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Influential Factors of School Culture on Teacher Self-Efficacy and Motivation: An Ethnographic Case Study

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Influential Factors of School Culture on Teacher Self-Efficacy and Motivation: An
Ethnographic Case Study

by

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DEDICATION

“How much better to get wisdom than gold, to get insight rather than silver!”

NIV Proverbs 16:16

“An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.”

ESV Proverbs 18:15

First, I thank my Heavenly Father for the vision and for giving me what I need to see this through to the end. To God be all the Glory for the things He has done.

This work is dedicated to my family. To my husband, Marcus Rouse, I thank God for blessing me to have you in my life. You have been a constant support and my rock. You are always there for me, and I cannot thank you enough. I love you more and more each day.

To my children Kori and Marcus, Jr. (RJ), thank you for understanding when Mom was not able to spend time with you or give you undivided attention. Thank you, Kori, for all your words of encouragement and help by making up sentences with the biggest words you could find to help me “write”. The laughter and jokes helped to ease my anxiety and truly think. Thank you, RJ, for your spontaneous hugs and presence just to give me love. I love you both more than you could ever know.

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this qualitative study was to determine the influence of teacher perception of ownership and empowerment on teacher self-efficacy and motivation. Tools of ethnography were used to create a descriptive narrative of teacher perceptions. Data was collected through focus group and individual interviews.

Results show that teacher perception of ownership and empowerment can influence teacher self-efficacy and motivation. Even though most teachers are intrinsically motivated, teachers still wanted to feel valued. Other factors that influence teacher perceptions of ownership and empowerment included relationships with colleagues and opportunities for shared leadership

This study concludes that teacher perception of ownership and empowerment are influential factors as they relate to school climate, teacher self-efficacy, and motivation. Major sources of empowerment were students, colleagues, family, and spiritual beliefs more than their administrators. Collegiality and belonging played a major role in teacher sense of empowerment and had considerable impact on school culture. To increase motivation and sense of self-efficacy, teachers need to feel valued by their administrators. Meeting teacher needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence promote a sense of ownership and empowerment. Perceptions of ownership and empowerment are influential in job satisfaction and are motivating factors for teacher retention. Limitations of the study included the sample size, lack of a quantitative measure, and timing.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Teachers face an insurmountable amount of pressure today in their effort to educate youth in this country. There is pressure from state leaders, local boards, community, school administration and parents to perform at ever-increasing levels of proficiency. There is constant conflict between agency and structure as teachers work to meet the needs of students, schools, and communities while adhering to the demands of a top-down system of management. Teachers are often given this monumental responsibility without having a voice or power to guide these initiatives. Teacher sense of ownership and empowerment are factors that influence self-efficacy and motivation to promote effective classroom instruction (Müller & Hanfstingl, 2010). Researchers note that teachers who have a high perceived level of ownership tend to be more engaged and committed to the profession (Somech & Bogler, 2002; Smylie, 1992)

Ownership in this study is a factor of the sense of belonging (Masterson & Stamper, 2003). It refers to the psychological perception of identifying as part of the organizational group or community (Pierce, Kostova & Dirks, 2001). Members of a group or community perceive belonging when they have opportunities to take part in experiences with the group and make decisions regarding the community (Pierce et al., 2001). Teacher ownership helps professional educators feel a sense of belonging within their school culture (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004).

Ownership is the feeling that one has a part in the decision making learning or path. It is the belief that the responsibility for outcomes is based on the individual. Ownership allows teachers to have a voice and participate in decision making within the school and their individual classrooms. Teacher sense of ownership is pivotal to feelings of empowerment to affect change within a school (Klingner, 2004). This perception of ownership also contributes to teachers' feelings of competence and autonomy. Feelings of ownership and belonging also contribute to the teacher sense of empowerment.

Empowerment is teacher autonomy and authority to make decisions about teaching and learning (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Teacher empowerment is related to the amount of control teachers feel they have in their classrooms and community. The levels of perception of empowerment can influence teacher retention, satisfaction, and self-efficacy (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

Many studies look at the teacher's sense of ownership and empowerment in relation to professional learning. In addition to improving teacher craft and ability, professional learning social structures provide an opportunity for teachers to build community and share in instructional decision making for the school, which creates a sense of ownership and empowerment. While professional learning can impact ownership and empowerment, a top-down approach is usually implemented in the type of professional learning and structure. Often teachers are not afforded the opportunity to provide input regarding the topic of study for their professional learning structure. Ownership is noted as one of the factors that influence the power of professional learning communities (Schaap & Bruijn, 2017; Clark, 2013). Silencing teacher voice in terms of

professional learning is not conducive to increased teacher sense of ownership and empowerment.

Other studies relate teacher sense of ownership and empowerment to mandated curricular and instructional changes. Changes from external sources such as an administrator or policy maker creates a top-down paradigm by those who presume to know what teacher actions are necessary in the classroom (Richardson, 1998). From this perspective, teachers are seen as passive agents of change. Teacher sense of ownership is limited or ignored in an effort to force change. However, it is essential for any kind of school reform to be successful (Klingner, 2004; McLaughlin, 1990).

A third set of studies often investigate teacher sense of ownership and empowerment as influential factors for teacher retention. Gujarati (2012) notes that nearly one-half of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years. Teacher empowerment and school leadership have been shown to be factors that influence teacher decisions to leave or stay at a school, district or state (Ndoye, Imig & Parker, 2010). Ownership has also been shown to be related to teacher decisions to leave or stay in the profession in addition the factors of empowerment and school leadership (Berryhill et al., 2009; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Powell et al., 2009).

There is a myriad of research studies available that highlight teachers' sense of ownership and empowerment in relation to top-down management systems. Yet, there has not been as much research in the area of ownership and empowerment in relation to the influence they can have on teacher self-efficacy and motivation. Ownership, belonging and empowerment have been well-established as features indicative of an

effective school culture, but not much is known about the impact of these features and their relation to teacher self-efficacy and motivation.

Problem of Practice

In Pee Dee School District in South Carolina, schools have developed a variety of ways to meet the mandates prescribed by state and local leaders. One way schools do this is by working to improve collaboration within their buildings in an effort to meet national, state, and local expectations for student achievement. The opportunities for collaboration can be within grade level or school level meetings based on content and strategies for improved outcomes. Collaboration among classroom teachers and administrators can also be opportunities to serve on school committees which help with decision-making at the school level. In addition to collaborating to improve teacher efficacy and student achievement, these experiences are also a means in which to create a sense of community within the school. Each school in Pee Dee School District has its own distinct culture with differing perceptions of ownership and empowerment which are influential factors for school climate, teacher retention, and job satisfaction.

In Pee Dee School District, much of the decision-making regarding teaching and learning rests with local school boards, central office administration, and school building administration. The top-down approach to schooling in this district is not conducive to increased teacher sense of ownership and empowerment. Teachers have expressed feelings of powerlessness in conversations because of their perceived lack of ownership and empowerment in their buildings. They note this sentiment when they are not afforded the opportunity to share in the decision-making regarding classroom instruction or when they do not feel valued as a part of their school community. This can be problematic

since lack of ownership and empowerment has the potential to impact teacher self-efficacy and motivation.

Research Question

There are different school models and cultures in the Pee Dee School District. Montessori, STEM, and language immersion schools are part of the district along with many traditional schools. In all of these models, teacher perception of empowerment and ownership play a role in the school climate and teacher motivation. The purpose of this study is to examine how sense of ownership and empowerment can influence teacher self-efficacy and motivation. The research question for this study is:

1. Within the school culture, how do the perceptions of ownership and empowerment influence teacher self-efficacy and motivation?

