during the summer months when teachers were not in school. It was difficult to recruit teachers during the summer due to summer vacation.

The fourth delimitation was that this took place in the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. There are other regions and states that employ Generation Z teachers, but this study was intended to focus on teachers who work in low-income school districts.

The fifth delimitation was the criteria of the participants. The study focused on Generation Z teachers who were Latinx. Since the Rio Grande Valley has a large Latinx population, this criterion was intentionally utilized for this study.

Definition of Terms

For this study, the below list of terms is defined as follows:

1. **Generation Z Teachers:** The oldest of Generation Z and the new cohort of teachers who find importance in work/ life balance, team focus, empowerment, support, flexibility, involvement, creativity, innovation, and a global working atmosphere (McCrindle & Fell, 2019).
2. **Generation Z:** Generation Z was born in the late 1990s and entered the classroom in the early 2000s (Seemiller & Grace, 2017).
3. **Digital Natives:** Native speakers of the digital language who have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, video games, cellphones, and tools of the digital age (Prensky, 2001).
4. **COVID-19 Pandemic:** COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) is a disease caused by a virus named SARS-CoV-2 and was discovered in December 2019 in Wuhan, China (CDC, 2021).
5. **Social Cognitive Theory:** Social cognitive theory adopts an agentic perspective on human development, adaptation, and change (Bandura, 2002).

6. Social Constructivism Theory: Social Constructivism Theory teaches all knowledge develops as a result of social interaction and language use and is, therefore, a shared, rather than an individual, experience (Lynch, 2016).
7. Self-Efficacy: People's beliefs about their capabilities to produce effects (Bandura, 1993).
8. Zone Proximal Development (ZPD): The ZPD refers to the learner's ability to successfully complete tasks with the assistance of more capable other people, and for this reason, it is often discussed in relation to assisted or scaffolded learning (Walker, 2010).
9. Lived Experiences: Personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people (Oxford Ref., 2022).
10. Digital Literacy: Digital literacy is the awareness, attitude, and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital tools and facilities to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize digital resources, construct new knowledge, create media expressions, and communicate with others (Martin, 2006).

Summary

With the teacher shortage increasing throughout the state of Texas, Generation Z, the newest generation of teachers entering the workforce tends to need more support. In this qualitative phenomenological study, I sought to understand how Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers' lived experiences impacted their motivation to be a teacher in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. In addition, I realized there was a need to examine the retention factors that influenced the Generation Z teachers' decision to remain at the campus. The exploration of the Latinx Generation Z teachers' lived experiences may help secondary-level administrators

understand how to recruit and retain the youngest generation of teachers entering the schools. Moreover, the findings could assist school districts to reevaluate their frameworks for hiring new teachers, redesigning their curriculum, offering more support systems to new teachers, and presenting new incentives to increase the retention of Latinx Generation Z teachers. Therefore, Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers from the Rio Grande Valley school districts were examined.

This chapter introduced the study by discussing the background of the research problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the theoretical frameworks, the significance of the study, my positionality statement, the limitations, the delimitations, and the definition of terms.

The following chapter, Chapter II, provides the history of supporting new teachers, and an overview of the influential events of Generation Z that impacted their childhood, adulthood, education, and work ethic. Additionally, the chapter examines the literature relevant to the characteristics of Generation Z teachers with a specific emphasis on their motivations in education and the workforce, as this was the focus of the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Generation Z was born in the late 1990s and entered the classroom in the early 2000s (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). They have witnessed or experienced significant events in history that have influenced their lives. Growing up in a digital age, they have been able to adapt and adjust to the ever-changing world of education. Generation Z teachers are different from previous generations. Based on the literature, Generation Z's upbringing with "ubiquitous connectivity, evolving mobile technology, and in a growing gig economy" (Agarwal & Vaghela, 2018, p. 20) seemed to have influenced their views of employment. They seek out flexible and satisfying jobs that will provide them with growth opportunities. "They want to have a work-life balance and a pleasurable working environment" (Agarwal & Vaghela, 2018, p. 19). The literature asserts that connections, effective communication, and contributions to others are what keeps them grounded and motivated in the workforce. Generation Z teachers seek out ways to promote diversity in their classroom, increase professional growth, and gain autonomy in education.

This chapter provides an overview of the influential events of Generation Z that impacted their childhood, adulthood, education, and work ethic. Additionally, the chapter examines the literature relevant to the characteristics of Generation Z teachers with a specific emphasis on their motivations in education and the workforce, as this was the focus of the study.

History of Supporting New Teachers

Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) explained that the nature of teaching has evolved over the decades through the pre-professional age, the age of the autonomous professional, the age of the collegial professional, and the fourth professional stage.

Pre-Professional Age

In the pre-professional stage, during the industrial age, “public education was like a factory where the teachers were the workers and required to complete all tasks, regardless of how overwhelmed they felt” (Hargreaves & Fullan 2000, p. 50). Teaching consisted of lecturing, question and answering, and seatwork. This teacher-centered approach was considered the most effective way to teach all students. When teachers faced challenging tasks, they simply used common sense. “One learned to be a teacher through practical apprenticeship and improved by trial-and-error” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000, p. 50). Good teachers were considered those who knew how to teach, deliver instruction, and manage their classrooms. Those who were incapable of completing these tasks were either dismissed or considered bad teachers.

Early on, new teachers had to fend for themselves because leaning on others was a significant weakness. Little (1990) explained that new teachers who sought out help were viewed as weak, and they quickly refused to collaborate with their peers. If new teachers needed assistance, they would simply observe others and figured it out themselves. Most of the encounters the new teachers had with their peers were in the teacher’s lounge or copy room. New teachers were considered competent and expected to teach with limited assistance from others.

The Age of Autonomous Professional

In the 1960s and 1970s, the age of autonomous teaching, teachers taught in isolation, and this was the culture of the schools (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000, p. 51). It was rare for teachers to collaborate with their colleagues because the education system believed the teachers could figure it out on their own. A good teacher used common sense to resolve any issues. Although teachers were given autonomy, they were unable to share their experiences or pedagogies with their colleagues. Teachers refrained from sharing ideas or seeking advice from their peers.

The Age of Collegial Professional

By the 1980s, the age of collegial professional, individual autonomy had become challenging because the teachers' curriculum did not align with their colleagues. Teachers were isolated from others, and schools had a difficult time changing the culture of teaching. The pressures to create a collaborative culture were "growing due to the knowledge explosion, the widening of curriculum demands," teaching was becoming more difficult, "and efforts to build cultures of collaboration were increasing" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000, p. 51). During this time, mentors were utilized a bit more to fill in these gaps and help the teachers develop goals, encourage risk-taking, support the rapid changes, and build teacher efficacy. New teachers were more accepting of receiving assistance from others and were able to learn new and innovative ways to provide instruction.

Fourth Professional Stage

In the fourth professional age of teaching, education was entering the 21st century and new teachers were expanding their knowledge and skills of teaching. Education became fast-paced and new teachers were having to depend on their mentors to help them work through more

diverse issues. Teaching was more about using multiple sources to bridge the gap between school and the community. New teachers were identified as digital natives who used digital tools to give them access to the internet, graphics, music, and videos (Kivunja, 2014). Technology became the main source for new teachers and was utilized to elevate their teaching practices by using “hyperlinked, random access, digital sources that are available online” (Kivunja, 2014, p. 101). The integration of these digital literacy practices began to replace traditional educational methods in the classroom (Szymkowiak et al., 2021). Younger teachers were familiar with the new method of teaching and adapted to the new norm of education. Recently, novice and experienced teachers have had to become accustomed to the new normal of education during the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to teacher shortages and teacher burnout.

Influential Events of Generation Z

“Generation Z has been profoundly shaped by the advancement of technology, issues of violence, a volatile economy, and social justice movements” (Seemiller & Grace, 2017, p. 22). Generation Z grew up in an era of violence and terrorism during the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, mass shootings, controversial presidential elections, and nationwide protests following the death of George Floyd (Reny & Newman, 2021). Generation Z teachers were entering the schools during the December 2019 outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ciotti et al., 2020), the critical teacher shortages (Bill et al., 2022), and during the crisis of teaching, which affected the United States and the rest of the world throughout the 2020s. These events transformed Generation Z’s outlook on life, made them more accepting to change, adaptable, authentic, and transformed them into a highly driven generation (Stillman & Stillman, 2017). Generation Z has been impacted by these historical events which have caused them to view society differently and encouraged them to become change agents. Although previous

generations experienced similar issues such as the Great Depression in 1929, World War I, World War II, the death of Martin Luther King and the March on Washington, the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Great Recession of 2007, and others (Seemiller & Grace, 2017), Generation Z continues to work through the challenges of the past.

September 11th, 2001

One of the most tragic and deadliest days in US history was the terrorist attack of 9/11 in 2001. “Americans watched in horror as the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, left nearly 3,000 people dead in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Shanksville, Pennsylvania” (Hartig & Doherty, 2021, p. 1). The earliest of Generation Z was about four years old when this incident took place in the United States. Unfortunately, they were not old enough to understand the impact it had on America. The youngest of Generation Z was not alive to witness this event, yet they were made aware of this through the internet and others who have collective memories of this attack. In 2011, the Iraq War came to an end and President Barack Obama brought the troops home. Unfortunately, the conflicts with the Middle East continued until 2021, when President Joe Biden pulled the troops out of the Middle East. Most of Generation Z’s life has been surrounded by conflicts with the Middle East and is still discussed among the generations today.

Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting

Generation Z experienced one of the many tragedies of gun violence in 2012 with the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. Barron (2012) reported that on December 14, 2012, Adam Lanza entered Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, and killed 26 people, which included 20 students seven years old and younger. This was one of the deadliest school shootings in American history. It was from this tragedy that some form of gun control

was sent to legislation. “This tragedy reignited the decades-long debate about gun violence and gun control in the United States” (Wozniak, 2017, p. 255). President Barack Obama vowed to do all he could to prevent another tragedy from happening, but the gun control bill failed at the federal level. Since this tragedy, there have been other school shootings that Generation Z has seen in their lifetime. Gun control is still a controversial topic in 2022.

Controversial Presidential Elections in the U.S.A.

In the last 14 years, the U.S. has had presidential elections surrounded by controversy. In 2008, Barack Obama was elected as the 44th president of the United States of America. In 2016, Donald Trump was elected as the 45th president of the United States. Throughout both elections, some policies were developed that positively and negatively impacted Generation Z in and out of the classrooms.

President Barack Obama

The election of Barack Obama took place in 2008 in which America elected the first African American and 44th president. “The election of Barack Obama as the first African American president is evidence for many that the equality dreamed of during the 1950s and 1960s civil rights movements has been, for the most part, achieved” (Redlawsk, 2010, p. 875). President Obama endured criticism and controversy throughout these presidential terms, but he managed to overcome the challenges America faced. During his presidency, he took on the responsibility for the economic collapse and the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. One of the biggest successes he had in his first terms was when he spearheaded the capture of Al Qaeda leader and the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, Osama Bin Laden in 2009. Another monumental moment during his presidency success was the development of the healthcare plan, the

Affordable Care Act, coined Obamacare which provided health insurance to millions of Americans. Rudalevige (2012) stated, “The House voted to repeal all manner of measures passed in 2009–2010, up to and including Obamacare (multiple times in fact)” (p. 1285). However, this became law and is used by many, including Generation Z. Barack Obama’s leadership continued for a second term and was re-elected in 2012. Barack Obama declared support for same-sex marriage, encouraged gun control after the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, and prohibited LGBTQ discrimination in the workplace. Even though Generation Z was unable to vote in the 2008 and 2012 elections, the issues addressed widely affected their generation and have been recognized by Generation Z in recent times.

President Donald Trump

In 2016, the earliest of Generation Z was able to vote in the presidential election between Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton and Republican candidate, Donald Trump. In a close race, Donald Trump defeated Hillary Clinton and was inaugurated in January of 2017. During his presidency, Generation Z was impacted by the social issues around the country. In 2017, both men and women took part in the massive worldwide Women’s March to protest against Trump’s administration and policies. In 2018, the government shutdown, the Trade War with China began, The March for Our Lives in Washington D.C. against gun violence took place, the Pandemic Office closed down, and the Immigration Crisis ensued. The Trump administration’s zero-tolerance policy against undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers required that the adults be apprehended for illegally crossing the US-Mexico border. “Between April and June 2018, over 2300 immigrant children, reportedly including preverbal, breastfed infants were relocated to separate child detention shelters across the USA to await the resolution of their parent’s case and hopeful, but not guaranteed, reunion” (Wood, 2018, p. 1). This became a

controversial issue, especially in the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. People around the world witnessed children being separated from their parents while others were kept in facilities and cages. The Rio Grande Valley was deeply affected by the border wall and immigration issues since it is located on the border of Mexico. This impacted much of South Texas because some parents and students feared being returned to Mexico during this time. There was much uncertainty and anxiety set in for immigrants in the United States.

Controversy and COVID-19 in the 2020s

In 2020, the U.S. Senate acquitted President Trump, the Coronavirus Pandemic became a global issue, the economy shut down, Generation Z became more involved in the 2020 election, and President Trump was defeated by Vice President Joe Biden in November of 2020.

In March of 2020, COVID-19 escalated and caused the economy to shut down. Restaurants, stores, and schools were closed, and people were required to shelter in place. During this time, people lost their jobs, and students were required to continue their schooling, remotely, which caused panic while trying to adjust to the new normal in the world. “Amid the closing of schools, businesses, and stay-at-home mandates, the world has become a much more uncertain, unpredictable, and chaotic environment—a breeding ground for stress, anxiety, and isolation” (Corbett et al., 2021, p. 1496). These unknown and unprecedented times caused social isolation, which people were not used to doing. The media constantly updated the world with the rising numbers of cases and deaths, which negatively affected people. If there is a positive throughout this situation, Generation Z enhanced their digital skills to navigate through the world. Since they had grown up as digital natives, circumstances convinced generations to become part of the social media trends. During the months that followed the shelter in place, people from all

generations became more involved in online platforms and did their best to take care of their families.

While the pandemic continued to dominate the nation, another tragic event took place that shook the entire world. The murder of George Floyd on May 25th, 2020, was a turning point for millions of people, as it involved a Black male who was killed by a White officer, Derek Chauvin. The nine minutes of footage of George Floyd dying was broadcasted all over social media. “It is especially significant that George Floyd’s murder occurred in the midst of a viral pandemic that, like the endemic plague of racism-fueled US police brutality that underwrote his death, is disproportionately affecting Black Americans” (Sobo et al., 2020, p. 243). After the murder of George Floyd, thousands of people took to the streets, protesting the inequality and racism, while chanting “Black Lives Matter”. Generation Z could be seen marching the streets trying to bring about change and racial equality in our society. The media covered the protests across the nation where vandalism, arrests, and violence occurred. The mass media had not covered demonstrations such as these since the Kent State killing in 1970, which was 50 years ago (Heaney, 2020). Stores, restaurants, and other historical monuments were set on fire leaving the world to see America fighting against itself. Americans wanted justice for George Floyd and others who had been killed by police. This division among American citizens heightened in the middle of the deadliest pandemic in the world.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued during and after the Black Lives Matter protests, and the nation noticed a major increase in COVID-19 cases and deaths. The economy was open, but people were told to continue to social distance, refrain from traveling, and wear masks daily. There was no vaccine available to protect the world, so these precautions were the only shield Americans had to prevent the spread of COVID-19. “The traditional delivery of teaching on

campus or school site classrooms changed overnight to teaching remotely” (Quezada et al., 2020, p. 472). The United States was still unsure of what would happen in the Fall of 2020, but they allowed schools to open and receive students in smaller numbers. Fortunately, schools were allowed to offer remote learning which assisted with keeping the numbers low in the classrooms. The education gap had already widened due to the pandemic, and schools could not afford to have students stay home.

Before Donald Trump left his presidency, he was able to approve the development of the fastest mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. Fortunately, the COVID-19 vaccine was the fastest to be developed, approved, and distributed in American history which was used to protect American citizens from contracting COVID-19. Gee et al. (2021), “The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine on December 11, 2020, and for the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine on December 18, 2020; each is administered as a 2-dose series” (p. 283). The vaccine was rolled out in phases, starting with the elderly, immunocompromised, and healthcare workers. As time went on, educators and the rest of the population ages 18 and older were allowed to receive their vaccines. Both, the older and younger, Generation Z were a part of this historical moment. People were eager to return to work, and students wanted to attend school. Thousands around the nation rolled up their sleeves and received the vaccines to protect themselves from the virus. As of December 2021, the United States has had over 800,000 deaths with Texas having about over 75,000. Although multiple coronavirus variants are lingering in the world, the United States continues to keep the economy and schools open to function as normal as possible in the present day.