Purpose Statement

This study is an investigative qualitative action research case study to explore how teacher perception of ownership and empowerment impact sense of self-efficacy and motivation. The focus of this study is the power of ownership and empowerment to influence teacher self-efficacy and motivation. The focus is not on student academic achievement, although it may be an occurrence as a result of teacher perception of ownership and empowerment. Throughout the research, ownership is discussed in the psychological sense as it relates to belonging (Masterson & Stamper, 2003) and will be generally defined as the feeling of having a say in the creation and implementation of classroom instruction and student learning experiences (Brezicha, Ikoma, Park & LeTendre, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

The study will look at teacher perception of ownership and empowerment through the lenses of self-determination theory. Self-determination theory is a perspective of human motivation that relies on meeting three psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Ryan, Kuhl, & Deci, 1997). Autonomy is the belief that a person has the right to govern his or her own behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Connell, 1989). Competence is the perception of one's ability to perform in an effective and efficient manner (Deci, 1975; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009), and relatedness is the connection a person feels with others and their community (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Ryan, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Aligned with relatedness is the sense of belonging that comes from being part of a community (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Beachboard, Beachboard, Adkison, 2011).

Ownership, agency, and empowerment are influential in teacher sense of self-efficacy and motivation. These factors align well with self-determination theory. Ownership and agency constitute autonomy, one of the basic psychological needs of motivation. Empowerment “in education is defined as intrinsic motivation, experiences of success, a sense of competency, the development of strengths, and self-respect” (Anme & McCall, 2008, p. 2). Anme & McCall (2008) go on to note that individual empowerment is influenced by peers and the community. Given the collaborative nature of school communities, teachers can be empowered by their interaction in them (Aibod et. al, 2020), and this aligns with the psychological need of relatedness and belonging. Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to succeed (Bandura, 1977). Teacher efficacy has been defined as “the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the

capacity to affect student performance” (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass-Golod, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977, p. 137). Teacher efficacy as defined in this way addresses the psychological need for competence as noted in self-determination theory. Ownership, agency, empowerment, and self-efficacy align with the needs of autonomy, competency, and relatedness which make self-determination theory an appropriate lens for this study.

Ownership

Ownership in terms of professional agency refers to the teacher’s ability or power to influence their work and efforts toward change (Vähäsantanen, 2015). Ownership as shared or distributed leadership focuses on activities and tasks distributed throughout groups within a school to include teachers as leaders (Spillane et al., 2004). Shared leadership is defined as

a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both...This influence process often involves peer, or lateral, influence and at other times involves upward or downward hierarchical influence. (Conger & Pearce, 2003, p. 1)

Teachers as adult learners are self-motivated and can direct their own learning processes (Merriam, 2001; Knowles, 1978). Adult learners need to have buy-in and feel as though they are a part of the planning process to impact their professional learning (Caine & Caine 2010, Zeppeda, 1999). Teachers' sense of ownership can positively impact school reform (Vähäsantanen 2015) and is necessary for teachers to support new ideas and put them into practice (Jansen et. al, 2014).

Agency

Teacher agency refers to perceived control over their roles in the profession. While agency exists, it is still contingent on environmental structures and features (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehen, 2002). Biesta et al. (2017) note that teacher agency is an environmental response in which teachers can have feelings of agency because agency exists (Bandura, 1989) but still feel “powerless to change their environment” dependent on timing and place. Teachers base their professional decisions on their own “goals, interests, and motivations” and having the freedom to exert some control based on their experience provides them agency at work. (Vähäsantanen, Hökkä, Eteläpelto, Rasku-Puttonen, & Littleton, 2008).

Empowerment

Teacher empowerment is the feeling of proficiency, motivation, and dedication that teachers feel when they feel the ability to make decisions and handle obstacles in the profession (Avdor, Reingold, and Kfir 2010). Bogler & Somech (2004) describe empowerment as the notion that teachers have the skills and competency to make changes for improvement. According to Erlandson and Bifano (1987), teacher empowerment “has a positive impact on their professional image, on their commitment to the mission of the school, and on their decision to remain in teaching” (p.34). Furthermore, Lee & Nie (2014) assert that teachers that are empowered have better classroom practices thus increasing school effectiveness.

Research Design

The research design is approached through a constructivist worldview lens as noted in Cresswell (2014). This lens is appropriate because data will come from

participants' perspectives of ownership and empowerment through focus group and individual interviews. Participants will also share perspectives of changes in feelings of motivation as a result of their sense of ownership and empowerment and share how perceived levels of ownership has influenced classroom instruction. Qualitative data will be collected from interviews with teacher participants. The purpose of the interview is to ascertain initial thoughts about the teacher's sense of ownership and empowerment. Furthermore, the interviews will seek to understand the teacher's perspective on the overall influence of their perception of ownership and empowerment on their sense of self-efficacy and motivation.

Researcher Positionality

I currently serve in my school district as the K-12 Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator. Before and during my role as the district social studies coordinator, I taught grades three, four, five, six and high school history. This experience created some longstanding relationships with teachers that may elicit a different response from veteran teachers than the ones I receive from newer teachers. My position is an administrative one and allows me to work with all the schools in our district and provides some scope of the level of professional learning regarding social studies instruction. I value teacher input regarding our curriculum pacing and guides and consider myself more of a facilitator rather than an authoritative figure. This is how I see myself, but my position is still one of authority and may have some bearing on the types of responses I receive during interviews.

Significance of the Study

This research is important because studying the influence of ownership and empowerment will add to the body of knowledge regarding the factors that positively influence teacher self-efficacy and motivation. Results from this study could serve to help schools and school systems maintain or improve school climates within their respective school districts. Lastly, findings from this research can aid in district efforts for teacher retention.

This study is also significant because it will add knowledge for the local context. Administrators and teacher leaders will benefit from the added research regarding the benefits of ownership and empowerment throughout our school district. This study is pertinent because it investigates the current perception of teacher sense of ownership and empowerment and delves into research to deepen understanding about its influence on teacher self-efficacy and motivation.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter one serves as an introduction to the problem, its significance, and research questions. Additionally, it introduces the relevant theories and a brief description of the research design. Chapter two will share relevant literature to support the study and share researcher background for the study. It provides historical perspectives and an in-depth look at the theoretical framework, which undergirds the research. Chapter three will discuss the research design and methods. It will detail the design of the study, data collection tools, and methods for data analysis. This chapter will also provide insight to researcher positionality and limitations of the methodology. Chapter four will detail the results and findings of the

study. This chapter will also note further limitations and implications of the study.

Chapter five will summarize the study and delineate conclusions as well as providing recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Changes in state academic standards, new initiatives from the central office and school principals, new curriculums and materials, and the desire to provide an equitable education for students are among the reasons why teachers may decide to make changes in their classroom instruction. Most of these reasons stem from a top-down approach to educational reform, usually without input from the group of people expected to carry out the plan for change to occur. Many times, a top-down approach does not afford teachers a voice and opinion regarding school decisions. Giving teachers the opportunity to discuss changes and the process by which reform occurs will provide a sense of ownership and empowerment (Klingner, 2004; McLaughlin, 1990). Just being invited to the table engages and honors teachers as the professionals they are and can enhance self-efficacy and teacher motivation. The perception of ownership and empowerment can impact classroom instruction and teacher retention.

No matter the mandate, initiative, or personal goal, all decisions that influence classroom instruction are filtered through the lens of the teacher. If there is to be any successful influence on instruction, then teachers must own a part in the decision-making process of teaching. They have the background and insider knowledge necessary to bring about change (Jacobs, Beck, and Crowell, 2014). Additionally, teachers' sense of

ownership and empowerment can boost morale and foster collegiality among teachers in a building when they are given the opportunities to collaborate and influence instructional decisions (Duttweiler, 1990).

The purpose of this study is to gain insight on teachers' perceptions of ownership and empowerment and its influence on teacher self-efficacy and motivation. Literature on ownership and empowerment will be summarized in terms of teacher motivation, school culture and job satisfaction. Additionally, using the lens of self-determination theory, the literature review will provide background concerning how teacher sense of ownership and empowerment aids in meeting the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

This research addresses the following question regarding teachers' sense of ownership and empowerment and the role they play in teacher self-efficacy and motivation.

1. Within the school culture, how do the perceptions of ownership and empowerment influence teacher self-efficacy and motivation?

This literature review will begin by noting the importance of the literature review for this action research study and a statement of research methods for the literature review. The next section will illustrate that the research is grounded in the overarching theoretical framework of self-determination theory supported by discussions of ownership, empowerment, self-efficacy and motivation as they relate to autonomy, relatedness, and competence as psychological needs as noted in Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory. Then the researcher will discuss how equitable instructional practices are impacted by teachers' sense of ownership and empowerment. Lastly, the

literature review will share related research studies that compare and contrast views of teacher perception of ownership, empowerment and teacher motivation and efficacy.

The purpose of the literature review is to make connections to related fields of study and fit the current study within the context of the literature (Oliver, 2012; Machi & McEvoy, 2016) and supports the current study with data and information necessary to conduct research that will add to the present body of knowledge regarding teacher sense of ownership and motivation in school settings. The literature review began with a broad search using the databases of ERIC, EBSO, and Pascal available through the University of South Carolina online library. Within the broad topic of ownership and empowerment, the research focus is narrowed to teacher self-efficacy and motivation.

Theoretical Framework

Self-Determination Theory

Motivation involves the processes of “activation and intention,” and two types of motivation are extrinsic and intrinsic (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-determination theory is a perspective of human motivation that relies on meeting three psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Ryan, Kuhl, & Deci, 1997). Autonomy is the belief that a person is in control of his or her own behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Connell, 1989). Work environments that support autonomous behaviors usually have a positive influence on self-motivation (Chirkov & Ryan 2001; Pelletier et al. 2001; Ryan and Deci 2000). Leaders who are supportive of autonomy tend to have workers who are more satisfied with their workplace (Gillet et al. 2013; Moreau and Mageau 2012).

Competence is how one perceives their own level of effectiveness and confidence in their ability to perform (Deci, 1975; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). Meeting these needs can

intrinsically motivate people to learn, produce, and perform (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The psychological needs of autonomy and competence must be met to influence intrinsic motivation (Niemi & Ryan, 2009; Deci et. al, 1999). A person who is intrinsically motivated tends to show more interest, excitement, confidence and general well-being than one who is extrinsically motivated by entities outside of themselves (Niemi & Ryan, 2009).

Relatedness is the connection a person feels with others and their community (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Ryan, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Teachers and students benefit from a sense of belonging and internalization of learning occurs when the need of relatedness or belonging is met (Niemi & Ryan, 2009; Beachboard, Beachboard, Adkison, 2011). Teachers must have their psychological needs met to become motivated and engaged in their school communities, professional learning and classroom instruction. Giving teachers ownership and choice helps to meet these needs. When teachers are allowed to have options that are personally and professionally meaningful, it leads to increased feelings of autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2006).

Psychological Ownership

A sense of ownership is psychological in nature when individuals consider immaterial objects as “mine”, and it becomes part of their identity (Ditmar, 1992; Pierce et al., 2001). This can have important effects on behavior and emotion (Pierce et al., 2001). A sense of ownership allows individuals to alter or control their environment which impacts feelings of efficacy (Beggan, 1991). Ownership also promotes the sense of belonging and satisfies the need for having a place or “home” (Duncan, 1981).

Teacher Sense of Ownership

Autonomy, independence and choice can collectively be called ownership (Dudley-Marle & Searle, 1995). Ownership suggests that teachers have a voice and choice in their professional environment will be more invested in their practice (Saunders et al., 2017). Dudley-Marling & Seale (1995) suggest that ownership cannot be given, but rather conditions must be met that are conducive to producing a sense of ownership. Teachers who are “highly autonomous” generally feel that their needs for autonomy and relatedness are met in professional learning experiences in which they choose to participate (de Wal, J., den Brock, P., Hooijer, J., Martens, R. & van den Beemt, A., 2014). Autonomy promotes a sense of ownership because it allows teachers to implement instructional practices that they feel are best for the students they serve in a way that aids them in meeting ever-changing demands based on their own self-determination (Collie, Shapka & Martin, 2016). Furthermore, teachers who experience higher levels of perceived ownership are more willing to accept more responsibility in their classrooms (Scribner et al., 2007) and have an expectation of inclusion to receive information and participate in the decision-making process (Pierce et al., 2001).

When school leaders employ a top-down approach to teacher professional learning, without taking into account teacher identity or needs, then teacher sense of ownership is threatened which can have a negative impact on professional learning communities (Guskey & Sparks, 2002). However, when teachers feel like they have ownership, they are more likely to be invested in their learning and professional development (Niemi, 2002).

Teacher Empowerment

Teacher empowerment is the feeling of proficiency, motivation, and dedication that teachers feel when they feel the ability to make decisions and handle obstacles in the profession (Avdor, Reingold, and Kfir 2010). It is the belief that teachers are skilled and knowledgeable enough to positively impact their work conditions (Bogler and Somech, 2004). Teacher empowerment is essential to any professional learning initiative (Sugrue, 2011), and is related to feelings of “power, support, autonomy, and efficacy” as noted by Dierking & Fox, 2012 in Tannehill & McPhail (2017). According to Erlandson and Bifano (1987), teacher empowerment “has a positive impact on their professional image, on their commitment to the mission of the school, and on their decision to remain in teaching” (p.34). The benefits of empowerment include quality decision making and improved school cultures (Marks & Louis, 1997) promotion of collegiality and “enhance[d] teacher sense of self-efficacy” (Aibod et. al, 2020).

Teacher Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura (1997), Self-efficacy is the belief a person has in him/herself to perform or carry out duties to complete a specific task. He goes on to note four factors of mastery learning experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states, which impact self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy is a “belief in ability to plan instruction and accomplish instructional objectives” (Gavora 2010). When teachers work together they maintain a sense of collective efficacy. Teacher collective efficacy is the shared set of beliefs of a group of teachers that they can positively influence students and meet learning objectives (Roekel &

Chrispeels, 2017). Teacher self-efficacy helps to fulfill the need of competence as noted in Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory.

Motivation

According to Reeve (2016), motivation is defined as any internal process that energizes, directs, and sustains behavior. Motivation can be defined as “wanting” and referred to as drive, a general desire to be “liked, respected, [and] ambition”, (Baumeister, 2016). Motivation can be intrinsic and extrinsic and is influenced by one's environment or culture (Baumeister, 2016; Reeve, 2016). Teachers are intrinsically motivated, and this can be influenced by the meeting of their psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Historical Perspectives

Social Cognitive Theory and Agency

Lev Vygotsky (1978) viewed learning and development as a social process impacted by the community. Social interactions with others influence human growth, behaviors, and value. Collaboration, as part of these interactions, is key to human development.

The role of agency in social cognitive theory has three properties of “forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness” according to Bandura (2018). Forethought is goal-making and leads to self-guided behavior. Self-reactiveness is self-regulation, meaning that individuals evaluate their own actions in meeting the goals they set for themselves. Self-reflectiveness refers to individuals thinking about their own levels of efficacy to meet challenges. In the self-reflective phase, individuals weigh their actions against their beliefs and values and make decisions accordingly.