The Crisis of Teaching in the 2020s

Quezada et al. (2020) stated, “The spread of the Novel Coronavirus pandemic swept the globe with incendiary speed” (p. 472). Schools and universities across the nation found themselves transitioning to online platforms to teach in 2020. For the first time, school districts had to offer classes 100% online which left teachers and students confused and worried about what would happen to them. “This pandemic brought about many rapid changes to education in a short period, particularly some which have not been seen or experienced in the majority of the world’s population” (Varela & Fedynich, 2020, p. 1). These unprecedented times called for action from the state and national levels of education. Districts scrambled to find funding to support the drastic change. Students were at home and needed computers, access to WIFI, and supplies. Teachers needed assistance with technology and professional development to learn how to navigate through this new norm of education. “Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2020) launched a series of instructional continuity plans affording school district leaders the opportunity to see what exemplar districts were implementing enabling local decisions about how to best proceed for their students” (Varela & Fedynich, 2020, p. 3). However, students were not making extensive progress with remote learning. Teachers struggled to keep up with the state standards since they were bound to teach through Zoom conferencing and Google Meets platforms. District leaders realized they needed to revise their plan and prepare for the following school year.

2020-2021 school year. In the 2020-2021 school year, students were given the option to return to in-person learning or remain on remote learning. If students were returning to school, they were expected to follow the CDC guidelines. The controversial issue in Texas was when the Governor prohibited the mandate of masks and vaccines by executive order, so it left teachers,

students, and parents concerned about how the school year would pan out with the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents were indecisive as to whether to send their children to school or homeschool them. In the state of Texas, homeschooling became popular, and thousands of children were homeschooled by their parents. U.S. Census Bureau (2021) indicated homeschooling in Texas nearly tripled between Spring 2020 to Fall 2020 from 4.5% to 12.3%. There were more than 750,000 students homeschooled in the state of Texas (Texas Homeschool Coalition, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic was too dangerous for children, so parents reached out to the Texas Homeschool Coalition. The Texas Home School Coalition, Inc., a 501(c)(4) organization, is the state support organization whose mission is to inform and inspire families and promote homeschooling and families in Texas (Texas Home School Coalition, 2020). Aside from the mask issue and maintaining social distancing, teachers were given the task to teach both in-person and online throughout the school day. Since there was still no vaccine available in the fall of 2020, districts continued with this teaching arrangement for quite a few months.

2021-2022 school year. Districts planned for all students to return to face-to-face classes in the 2021-2022 school year. This meant that students were to follow the CDC guidelines as they were being updated. Therefore, parents jumped on the bandwagon, created social communities online, and decided to teach their kids from home. This placed a burden on the districts because they lost students and funding as well. Shortly after, the state allowed the districts to implement remote learning and face-to-face classes to encourage parents to enroll their children back at the campuses.

In the 2021-2022 school year, districts noticed that hybrid teaching and COVID-19 were taking a toll on teachers. Slowly, teachers were getting sick, retiring, or resigning which led to teacher shortages around the nation. Districts provided professional development for teachers,

but the sessions offered were only “to meet their just-in-time, personal learning needs” (Hill-Jackson et al., 2022, p. 6). There was no time to provide effective, long-term professional development training. Teachers became discouraged, overwhelmed, stressed, and struggled to keep up with the crises. Dabrowski (2021) explained that teachers feared contracting COVID, were burned out from the struggles of the previous year of remote learning and contemplated leaving the profession. Teachers were not given the autonomy to teach and were expected to do more work than before. Unfortunately, students were left without teachers or were assigned substitutes to finish off the school year.

Teacher Motivation

Sinclair (2008) defined teacher motivation in terms of retention and attraction specifically, “what attracts the individuals to teaching, how long they remain in their initial teacher education courses and subsequently the teaching professions, and the extent to which they engage with their courses and the teaching profession” (p. 37). Research on in-service teacher motivation to remain teaching began in the 1990s (Han & Yin, 2016). In-service teachers are motivated by numerous factors such as professional relations and ties, leaderships teacher development, working environment, and colleagues (Packard & Dereshiwsky, 1990; Peterson & Ruiz-Quintanilla, 2003; and Mani, 2002). In addition, teacher motivation has been linked to student connections and student achievement, depending on the type of motivation of the teacher whether it be intrinsically or extrinsically.

“Among the various motivation theories that have been applied to teacher motivation research, self-determination theory (SDT) has been extensively employed as a framework in studies of the influence of teacher motivation” (Han & Yin, 2016, p. 9). Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, motivational psychologists, worked together for over 40 years to develop,

examine, and elaborate on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Ryan and Deci's (2000), Self-Determination Theory (SDT) focused on individuals' motivation, psychological development, and well-being. According to Deci and Ryan (2008) SDT "differentiates motivation, with autonomous and controlled motivations constituting the key, broad distinction" (p. 14). In this case, Self-Determination Theory explains why teachers decide to make decisions they do without having an external regulation. With SDT, the teachers conduct activities that are intentionally motivated by autonomous and controlled motivations. Throughout the years, Deci and Ryan (2000) examined how people became more motivated and less motivated when given a task or activity to complete. Both, Deci and Ryan (2000) discovered that there are two types of autonomous motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan (2000) believed that intrinsic motivation was connected to "active engagement with tasks that people find interesting and that, in turn, promote growth" (p. 233). Intrinsic motivation comes from within and is about the drive and fulfillment of completing a task. Whereas extrinsic motivation "involves engaging in an activity because it leads to some separate consequence" (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 15). Both theorists believed that individuals continue to pursue their well-being and psychological growth if they meet their basic psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Deci & Ryan, 2000). When teachers meet any of those needs, this creates a catalyst for optimal motivation and can sustain growth through autonomous motivation.

Intrinsic Motivation

Deci and Ryan (2000) stated, "Intrinsically motivated behavior is those that are freely engaged out of interest without the necessity of the separable consequence, and to be maintained, they require satisfaction of the need for autonomy and competence" (p. 233). For instance, an intrinsically motivated teacher may focus on making student connections or helping a colleague

with a challenging situation. This can be seen in the classroom or during peer-to-peer interaction. According to Nahbani and Riyanto (2020), “the more he/she gets interested in their work, the more they are motivated” (p. 235). Turner (2019) conducted a study that focused on how SDT affected teachers in a learning environment and found that teachers applied SDT to assist psychological needs. This positive outcome revealed that, through SDT, students became motivated in learning and displayed optimal performance, and creativity when their teachers were intrinsically motivated to teach. “Becoming autonomous involves learning how to make responsible decisions and take actions in ambiguous and uncertain situations (Schroth, 2019, p. 10). When teachers feel a sense of enjoyment and confidence in teaching, then they are intrinsically motivated to put forth the effort to support their colleagues and students.

“The need for relatedness refers to the extent to which one feels connected to others and experiences the sense of relatedness and safety” (Kaur & Noman, 2020, p. 5). In terms of teachers and relatedness, this can be described as feeling appreciated and the ability to connect to others at the campus. Teachers can be motivated when administrators or colleagues are treating them right. Martela and Riekkari (2018) explained that “Relatedness is more about the interpersonal dimension, reflecting the extent to which a person feels that one is connected to others, has caring relationships, and belongs to a community” (p. 2). New teachers entering the profession tend to seek out ways to bond with their colleagues. When teachers feel connected to their peers, they tend to be intrinsically motivated to go to work in a strong nurturing environment.

Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation leads to individuals feeling pressured to engage in an activity or behavior based on an external reward. For instance, when teachers have an external reward

offered to them such as a higher pay in salary, then they are working with controlled motivation. Extrinsicly motivated teachers “consciously identifies with, or personally endorses, the value of an activity, and thus experiences a relatively high degree of volition or willingness to act” (Ryan & Deci, 2020, p. 3). Deci and Ryan (2008) state that “when people are regarded, threatened, surveilled, or evaluated, they tend to feel pressured and controlled, and that diminishes satisfaction of their autonomy need” (p. 15). Therefore, once a reward is no longer available to them, then the individuals will stop engaging in the activity or task.

Teacher Retention

Arroyo (2021) referred to teacher retention as the number of teachers who are still teaching in the same school the following year. "All occupations, of course, experience some loss of new entrants—either voluntarily because newcomers decide not to remain or involuntarily because employers deem them to be unsuitable. But researchers hold that teaching has long had high rates of attrition among newcomers” (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004, p. 682). Ingersoll (2003) estimated that at least 45% of early career teachers leave the field of education within the first five years of their career, specifically those that are under the age of 30. Moreover, Sutchter et al. (2016) explained that 8% of teachers in the United States tend to leave the teaching profession every year. As of February 2022, The Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed that there were at least 380,000 job vacancies in the schools which was the highest it had been in the past decade (Riser-Kositsky, 2022). School districts across the nation have had challenges with retaining highly qualified teachers. It has become evident that even teachers in Texas are leaving their jobs at an increasingly higher rate, which has become a workforce and staffing issue for school districts (Madden, 2022).

Retention in schools has caused, not only, a financial burden but also negatively impacted student achievement and the campus culture. Sutchter et al. (2016) stated, “Student achievement is undermined by high rates of teacher turnover and teachers who are inadequately prepared for the challenges they face” (p. 62). The shift in education has not only been caused by the pandemic but by teacher turnovers in the schools. “The constant revolving door of new teachers coming and going has caused districts to spend money on replacing these vacancies and rebuilding their school culture” (Shuls & Flores, 2020, p. 3).

Shuls and Flores (2020) conducted a qualitative study that consisted of three school districts from the St. Louis metropolitan area. From the three districts, they interviewed two directors of human resources and one assistant superintendent. The study revealed that “the culture of trust, openness, and academic freedom as one of the main reasons why teachers stay” (Shuls & Flores, 2020, p. 12). Other important factors that influenced the high teacher retention were having a supportive administration, personalized professional development programs, new teacher induction programs, and leadership training programs for administration (Shuls & Flores, 2020). The researchers found that these districts had the highest retention rates because they focused on creating a positive work environment for their faculty and they made the district more inviting and comfortable for the teachers.

During the pandemic, returning face-to-face, teachers faced classroom management and working condition issues. Gabor (2022) explained that teachers were “bedeviled by the long-standing pressures of ever-changing testing and accountability regimes, lack of administrative support and poor working conditions — problems that cry out for developing school cultures that foster teacher engagement, trust, and training” (p. 2). Teachers were at their breaking point and school districts struggled to retain and recruit teachers to fill in the gaps in the classrooms.

Teacher stress had been linked to teacher turnovers which were concerning due to its effect on students' achievement. Therefore, on March 8th, Gov. Greg Abbott directed the Texas Education Agency to create a task force to examine the state's teacher shortage problem (Lopez, 2022). In a letter to TEA Commissioner Mike Morath, Abbott stated "the task force should investigate why these shortages exist, recommend policy changes to the state education agency and consider more flexibility in the teacher certification process" (Lopez, 2022, p. 1). This would, hopefully, increase teacher retention and encourage new teachers to apply for teaching positions in the school districts.

Generation Z: Traits and Qualities

Generation Z is considered to be a digitally infused, motivated, and a determined generation who seek out ways to be the catalyst for change. Being raised in a time of violence, conflict, political turmoil, and crises, Generation Z had to overcome challenges and become empowered, educated, and engaged individuals. "Generation Z has indicated a desire to be involved with transformational rather than transactional activities in their world" (Carter, 2018, p. 2). They tend to be a more pragmatic generation that deals with the causes of social issues. Their unique experiences in society, in education, and in the workforce are what make them stand out compared to previous generations.

Digital Natives

Marc Prensky (2001) coined the term digital natives to identify those that were born into the digital world. Digital natives are "native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games, and the Internet" (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). Digital natives are considered those that are used to receiving information quickly and who have hypertext minds where their brains function like a

network. Their brains can have multiple browsers open just like a computer, and they tend to multitask while still listening to those around them. Prensky (2001) explained that digital natives are those who grew up with technology in their hands and can navigate through digital tools and applications. They spend thousands of hours online or using an electronic device rather than reading printed text. “Maybe, at the very most, 5,000 hours of book reading” (Prensky, 2001, p. 2) is seen in the digital natives. Due to the constant use of technology, it is difficult to retrain the brain to steer away from using digital applications. They have programmed their minds to newer ways of thinking which make it difficult to go back to the paper and pencil ways of teaching and learning.

Digital natives are those who can “think and process information fundamentally differently” (Prensky, 2001, p. 1) than digital immigrants (those who grew up before the digital age). Their minds are programmed to make connections, troubleshoot problems online, and develop solutions using the Internet. Digital applications have been utilized by Generation Z throughout their life. Digital natives have grown up without having to look up information in an encyclopedia or dictionary. “Many, if not most, [digital native] students have never known a world without computers, the World Wide Web, highly interactive video games, and cellular phones” (Kouropoulos, 2011, p. 529). Instead, they use their digital devices to obtain information within a matter of seconds.

Utilizing Technology in the 21st Century

Prensky (2001) described digital natives as contemporary youth who never experienced life before the internet and have had technology readily available to them at such a young age. Cell phones have been around even before Generation Z was alive. The earliest of Generation Z

witnessed the beginning of the revolutionary iPhone as it became the trendiest mobile phone on the market. In 2007, when Generation Z was just 10 years old, iPhones became the most popular item in the world. “By the time they were in their teens, the primary means by which young Americans connected with the web was through mobile devices, WIFI, and high-bandwidth cellular service” (Dimock, 2019, pp. 4-5). The iPhone was equipped with a camera, video, and the internet, and made it easier to text message on a virtual screen than on other phones. “The iPhone could be described as a combination of Apple’s popular iPod music player and a smartphone designed to surf the Web” (Michalowski et al., 2008, p. 2). In 2010, the iPhone dominated the majority of the world. Cell phones, iPods, cameras, and the latest laptops were used by Gen Z in schools and at home. In the present day, Apple has developed an iPhone 13 which features a larger screen, faster internet, and professional media options. Although not all of Generation Z may own the latest iPhone, it still has been known to be used by this generation throughout the years.

Generation Z quickly demonstrates a level of comfort with technology and uses it often as they get older. “The technologies have a big impact on human activities and the fact that Generation Z is matured alongside technology leads to an assumption that Generation Z has made technology as their personalities” (Nabahani & Riyanto, 2020, p. 235). Generation Z is even more technologically integrated than their Millennial colleagues, “living a cyborg-like reality in which who they are, what they do, and how they feel are all intertwined with a complexly intermeshed technology-grounded world” (Miller & Mills, 2019, p. 79). Technology and the internet have been necessary for digital natives to function. Generation Z has had more access to information through smartphones, the internet, and online applications than previous generations. They use technology to their advantage and have learned to value their time spent

online. Rue (2018) stated, “Gen Zer stay alert to new developments in technology and are likely to be early adopters” (p. 6.) and navigate through digital trends quickly. Due to the ever-changing world of education, Generation Z has adapted to remote instruction and the use of integrating technology into education. They have been in their comfort zone, even more so, throughout the pandemic. Szymkowiak et al. (2021) stated, “Gen Z prefers digital media over that traditional, and has a constant need to receive new, different types of information” (p. 23). The integration of technology benefits Generation Z because they prefer digital education over traditional teaching. The use of technology has increased in education, and Generation Z has been at the forefront of the new norm in education.

Forms of Communication

Green and McCann (2021) stated, “Communication is another important trait of the Z generation. They feel the need to be connected constantly through any communication technology possible” (p. 4). Connectivity has been a priority for Generation Z to socialize and interact with their friends, family, and colleagues. In a study conducted by Bradbury (2017), Generation Z and other digital natives have claimed that they communicate 74% digitally and 26% in person. Since smartphones and the internet have been constant in their life, Generation Z has been able to connect with others at any given moment. The use of text messages, emojis, gifs, and other digital applications is seen as a modern form of communication among Generation Z. Generation Z, digital natives, are visual learners who use text messaging, emojis, gifs, signs, and other digital formats to communicate with others. They prefer to convey meaning with visuals rather than words because this allows them to say more with less. To Gen Z, communication is about getting to the point quickly because “their tech habits lead them to demonstrate a limited attention span, and they bore easily when they perceive monotony”

(Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020, p. 854). Generation Z tends to be disinterested in conversations that are too lengthy or that do not get straight to the point. Hernandez-de-Menendez et al. (2020) explained “Gen Z shows frequent communication instead of lengthy communication and that Gen Z spends most of the time online” (p. 849). They are constantly connected to the world online “which allows them to feel instantly gratified, or hurt, or utterly important, or dismayed by the content or the context of communication” (Turner, 2015, p. 110). Online communication is faster and easier for Generation Z to send and receive instant feedback.

Generation Z’s constant online communication can have a skills gap that could impact their future jobs. O’Boyle et al. (2017), explained that “The communication skills gap of many Gen Z professionals could potentially hinder the passing on of tacit knowledge, impacting the organization as older generations retire from the workforce” (p. 5). It can be argued that Generation Z prefers face-to-face communication when it comes to socializing, but there are digital applications such as Facetime, Kik, Facebook Messenger, Zoom, Skype, and others that allow them to communicate in modern times. Since Generation Z has grown up socializing mostly in this fashion, it is utilized more often. Rue (2018) stated, “I fear that the establishing and deepening of human connection will be more challenging for this generation, which could lead to greater loneliness and decreased mental health” (p. 7). It is challenging for Generation Z to have a full conversation in person because they have spent most of their life behind their devices. The lack of actual in-person communication can be detrimental to Generation Z when it comes to socializing in the classroom or the workforce. Seemiller and Grace (2019) explained that Generation Z may end up lacking critical interpersonal communication skills to effectively interact with each other. This may inhibit their skills to communicate face-to-face with others in

a social environment. Nonetheless, Generation Z welcomes both, online and face-to-face, formats of communication.

The Influence of Social Media

Generation Z is well-known for being the most fluent in the use of social media. “Generation Z is raised with the social web, they are digital-centric, and technology is their identity” (Singh & Dangmei, 2016, p. 2). Social media became popular in 2003 with the launch of Myspace, but the majority of Generation Z grew up with Facebook. The social media platforms that gained popularity with Generation Z early on were Facebook and Twitter. “Initially designed in 2004 as a Harvard student social network, Facebook has had an undeniable impact on how Generation Z youth interact in the world” (Turner, 2015, p. 108). This platform was used to connect with friends and family and coined the concept of likes in the social media world. Generation Z spent most of their time communicating with friends and received the attention of virtual strangers online. This generation is not afraid to speak their mind or share personal information on social media which sometimes goes against them. Because of the lax behavior online, this sometimes led to cyber bullying for this generation. Generation Z were either the participants, victims, or sometimes both. Social media allows for anonymity, and “it allows for socially interested behaviors to proliferate in ways we have never before seen” (Turner, 2015, p. 110). Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and Tik Tok are among the top social media platforms where individuals post intolerable behavior. The competition among Generation Z is constant in the social media world due to the immediate validation and acceptance through the many platforms.

The earliest of Generation Z tend to use social media to their advantage to bring awareness of the social injustices in the world. Rue (2018) stated, “as the most diverse generation in American history, it is not surprising that Gen Z is already showering awareness and concern about inequality” (p. 7). Generation Z has become involved in protests and global movements to bring change to the world. “Gen Z activists leveraged social media effectively before, during, and after the march both to mobilize involvement and to spread their messages” (Rue, 2018, p. 9). Today, Generation Z prefers to use Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Tik Tok, and other popular platforms to engage with their family and friends. These platforms have allowed Generation Z to express their opinions and make their voices heard on a plethora of social issues. This generation is driven by social media which can either positively or negatively influence the perceptions of how others view the world. This generation continues to break down the barriers of social media and encourage people of other generations to engage in online activity alongside them.

Higher Education

Seemiller and Grace (2019) stated, “Sixty-one percent of those in Generation Z say that they should know their future career before coming to college” (p. 194). Generation Z has taken advantage of college credits in high school and shortened their time to three years or less in college. For other generations, the norm was four or more years to obtain a bachelor’s degree, but for Generation Z “perhaps the notion of the fifth-year senior will be replaced by the third-year senior rushing to punch the clock to graduation” (Seemiller & Grace, 2019, p. 195). Generation Z learners have been considered overachievers that find it more cost-effective and simpler to acquire their credits in high school because they do not have to pay out of pocket or acquire student debt. They value their time and finances in college and prefer to learn what they

need to in a short, quick, effective manner. This generation has found that the least expensive colleges seem more feasible than the prestigious and expensive ones. Fortunately, colleges have offered free tuition opportunities for Generation Z which they have taken advantage of. The free tuition offered to Generation Z students has convinced them to attend college and take more courses a semester. Finances tend to be important to Generation Z, and some would rather stay at home and go to college than rent an apartment or dorm. Although parents of Generation Z have supported them up until graduation, “some in Generation Z don’t have any intention of moving out after college” (Seemiller & Grace, 2019, p. 194). Those who leave for college might return home shortly after.

The literature suggests that Generation Z feels the need to be empowered, educated, engaged, and prepared to solve world problems. As adult learners, they expect to learn how to navigate through issues that affect their future careers. What may have worked in higher education with the past generations will not be as effective with Generation Z. “Gen Z’s intrapersonal approach to learning differs drastically from the teamwork-oriented and collaborate nature of Millennials” (Seemiller and Grace, 2017, p. 23). Generation Z has worked in groups, but they have been used to working independently for most of their life. “They prefer to deal with problems independently, and before asking for advice or help will search for a solution on YouTube or other platforms of video tutorials” (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017, p. 809). Generation Z would rather utilize technology to solve problems than ask for assistance.

Generation Z is practical and prefers learning at their own pace. When Generation Z entered higher education institutions, the faculty noticed that the traditional practices had to be adjusted to fit Generation Z’s learning styles. “Education is no longer dependent on chalk and blackboard, it is interactive, lifelong learning, visual, kinetic and above all, aware and responsive

to students needs bringing forth the compulsory skills in order to have a smooth conversion towards the workforce” (Bărbuceanu, 2020, p. 144). Generation Z values their time, and universities have noticed that their pedagogies may need to be adjusted to reach this generation. According to Schroth (2019), “Gen Zers say they prefer collaborative learning rather than a ‘telling’ approach” (p. 12). The long lectures and PowerPoints do not engage Generation Z as they did with the previous generations. They prefer short lectures, if any, and expect the professors to keep them engaged by utilizing technology. Rue (2018) stated, “They have learned to expect not only Amazon-like speed and quality of service but also Amazon-like personalization” (p. 9).

Generation Z encountered violence, conflicts, and crises, which encouraged them to become an empowered, educated, and motivated generation who have become the catalysts for change. Being digital natives, they have grown up in a digital world where they have used technology to socialize and interact with others in society. As digitally infused individuals, they have taken advantage of social media platforms to bring awareness to issues and prompt change in the world and education. They entered higher education institutions as practical learners who preferred to learn about their future careers in a fast-paced manner. Higher education institutions have had to transform and “adapt to the changes that are happening worldwide, such as the development of advanced information technologies which are available to many people, the different profiles of students, and the demand for skilled graduates for jobs that do not exist yet” (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020, p. 847). However, there has been a gap in the literature concerning Generation Z teachers' lived experiences and motivations which were explored in this qualitative phenomenological study.

Generation Z Teachers

Generation Z teachers are the earliest members of their cohort “who will be teaching the mid and latter members of this same cohort” (Carter, 2018, p. 5). The new generation of teachers can be described as “technological, social, global, and developed. They are the most connected, clever, and education generation ever existed before, who have adopted technological developments, are driven by social media, and influenced by bands and musical culture” (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017, p. 809). These digital-native teachers have grown up as independent thinkers and learners who strive to excel in education. The literature asserts that Generation Z experienced influential events that have affected the way they perceive society and navigate through it. The constant use of technology has spilled over into the classroom which resonates with their Generation Z students. “Generation Zs digitally infused social DNA plays a role in what makes Generation Z unique, but do not be mistaken in thinking that being digitally savvy is all that defines them” (Seemiller & Grace, 2017, p. 22). This generation of teachers has a “uniqueness of stimuli and access to limitless information” (Nabahani & Riyanto, 2020, p. 237) and tends to stand out from their colleagues from previous generations. As the new generational cohort of teachers, they have brought their “technology-driven lifestyles and prolific use of social media” (Gaidhani et al., 2019, p. 2806) to school districts to engage their younger generation of learners.

Digital Literacy Skills

The new generation of teachers, known as Generation Z, have grown up as digital natives and have utilized technology to create lessons that engage their Generation Z students.

Generation Z teachers have been interconnected 24/7 and exposed to online platforms such as:

“Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, blogs, podcast, YouTube, online news, text messaging, instant messaging, smartphones, Ipads” (Barbuceanu, 2020, p. 137). As the youngest generation of teachers, they desire to use different forms of technology to plan, create, and communicate with others. Barnhart (2020) stated that Generation Z teachers tend to be “digital natives, like their students, and familiar with the use of technology and bring several assets to the fieldwork partnership” (p. 126). They tend to be more risk-takers who explore digital practices to promote learning in their classrooms. They have had no problem sharing their digital expertise with their colleagues and helping the previous generation of teachers build their digital skills. For Generation Z teachers, “who have grown up with computers in their homes and cell phones in their pockets” (Starkey, 2010, p. 1429), technology has been the norm.

Digital literacy in the digital age is “the ability and dexterity students possess in how and what language to use when suitable; it is also the facility in the digital language of technology and the capacity to critically inspect various kinds of language and texts” (Barbuceanu, 2020, p. 141). They find the use of technology to be the norm and have been driven by it. “The success of digital literacy in the classroom setting is often related to the teacher’s key role as a facilitator in the teaching and learning process” (Kurniawati et al., 2018, p. 2). As digital literate teachers, they have been used to navigating through the world at a fast pace.

“Digital Immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language” (Prensky, 2001, p. 2). It has been argued that digital immigrant teachers, that have not been exposed to digital literacy, encounter challenges and refrain from integrating technology into the curriculum. Digital literacy can be intimidating for teachers who are not digitally literate and who are unfamiliar with digital applications that integrate literacy; however, Gen Z teachers have been

introduced to digital literacy at an early age. “We know that the nature of literacy has changed in the digital age, but unfortunately, we do not have decades to catch up to this change” (Hicks & Turner, 2013, p. 59). Honeyford and Watt (2018) explained that teachers are met with the “uncertainty in responding to the ever-changing landscape of social media and new technologies” (p. 276) and become reluctant to adapt to change. What Prensky (2001) described at the dawn of the 21st century remains true today. “Today’s students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach” (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). It takes time to become digitally literate to develop the skills needed to support students in the classroom.

It can be argued that technology does not have the same value as traditional literacy practices, and barriers such as funding and training may hinder teachers from utilizing digital literacy in their classrooms. However, digital literacy can be engaging to use, but it may not be as effective when a teacher is not digitally literate or able to model this practice. Hicks and Turner (2013) argued that five digital practices that experienced teachers should stop such as counting slides, using a blog without blogging, criticizing digital technology, asking questions that can be answered by a search engine, and using “cool” technology to deliver a planned lesson. Simply creating PowerPoint slides for presentations, typing blogs, using technology to copy information to index cards, and incorporating digital tools such as polls are not considered digital literacy. Hicks and Turner (2013) believed that “Digital literacy is about more than just adding technology into the teaching we already do” (p. 60). “For these reasons, there is a growing need for teachers to use technological solutions in teaching, to set an example for students to use technology independently for educational purposes” (Green & McCann, 2021, p. 2).

Work Expectations

Acheampong (2020) stated, “The current Gen Z workforce composition is between 5-10%” (p. 76). Generation Z’s expectations of a job vary compared to those of previous generations. Schroth (2019) explained that Generation Z tends to have idealistic ideas of their workplace such as growth opportunities, and work satisfaction and that every colleague respects and considers their ideas. Generation Z seeks out jobs that offer more advancement in their careers, freedom, and independence. Singh and Dangmei (2016) suggested that Generation Z teachers are attracted to a workplace where the environment is friendly and allows for flexibility. They seek out jobs where they are valued, respected, and feel a part of the campus community. “Sociable and flexible schedules are a motivation for them” (Nabahani & Riyanto, 2020, p. 237).

In a study conducted by Dan Schawbel (2014), Generation Z preferred face-to-face communication when it came to their work because they wanted others to take them seriously. Generation Z does not want to be judged based on their young age. Schawbel (2014) explained that Generation Z would like to be recognized for the ideas they bring to the job. Even though they are passionate about becoming teachers, they have certain expectations before entering this profession. The opportunity to become a leader or grow in their profession appeals to this younger generation of teachers, Generation Z.

Growth Opportunities

Generation Z explores jobs that offer growth opportunities, especially in education. In the field of education, Generation Z can start their career as a teacher and work their way up to administrative positions at the campus or district level. For districts to retain Generation Z

teachers, it would be important to “help them see a path to their futures,” (Seemiller & Grace, 2019, p. 218), especially at the campus level Administrators can support the new generation of teachers “gain a sense of autonomy by allowing them to take greater ownership of projects and make more of their own decisions over time” (Schroth, 2019, p. 14). When leaders understand Generation Z, they notice that they are highly motivated individuals that can be great assets to the campus. Administration can foster Generation Z teachers’ personal and professional growth by helping them elevate their praxis.

Mark Sparvell, an educational leader at Microsoft Education, surveyed 1034 novice teachers and found that “young teachers tend to want ongoing support and professional development” (Will, 2020, p. 4). Young teachers sought out opportunities for professional development, coaching, mentoring, and feedback to support their teaching practices. Unfortunately, young teachers, like Generation Z, have found that online platforms such as Twitter, Reddit, Facebook, and other social media groups provide more support than their colleagues, administration, and district. It can be challenging for Generation Z teachers to reach out to their peers because they struggle to admit that they do not know everything. With online groups, they can ask for assistance without judgment. Teresa Bridges (2015) claimed that Generation Z prefers to receive mentoring and professional development to enhance their knowledge and skills in teaching. Generation Z teachers favor “understanding, friendly, caring, respectful, helpful, fair, easy-going, and patient supervisors who take the time to get to know them” (Seemiller & Grace, 2019, p. 239). To Generation Z teachers, building a good rapport with administrators opens the door for them to share their ideas with those at a higher level.

Work Motivation

Based on the literature, Generation Z wants jobs that are going to be internally fulfilling. Generation Z innately desires to be in a position where they can make a positive impact on others. Nabahani and Riyanto (2020) explained that the more employees become satisfied at work, “the more motivated they are to keep on working their best, vice versa, achievement could be made” (p. 235). Seemiller and Grace (2019) suggested that “This is a generation that wants to come home at the end of the day feeling good about what they contributed to the world through their work” (p. 217). Seemiller and Grace (2019) added that Generation Z is a generation of entrepreneurs, yet they prefer jobs, like teaching, that have modest pay but make them happy. They find enjoyment in knowing that they can be the game changers in teaching education. However, to maintain Generation Z teachers’ motivation to work in the schools, Argarwal and Vaghela (2018) recommended that administrators identify their work preferences and gain insight into their expectations of the job. Although this is the work motivation of Generation Z, it is not specific to the Latinx Generation Z teachers.

The literature focused on the subculture of Generation Z teachers rather than the Latinx Generation Z teachers because there was scant information. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to Latinx Generation Z teachers.

Summary

Chapter 2 examined the experiences, qualities, and work expectations of the new generation of teachers, Generation Z. Based on the literature and research, Generation Z teachers have encountered pivotal events in their life that have empowered and transformed them into becoming change agents in society. The literature review provided a brief analysis of teaching, influential events, and the qualities Generation Z teachers bring to the classroom. “Generation Z

is the most global, diverse, technological, and entrepreneurial generation ever” (Green & McCann, 2021, p. 3). The traditional methods of teaching have changed, and technology has taken over much of education in these last few years. The literature asserted that Generation Z have different education and work expectations from previous generations, but it did not include how their lived experiences impacted their motivations to teach and remain in the public school districts. This study explored the phenomena of motivating and retaining Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers based on their lived experiences in the Rio Grande Valley school districts.