Bandura (2018) further asserts that individual agency is notable but does not necessarily denote the only way people interact. There are differing levels of agency which are influenced by the environment in which people live. Individual agency only applies to that can be controlled by the individual. There is also a proxy agency which is influenced by social conditions and institutional barriers (Bandura, 2018). Proxy agency is exercised within these confines in which individuals may influence others to help them reach desired outcomes. Lastly there is collective agency when individuals work together as a group to use their combined knowledge and skills to achieve a common goal (Bandura, 2018). All three of these forms of agency work together in the life of functioning individuals to address psychological needs of autonomy, competency, and relatedness as discussed later in this research through the lens of Deci & Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory.

Job Satisfaction

Self-determination theory asserts that the social environment is integral in the satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Job satisfaction refers to a sense of contentment in the work environment (Schleicher, Hansen, & Fox, 2011) and is an influential factor for determining job performance (Judge, Thorenson, Bono, & Patton, 2001). Job satisfaction has two domains- affective and cognitive (Moorman, 1993) and enjoyable experiences at work fall into the affective domain while an individual's perception of the job and expectations fall into the cognitive domain (Campbell, Converse & Rogers, 1976). Teacher job satisfaction is dependent on their cognitive and affective experiences in the profession and the school environment (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2011).

School Culture

School cultures consist of administrative and organizational structures that create a social environment that impact teacher experiences (Avalos, 2011). School administration are an integral part of creating and maintaining professional cultures in school that positively influence teacher commitment and engagement (Sperandio & Kong, 2018, Stoll et al., 2006). Dissatisfaction with school administrators and adverse situations at work are what often lead to teachers leaving particular schools of the profession as a whole (Carver-Thomas, D. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). Factors that influence teacher decisions to leave the profession include low salaries, dissatisfaction with administrators, poor facilities, a lack of autonomy, or personal safety (Erichson & Reynolds, 2020). What is valued most by teachers is a deep professional climate in which there is a collective vision and a strong culture of collegiality (Stearns et al., 2015).

Teacher Retention

Retaining teachers is a national issue and with the recent COVID19 pandemic, it has become significantly more challenging to keep teachers in the classroom. Approximately fifty percent of teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Latham & Vogt, 2007). School climate is a factor in teacher retention because teachers want to work in an autonomous environment with administrative support (Hughes, 2012). Hughes (2012) also notes that “empowering teachers would enhance teacher retention” (p. 247). Self-determination theory notes autonomy as one of three psychological needs that must be met to motivate and engage teachers. When these needs are not met, teachers are not engaged and are repelled from the profession.

Teacher Empowerment and Engagement to Challenge Inequities

Teacher engagement with students is dependent upon the teacher's ability to build meaningful relationships with students (Hamre & Pianta, 2010). Positive interactions between teachers and students support student engagement by attending to their social, emotional, and cognitive needs (Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020). These three domains are directly related to the psychological needs posited by self-determination theory. Competency is addressed through cognitive needs while autonomy is addressed through emotional needs; relatedness is addressed through social needs. Meeting these needs requires that teachers get to know their students. Research has shown that when teachers take the time to learn about their students and make connections, student engagement increases (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Skinner et al., 1998).

While looking at engagement as a relationship built on meeting the psychological needs of both teachers and students, one must also look the way engagement can address issues of inequity (Andrews & Richmond, 2019) Engagement is activated “through the interactions of students and teachers, in a shared space, for the purpose of democratic reconstruction, through which personal transformation takes place” (McMahon & Portelli, 2004, p. 70). This type of engagement is essential for all students, but especially for marginalized groups within schools.

For marginalized groups such as students of color, LGBTQIA, English-language learners, disabled students, and students of poverty inequities in education exist. Regardless of institutional and societal barriers, these students are still expected to meet high expectations regarding student growth and achievement. Sense of ownership and empowerment can aid in teacher engagement and motivation to plan instruction that

provides necessary resources for an equitable education experience for all students (Jacobs, Beck, & Crowell, 2014; Nieto, 2007).

OECD defines equity as ensuring that personal and socio-economic backgrounds are not hindrances to a fair and equal education (2012). Student identities are shaped by their personal backgrounds and when teachers fail to value student cultures in an effort to engage them, they perpetuate the inequalities that already exist to suppress minority students (hooks, 2003). According to hooks (1994), education should be a form of freedom for teachers and students alike. Teaching and learning should be relevant and connect knowledge with life experiences (hooks, 1994). This is necessary to address the inequities that persist for both teachers and students. Inequities for students and teachers are connected in a way that teachers need professional learning that enables them to be more responsive to students needs as they learn more about those needs through teacher-student relationships (Andrews & Richmond, 2019). Professional learning communities can help in meeting these needs when they are designed with a focus on equity (Andrews & Richmond, 2019) and are related to context and influenced by the identities of teacher participants (Richmond & Manokore, 2011).

Related Research

De Neve, Devos, & Tuytens (2015)

The purpose of this study is to investigate the link between teacher character (self-efficacy) and collegiality in professional learning communities within the context of teacher learning and implementation of differentiated instruction (DI). It is important to note that high demands on a job can usually be buffered with job resources such as autonomy and collaboration with peers according to the Job-Demands-Resources (JD-R)

model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Researchers De Neve, Devos, Tuytens in their 2015 studies held several hypotheses regarding the influence of teacher character and collegiality in the context of professional learning. They are as follows:

H1. There will be a positive relationship between teacher autonomy and beginning teachers' self-reported changes in DI-practice.

H2. PLC-characteristics will be positively related to teachers' self-reported changes in DI-practice.

H3. The higher teachers' self-efficacy, the more they will report changes in their DI-practice.

H4. Teachers' self-efficacy will partially mediate the relationship between teacher autonomy and teachers' self-reported changes in DI-practice.

Methods of data collection for this study included random sampling and use of a questionnaire. Measurements were taken using existing and researcher created scales.

Their research found that Job resources (Collaboration and Autonomy) and Personal resources (efficacy) influence teachers self-reported changes in differentiated instruction. There was a direct correlation between teacher collaboration (job resources) and the learning process of beginning teachers. There was also a correlation between teacher autonomy and a change in DI-practice. Sharing of expertise was influential in motivating teachers to use DI in the classroom. Collective responsibility and deprivatization of practice did not have an impact on classroom practice of DI. Teacher efficacy is necessary for novel teachers learning and professionalization (increased proficiency), and self-efficacy is influential in professional learning. More autonomous teachers have increased levels of self-efficacy.

This research is related to the study because the study seeks to examine the effects of ownership and agency in teacher efficacy. While this study focused on classroom use of differentiated instruction, the researcher will explore correlations between ownership in professional learning and teacher self-efficacy.

Sánchez-Suzuki Colegrove, K., & Zúñiga, C. (2018)

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of teacher and student agency through the teacher's implementation of project-based instruction in her diverse 1st grade classroom. Her classroom consisted of students from differing cultural and social backgrounds including English language learners. The teacher in this study decided to examine her instructional practices with students who statistically receive less rigorous instruction because of their marginalized status. The teacher decided to use problem-based instruction to help students develop critical thinking skills. The research questions were as follows:

How does a first-grade ESL teacher implementing PBI examine her teaching approach in a high-stakes testing environment?

In what ways does a first-grade ESL teacher discover agency and that of her students while implementing PBI?

This study was part of a larger study that used a multi-vocal, video-cued ethnographic method. The study was completed in phases. Phase one was an ethnographic study of two first grade classrooms in an urban public elementary school. Researchers collected data through field notes, films, and photos. Phase two was an edited film of a "typical" day at the school site. The film was shown to the teacher in the study as well as students and parents of the classrooms that were studied. Phase three

involved showing the film externally in focus group interviews to Latin immigrant parents, bilingual and ESL students and administrators throughout Texas and California.

For this study in one teacher's classroom, the researchers only focused on phases one and two. The site for this study was a first grade classroom in a Texas public elementary school in which over fifty-percent of the student population is identified as Hispanic.