Chapter III discusses the methodology and research design to be used in this qualitative phenomenological study of Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers lived experiences, motivations, and the retention factors that impact their decision work in the Rio Grande Valley school districts.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

I conducted a qualitative phenomenological study to explore how Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers' lived experiences influenced their motivations to teach and also identified the important factors to retain them in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. For this study, a phenomenological approach was used to explore the lived experiences of Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers. "A phenomenology is a form of qualitative research that focuses on the study of an individual's lived experiences within the world" (Neubauer et al, 2019, p. 90). Thus, this research sought to understand how Latinx Generation Z teachers' education and work experiences have impacted their decision to work at the secondary campuses in the Rio Grande Valley school districts.

This chapter presents the research problem, the purpose of the study, the research design, the data collection, and the data analysis of the study.

Research Problem

Barnhart (2020) explained that the current disruption in education caused by the COVID- 19 potentially stimulated a rethinking of how districts support the new generation of teachers, Generation Z. Generation Z teachers have entered the workforce during unprecedented times

when the COVID-19 pandemic and major teacher shortages have impacted the school districts around the nation. Recently, Governor Greg Abbott initiated a teacher task force to identify the issues with teacher shortages in the state of Texas. School districts have offered incentives to retain highly qualified teachers to motivate teachers to apply for a job. In a recent article by Ann Kellett (2022), she investigated the reasons why teachers have left the classroom in Texas. Kellett (2022) interviewed a Texas A&M Assistant Professor, Andrew Kwok, who claimed that “the teachers may be leaving the classroom due to health, academic gaps, and the abrupt transition to using technology which caused mental and emotional burnout” (p.1). Therefore, it has been a daunting task to retain teachers in the school districts.

Fortunately, the literature suggested that Generation Z teachers’ experiences, qualities, vision, and work ethic have made them highly adaptable to change in the digital age of education (Magano et al., 2020). As stated in Chapter II, Generation Z was born at a time when historical events prompted the advancement of technology, social media, and education. According to Benítez-Márquez et al. (2022), “This generation cohort has been surrounded by a global financial crisis, times of terrorism, political uncertainty, and an almost irreversible climate crisis” (p. 2). Generation Z has been “constantly connected, communicates through various networks across countries and cultures, prefers practical learning, community life, and desire to improve the world” (Cakirpaloglu et al., 2020, p. 5843). Generation Z teachers have had to adopt the role of change agents in education and are having to use their experiences to navigate through the workforce.

Thus, to gain an understanding of the Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers, I explored their lived experiences at a deeper level by conducting a qualitative phenomenological study to examine how Generation Z teachers’ lived experiences impacted their motivation and decision to

remain working in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. Through the interview process, I analyzed how Latinx Generation Z teachers' lived experiences influenced their motivation to work in education and examine how these experiences impacted Latinx Generation Z secondary teacher retention at the schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers' lived experiences, motivations, and retention factors that impact their decision to work in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. This new generation of teachers has recently entered the classroom, yet there has been limited literature and research about how Latinx Generation Z teachers' lived experiences impacted their motivation to work and remain teaching in the school districts. Therefore, this study sought to explore (a) Latinx Generation Z teachers' lived experiences; (b) examined how these experiences have influenced their motivation to teach; and (c) identified the important components to retain them in the Rio Grande Valley school districts, especially at the secondary campuses.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers' lived experiences influence their motivation to teach in the Rio Grande Valley school districts?
2. In sharing their experiences, what do Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers see as important components for retaining them in the Rio Grande Valley school districts?

Research Design

I conducted a qualitative research design that includes a phenomenological interview approach in which I explored the lived experiences of the Latinx Generation Z secondary

teachers through semi-structured interviews. Van Manen (1997) described phenomenology as the study of lived experiences and meanings which involved descriptions and interpretations that provided a deeper understanding. The phenomenological research design offered rich descriptions of the phenomena (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). For this study, I used reflective questioning to explore the lived experiences of Latinx Generation Z teachers. “The process of focusing questions is an iterative, reflective process that leads, not just to data, but to specific data that can add knowledge to a larger field of study” (Agee, 2009, p. 442). Vagle (2014) explained that phenomenology can be used as a reflective method to gain insight into a person’s lived experiences. Therefore, the phenomenological approach was most suitable for this qualitative study to explore Latinx Generation Z teachers’ lived experiences, examine their drive for teaching, and investigate the factors that they believe are important to retaining them in the school districts.

The study included a purposeful sampling method which was used to “intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2015, p. 205). Through purposeful sampling, I selected the participants based on a participant criterion. Once the participants were selected, I followed a three-interview series approach to build a rapport with the participants, to explore their lived experiences and motivations, and to encourage the participants to reflect on the important retention factors that influenced their decision to remain at the school. Once the data was collected, I coded, categorized, and identified themes to interpret the data. Qualitative analysis of the data collected was examined based on the participants’ responses and was coded and categorized by common themes (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). “Recounting narratives of experience has been the major way throughout recorded history that humans have made sense of their experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 8). Through the thick

descriptions of the participants, I compared and cross-checked the data to interpret their lived experiences and analyzed how these experiences influenced their motivation and decision to teach in the Rio Grande Valley schools.

The phenomenological interview approach allowed me to dive deep into the lived experiences of the Generation Z teachers. The semi-structured questions were designed to prompt the discovery process, yet they did not limit the exploration of the participants' lived experiences. Therefore, through semi-structured interviews and reflective questioning, the participants revealed their deep thoughts and feelings about their lived experiences and motivations, and it allowed them to elaborate on the factors that impacted their decision to remain in the Rio Grande Valley school districts.

Setting

This qualitative phenomenological study was conducted in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) in South Texas located a few miles from the Mexico border. The Generation Z population comprised 6.17% of the RGV population (RGV Health Connect, 2021). The RGV Health Connect (2021) data revealed that most of the Rio Grande Valley population comprised of more than 1,314,420 persons with 93.79% identified as Hispanic/Latinx. The average family household in the RGV consisted of 20.33% of the RGV. The household income for Hispanic/Latinx families averaged between \$38,000 and \$40,000 (RGV Health Connect, 2021).

The majority of the RGV school districts serve economically diverse, middle to low-income families. With limited resources and funding, the RGV has faced challenges sustaining highly qualified teachers. The beginning teacher's salary ranges from \$36,000-\$48,500 (TEA, 2022). According to the Texas Education Agency (2022) data, currently, there are about 1,330

Generation Z teachers (ages 21-25) who hold a bachelor's degree, in the following Region One counties: Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy County.

I had planned to interview two to eight Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers between the range of 21-25 years of age since they are the newest generation of teachers to enter the teaching profession in school districts. I sent out numerous emails and invitations to personal and professional networks and three participants, who met the criteria, responded. Initially, I wanted at least one Generation Z teacher from all four counties, and fortunately, I was able to have representation from three of the four counties. The setting for the study took place in the Rio Grande Valley using an online application, Zoom. Due to the different geographic locations of the participants, the online setting provided the teachers with the convenience to participate from the place of their choosing. Since teachers were not working during the summer, this was more convenient for them. This study delved deep into the lived experiences of the Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers, their motivations to teach, and the retention factors that influenced their decision to remain working in the RGV school districts. The thick descriptions of the participants' responses provided thick interpretations of the findings (Ponterotto, 2006). I analyzed the data thoroughly and delivered a more robust qualitative phenomenological study.

Participants

The sampling method I used was purposeful sampling. According to Koch et al. (2014), “In purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select participants who are most capable of providing rich, thick descriptions of their experiences, practices, and/or their perspectives as related to the phenomenon of interest” (p. 136). The participants selected delivered the richest descriptions of their lived experiences. I examined how their lived experiences influenced their

motivation to work in education and discovered how districts can retain Generation Z teachers in schools.

Tuckett (2004) explained that the richness of data is far more important than the number of participants in the study. This study consisted of personal interviews with three Latinx Generation secondary teachers via Zoom. Through the interviews, I discovered how the Latinx Generation Z teachers' lived experiences impacted their motivation to teach at low-income school districts and identified the key components to retaining these teachers in the RGV. The participants were required to meet the following criteria:

Participant Criteria

- a) Generation Z (ages 21-25)
- b) Be a secondary general education teacher from school districts in the Rio Grande Valley
- c) A full-time, Latinx teacher
- d) Born and raised in the Rio Grande Valley
- e) Currently teaching in the Rio Grande Valley schools
- f) Completed their secondary and post-secondary education in the Rio Grande Valley
- g) Must have at least one year of teaching experience

Participant Recruitment

I recruited participants in conjunction with personal and professional networks. As soon as I received IRB approval to conduct the study, an email (Appendix A) was sent out to personal and professional networks. A formal letter was sent via email (Appendix B), inviting participants to be part of the study. This invitation listed the guidelines and expectations of the participants, and my contact information, in case the participants had any questions. Once the participants

responded to the invitation, I emailed them a letter of informed consent and confidentiality (Appendix C) that was signed prior to the first meeting.

Data Collection

Data for this qualitative phenomenological study was collected through semi-structured interviews using the phenomenological interview approach. Seidman (2006) stated, “The primary way a researcher can investigate an educational organization, institution, or process is through the experience of the individual people, the ‘others’ who make up the organization or carry out the process” (p. 10). The phenomenological interview approach supported my research study. I had originally planned to conduct the three interviews on separate days, but each participant completed their three interviews in one to two days. The interviews were conducted at the convenience of the teachers via Zoom and were recorded and reviewed using the autogenerated transcription from the Zoom application to check for accuracy. I assigned each participant a pseudonym to provide anonymity. I developed a key to identify each participant based on their pseudonym. To provide a deeper connection with the readers, I felt that using a pseudonym added depth and meaning to the study.

The three-interview series allowed me to dive deep into the experiences and place them into context in a meaningful way (Seidman, 2006). Seidman (2006) explained the three-interview series as:

The first interview establishes the context of the participants’ experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them (p. 17).

For this qualitative phenomenological study, I developed semi-structured interview questions that encouraged the participants to reflect on their lived experiences, motivations, and retention factors that impact their decision to work in the Rio Grande Valley school districts (Appendix D). Lopez and Whitehead (2013) explained that the semi-structured interview questions “steer the interview yet allow for flexibility” (p. 128). Ultimately, “at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 9). I had the flexibility to ask follow-up questions and add any other thoughts or comments that transpired during the interviews. The interviews were conducted over two months which allowed me to build a rapport with the participants and explore their lived experiences, motivation, and retention factors. The interviews were recorded using the Zoom application. I coded, categorized, and analyzed the interviews for themes.

Data Analysis

Albert Bandura’s (1977), social cognitive theory and the construct of self-efficacy were utilized as a theoretical framework for this study. Self-efficacy is one’s belief that one can or cannot successfully complete a task or job (Bandura, 1977, 1997, 2002). I used the four components of self-efficacy to inform my analysis of the participants’ responses. Also leveraging Lev Vygotsky’s (1986) social constructivism theoretical framework as a lens through which to view the interview data, I was able to identify how important it was for the participants to learn from their peers through social interaction.

I analyzed the interview data using methods such as coding, categorizing, and thematic analysis. Glesne (2016) stated, “Coding is a progressive process of sorting and refining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data” (p. 195). Through an iterative process, “Codes and themes occurring in the data can be determined inductively from reviewing the data, and/or

from relevance to your research questions” (Robson & McCartan, 2016 p. 461). My data for this study consisted of narrative sources such as interview transcripts and interview recordings from the three interviews I had with the three participants. When the interviews were completed, I read through the transcripts and listened to the interview recordings to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. Then, I read the transcripts to find patterns and reread them again. I underlined certain words and phrases that were repeated within and across participants’ transcripts. I continued to underline each code word and phrase as I read through the transcripts. Then I typed all of the codes and phrases onto an Excel spreadsheet and organized them into categories. Once they were placed into the categories, I sorted them from A-Z and counted the number of times the words, phrases, and categories were mentioned throughout the interviews. The two major fields I investigated were motivation and teacher retention. While I was analyzing the data, I used those fields to discover the commonalities among the three participants. I compared and cross-checked the interviews for “consistency of information derived at different times and by different means” (Patton, 1999, p. 1195). The data collected provided a more in-depth perspective of the participants’ experiences. Since the review of literature mostly asserted characteristics, experiences, and education and work experiences, the study conveyed a breadth of individual experiences. As a result of this phenomenological study, four themes, two subthemes, and three categories emerged from the participants’ responses.

Holloway (1997) explained that thick description “aims to give readers a sense of emotions, thoughts, and perceptions that research participant’s experience” (p. 154). To understand the participants’ experiences, it was important to develop a clear picture of the culture and setting in which they work (Holloway, 1997). “When people tell stories, they select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness” (Seidman, 2006, p. 7). This displayed

relatable, trustworthy, and credible data from the interviews collected. The particular context of this study took place in the Rio Grande Valley which is predominantly a Latinx community.

As the researcher, I wanted to understand the participants' lived experiences as a teacher and identify what motivated them in the school districts, so I used Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, Self-Efficacy to design the interview questions. Each code word, phrase, and category were analyzed and counted throughout the coding process and which revealed the themes for this study as seen in the tables in Chapter 4. The participants shared their experiences and provided clear evidence for the field of investigation of motivation. As for the field of investigation of teacher retention, I used Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory of zone proximal development to understand the importance of support systems and peer to peer learning and interactions.

This phenomenological study was grounded in Albert Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the lived experiences of the Generation Z teachers. During the interviews, I asked follow-up questions to allow the participants to elaborate on their responses. The participants shared rich descriptions of their lived experiences and the impact they had on their motivation and retention factors to teach in the RGV.

Participants' Profile

Two Latinx high school teachers and one Latinx middle school teacher of Generation Z participated in this phenomenological study. I assigned a pseudonym to each participant to add depth and meaning to the study. I developed a key to identify each participant to match the pseudonym. The participants were selected based on a specific criteria. The participants, individually, engaged in conversation with me to share their lived experiences, motivations and

retention factors that impact their decision to remain in the school districts. They also expressed the need for support to retain them at the schools. The personal experiences shared by the Generation Z teachers were powerful, rich, and added breadth to this study.’

Each participant described growing up using technology at home and at school. When they entered middle school and high school, technology had just gained momentum. Their love for technology grew from those experiences in grade school. They described particular games and programs that were utilized in their elementary and middle school years. They recalled learning how to read by using the program, Accelerated Reader. With this program, the participants would read a book, take an online quiz, and obtain a certain number of points for each book they read. The participants mentioned that they also used laptops to read and play computer games to learn about math. When they reached high school and college, the iPad, iPhone, and laptops were required to be able to complete their assignments. By the time they were student-teaching, the pandemic had hit, and technology had taken over the world of education. In their first year of teaching, they learned to design digital lessons and provide instruction to their students, virtually. When they transitioned back to face-to-face instruction, they continued to integrate technology into their classroom to support the students’ learning.

Ironically, when I asked them about their motivation and retention factors, there was minimal focus on the use of technology. Considering the participants were all digital natives, this was not a major factor for all three of them. However, there were four themes that emerged from their motivation to teach were Creating Authentic Relationships and Trusting Relationships in the Classroom, Fostering the Students’ Well-Being and Receiving Teacher Support, and Recognizing Teacher Successes to Increase Teacher Efficacy. As for teacher retention, the data revealed one theme Implementing Effective Support Systems to Increase Teacher Retention, two

subthemes, Administration Leadership Skills Affect Teacher Retainment and The Impact of Mentorships to Build Teacher Efficacy, and three categories, Providing Support with Discipline to Improve Teacher Classroom Management, Fostering Effective Communication to Convey Important Information at the Campus., and Grace and Time to Support Teacher and Student Success.

Field of Investigation: Motivation

A key component of the interview process for this study was to investigate the participants' motivation to teach. Therefore, during the interviews, I asked each participant how their lived experiences influenced their motivation to teach in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. The three participants provided rich experiences that impacted their motivation to teach in the RGV.

The data of motivation was transferred onto an Excel spreadsheet to assist me with the organization. The three columns were created to identify the code words and phrases for each theme and to reveal the number of times there were mentioned in the interviews. Chapter 4 present my findings and tables for this field of investigation.

Field of Investigation: Teacher Retention

To answer the second research question, each Generation Z teacher participant was asked to identify important factors that would retain them in the RGV school districts. The three participants shared their lived experiences and explained key factors that the districts could do to retain them for years to come.

For this study, I intentionally developed my interview questions using both Bandura's (1986) and Vygotsky's (1978) theoretical frameworks to identify the important components to retain Generation Z teachers at the school districts. The theme Implementing Effective Support

Systems to Increase Teacher Retention emerged from the data. The two subthemes revealed were Administration Leadership Skills Affect Teacher Retainment and The Impact of Mentorships to Build Teacher Efficacy. From the subtheme of Administration Leadership Skills Affect Teacher Retainment were three categories, Providing Support with Discipline to Improve Teacher Classroom Management, Fostering Effective Communication to Convey Important Information at the Campus, and Grace and Time to Support Teacher and Student Success.

The data from the interviews of teacher retention was transferred onto an Excel spreadsheet to assist me with the organization. The three columns were created to identify the code words and phrases for each theme, subthemes, and categories and to reveal the number of times they were mentioned in the interviews. Chapter 4 presents my findings and tables for this field of investigation.

Trustworthiness

According to Glesne (2016), “Trustworthiness is about alertness to the quality and rigor of a study, about what sorts of criteria can be used to assess how well the research was carried out” (p. 53). The interviews captured the experiences, motivations, and retention factors of the three participants in a detailed manner. It was my responsibility to ensure that rigor and trustworthiness were established. According to Cope (2014), trustworthiness in qualitative research was based on the following: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. In the final interview sessions, I provided the participants with the opportunities to add any additional comments, but they did not have anything to add to the interviews.

In a phenomenological study, it was important to include member checking within the context of the study to assure that the participants’ voices are represented accurately. Creswell (2016) explained that member checking involves taking the data back to the participants so that

they can check it for accuracy and credibility. After each interview, I verified the data collected with the participant. Member checking was also performed in the final interview with the participant to provide them an opportunity to elaborate on their responses from the first and second interviews. I reviewed their responses to ensure that I had captured their lived experiences and reflections accurately. This clarified any lingering questions and confirmed the data collected within the three-interview series.

Summary

This chapter described the qualitative phenomenological study methodology which focused on Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers' lived experiences and how their experiences impacted their motivation to work in education and remain teaching at the school districts in the RGV. The semi-structured interviews were the only data collected from the participants.

The three participants in the study were recruited and met certain participant criteria. Once the participants were selected, then they received explicit information and the consent forms to participate in the study. The interview responses were conducted via Zoom, and I offered the participants the opportunity to add to the information collected in the previous interview sessions. I used thick descriptions from the exploratory interviews to provide a robust study. I also analyzed the data using methods from Glesne (2016), Saldana (2015), and Patton (1999) to code, categorize, and analyze the themes.

Chapter IV presents the findings of my qualitative phenomenological study. Chapter V discusses the findings of the research topic and provides areas for further exploration.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Chapter IV presents the findings that resulted from the interviews of three Generation Z teachers from the Rio Grande Valley. I used a phenomenological qualitative design to explore the lived experiences of these three, Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers, to examine their motivation for teaching, and identify the factors that they believe are important to retaining them in the school districts. This method was best suited to answer the research questions and allowed me to delve deep into their lived experiences.

This study investigated the motivation and retention factors of Generation Z teachers in the Rio Grande Valley. Through interviews, I captured their lived experiences and motivations to teach, and also identified the key components to retaining them in the school districts. As a result of this phenomenological study, four themes, two subthemes, and three categories emerged from the data.

The two fields I investigated were motivation and teacher retention. During the first and second interviews, each teacher was asked about their lived experiences and motivational factors that influenced their decision to work in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. In the third interview, the participants discussed the important components for retaining them in the school districts. Albert Bandura's (1986 ,2002) Social Cognitive Theory of Self Efficacy informed my

interview questions and my understanding of the participant's motivation to teach and their personal experiences, the social environment they worked in, and their behaviors while working with others. Through the lens of Social Constructivism Theory and Zone Proximal Development by Vygotsky (1978), I was able to understand how their experiences and social interactions with their colleagues and students influenced their decision to remain teaching in the school districts.

Key Findings of the Field of Investigation of Motivation

In the field of motivation, there were three themes that emerged in my findings. It was evident that the Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers wanted to build relationships in the classroom, receive and provide support to others, and wanted to be recognized for their hard work at the campus (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Generation Z Teachers Codes and Phrases: Field of Investigation: Motivation*

*Repetitive Code words or phrases	Themes	Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>*Authentic with students</i> <i>Bond with students</i> <i>*Connect with students</i> <i>*Connect with a mentor</i> <i>*Culture</i> <i>*Trust</i> <i>Good relationship with Gen Z teacher</i> <i>*Interact</i> <i>*Relate to my generation</i> <i>*Relate to student</i> <i>*Relate to technology</i> <i>*Relationships and connections</i> <i>Relationships are key</i> <i>*Respect</i> <i>*Student connections</i> 	<p>Creating Authentic Relationships and Trusting Relationships in the Classroom</p>	<p>54</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Biggest supporter</i> <i>Do more for these kids</i> <i>*Extra support</i> <i>Got a lot of support</i> <i>*Guided me</i> <i>*Helped me</i> <i>*Helping others</i> <i>*Helping students</i> <i>Love encouraging people</i> <i>Love for helping others</i> <i>*Needed to help</i> <i>*Received support</i> <i>*Strong support</i> <i>*Support</i> <i>*Support them</i> <i>*Supported</i> <i>*Supportive</i> 	<p>Fostering the Students' Well-Being and Receiving Teacher Support</p>	<p>40</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>*Acknowledged</i> <i>*Appreciation</i> <i>*Being noticed</i> <i>*Feel recognized</i> <i>Incredible feeling to be recognized</i> <i>Like everyone cheering for you</i> <i>Newsletters</i> <i>*Recognized</i> <i>*Recognized by students</i> <i>Teacher of the week</i> <i>Teacher of the Year</i> <i>Teachers will get recognized</i> <i>*Valued</i> <i>*Want to be appreciated</i> <i>*Want to be noticed</i> 	<p>Recognizing Teacher Successes to Increase Teacher Efficacy</p>	<p>34</p>

Creating Authentic Relationships and Trusting Relationships in the Classroom

Throughout the interviews, the participants explained how important it was to build relationships and make connections with their students and colleagues. They described their lived experiences and used those past experiences to relate to their students in the classroom. Since the participants were of the same generation as their students, they felt that they were able to understand how their students felt, thought, and acted in school, unlike the more experienced teachers on their campus who were not of Generation Z.

Alyssa talked about her experience with some teachers when she was in school. Her first language was Spanish, and she explained that she did not have a good relationship with some of her teachers. She talked about a teacher that “ended up making fun of me, for the way I spoke English or for asking a question about when something happens and there was just little motivation.” She further explained that this experience helped her to connect with her students and build a positive, working relationship with them. She did not want her students to have to go through what she went through. Her negative experience with her former high school teacher motivated her to be more relatable with her students in her classroom and make those connections with those that struggled.

Laura leveled with her students throughout the year, meaning she tried to relate to them. She said she wasn’t old enough to treat them like their mom but that she felt like an older sibling to them. “I kind of treat them like I’m their big, older sister, and you know, I talked to them like whenever, give them advice and stuff still in a loving way.” She stated:

I was myself with them this year, and they respected that. I think that they saw that because kids are not dumb, like they can sniff if you’re being phony or if you have you know walls up when you’re trying to be all, you know, all professional there with your

coat and tie, so I was just authentic with them. I told them like there's one thing about me like I do not lie.

Laura stressed the importance of the respect that her students had for her as a teacher. "I think one of the things that they really respected was, I told them that you know, I do not scream, like I don't yell, I don't scream." She did not feel that screaming was a way to build positive relationships and connect with her students. She reflected on her experience in school and having teachers that "would just scream and scream and the kids would laugh at them because they get that at home." Therefore, the approach she took with her students was very straightforward and honest. Another experience she talked about was that she made connections with the students by learning the students' "lingo" and "weird words" that they use in the classroom. She explained that she would get to know the students by simply talking to them to develop a trusting relationship with them.

Nicole offered experiences that were not mentioned by the other two participants. During our conversations, she discussed the connections she made with her students by using Generation Z examples. For instance, she discussed with her students that they were of the same generation, regardless of their age. She stated:

I'm like 'if you guys think about it, we are all part of the same generation. I'm part of the same generation as you. We're no different from each other when it comes to like the way that we've grown up. Like we've grown up in this technology. A generic thing we grew up on is some of the same shows, like shows that you guys have watched, I've watched them like all my life,' and it's like wow. Like we're able to connect in a way that was just like, I think it's different. Now we stick.

Nicole felt that she relates to them in a way that the other generation of teachers do not. “I think that makes a huge difference in the way that I’m able to connect and build relationships.” Nicole realized that being closer to their age is an advantage because they want to learn from her. She understood her students’ needs and empathized with them, considering they have been out of the classroom for about three years due to the pandemic. She shared an experience she had with one student, who motivated her this year:

I have this one girl that like would stay after school with me, and we would chat with each other, as in like being able to connect in that way that she’s just like ‘I was able to like get such a high score.’ She was one of the students who got a 95 on her STAAR and a four on her essay. She’s like, ‘Miss, I’ve never done this in my life.’

Moments like these are what motivated Nicole throughout the year. She loved making an impact on her students and developing deeper relationships to help them succeed in her classroom.

Fostering the Students’ Well-Being and Teacher Support

The participants reflected on positive experiences at their campus and discussed the collegial and mentor support they received this year. According to the three participants, teaching during a pandemic was challenging. The transition from virtual instruction to hybrid and face-to-face instruction was not an easy task, but they were determined to succeed. While speaking with the participants, I learned that the support they received from their colleagues and mentors is what motivated them throughout the year.

Alyssa shared her experience of working alongside her neighboring teachers and mentor.

She stated:

My neighbor teachers helped me through everything. Like they gave me all these websites to use, how to take attendance, like I didn't even know how to take attendance the first day. So, I would just go to my neighbor, and she'll be like, 'Oh yes, you can do this and that' and she guided me through everything. I did have a mentor and he was also like really good at helping me with classroom management.

Similarly, Laura described her mentor as one who devoted his time to ensuring her transition to the classroom was successful. She expressed her gratitude for having a strong mentor and stated, "I was like blessed to have like a mentor that he did the lesson plans for me, like he did everything, and he really, really took like the stress out of the job for me." She shared one of her daily experiences with her mentor:

He would come into my room and basically teach me the day before. We were going to present that to the kids, so he would come in. He's like, 'okay yeah basically we're doing, you know, balancing equations tomorrow, so this is how you do it.' He would write the whole thing on the board and go through, and I would be asking him questions. He would do that like almost every day, and I thought that was normal.

Laura realized that this was not the norm for other new teachers throughout the district. When she gathered with other Generation Z teachers at a conference, she found out that they did not have the support she had at her campus. She appreciated her mentor and recognized his efforts to support her during her first year of teaching.

Fortunately for Laura, she had strong support from her administrator. The positive interactions she had with her administrator at the campus motivated her to work harder this past year. She described her administrator as one who is “supportive and like calm.” She added:

He just makes me feel very like confident, and he believes in me. He’s just like waiting to see like my potential and greatness or whatever, like as a teacher. It makes me want to do good because that’s how much I respect him.

Nicole shared similar experiences about the support she received from her Generation Z teacher who was her classroom neighbor. She and her neighbor taught the same grade level and “built like a good friendship.” Nicole described her teacher neighbor as “my biggest like support when it came to like figuring out the world of reading because I was so accustomed to the writing already.” She shared an example of one interaction she had with her Generation Z neighboring teacher:

She would be the biggest help. She would give me like resources I needed and be like ‘hey let’s do this story. They’re going to be so into it and like this is how you should like go about reading it with them and everything.’ She was so amazing and like being able to just help me. Whenever I needed to see like an exemplar, like I would go into her classroom and be like, okay, I need to see what is it that she does.

Nicole also described how helpful her manager or mentor was throughout the year. It was difficult to find time to work with her manager because she was very busy, but her manager made the effort to meet. Nicole explained:

She would work with me in the way of just like, ‘you know what? Today I’m going to give you a sub, and we’re going to plan. Like we’re going to plan this day, and I’m gonna

help you figure out what resources we should do.’ I feel like I got a lot of support. Even though the challenges of teaching during the pandemic were a struggle and overwhelming for Nicole, she felt strongly supported and more at ease knowing she could depend on her manager for assistance.

The participants did mention that they were not only motivated by the support from their colleagues and mentors, but they were motivated to support their students. It was evident from the interviews that each participant felt the need to somehow support their students emotionally and academically in the classroom. It was interesting to find out how these Generation Z teachers helped their students transition from virtual instruction to face-to-face instruction.

Alyssa understood that her high school students were having a difficult time and that they had “things going on at home they can’t control.” She decided to support her students by giving them the opportunity to ask them about their day and check in to see how they were doing. She allowed them to get into groups to be able to discuss and develop a bond with their peers and with her. This was something she looked forward to doing every day because she knew they needed extra support during this time.

Laura expressed her love for helping others, especially her students. I noticed throughout our conversations she mentioned the need to support her students. She explained:

I love encouraging people, and you know, trying to bring them out of like dark places, and middle school is a very dark place for a lot of kids. You know, knowing that I can be someone that brings like light to their life, or it can like, kind of like, show them how they have blinders on you know. Sometimes they’re they only see their situation the way

they want to. Giving them a different positive perspective makes the job worth it to me.

So that's the main thing that motivates me with teaching.

Laura's support was very intentional because she wanted her students to see the positive qualities within themselves. Her desire to support them emotionally is something that she felt would help them grow in and out of the classroom.

Nicole discussed the diversity at her campus where they "have a lot of kids coming in from Mexico. Like a lot of kids that are experiencing the school life in the USA for the first time." She explained the teachers make it a priority to support their students. She stated:

We want to support them. Their parents are doing the extra mile like even sending them over here and not knowing what's going to come around from crossing the border every single day, so it's just like I think we all have the same intention of just like you want to do more for these kids.

The fact that her students were making the extra effort to travel to the United States every day to get an education motivated her to continue teaching. She loved supporting her students and making a difference in their lives.

It was clear that all three Generation Z teachers received support at their campus while also providing support to their students. I noticed they utilized social and emotional learning strategies such as, discussion about their day, and was able to help them make progress in the class. They were grateful to those who reached out to them during this challenging year, and they paid it forward by providing their students with the support they needed to adjust to the new norm of education.

Recognizing Teacher Successes to Increase Teacher Efficacy

When a teacher is recognized in education, it is due to their hard work and dedication at the campus. In the first years of teaching, the participants explained that they were unsure if they were doing things right or wrong, yet they continued to put forth their best effort to provide innovative, instructional strategies that would engage their students in the classroom. As Generation Z teachers, the participants described “being noticed” and “acknowledged by their colleagues, administration, and students. During the interviews, the participants reflected on their experiences throughout the year and recalled instances in which they were recognized for their efforts in teaching at their campus.

Alyssa was proud to say that in her first year, she was almost selected as Teacher of the Year at her campus. She explained that being voted on by her colleagues as a finalist increased her motivation to teach. Another experience that Alyssa mentioned focused on being recognized by her students. During the interviews, she talked about her family and accomplishments, thus far, as a young teacher. She has told her students about her educational journey and how she has ended up in the classroom today. They recognized that she was young, accomplished, and independent and viewed her as a role model. She shared that her students have commented, “Like wow! Like I want to be able to do that. Like I want to have my own house at 22. It’s really awesome how you’ve done this at such a young age.” Alyssa found that type of recognition gratifying.

In speaking with Laura, she was motivated by the recognition she received at her campus. She spoke about how her administration viewed her as a competent, young teacher. She valued this type of recognition because she noticed that other young teachers, at other campuses, had different experiences. She stated, “You want to be noticed, and it boils down to appreciation like,

no matter what career field. I feel like employees want to be appreciated.” Laura shared an experience from this past year where the administration brought in food carts for all of the teachers. “I just felt, I just feel so like loved and taken care of, and like appreciated at my school.” These types of gestures made her feel recognized and valued as a teacher at that campus.

When speaking with Laura, I also noticed that she recognized or acknowledged the efforts of her peers. In conversing with her students, Laura realized that they mentioned one particular teacher often. Laura was curious to find out what the teacher was doing that made her stand out, so she decided to visit the teacher. She asked, “So why do the kids like your class?” The teacher explained all the different strategies that she uses which Laura found very interesting. Laura told the teacher, “I think I would want to be in your class. Like that sounds really fun!” Laura was quick to acknowledge her peer’s ideas. She said, “I love, you know, listening to other teachers and how they do things.” She was unsure if this had anything to do with her being of Generation Z, but she was “just open to learn and change” and did not hesitate to recognize others for doing a good job.