The teacher waited for an opportunity for PBI to present itself because she wanted students to choose their project. Students chose to make volcanoes which led to students leading the study by researching volcanoes and making lists of needed materials. The students worked collaboratively and learned from one another. Her class was an active learning environment.

Data analysis was an ongoing process throughout the study which included coding, as well as thematic and discourse analysis. There were no limitations discussed in this study.

The study found that Ms. Cooper believed herself to be controlling because of her experiences as a student in classrooms that were all teacher-led. Her identity as a teacher was shaped by these experiences. She was responsive to student needs and comfortable letting students take control of their learning and exercise their agency as she exercised hers to try something new. This change required time and self-reflection to motivate a teacher to change. The overall theme to their findings is that teacher identity is shaped by teacher experiences.

This study is related to the current research because it details the changes that took place as a result of the teacher agency to change instruction in her

classroom. According to Self Determination Theory, her psychological needs were met. She exercised autonomy to make changes to instruction. She showed competence in her reflection of her values regarding instruction and was able to make decisions about how to implement PBI. Having her own needs met enhanced her self-efficacy in the classroom. She extended her learning through making sure her students' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness were met.

Brezicha, Ikoma, Park, & LeTendre (2020)

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between teacher sense of ownership and commitment when principals provide opportunities for shared decision-making. The paper further examined the differences in teacher and principal perception of shared decision-making. The conceptual framework to support the study included literature regarding job satisfaction and teacher decision-making and shared leadership. Questions to guide the research were as follows:

1. Do principals and teachers perceive a difference in how involved teachers are in school-level decision processes? If gaps exist between teachers' and principals' perception of teachers' opportunities to participate in decision-making, do the gaps vary across the 29 countries studied? (RQ1)
2. Is teachers' job satisfaction associated with the perception gap and teacher collaboration after controlling for teacher and school characteristics? (RQ2)

This research was a quantitative study that collected data from teachers in twenty-nine countries using the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013. This is a "cross-sectional survey that explores the learning environment, appraisal and feedback, teaching practices and classroom environment, development and support,

school leadership, and self-efficacy and job satisfaction” (p. 435). The sample in this study included full-time teachers of reading, writing and literature; mathematics; science and social studies. Participants' responses were given values that were analyzed to show teacher and principals overall agreement and disagreement with statements in the survey.

Limitations of the study included differing participant interpretation of questions. Additionally, the study was a cross-sectional in nature which captures one moment in time. Therefore, it lacks the ability to show causal influences.

Findings from Brezicha et al. (2020) show that principals believed they were sharing the power of making decisions with teachers. However, teachers still did not feel as though they had a big enough role in decision-making in school. There was a large gap in teacher and principal perceptions of teacher involvement in decision making.

Collaborative culture within the school proved to be positively related to teacher job satisfaction. Results also suggest that shared decision making is more impactful on teacher job satisfaction than some other factors. When teachers do not feel involved in the decision-making or power-sharing, they can become disengaged, which leads to job dissatisfaction.

This research is related to the current study because it sought to explore the perception of ownership and decision making from the perspectives of teachers and administrators. The current study seeks to understand the relationship between teacher sense of ownership and teacher self-efficacy and motivation. The findings proved that collaboration and shared decision making were critical for teacher job satisfaction and engagement. These findings align with psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence as outlined in the theoretical framework of self-determination theory.

Within Brezicha et al (2020) correlations between job satisfaction and self-efficacy were noted which is important to the current study in that it explores the fulfillment of psychological needs as influential to enhance teacher self-efficacy.

Harrach, C., Geiger, S., & Schrader, U. (2020)

This study was built around the motivational concept of psychological empowerment in the workplace. The researchers sought to explore the influential factors of collective social responsibility in the workplace because employee participation is an important factor for meeting goals and promoting sustainability, which involves all stakeholders, including owners, managers, and employees. Theoretical underpinnings of work-life research and social identity theory support this research.

H1 The perceived organizational support towards sustainability is positively related to sustainability empowerment in the workplace.

H2 The sustainability-orientation of employees is positively related to sustainability empowerment in the workplace.

H3 Sustainability-empowerment in the workplace is positively related to job satisfaction.

H4 Sustainability-empowerment in the workplace is positively related to organizational commitment.

H5 The relation between sustainability empowerment in the workplace and job satisfaction is moderated by sustainability-orientation of employees.

H6 The relation between sustainability empowerment in the workplace and organizational commitment is moderated by sustainability-orientation of employees.

This research was quantitative and used structural equation modelling to test their hypotheses regarding the relationships of sustainability-orientation of employees and corporate social responsibility. Adaptations of several scaled instruments and questionnaires were used to measure the following factors: sustainability empowerment in the workplace, sustainability-orientation of employees, perceived organizational support towards sustainability, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The sample size was 1252 employees ages eighteen and older.

This research is limited because it does not cover all areas of previous research in the field of micro- collective social responsibility. The study only focuses on individual empowerment rather than team empowerment. There is evidence of the influence of competence and impact that was not addressed in the study.

Findings from the research show that sustainability empowerment in the workplace had an overall positive effect on employee job satisfaction and commitment. All hypotheses were confirmed. Empowerment is an influential factor positive workplace environment and employee commitment.

This study is related to the current research because it tests the power of psychological empowerment in much the same way this research is using qualitative methods to evaluate the influence of empowerment and ownership on teacher self-efficacy and motivation. The researchers used supportive literature that discussed psychological safety which provides an environment in which employees can be themselves at work which aligns their work identity and personal identity. Another factor was psychological availability which refers to the alignment of work and personal values that promote positive feelings and a sense that employees are members of the

organization. Within the research, empowerment is described as intrinsic motivation and “employees’ perception, individual wishes, and feeling about the possibilities to shape the work role” (p. 95)

Collective social responsibility, along with psychological safety and availability align with the psychological needs for relatedness, autonomy and competence as outlined in Deci and Ryan’s self-determination theory. Harrach, Geiger & Schrader (2020) also discuss the implications of their research on employee commitment which is similar to the current study which seeks to explore teacher motivation. Sustainability in the workplace is similar to school culture or climate as described in the current study which makes the research on sustainability empowerment in the workplace relevant to the exploration of teacher empowerment and ownership on self-efficacy and motivation.

Klagge (1998)

The purpose of this study was to explore the positive and negative association with empowerment in the workplace in an effort to increase understanding of the psychological phenomenon and improve its implementation in the workplace. This research sought the input of middle managers since they are the ones usually caught between employee empowerment and work efficiency. The guiding questions for the research are: What is empowerment? What opportunities and problems does it present to organizations? How do middle managers think it should be implemented?

The literature to support the research discussed pros of empowerment to include alignment of work and personal life, increased problem solving, increased respect and trust and positive motivation. Literature that presented negative effects of empowerment included heavy investments and cost in employee training, development of new power

structures and requires a lot of effort to implement changes. Other negative consequences of employee empowerment include loss of control, changes in manager/employee relationships and possible downsizing.

This was a qualitative study conducted using focus group discussions. A group of 150 middle managers came together in a forum to discuss key issues. One major issue of concern was employee empowerment. The participants had an average experience level of twelve years and supervised an average of fourteen employees. No limitations were outlined in this research.

Commonalities were found among the participants regarding positive and negative factors of empowerment. Middle managers were in agreement with literature concerning the definition of empowerment as giving increased power, authority, or responsibility to employees and supplying the training for increased competency to be empowered. The focus group agreed that empowerment improved employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction “due to increased self-esteem, pride, confidence, and ownership of organizational outputs” (p. 555).

Middle managers disagreed with the literature regarding the implementation of empowerment. The literature suggested that this discord stemmed from fear of losing control, but within the focus group the concern was that the time-consuming and intense energy responsibility of empowerment was put on the middle managers. They saw the value of empowerment and realized that the coaching aspect of empowering employees was where they could contribute most to the workplace.

Empowering employees improves morale and improves effectiveness and productivity. It also increases confusion, requires extensive training to increase

competencies, and reduces productivity during the transition from compliance system to an empowered system. Middle managers face downsizing, changes in responsibilities and reduced authority. There is also the threat of pushing challenging responsibilities on employees under the guise of empowerment and blaming employees when things go wrong. Lack of compensation for increased responsibilities could also be a drawback of empowerment that could lead to employee resentment.

Overall the positive influences of empowerment are important for job satisfaction. The implementation of empowerment should be carefully considered in order for it to be successful in the workplace. This can be done by establishing a vision of empowerment at the top, providing training and development of employees and to increase competencies to be empowered, and establishing middle managers as “bridges” and providers of communication between employees and top level management and coaching for employees.

This research is important to the current study because it reaffirms the necessity of meeting psychological needs for motivation in the workplace. The middle managers in this research reflect the position of principals and their assistants in the school building. Top level management is ultimately the central office. The middle managers noted that empowering employees increased morale which is aligned with the psychological need of relatedness. The training necessary for empowerment is aligned to the psychological need of competence and was referred to repeatedly. Finally, providing more employee control addresses the need for autonomy. Deci and Ryan’s theory of self-determination is evident in the research. Meeting these needs helps to empower employees and improves their motivation and effectiveness. This current study seeks to explore this same

correlation of meeting teachers' psychological need to enhance their perceptions of ownership and empowerment to influence self-efficacy and motivation.

Summary

Deci & Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory serve as a theoretical lens with Bandura's theory of self-efficacy as a frame. Peer reviewed literature in the areas of teacher engagement, ownership and engagement further support the theoretical frame and basis for research. These ideas of ownership and empowerment are situated historically in Vygotsky's theory of social cognitive theory and found in the body of work regarding job satisfaction, school climate, and teacher retention. Additionally, social justice perspectives ownership and empowerment are discussed in terms of the power to challenge inequities. Lastly, this chapter provides a review of literature related to the topic of study.

The literature reviewed in this section shaped my understanding of the important role that psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness play in school cultures, teacher perceptions of ownership and empowerment, and overall job satisfaction. Delving into the literature helped in the creation of pointed interview questions to collect data on teacher perceptions and experiences based on the Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory and Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. In the early stages of research, I had a misconception of ownership and empowerment as privileges or rights to be bestowed or given, but the literature discussed more about school cultures and workplace environments that promoted ownership and empowerment. This led to the realization that teacher perceptions of ownership and empowerment are more than just having the opportunity to share in decision making regarding professional learning or classroom instruction. The literature helped to shape my thinking about ownership and

empowerment as factors of the work environment that permeated many areas of the profession and teacher experiences to include job satisfaction and commitment.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Overview of Study

With the uncertainty of schooling during a pandemic, teachers have had to overcome many obstacles in the last year. Teachers had to learn to teach in new ways and get more comfortable with technology seemingly overnight. In the midst of all that, they still faced criticism and pressure from state leaders, local boards, community, school administration and parents to perform at ever-increasing levels of proficiency. State testing and teacher accountability systems did not disappear during the pandemic, and having to prepare students for test-taking while promoting life-long learning is a challenge.

Teachers are conflicted between agency and structure as they try to meet the needs of students, schools, and communities while adhering to the demands of a top-down system of management. Ownership and empowerment are lacking most often in schools with a top-down management. Teacher perception of ownership and empowerment are factors that impact self-efficacy and engagement for improved classroom instruction (Müller & Hanfstingl, 2010). Researchers note that teachers who have a high perceived level of ownership tend to be more engaged and committed to the profession (Somech & Bogler, 2002; Smylie, 1992; Somech, 2010).

The purpose of this case study is to explore how teachers' sense of ownership and empowerment impact teacher self-efficacy and motivation in the Public School District.

The focus of this study is the power of teacher sense of ownership and empowerment and its impact on teacher motivation and school culture. The focus is not on student academic achievement, although it may be an occurrence as a result of ownership, empowerment and increased self-efficacy. Ownership is generally defined as the feeling of having a say in the creation and implementation of professional learning experiences (Brezicha, Ikoma, Park & LeTendre, 2020). Empowerment is defined as one's intrinsic motivation toward their role at work (Lee & Nie, 2014), and self-efficacy is defined as one's ability to affect change in their role at work (Bandura, 1977).

Research Question

1. Within the school culture, how do the perceptions of ownership and empowerment influence teacher self-efficacy and motivation?

Context and Participants

This study took place in Pee Dee School District which has a population of more than 16,000 students. There are a total of twenty-two school sites in the district. Elementary and middle schools in this district have different configurations. Ten elementary schools house grades kindergarten through six, and four elementary schools serve grades kindergarten through five. One middle school serves grade six and grade seven, and three middle schools serve grades seven and eight. Three high schools serve grades nine through twelve. There is one secondary school that is an alternative school that serves grades 6-12, and one school is a child development center. There are many iterations and school models with varying levels of teacher sense of ownership and empowerment in the district.

Data collection for this research took place in area elementary schools. Teachers at each site had varying years of experience from first-year teachers to veteran teachers with over twenty years of experience. Elementary schools have different programs such as Montessori, STEM, and language immersion. Participants came from schools that have different programs or models of instruction.

Data came from a purposeful sample from five elementary schools in the district. Representatives were teachers of grades 3-4 for a purposeful sample size of 14 teachers. All teacher participants were volunteers solicited through an invitation sent to them individually. The researcher intended to have volunteers that meet the following criteria: teachers with 3 years or less experience, teachers with 5- 10 years of experience, and teachers with more than 10 years of experience. The pool of teacher participants met these criteria. This sample represents a bounded case study because the researcher works more closely with elementary teachers than secondary teachers. Third and fourth grade levels fall neatly in the middle of the elementary grade bands of kindergarten through fifth and sixth grades which made these grade levels ideal for the purposeful sample.

Research Design

This qualitative design was an ethnographic study to determine teachers' sense of ownership and empowerment in their schools and whether or not the perception of ownership and empowerment influences engagement and classroom instruction.

Qualitative research methods were appropriate for this study because the researcher sought to gain a holistic view of teacher perception of ownership and empowerment within the Pee Dee School District. Ethnography is described as a study or focus on a culture and its group dynamics (Cresswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The goal of this study was to document the experiences of teacher participants in different schools to explore whether or not teachers have a sense of ownership and feel empowered. The purpose of the study was also to discover if ownership and empowerment influenced teacher engagement to impact classroom instruction. The research was also intended to understand teacher experiences in an effort to inform decision-making (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data Collection

Participant data was collected from focus groups and individual interviews with teacher participants. Interviews consisted of open-ended questions around teachers' understanding of ownership, empowerment, and self-efficacy. The responses from these interviews was analyzed to compare teacher perceptions of ownership, empowerment, and self-efficacy at the school sites to compile an overall description of these for the district. From the focus group and individual interviews, the researcher gathered rich descriptions of teacher perceptions of ownership and empowerment. The researcher hoped to observe a correlation between sense of ownership and empowerment as well as a correlation between perception of ownership and teacher self-efficacy. Interviews further provided information concerning the influences that impact classroom instruction. The data provided an in-depth view of the relationship among teachers' sense of ownership and empowerment. This data also revealed the relationship between ownership, empowerment and classroom instruction, if any.