Nicole’s campus had a system in place where they recognized their teachers biweekly. They would do “shout outs,” “teacher of the week,” “and “newsletters,” where “teachers will get recognized for things that they would do.” She looked forward to reading her emails. “It was always like a nice feeling of being like when they would mention your name.” This type of motivation is what kept her going throughout the year. She said that once she saw her name she would say:

Hey! Like I did that and now like I feel recognized for it, or when you would get teacher of the week. It was such an incredible feeling because not only are

like everyone else cheering for you, but for the kids, they're all excited and everything.”

Nicole revealed being recognized by her peers was one thing, but to have her students cheering her on was a nice feeling to have at the campus.

The three themes that emerged from the data impacted the motivation of the three Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers. They described their lived experiences and the significance of receiving support from their colleagues while also offering support to their students. They emphasized the importance of building relationships with their students and obtaining recognition for their efforts at the campus. Regardless of how overwhelmed they were, they remained motivated to work through the challenges.

Key Findings of the Field of Investigation of Teacher Retention

In the field of investigation of teacher retention, there was one theme, two subthemes, and three categories that emerged in my findings. The presentation of my findings (see Table 2) revealed that strong support systems such as administrators and mentors greatly impacted their decision to remain at the school district.

Table 2. Generation Z Teachers Codes and Phrases: Field of Investigation: Teacher Retention

*Repetitive Code words or phrases	Theme	Frequency
<i>*Administration can retain teachers</i> <i>*Want to collaborate with colleagues</i> <i>*Colleague support</i> <i>*Need of support to retain teachers</i> <i>*Need support from administration</i> <i>*Need support from mentors</i> <i>*Supporting teachers</i> <i>*Want to feel supported</i> <i>Need guidance</i> <i>Need a Supportive administration</i> <i>*Support us</i>	Implementing Effective Support Systems to Increase Teacher Retention	22
	Subthemes	Frequency
<i>*Administration affects campus culture</i> <i>*Administration management style</i> <i>*Administration needs to support teachers</i> <i>*Administrator is encouraging</i> <i>Administration doesn't micromanage</i> <i>Administration leadership style</i> <i>Administration sets the tone</i> <i>Good of a boss</i> <i>*Need help from administrator</i>	Administration Leadership Skills Affect Teacher Retainment	28
<i>Ask for mentor assistance</i> <i>Mentor is very helpful</i> <i>*Need a good mentor</i> <i>Need strong mentors</i> <i>Need an instructional coach</i> <i>*Need support</i> <i>Need emotional support from mentor</i> <i>Work closely with a mentor</i> <i>Blessed to have a good mentor</i>	The Impact of Mentorships to Build Teacher Efficacy	11
	Categories	Frequency
<i>*Administration not following through</i> <i>*Administrator support</i> <i>*Lack support with discipline</i> <i>*Need more help with discipline</i> <i>*Need to help with classroom management</i> <i>*Struggle with discipline</i> <i>Students are defiant</i> <i>*Too busy to discipline</i>	Providing Support with Discipline to Improve Teacher Classroom Management	17
<i>Administration communicates</i> <i>Administration was very encouraging</i> <i>Administration lacked communication</i> <i>Did what they could to communicate with them</i> <i>*Need better communication</i> <i>Scheduled last minute faculty meetings</i> <i>What are they (administration)thinking</i>	Fostering Effective Communication to Convey Important Information at the Campus	10
<i>Respect our time</i> <i>They (administrators) are just so like peaceful</i> <i>*Need grace Need more time Needed time</i> <i>There's a lot of grace at my district</i> <i>These kids need a bit more grace</i> <i>Time to develop those relationships with the students</i>	Grace and Time to Support Teacher and Student Success	9

Implementing Effective Support Systems to Increase Teacher Retention

All three Generation Z teachers expressed the importance of having strong support from their administration and mentors, especially during the first years of teaching. The participants described administrators as those who create the culture at the campus. Mentors were considered those that provided them with instructional and emotional support in their first years. With both support systems in place, the Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers felt this would be key to retaining them in the school districts. The categories that evolved from the data were administration and mentors. The three subcategories from those were: discipline, communication, and grace and time.

Administration leadership skills affect teacher retainment .The data revealed that the campus administration played a vital role in the campus culture and strongly affected the participants' decision to remain at their campus. They explained their leaders created a positive working environment for them, and they did not feel the need to look elsewhere. However, the participants expressed the need for more administrative support throughout the year. Throughout the interviews, the participants shared their experiences and important components that could be implemented to retain the new cohort of teachers at the schools.

Providing support with discipline to improve teacher classroom management.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the participants explained how challenging it was to maintain discipline, since the students were used to being home for so long. The students came to school with “attitude” and were “defiant” and did not comply with their classroom rules. The

teachers mentioned a few challenges such as, “struggled to keep them off their cell phones,” “the students would stay in the restroom for a long period of time,” and “there were fights.”

Alyssa stressed the importance of having administrative support when it came to discipline. She stated,

My biggest one is just the whole classroom management thing. They (administrators) could help us out because we’re young so it’s easier to get walked over. Because they (the students) see that we look younger, I feel like they just think of us as another student.

She shared a classroom experience that happened this past year in which she lacked support from her administrators. She had a student who was “defiant” and “very rude” and sent the student to the office, but the administration did nothing about it. She stated:

He (the student) just came back, and he was like ‘you see, what was the point of sending me to the office. They aren’t gonna do anything to me.’ So, I feel like that support would also help within the discipline part of it because you want to say you’re the teacher of the classroom, but if they (the administration) are not following through, then you can’t do much about it.

Alyssa felt that the level of support from the administration would be helpful for first year, young, Generation Z teachers, like herself.

Laura discussed that “a good leader,” “your leader and the type of like style of boss” that was assigned to the campus was extremely important. She spoke highly of her administrators and that their management styles were effective. She stated, “I don’t know how to describe him, but he’s just, it’s just awesome! But it’s the leader that affects the retainment, I think.” It was so interesting the way Laura described the culture. She stated, “I’ve learned that the culture, and,

you know, the energies or the vibes, whatever you want to say is really dependent on the administration.” I never thought of it that way but after speaking with Laura and listening to her describe the campus culture, it made me realize that administration does bring that energy and set the tone for the entire campus throughout the year.

Nicole also felt strongly about receiving support from the administration when it came to discipline. “I think there needs to be more change in the way that we like go about discipline.” She continued to explain that this year was difficult. She stated:

I think all year we (teachers) felt it, because it was like every single day there was always something that needed to happen, and I’ve had like a moment where I’ve had to step out of the classroom and be like I can’t believe it. They (the students) are so like more inclined to want to do things, and I feel like this is not how it should be because I would be told this is not normal. Our first year coming back, and I think they (the students) are just not accustomed to this anymore like they were used to.

The transition from virtual instruction to face-to-face was a challenge in itself, and Nicole emphasized “it was just hard getting them (the students) back.” Therefore, she strongly suggested that support from their administration, with discipline, would be helpful to get the students back on track.

Fostering effective communication to convey important information at the campus.

The participants mentioned the need for effective communication from the administration, especially in their first years of teaching. Simple communication such as informing them of upcoming procedures during testing in advance or faculty meetings would make a big difference.

The participants provided examples of where the gaps could have been filled in during the year when it came to communication.

Alyssa offered an example of where there was a lack of communication this past year. She explained that she had no idea what the day was going to be like when she arrived. “It was either last minute faculty meetings which they have been doing since the beginning of the year.” This is something Alyssa felt that could have been avoided if they had communicated with them ahead of time. She expressed that they had families and needed time to make accommodations to be able to attend. Even with testing procedures, Alyssa said the teachers had “no idea how to do testing because they would never talk about it until two days before it was happening.” As a first-year teacher, it takes time to adjust and learn about how everything works. She was disappointed that “there was no communication with the admin, and it just felt like they were keeping everything with each other.” She reiterated the need for “better communication. I feel like that’s the one we need.”

In all three interviews, Laura praised her administration for providing positive communication this year. In sharing her experiences, she described a minor lack of communication this past year. Laura was notified of an afterschool meeting one day along with six other teachers, but she was unsure why she was asked to attend this particular meeting. She found out that it was a 30–45-minute meeting focused on building relationships. Once the meeting was over, she was informed by one of the administrators, “so basically, you who are in this meeting, you’re gonna present what I just presented to the whole staff for the PD next Friday.” Laura was shocked and stated, “I’m just trying to contain my anxiety, like not show it on camera. And I’m just over here like, ‘what are they thinking?’” Although they did not communicate with her ahead of time as to why she was invited to the meeting, she realized that it

was an opportunity for her to grow at the campus. She did not expect this and said, “I’m like, I’m like a first-year teacher, like why would they tell me that?” Regardless, she mentioned that she never got the opportunity to present because it kept on getting rescheduled due to the pandemic and eventually never happened. If Laura had been asked to present, she said she would have been fine doing so, regardless.

Nicole mentioned that her administration was very encouraging and did what they could to communicate with them, even when they were busy. The ongoing issue that they stressed to the teachers was “your culture, your culture, your culture.” Her administration focused their entire year on campus culture because most of their students were English Learners, and their parents needed to be informed of their child’s progress. Nicole did not feel that her administration lacked communication this year.

Grace and time to support teacher and student success. I found it interesting when each participant mentioned the words “grace and time” during the interviews. The participants would have liked more grace and time when taking time off from work and getting the students back on track. They sought out more compassion and empathy from their administration this year. The participants spoke about the difficulties to get the students back into the classroom since they were out of school for a while due to the pandemic. The participants expressed their tireless efforts to work hard to get the students to trust them and make progress. They understood that there was not enough time to get the students back on track in one year, but they felt that with more grace and time that it would make things easier for them in the long run.

Alyssa wished she had been given more grace and time to attend appointments this year without getting penalized.

I wouldn't be able to leave. I would have to request the whole half-day off and that takes like half of your paycheck for that day, you know. So, I feel like that's really unfair because you're there the whole day. All you would need is like maybe 30 minutes or maybe you know, maybe an hour, and you don't have a class, and what's the deal, you know. So, I feel like that's something that we find really unfair, as well, because it's like I just need 20 minutes of my time.

She understood how difficult it was to request substitutes to cover, but she wished that administration would find a way to cover for them so that the teachers would not miss out on that money in their paycheck. Alyssa knew how critical it was for her to be in attendance, but she had hoped her administrators had given her time to take care of herself without being penalized.

In speaking with Laura, she felt that grace was definitely given at her district. "I feel like there's a lot of grace at my district with like the scores and stuff." She explained that at her campus, they try to coach you and do not threaten you about your job. Laura gave another example of how her administrator recognized how valuable the teachers' time was after school. She mentioned that her administrator "verbally says it in the meetings and stuff, 'I want to respect your time.'" She said she was grateful to be at her campus. She described her administration as "peaceful and just the way they carry themselves and the way they talk to people." The only way that Laura said she would leave her campus was if her principal left. She said, "that's how good of a boss he is."

Nicole spoke about how she wished that administration gave them and their students more grace and time to build relationships in the classroom. She discussed that the students had been out of school for almost three years, but she strongly felt that "these kids need a bit more grace." She expressed the need to "build their trust" to get them to follow the rules and focus on

class. It may be easy for the administration to discipline the students, but she felt that the students “needed time and I think that was what we need more, grace and time to get these kids back.” She suggested that it would be best to understand the students’ situation. “I don’t know what their home life could be like and at the end of the day, that’s what we don’t’ know.” While she appreciated her administration for supporting her with discipline, she hoped that the administration would give them more grace and time to develop those relationships with their students and also understand their students’ homelife to be able to help them in the long run.

The Impact of Mentorships to Build Teacher Efficacy. The participants were fortunate enough to have strong mentors and colleagues who supported them throughout the year. Even though they were given the autonomy to develop their own lessons and activities, their mentors helped them become more organized and familiar with the curriculum.

Alyssa expressed that she was given the autonomy to do what she needed to, but she was overwhelmed with the number of resources she was given. She asked her mentor for assistance and her mentor was very helpful with classroom management strategies. However, the mentor she was assigned taught another content area, so she struggled to develop activities and lessons within her own content area because she was the only teacher teaching that content. Alyssa hoped that she could have had a mentor whom she could team up with in her area of expertise. She stated, “I would like to know what I'm doing right, and what I'm doing wrong, and what I could do to be more effective.” Alyssa wanted to learn from others, especially as a first-year teacher, so a mentor or another colleague in her content area would have provided her with much more support this year.

As mentioned before, Laura was fortunate to have a mentor that fully supported her throughout the entire year. When I asked about what would retain Generation Z teachers, she quickly said, “a good mentor.” Laura had two strong mentors this year, including her instructional coach. Her instructional coach was one that “basically was there to like support me and a lot of like you know emotional support and stuff, and I always loved talking to her.” Laura’s mentors went above and beyond to ensure that she had a smooth transition from virtual instruction to face-to-face. Laura reiterated that she did not know what she would have done without them this year.

Like Alyssa, Nicole had the autonomy to develop lessons that she felt would fit her students’ needs. When Nicole met with her mentor, her mentor stated, “I want you to have your own like sense of figuring out how to do things. You know what, let's scrap that away.” Nicole worked closely with her mentor to develop engaging activities that her students enjoyed in her classroom. Nicole mentioned that even when things got difficult or overwhelming, her mentor reminded her that she was doing an amazing job. Nicole was really hard on herself, but she was grateful to have that support system in place at her campus.

The three participants were fully aware that they were fortunate and “blessed” to have had strong mentors, especially during these unprecedented times. Their mentors motivated them, supported them, and taught them how to overcome challenges in and out of the classroom.

Technology, growth opportunities, and professional development were mentioned by one participant, but it was not consistently mentioned throughout the interviews. As Generation Z teachers, they do find it important to have the technology and other opportunities to grow at the campus, but these were not major motivational and retention factors for them.

Conclusion

Throughout the interviews with the participants, they consistently offered evidence to support the motivation and teacher retention factors that impacted their decision to remain in the RGV school districts. They shared their lived experiences that indicated how these connections influenced their motivation to teach and provided insight into what districts could do to retain them. The participants' experiences and perspectives confirmed that districts need to understand the motivations of Generation Z teachers to be able to retain them in the school districts.

Chapter V provides a summary of the data collected, as well as how the interviews correlate with the literature on Generation Z teachers and teacher retention. Chapter V presents a discussion of the findings of this phenomenological study focused on three Latinx Generation Z secondary teacher participants' lived experiences, their motivations, and the retention factors that impact their decision to work in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. The chapter restates the summary of the study, discussion of the findings, limitations, recommendations for future research, implications, and conclusion.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings of this phenomenological study focused on three Latinx Generation Z secondary teacher participants' lived experiences, their motivations, and the retention factors that impact their decision to work in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. Originally, I thought, predominantly, that the Latinx context of the Latinx teachers would come into play in my study, but it did not emerge from the data. Therefore, this chapter intends to provide practical recommendations for future researchers, teachers, and district and campus administrators.

The chapter presents the summary of the study, discussion of findings, limitations, recommendations for future research, implications, and conclusion.

Summary of the Study

This study aimed to understand the Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers' lived experiences, motivations, and retention factors that impact their decision to remain in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. There was limited research about Generation Z teachers, particularly studies focused on Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers and their motivations to teach in public school districts. In addition, there was a gap in the literature to identify the retention factors that impact the Generation Z teachers' decision to work in the school districts. Therefore, this study explored three Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers' lived experiences,

examined how these experiences influenced their motivation to teach, and identified the important components to retaining them in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. For this study, I anticipated answering the following research questions:

1. How do Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers' lived experiences influence their motivation to teach in the Rio Grande Valley school districts?
2. In sharing their experiences, what do Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers see as important components for retaining them in the Rio Grande Valley school districts?

A qualitative research design was conducted including a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences, motivations, and retention factors of Latinx Generation Z teachers. Purposeful, criterion sampling was used to collect data from a total of three Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers who teach in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. Each participant was located in different counties in the RGV, so it was more convenient to conduct the interviews virtually.

Virtual, semi-structured interviews were conducted using a three-interview series approach to capture the participants' experiences to obtain rich, detailed descriptions of the phenomena (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). For this study, interview questions were designed to intentionally focus on the motivations and retention factors and solicit in-depth responses from the Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers in this study. The data from the interviews were analyzed and coded. Each code word, phrase, and category were counted, and themes, subthemes and categories emerged from the findings.

Albert Bandura (1986) explained that social cognitive theory focused on how internal and external influences frame a person's self-motivation and decisions. This study used Albert

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory construct, self-efficacy, to explore and examine Generation Z teachers' lived experiences and motivations. Within the construct of self-efficacy, there were four main components: an individual's mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological state. Self-efficacy components were used to analyze the data and themes and subthemes that correlated with the framework were discovered. For this study, I also used Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism and zone proximal development was utilized to analyze Generation Z teachers' relationships and support systems. With the social constructivism theory, I noticed that the participants were the active learners who learned from collaborating and interacting with others at the campus. Thus, by using these theoretical frameworks, I understood how the Generation Z teachers' lived experiences influenced their teacher efficacy motivations, especially during their social interactions in the schools.

A qualitative phenomenological design was utilized to understand the participants' lived experiences and motivations. Through this study, I gained a deeper understanding of how the participants' lived experiences influenced their motivation to teach and identified the important components of retaining them in the schools. Each Generation Z teacher participated in the three-series, semi-structured interviews that were conducted via Zoom video conferencing. Initially, the three-series interviews were scheduled to be conducted on three separate days, but the participants completed their interviews within one to two days. Once the interviews were complete, I analyzed the data and coded words and phrases, and identified the themes, categories, and subcategories relating to the two fields of investigation, motivation and teacher retention.

Discussion of Findings

From the qualitative phenomenological study, two overarching themes emerged motivation and teacher retention. Within the field of investigation of motivation, there were three themes focused on relationships, support, and recognition. For the field of inquiry of teacher retention, there was one theme that emerged which centered around support systems

Field of Investigation: Motivation

In speaking with the three participants, each of them discussed the challenges they faced from transitioning from virtual to face-to-face instruction. Participants shared their lived experiences of teaching and the motivational factors that influenced them this year. The rich descriptions allowed me to clearly understand how important it was for Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers to develop strong relationships with their colleagues and students, how strong support impacted their desire to work, and how critical it was to recognize these young teachers, especially in their first years of teaching. I also learned that they needed to be fully supported, specifically, by administration and mentors. To retain Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers in public schools, they needed to receive more assistance and guidance to feel confident at their job.

Throughout the interviews, the participants emphasized the importance of creating authentic relationships on the campus. Based on the literature, I assumed technology would be the central focus of their relationship and connections, but it was deeper than that. In essence, the participants were truly passionate about their job and driven to teach because of their students. They discussed the importance of bringing a positive perspective to the classroom and building trusting relationships with their students. They taught with compassion and empathy. It was

evident that the participants were motivated to support their students emotionally and academically. They reflected on the negative experiences they had in school growing up and used that as motivation to develop meaningful relationships, especially with those students who struggled. I learned that the participants had a great deal of respect for their students and related to them in similar ways. Since the participants were of the same generation as their students, they sometimes referenced the use of technology and TV shows to relate to their students in the classroom, which made it easier to connect with them. I also noticed that the participants incorporated social and emotional learning strategies in their classroom and provided numerous opportunities for their students to interact with their peers and have daily discussions. The social and emotional learning was an integral part of their daily lessons. When speaking with Alyssa, she mentioned how much she enjoyed bonding with her students and providing them with opportunities to talk about their day. Laura talked about how she loved being that light for her students in the classroom. Nicole was passionate about helping her students, even after school. She said, “that’s all I’m here for. I’m here for just that.” Results showed that the participants had an innate nature to want to help others which highly motivated them.

The participants constantly expressed their gratitude for their colleagues, administrators, and students and valued the positive relationship they formed. The participants stated they were “blessed” to have supportive colleagues and “loved talking” to others. The level of appreciation all three participants had for others was conveyed throughout the interviews. Regardless of the challenges they faced throughout the year, the participants made continuous efforts to build strong relationships and create a welcoming classroom environment for their students. As Laura stated, “being authentic with them and earning their trust” was what the students respected the most.

The participants were supported by their colleagues and administrators which increased their confidence and competence. This finding supported my initial thoughts, Generation Z teachers needed strong support from their colleagues and administration to increase their teacher efficacy. Interestingly, I found that the support they received from their colleagues such as planning, attendance, literacy practices, and classroom management increased their desire to remain on the campus. The participants explained that they felt more at ease knowing they could depend on their colleagues for assistance. For example, Laura described her mentor as “encouraging,” and “positive” because he took the time to help her develop instruction daily. Alyssa and Nicole expressed the same sentiments when discussing the assistance, they received from their mentors this year. I noticed that Generation Z teachers did not hesitate to ask for help when they struggled. Laura talked about asking her mentor questions every day when they met. Nicole also said that she had no problem asking her colleague questions when it came to teaching reading. Since she was a writing teacher, she was not familiar with how to implement reading into her lessons. Alyssa said she would go straight to her mentor and ask about classroom management strategies. All three participants displayed examples of Vygotsky’s (1978) social constructivism and zone of proximal development as they engaged in peer to peer learning with their colleagues.

When they were having trouble or felt overwhelmed, they sought out in-person assistance from their neighbor teachers, mentors, and administrators who helped them work through the issues such as instruction and classroom management. Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) explained that new teachers would isolate themselves and use common sense to figure things out. However, results showed that this generation of teachers did the complete opposite. They were eager to learn from their colleagues and wanted to collaborate with them, daily. Bandura (1997)

explained that through positive vicarious experiences and positive feedback, the efficacy of the person would be increased. The participants described feeling confident presenting their daily lessons to their students. For instance, Nicole explained that her colleague would provide her with an exemplar and would say to her, “let’s do this story, they are going to be so into it.” So, after meeting with her she felt confident teaching the lesson to her students. By observing others, the participants learned how to construct lessons and execute instructional activities, successfully (Dehdary, 2017). Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development and the adult peer to peer learning was evident in this study. The Generation Z teachers in this study loved to learn and asked their colleagues to teach them new concepts or practices. Laura mentioned that she would go into her colleague’s class to learn about what she was doing to get the students engaged. She stated, “I’m just open to learn and change, and I’m not stuck in my ways.” In speaking with the participants, I learned that they were more willing to collaborate and learn from their peers.

All three participants were recognized at their campus for their hard work and dedication. One participant was motivated by almost receiving enough votes by her peers for the annual Teacher of Year award. Another participant discussed that her campus administration rewarded their teachers with food. While the other participant received recognition via email and newsletters. Each participant provided examples of rewards that celebrated their successes at the campus which increased their efficacy. Their lived experiences revealed that the interactions, feedback, and rewards they received increased their motivation and confidence as Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers. These experiences tied back to the literature and confirmed that they were satisfied when they made a positive impact on others and felt good about their work. Schawbel (2014) described Generation Z as a generation that likes to be recognized for the efforts and contributions they bring to their job. Nabahani and Riyanto (2020) also confirmed

that the more motivated Generation Z is, the more they keep doing their best to achieve success. All of the participants expressed their gratitude and appreciation to their peers and administrators for recognizing their contributions to the campus.

Field of Investigation: Teacher Retention

The other field of investigation focused on teacher retention of Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers. With the teacher shortages going on, the state of Texas has created a task force, that would help identify the reasons why teachers are leaving the profession (Lopez, 2022). However, this study was conducted to determine why participants decided to stay at the school districts in the Rio Grande Valley. Therefore, the final interview was designated to focus on the retention of Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers.

I assumed that the participants would mention salary as the main factor, however, the results indicated they wanted more support from their administration and mentors throughout the year. Alyssa stated, “my biggest one is just the whole classroom management thing. They (administration) could help us out because we're young.” Laura reiterated that “having a good mentor” and “strong administration” would increase retention. Interviews with the participants revealed that they felt the administration played a vital role in creating the culture at the campus. A positive working environment that would allow the Generation Z teachers to ask for assistance from their leaders would benefit them at the schools. Another assumption I made about the participants was that they would ask their administration to support them with more technology or autonomy, but the results differed. From the interviews, I learned that the participants would rather have their administrators support them with discipline, provide them with effective communication, and offer more grace and time to the teachers and students.

Classroom management was well established as one of the greatest challenges for new teachers due to the circumstances of the pandemic. The pandemic caused schools to close down and forced districts to offer remote instruction. The transition from full remote instruction to face-to-face instruction further exacerbated this challenge. It was clear that the students were accustomed to being at home without having to deal with consequences or discipline from the school during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, this caused issues when the students returned to face-to-face instruction this past year. The participants mentioned the challenges they faced in trying to get the students back on track. Nicole stated, “The students loved the restroom for some reason. They would spend like 20 minutes in the restroom, and I had a hard time getting them back in the classroom. Alyssa had an issue with fist fights in her classroom, and the students faced no consequences when they were sent to the office. It was clear that the participants’ physiological state of feeling overwhelmed and defeated at times negatively impacted their self-efficacy because they lacked support from their administration. Their confidence to enforce the rules was diminished because the students knew that there would not be consequences for their actions. This was difficult for the participants because they were new to the profession and needed the support of the administration to be taken seriously by their students. Alyssa explained that to do their job in the classroom they needed help from their administration to “follow through with discipline.” They could not accomplish the task of getting through a lesson because this was an ongoing issue, so they had a low self-efficacy when this occurred. Laura explained that to retain them at the schools, the administration needs to “set the tone, create positive energies, and implement effective leadership management styles.” To increase the teacher efficacy at the campus, the administration would need to ensure that they implement the rules and are consistent with the discipline at the campus.

Effective communication from their administration was critical to retaining Generation Z teachers at the schools. A strong line of communication from the administration, in the first years of teaching, was fundamental to supporting the Generation Z teachers. For instance, Laura described an experience where she was notified of a meeting, but the administration did not inform her of why she was one of six teachers required to attend. This participant felt her anxiety level go up when she was asked to conduct a presentation to the campus. Bandura (1997) described this as one who is in a physiological state or feeling anxious about a task. When a teacher is feeling anxious or nervous about a task, then this tends to result in low self-efficacy. The other participants explained that there was a lack of communication throughout the year with testing protocols, faculty meetings, and other events. My initial assumption was that the Generation Z teachers were multitaskers and were able to adapt to changes, but I realized that when it comes to meetings, they would like to be notified weeks in advance to prepare and make proper accommodations. I can understand how the lack of communication can be an inconvenience, especially if they have a family and other obligations to tend to.

The participants highlighted the significance of receiving grace and time from the administration. From the interviews, I understood that the participants wanted more compassion and empathy from their administrators. As a millennial, I would not have thought of asking for grace and time from my administration because I knew I just had to get the job done, regardless. As a teacher, I worried more about increasing the student's scores and making sure the students completed their work to pass, but this generation of teachers saw past just the academics. From the interviews, I learned that the teachers wanted to connect with the students before they could help their students make progress.

Going through the COVID-19 pandemic, the participants explained that it had been challenging to discipline the students, take time for themselves, and increase the student scores in the classroom. Participants described that their students' home life is different from their school life, and they would like the administration to consider that the students had been out of school for almost three years, and it was going to take time to gain their trust. In addition, the participants mentioned that the administration could have given them more grace even when it came to students' scores on their state exams. Instead of holding the teachers accountable for low passing rates, they needed to provide them with support and grace and time to increase student scores. Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) described a connection between the students' academic status and teachers' self-efficacy. Teachers with a high-self efficacy can have a positive influence on student achievement. Thus, administrators need to simply have more compassion towards their teachers and offer these types of support systems to retain them at the school districts and increase their teacher efficacy.

A mentorship can positively or negatively impact the teachers' self-efficacy and affect how they implement instruction. The effort put forth by the mentors depends on how well the teachers interact and observe one another. Those teachers with high self-efficacy are committed to conquering obstacles and remain focused on their goals. Teachers with low self-efficacy lack motivation and avoid challenging tasks as they relate them to previous experiences of failure.

In this study, mentors played a key role in fostering a strong support system within the school setting. I assumed that the participants would have mentioned that they needed more professional development or growth opportunities, but the need for good mentors was mentioned throughout the interviews. As educators, we seek out advice and assistance, not only from our mentors but, from our grade level teachers, content area teachers, instructional coaches, deans,

and even administration. In this study, the participants referred to mentors as their “neighbor teachers,” “instructional coaches,” and their “managers.” Through Vygotsky’s (1978) social constructivism theory of zone proximal development, I was able to understand how the social interactions with their peers enabled them to obtain new skills to implement into their classroom practices. While they felt overwhelmed at times with many resources, their mentors offered to sit down and meet with them to plan their instruction. The participants worked with their mentors to devise a plan and master their pedagogical practices which increased their teacher efficacy. In addition, results showed that the mentors not only supported them with instruction, but they offered them advice and words of encouragement to help them overcome the challenges in and out of the classroom. The mentors increased the participants’ confidence through Vygotsky’s (1978) social constructivism theory of collaboration and Bandura’s (2002) self-efficacy of social persuasion. Pfitzner-Eden (2016) stated, “The impact of the mentor teacher can exert on the teacher self-efficacy development” (p. 3). Since Generation Z viewed their mentors as experts, social persuasion had a positive, personal impact on them. All participants praised their mentors and explained that Generation Z teachers need that support system in place to retain them in the school districts.

Limitations

The goal of this study was to explore how Latinx Generation Z secondary teacher participants’ lived experiences, motivations, and retention factors that impacted their decision to work in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. The findings contributed to the context of motivation, teacher retention, and Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers; however, there were considerable limitations that impacted this study.

The limitation of this phenomenological study focused on a small sample size, even after numerous invitations were sent out.

Another limitation was that this study consisted of only female participants who agreed to participate in this study. No males responded to the invitation. Male perspectives would have added breadth to this study.

A third limitation was that the study was located in the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. There are other parts of the state or regions that could be explored further.

The fourth limitation was that the study was centralized in the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. There are numerous regions throughout the state who employ Generation Z teachers. Their perspective of teacher retention could be explored and compared to those in the Rio Grande Valley.

The fifth limitation was that the study focused on Generation Z secondary teachers and did not offer the Generation Z K-5 teachers an opportunity to share their lived experiences, motivations, and retention factors. The elementary level comes with more responsibilities that could be explored in the future.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study yielded five areas requiring further research within the field of education.

Replicate this Study

This study focused on Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers in the Rio Grande Valley, so future scholars may want to conduct a study in other regions or states. The researcher may want to replicate this study and include teachers of other generations and provide a comparison of their motivation and retention factors. Also, this study could include in-person interviews. This

would allow the researcher to observe the participants in their classrooms. Thus, broader research on motivation and retention factors could add to the literature of Generation Z teachers. This could help district leaders increase new teacher support to retain them at the campuses.

Gender Differences

Further research could be done to include male Generation Z teachers' lived experiences, motivations, and thoughts on retention factors. The researcher could examine the ratio of male and female Generation Z teachers of all grade levels, as well as content areas. By including all genders, this may impact the context of teacher motivation and retention and make for a well-rounded study.

Teacher Shortages

The teacher shortages have increased across the state and the nation, leaving school districts with a large number of vacancies in the classroom (Riser-Kositsky, 2022). While there is literature about teacher shortages, a recommendation for more research focused on Generation Z teachers. This topic may be highly relevant to research to understand why Generation Z teachers have decided to remain in the classroom which could further assist districts to implement practices that would increase retainment and decrease the number of vacancies in the school districts.

Types of Support Systems

According to the Generation Z teachers in this study, support systems are effective for retaining them in the school districts. Future scholars should consider conducting a mixed-method study to measure the types of support systems needed for the new teachers who are of Generation Z. Future research could also be done in the school districts to identify the support

systems that are in place to further retain Generation Z teachers at the campuses. Support systems could include professional development, mentoring programs, and other types of training.

Compare Administration and Generation Z Teachers

Future research efforts could be made to understand how the administration motivates their new cohort of teachers at the school districts. The researcher may consider doing a comparison of the administrator and the Generation Z teacher responses. A qualitative study may be conducted to obtain rich data from conducting interviews and ethnographies of the participants. This would allow the researcher to dive deep into the data and discover the relationship between the administration and Generation Z teachers' motivational factors. Future studies may allow researchers to understand and explain the perspectives of the administration and Generation Z teachers to bridge the retainment gap.