Description of Procedures

For all school groups, the researcher obtained approval for the study from the university's institutional review board and local school district before the collection of data. The researcher provided a detailed explanation of the study to teacher participants in

a recruitment letter that was sent to the schools. Then the researcher sent individual emails to teachers asking for their participation in the study. The math coordinator, a colleague of the researcher also sent individual emails to teachers to help the researcher gather participants for the study. Teacher participants who volunteered for the study completed a demographics and consent form provided via Google forms for this qualitative ethnographic study. Once the forms were completed, the researcher scheduled interviews with participants by sending out her availability through email. Participants responded with a preferred date and time via email correspondence. There were a total of seventeen participants who completed the demographics and consent form. Only fourteen teachers actually scheduled an individual interview. Of those fourteen, nine participated in the focus group interview. The focus group was scheduled using the Doodle Poll web tool. The study lasted for eight weeks to include time for data collection and analysis.

Interviews were conducted face to face in virtual settings using Zoom, and some interviews were conducted over the phone. All interviews were recorded via the web application Otter.ai for transcription. Recordings will be destroyed after a period of time. A timeline of data collection and rationale are provided in the following table.

Table 3.1 Timeline for research procedures and rationale

	Procedure	Rationale
Week 1	<p>Inform participants of the intent of the study and have volunteers complete consent forms.</p> <p>Volunteers will complete a demographics questionnaire.</p>	<p>This data was used to ensure the pool of teacher applicants met the researcher criteria of years of experience and grade levels for individual interviews</p>
Week 2	<p>First focus group interviews with interested participants.</p>	<p>The purpose of the focus interview was to gather an overall perception of ownership and empowerment in the group. This focus group interview also garnered descriptive data to address the impact of ownership within the classroom.</p>
Weeks 3-4	<p>Conduct face to face individual interviews with fourteen teacher participants</p>	<p>The individual interviews provided rich descriptions regarding perceptions of ownership and empowerment and its impact on classroom instruction.</p>
Week 5-6	<p>Compile data from individual interviews and code them according to themes and subthemes which included basic psychological needs and self-efficacy.</p>	<p>Since the study is using Self-Determination Theory and the theoretical framework, it makes sense to code interview responses using the needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.</p>
Week 7-8	<p>Compile data and report results in chapter four</p>	

Sample Focus Interview Questions

1. Do you feel you have a level of control over instructional decisions in your classroom?
2. What comes to mind when you hear the term empowerment?
3. Do you feel like you are a part of the community where you work? Why or why not?

Sample Individual Interview Questions

1. Thinking about teaching as a profession, what do you consider most important in helping you fulfill your role and responsibilities?
2. Do you feel like you are a part of the community where you work? Why or why not? Can you provide an example?
3. How does a sense of community or belonging impact your role as a professional educator?
4. Do you feel you have a level of control over instructional decisions in your classroom? Why or why not? Can you give an example?
5. What makes you feel valued as a professional? Can you give an example?
6. What comes to mind when you hear the term ownership? Can you provide an example of ownership in your current position?
7. What comes to mind when you hear the term empowerment? Can you provide an example of empowerment in your current position?
8. How does your perception of ownership and empowerment impact you as a teacher?
9. Does ownership and empowerment impact your classroom at all? If so, how?

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an ongoing process throughout the study. The researcher analyzed data after each day of interviews. Individual interviews were scheduled once participants completed the demographic and consent form. The focus group interview was scheduled using a Doodle poll to choose a date and time that was available for most participants. Nine of the fourteen teachers participated in the focus group interview since participation in the focus group interview was not a requirement to be a part of the study. Interviews were recorded as a method of accountability for data collection and reporting. The researcher used coding to analyze interviews and mine data from the transcribed conversations. The use of a transcribing web application, Otter.ai, aided in transcribing interviews. The researcher used a combination coding system that included an a priori coding system prior to the interviews and a grounded coding system after the interviews. The a priori coding system was based on the theoretical framework of self-determination theory with the psychological needs and self-efficacy as major themes. The grounded coding was used to establish subthemes as they emerged from the data. Creswell (2014) defines coding as “the process of organizing the data by bracketing chunks (or text or image segments) and writing a word representing a category in the margins,” (p. 197). Member checks served as an added measure of validity and reliability. The transcribed interviews were shared with participants to double check the transcription.

Data was analyzed for evidence of teacher perception of ownership, empowerment, and self-efficacy in an effort to show that teacher psychological needs were being met in schools in the Pee Dee School District. The researcher coded data according to psychological needs of autonomy, competency, and relatedness as noted in Deci and Ryan’s self-determination theory.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher was an observer and interviewer for this study. The researcher has more than 20 years of experience in the school district. Additionally, the researcher serves in a district administrative role and has relationships with all of the schools. Her role as social studies coordinator requires her to conduct classroom observations and conduct professional development experiences for all schools. This relationship may cause participants to feel obligated to participate. However, every effort was made to remain objective and reassure teacher participants of their freedom to participate and the anonymity of their responses. Because of the researcher's role as a district level administrator, she is in the position to gain access to multiple district sites and collect data that will impact the district as a whole.

Summary

This chapter served to provide detail regarding the methodology used to conduct this ethnographic case study of the influence of ownership and empowerment in the Pee Dee School District. This research is a qualitative study that implemented the use of focus group and individual interviews as a means of data collection. After data collection, the interviews were transcribed, and emerging themes were manually coded by the researcher. This method of data collection provided rich information that was used to construct a narrative detailing teacher perception of ownership and empowerment and its impact on classroom instruction and self-efficacy in this school district.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Overview of Study

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to examine the influence of teacher perception of ownership and empowerment as it applies to teacher self-efficacy and classroom instruction. The findings of this study intend to illuminate how teachers perceive ownership and empowerment in their current roles. The research question for this study is

1. Within the school culture, how do the perceptions of ownership and empowerment influence teacher self-efficacy and motivation?

Findings from this study are connected to the research question. Qualitative data collected through interviews is analyzed in this chapter using Deci and Ryan (2000) self-determination theory and Bandura (1997) theory of self-efficacy. These theories were the foundation of the approach used to analyze the data. Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory provided the major lens for data analysis. Transcripts were analyzed using inductive analysis. As data was collected, themes and sub-themes emerged from the data which were coded based on the emergent themes. This chapter will discuss themes and highlight teacher descriptions of factors in their school climate that contribute to their perception of ownership and empowerment along with the perceived influence on teacher confidence and motivation.

Fourteen teacher participants were recruited to participate in this study. They were selected based on the grade levels in which they taught and their availability. Eight participants were asked directly by the researcher via email or phone call to participate in the study. Two participants were asked by their principal to participate, and four were asked to participate by the district math coordinator who is a colleague of the researcher. Initially, the plan was to solicit participants from a limited number of schools. However, there were not enough volunteers. So, the pool of participants was widened to any third or fourth grade teacher in the district who was willing to volunteer their time. Once teachers volunteered, they completed a demographics form created using Google Forms. The form was sent via email and asked questions such as contact information, school, grade level, years of experience, gender and ethnicity. The form also included statements of understanding for participation in the study which acknowledged participants understanding that their responses will be recorded electronically, kept confidential, and that the researcher cannot control confidentiality within the focus group interview. After completing the survey, participants completed a second Google form to help select the best date for a focus group interview. The second form included participants name and a selection of dates and times of availability for scheduling interviews. Once participants completed the demographics form, the researcher contacted them via email to schedule individual interviews. Information was collected through a focus group interview and individual interviews. Interviews were semi-structured and were conducted online or via telephone since the study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, conducting interviews via the Zoom platform made it more convenient for participants to

meet after school. All interviews were recorded via Zoom and audio recorded using Otter.ai, an online application for audio recording and captioning.