Implications

This study revealed that the Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers were motivated by developing relationships, having support, and receiving recognition for their hard work at the campus. When it came to retention factors, results showed that the participants in this study would remain at their campus if they had stronger support from their administration and mentors.

District leaders need to be intentional about how they structure their mentoring programs. Administrators may want to think carefully about how they pair their new teachers and mentors, who can plan together, and who are in the same content area. Administrative and mentor support

is critical for Generation Z teachers, as well as other new teachers, in their first years of teaching. As the youngest generation of teachers, they seek out ways to learn and grow from others at the campus. This study provided data that offered insightful information as to how district leaders could support their teachers by pairing the new teachers with strong mentors in the same grade level and same content area. By providing the new teachers with a strong mentorship, administrators can show an ethics of care, where new teachers are fully supported.

The curricular and pedagogical trend in social and emotional learning (SEL) resonates with my findings from the interviews with the Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers. Ragozinno et al. (2003) defined social and emotional learning (SEL) as “the capacity to recognize and manage emotions and solve problems effectively and to establish and maintain positive relationships” (p. 169). In this study, participants implemented SEL into their curriculum and described aspects of experiencing SEL growing up. Findings in this study showed Generation Z teachers were more emotionally attuned than other generations. This is a new time in education and administrators need to have more empathy and compassion toward their new teachers, especially as they transition to the new normal of education. With the current situations going on such as the pandemic, violence, and other social issues, the new teachers need administrators to give them more grace and time to adjust while also taking care of their social and emotional needs. Administrators can create this culture of SEL with their teachers at the campus to be able to relate to and support them throughout the year. Thus, teacher preparation programs and district leaders may want to consider implementing SEL at the schools and provide teachers with more grace, flexibility, empathy, compassion, and support to strengthen their relationships and pedagogical practices to increase student achievement in the school districts.

Thornton et al. (2020) explained that an administrator's responsibility is to create purposeful and intentional opportunities to increase teacher self-efficacy that results in positive educational outcomes at their campus. Recognition of the new teachers and experienced teachers at the schools would strengthen the campus culture and increase teacher efficacy every year. This study showed that Generation Z teachers appreciated simple teacher incentives offered at their campus. Examples of teacher incentives could be implemented at the campus such as, "Teacher of the Week" or weekly or monthly breakfast or luncheons. These incentives would let the teachers know that the administration recognizes their hard work and dedication to the campus. When the administration notices and acknowledges their new and young teachers, their motivation to work at the campus increases and they do not feel the need to leave.

District leaders can use this study to possibly reframe their hiring practices, redesign their curriculum, reevaluate teacher workload, and provide teacher incentives. For instance, when hiring new teachers, district leaders may want to implement recruiting strategies such as highlighting the support systems available, the digital resources available to develop instruction, and the rewards that are offered at the district. The Generation Z teachers of this study mentioned that their district provided them with support systems, digital resources, and incentives which led them to apply and work at the campus. Therefore, the administrators could use the motivation and retention factors from this study to implement them into their current recruiting and retention practices.

Conclusion

This qualitative phenomenological study was aimed at exploring Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers lived experiences, motivations, and retention factors that impact their decision to remain in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. Prior to interviewing the three

participants, I anticipated that the Latinx context, the influential events of September 11th, the Sandy Hook Elementary Shooting, the presidential elections, and George Floyd would be mentioned by the participants as part of their lived experiences, however, they were not mentioned once. The influential events that shaped the participants' teaching experiences have been the COVID- pandemic and the crisis of teaching. Participants in this study were interviewed prior to the Robb Elementary School shooting in Uvalde, Texas, thus, not stated in the interviews.

Interestingly, the results showed that Generation Z teachers grew up as digital natives using technology all of their life, as the literature asserted, yet technology was not considered a major factor in their motivation to teach. Instead, Generation Z teachers were motivated by developing relationships with their colleagues and students, as mentioned in the literature about teacher motivation. The teachers wanted to receive support and also be recognized for their efforts in the classroom. As for retention factors, they emphasized the importance of having support systems from their administration and mentors. Generation Z teachers would like to have more interactions with their colleagues, administration, and students, so they can learn and grow from those experiences at the campus.

From this study, I learned that Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers consider developing relationships, implementing social and emotional learning, and having strong support systems at the campus as top priorities. Generation Z teachers have a different perspective of teaching and motivation than Millennials, such as myself. Generation Z teachers foster student relationships to build trust and respect to be able to increase student achievement. They implement social and emotional learning strategies in their classroom and create a positive classroom environment where the students feel comfortable discussing issues and working with

others. As a millennial teacher, I do not remember using social and emotional learning at my campus because the administration stressed the importance of increasing student scores on state exams. In other words, we did not have time to build relationships with our students because it was more about student data. However, it is critical now for new teachers to receive support from their leaders and mentors to be successful in the classroom. Building a rapport, making connections, collaborating with others, and teaching and leading with empathy and compassion are what motivate Generation Z teachers to remain working in public school districts.

As a teacher and mentor, I have learned that I need to communicate more often with the new teachers and hone in on that peer to peer social construction of knowledge. This research has changed the way I support the new generation of teachers because I understand that factors that motivate and encourage them to remain in the schools. I realized that I cannot assume that the new teachers do not need assistance or recognition from their colleagues. Therefore, as a future mentor, I need to take the initiative and offer instructional and emotional support to ensure the new teachers' efficacy remains high so that they are able to develop and implement effective practices in their classrooms and mentor others in the process.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

FIRST CONTACT TO FIND POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Hello, _____.

I hope you are doing well. I am reaching out to my personal contacts and personal networks to ask for assistance with recruiting teachers for my research study. I am interested in recruiting participants that are Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. My research study aims to gain a deeper understanding of Latinx Generation Z secondary teachers' lived experiences, their motivation to teach, and the retention factors that impact the Generation Z teachers' decision to work in the Rio Grande Valley school districts.

The teachers will be asked to participate in three interview sessions that will be conducted via Zoom. If they choose to participate in the Zoom interviews, they may provide a date and time when they are available outside working hours or during the summer. This is strictly voluntary, and they may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you know of any Generation teachers who fit the participant criteria that might be interested in participating in this study, please feel free to share the attached invitation. If they have any questions or are interested, they may email me at Kimberly.banda01@utrgv.edu, and I will send them an informed consent and confidentiality form to sign. My hope is to receive all participant confirmations by _____.

Thank you again for your time.

Blessings,

Kimberly Banda

UTRGV Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear Teachers,

You are invited to participate in a research study titled "An Exploration of Latinx Generation Z Teachers' Lived Experiences, Motivations, and Retention Factors to Teach in the Rio Grande Valley School Districts".

I want to assure you that your participation in this research is voluntary, and the information that you provide is confidential and will be protected by the researcher. If you decide to participate in the study, you will be able to withdraw from it at any time.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research study is to gain a deeper understanding of Latinx Generation Z teachers' lived experiences motivations to teach, and the retention factors that impact the Generation Z teachers' decision to work in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. From the findings of this research, I hope to provide information that will help our districts and administrators recruit and retain secondary, Latinx Generation Z teachers during this transition to the post-pandemic era. District leaders can use these findings to reevaluate their framework to increase teacher retention.

Participant Criteria

For this study, participant must meet all of the following criteria:

- a) Generation Z (ages 21-25)
- b) Be a secondary general education teacher from school districts in the Rio Grande Valley
- c) A full-time, Latinx teacher
- d) Born and raised in the Rio Grande Valley
- e) Currently teaching in the Rio Grande Valley schools
- f) Completed their secondary and post-secondary education in the Rio Grande Valley
- g) Must have at least one year of teaching experience

Participation period and procedures. -If you decide to participate in this study, the process will last approximately 2-3 months (summer) and will be carried out in the following manner:

- Obtain and sign the informed consent and confidentiality form.
- Schedule the three, Zoom interviews via email.
- Each interview will be conducted via Zoom, and the interviews will be audio and video recorded.
 - 1st interview and 2nd interview- building rapport, explore the lived experiences and motivations.
 - 3rd interview- examine the retention factors and review the accuracy of the responses collected.
 - Each interview will be a minimum of 30 minutes. This will require about a total of 1 ½ to 2 hours of your time, including the 3 interviews.

Voluntary participation. - Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time.

Privacy / Confidentiality- The information that you provide will be private, confidential, and protected by the researcher (Kimberly Banda).

If you would like to participate in this study, please email me so that I may send you the “Informed Consent and Confidentiality” letter to be signed. Once you have signed the “Informed Consent and Confidentiality” letter, please send me the signed copy via email and we will develop a schedule for the interviews.

Please note that this research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protection (IRB). If you have questions related to the research, please contact me by phone at 956-264-4868 or by email at Kimberly.banda01@utrgv.edu.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Kimberly Banda

UTRGV Doctoral Candidate/Principal Investigator

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

You have submitted your interest to participate via email and have met the participant criteria for this research study. I appreciate your willingness to participate.

The purpose of this research study is to gain a deeper understanding of Latinx Generation Z Secondary Teachers' lived experiences motivations to teach, and the retention factors that impact the Generation Z teachers' decision to work in the Rio Grande Valley school districts. From the findings of this research, I hope to provide information that will help our districts and administrators recruit and retain secondary, Latinx Generation Z teachers during this transition to the post-pandemic era. District leaders can use these findings to reevaluate their framework to increase teacher retention.

Reasons why you have been selected for this study

The reasons why you have been asked to participate in this study are that you:

- a) Generation Z (ages 21-25)
- b) Be a secondary general education teacher from school districts in the Rio Grande Valley
- c) A full-time, Latinx teacher
- d) Born and raised in the Rio Grande Valley
- e) Currently teaching in the Rio Grande Valley schools
- f) Completed their secondary and post-secondary education in the Rio Grande Valley
- g) Must have at least one year of teaching experience
- h)

Participation period and procedures. -If you decide to participate in this study, the process will last approximately 2-3 months (summer) and will be carried out in the following manner:

- Obtain and sign the informed consent and confidentiality form.
- Schedule the three, Zoom interviews via email.
- Each interview will be conducted via Zoom, and the interviews will be audio and video recorded.
 - 1st interview and 2nd interview- building rapport, explore the lived experiences and motivations.
 - 3rd interview- examine the retention factors and review the accuracy of the responses collected.
 - Each interview will be a minimum of 30 minutes. This will require about a total of 1 ½ to 2 hours of your time, including the 3 interviews.

Possible risks or inconveniences. -Your participation in the interviews does not present any risks.

Benefits of the study. - It is possible that the results of this research may not help you directly. However, the information I learn will help administrators, teachers, and school districts reevaluate how they recruit and retain the new generation of teachers, Generation Z, in the Rio Grande Valley school districts.

Compensation. - You will not receive any type of compensation for participating in this study.

Voluntary participation. - Your participation in this research is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Privacy / Confidentiality- The information that you provide will be private, confidential, and protected by the researcher.

If you would like to participate in this research study, please read the consent page carefully, type your full name, and place a check next to "I agree. If not, simply place a check next to "I do not want to participate". Please sign and date the form, regardless if you agree or do not agree to participate.

I _____ (participant's name) have been invited to participate in the qualitative phenomenological study titled, "An Exploration of Latinx Generation Z Secondary Teachers' Lived Experiences, Motivations, and Retention Factors to Teach in the Rio Grande Valley School Districts" which is being conducted under the direction of Kimberly Banda, UTRGV Doctoral Candidate.

By signing this consent form, I confirm that I have read the information pertaining to this study, and I understand the following points explained in the document:

- ✓ Purpose of the study.
- ✓ Reasons why you have been selected for the study.
- ✓ Period of participation and procedures.
- ✓ Possible risks or inconveniences
- ✓ Benefits of the study.
- ✓ Compensation.
- ✓ Voluntary participation.
- ✓ Privacy / Confidentiality.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I can withdraw from the study at any moment if I so wish, without the need to provide an explanation. By signing this document, I also agree to allow the results of the study to be published and shared as long as my identity is not revealed.

I AGREE

I DO NOT WANT TO PARTICIPATE

Participant's signature

_____/_____/_____
Date

Please note that this research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protection (IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or if you feel your rights as a participant were not adequately met by the researcher, please contact the IRB at (956) 665-3598 or irb@utrgv.edu.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Principal Investigator at Kimberly.banda01@utrgv.edu or Dr. Karin Lewis, Faculty Advisor at Karin.lewis@utrgv.edu.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Kimberly Banda

UTRGV Doctoral Candidate/Principal Investigator

Dr. Karin Lewis

UTRGV Faculty Advisor

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview 1

Rapport Building, Background, Teaching Pathway

Reflective Questions	Possible Follow-up Questions
1. Tell me about yourself.	
2. Can you tell me about your experiences as a learner in the classroom and a teacher in the workforce?	a. What traits do you have as a Latinx Generation Z learner and worker?
3. Can you tell me about your journey to becoming a teacher in the Rio Grande Valley?	a. What expectations do you have of the workplace? b. How did you become a teacher (training, college, alternative programs)? c. What expectations did you have about your first year of teaching? Elaborate.
4. Can you tell me, how are you different from previous generations of teachers you work with?	a. How do you describe your generation of teachers? Elaborate
5. Reflecting on your experience(s) teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic, can you share some stories from this year that have had a positive or negative impact on you as a teacher?	a) With the COVID-19 pandemic and the teaching crisis, how have you been able to handle challenging situations that arise during the school year compared to teachers from previous generations?
6. Can you tell me your experiences, thus far, of teaching the youngest of Generation Z?	a. Can you give me some examples of how you are different from the youngest of Generation Z?

Interview 2

Motivation

Reflective Questions	Possible Follow-up Questions
1. In sharing your lived experiences, can you tell me any specific factors that motivated you to become a teacher?	a) What factors influence your decision to stay in this profession?
2. Tell me, what drives or motivates your actions or behaviors in your current role as a teacher?	a) Are you satisfied with your decision to be a teacher? If so, can you tell me, what do you enjoy about being a teacher?
3. Can you describe the role that autonomy plays for you as a teacher, and can you share your experiences of having autonomy at the school?	a. Why is it important to have autonomy at your school?
4. Describe a time when you felt you could or couldn't share your beliefs, values, and experiences. How have you felt so far about finding your voice as a Latinx Generation Z teacher?	a) While working at the schools, can you share any learning or growth opportunities that have impacted your decision to remain at the school district?
5. Working in a multigenerational profession, can you share your experiences of a time you felt accepted or misunderstood as a new teacher at the school?	
6. Can you tell me, how do you feel about your ability to be a competent, young, teacher?	a) Can you give me an example?

Interview 3

Retention of Generation Z Teachers

Reflective Questions	Possible Follow-up Questions
1. Can you describe your experience teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?	a) Did you consider leaving the teaching profession? b) What could the school district have done to better support you during this time?
2. Tell me what does your campus culture look like?	a) What impact does it have on you as a Latinx Generation Z teacher?
3. Can you share some specific workplace factors that would increase your desire to stay in the teaching profession long-term?	a) Can you share some examples?
4. Can you share a time when you received support from your colleagues and/or administration?	a) Would you say that this influenced your decision to remain at the school district?
5. As a Latinx Generation Z teacher and digital native, could you describe some ways that your school district could do to retain more Latinx Generation Z teachers like yourself? Can you elaborate?	

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kimberly B. Banda graduated with her Bachelor of Arts in English in 2006 from the University of Texas at Brownsville. In 2015, she obtained her Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, with an emphasis in digital literacy, from the University of Texas at Brownsville. In August of 2022, she completed her Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, with a specialization in literacy, from the University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley.

Kimberly has over 16 years of teaching experience and six years of consulting experience. Previously, she was a high school English teacher at three public school districts and was also an education consultant and mentored new teachers. Later, she became a university instructor where she taught literacy courses to elementary and secondary teacher candidates in a teacher preparation program.

Kimberly's passion has always been to assist others in their education journey. She is now a business owner and an education consultant and provides services that fully support teachers and students through mentoring and coaching programs. Her interests include recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, mentoring and coaching new teachers, assisting teacher preparation programs, developing high-quality curriculums, and supporting English Language Arts and Reading teachers and students. As an educator, she understands the time and commitment needed to be an effective teacher, and she strives to develop professional education services that promote teacher growth and student achievement in the school districts and at higher serving institutions. Kimberly B. Banda can be contacted at kbanda2020@gmail.com.