This chapter will present findings that emerged from the data. Major themes used to code the data were the psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness as outlined in self-determination theory as well as a theme of self-efficacy. Within those themes, the following subthemes emerged: control, community, shared leadership, value, and teacher definitions of ownership and empowerment were analyzed. In the discussion of empowerment, teacher motivation is noted. Finally, within the theme of self-efficacy, sub-themes of confidence and competence emerged along with discussion of classroom instruction. Interview questions and responses will be discussed in each sub-theme.

Self-determination theory founded by Deci and Ryan (2000) posit that humans are intrinsically motivated to engage in a social agenda when their psychological needs are met. These needs are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Teacher responses to the interview questions illuminate their perception of how their needs are being met in their schools. Self-efficacy, theory by Bandura, states that it is the belief in one's ability to carry out a task that affects self-efficacy (1997). Teacher efficacy is “the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance” (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass-Golod, Pauly & Zellman, 1977, p. 137). Teacher self-efficacy is an important characteristic that influences success in the classroom (Gavora, 2010).

Participants

This section will provide a brief overview of each participant to aid in understanding the context from which their responses originate. Participants will be

discussed in the order their interviews were conducted. Each participant has been given a pseudonym to protect their anonymity (Cresswell, 2014).

Table 4.1 Participant Demographic Chart

	Gender	Ethnicity	Years of Experience	Grade Level	Type of School
P1. Harley	Female	African American	4	3rd	Non-traditional
P2. Renee	Female	African American	7	3rd	Non-traditional
P3. Emily	Female	African American	2	3rd	Non-traditional
P4. Lisa	Female	White	14	4th	Non-traditional
P5. Kristin	Female	African American	22	4th	Non-traditional
P6. Briana	Female	White	14	3rd	Traditional
P7. Gisele	Female	White	2	4th	Traditional
P8. Gwen	Female	White	1	3rd	Traditional
P9. Simone	Female	African American	8	3rd	Traditional
P10. Natalie	Female	White	32	3rd	Traditional
P11. Whitney	Female	White	20	4th	Traditional
P12. Danielle	Female	African American	17	3rd	Traditional
P13. Hope	Female	African American	16	4th	Traditional
P 14. Bridget	Female	White	9	3rd	Traditional

Harley, Renee, and Emily are female, African American teachers who teach 3rd grade at a non-traditional elementary school in the district. A non-traditional school in the district is one that specializes in a particular model of education. Of the thirteen elementary schools, there is a Montessori school, STEM school, language immersion

school, and a Primary Years Programme (IB) school. The other schools in the district are traditional elementary schools. Harley, Renee, and Emily have only been employed by this school district. They are all virtual teachers this school year which means they come to their classrooms each day and teach from their laptops via Google classroom meetings. No students are physically in the classrooms. Emily started her career in the district as a non-traditional classroom assistant at a different school in the district while working on her degree in education, so she has some classroom experience prior to becoming a classroom teacher. Renee has also taught non-traditional classes at another school in the district prior to her current position at the non-traditional elementary school. All three of these teachers serve on a grade level team together.

Harley, Renee, and Emily all expressed feelings regarding their sense of belonging and relatedness within their classroom and in relationships with parents. The perception of relatedness and community is most noted in their discussion of feelings related to their grade level community. These teachers also express general frustration with the perceived lack of voice they have when it comes to decisions that directly impact their classroom instruction. This is tied to their feelings of being “outsiders” and “forgotten” as virtual teachers. They do not feel part of the school level community as a whole because they are virtual and located outside the building in mobile units away from the face to face teachers in the main building.

Lisa and Kristin are female teachers at a non-traditional school in the district and serve on a grade level team together. Lisa is White and Kristin is African American. Lisa has only been employed with this district but has worked as a non-traditional teacher at a different school in the district teaching grades four, five, and six. Kristin has worked in

this district on two different occasions. She initially worked in this district as a teacher at a traditional school before leaving to work in another city. She returned to Forward School District and resumed working a different school. Lisa and Kristin have concerns regarding perception of ownership and empowerment within the school. However, Kristin is so frustrated with the current state of affairs that she is leaving the profession of teaching at the conclusion of this school year with twenty-two years of experience. Lisa believes she has autonomy and agency in her classroom to teach in a manner that she deems appropriate, whereas Kristin perceives no levels of autonomy. Kristin is on an improvement plan for a third year and is under close supervision and scrutiny by building administrators. She comments that she constantly receives negative feedback. Both teachers feel empowered by their team and students more than a perceived level of empowerment from administrators.

Simone and Gwen are third grade teachers at the same traditional elementary school. The school she serves has been a historically low-performing school with a high turnover rate. Nearly all teachers at the school are new. Simone is a female, African-American teacher with eight years of experience and Gwen is a White female who is new to teaching. Simone has only been employed with this district. She is the most experienced classroom teacher in the building. Simone believes that her voice as a teacher does not matter, while Gwen believes that the administrators do take their opinions into consideration when making decisions. Gwen also believes her status as a new teacher impacts her feelings of ownership and empowerment.

Brianna and Gisele are both White females who teach different grade levels at the same traditional elementary school. Gisele is a second year teacher who feels like she

belongs in her school and community. She has great relationships with her grade level team, administrators, and students. However, she struggles to build those same relationships with parents. So, she does not feel as though she connects outside of the school building. She feels autonomous both inside and outside her classroom to make decisions that best benefit her students. She feels empowered by her students and her mom. Gisele cited her daily conversations with her mom as she commutes to the school as a way for her to remain grounded and provides perspective for the day.

Brianna is a veteran teacher of fourteen years, and she has taught in another school district prior to coming to this district. She is a virtual teacher this year, and that plays a role in her feeling of belonging in her school. Prior to this pandemic school year, she felt a stronger sense of community with her grade level team because they met frequently and were face to face. However, being a totally virtual teacher, had somewhat isolated her from them. Brianna decided to build community with other grade level teams in the school and that has improved her sense of belonging to her school community. She also feels strongly connected to her students, parents, and administration. Like Gisele, she feels autonomous both inside and outside her classroom. Brianna feels empowered by her students as well as school administrators and the guidance counselor. Both teachers defined ownership as accountability and feel accountable to their students.

Natalie and Whitney are White teachers at the same traditional school within the district. Natalie has thirty-two years of experience, and Whitney has twenty years of experience. Natalie has been at the same school for all thirty-two years and lives in the school community. Natalie has taught at different schools within the district. Both teachers feel like they belong in their school community. They have solid relationships

with students, parents, and administrators. They both feel valued at their school and feel autonomous in their classrooms. Natalie and Whitney both feel empowered by school administration in the building. They also have a high level of perceived ownership in their classrooms. Whitney made comparisons to her old school in which she did not feel like she was valued or that her opinions matter. She feels like she has more autonomy now than in the past.

Danielle is an African American female and has seventeen years of experience and teaches at a traditional elementary school. She feels that she belongs in her school community. She has strong relationships with her students, parents, grade level team and administrators. She feels empowered by colleagues and her students.

Hope is a fourth grade African American female with sixteen years of experience. She teaches a school that has a large population of students with learning and physical disabilities. The school is typically one of the lower performing schools in the district. She feels like she is a part of her school community with administrators, colleagues, students, and parents. Hope says she feels valued and has high perceived levels of ownership and empowerment. She feels “invested” in her school.

Bridget is a 3rd grade White female teacher with nine years of experience. She is very involved in her school community and feels a high level of belonging. She makes a special effort to attend events outside of school to support the populations she serves. Bridget believes that her principal trusts her and has a high level of perceived autonomy, ownership and empowerment.

Analysis of Results

Overarching themes from the data included autonomy and agency, competence, and relatedness. Sub-themes and codes included ownership, empowerment, self-efficacy, control, shared leadership, community, value, motivation, and confidence as shown in Figure 1. Throughout all the conversations, teachers talked about their experiences which included their thoughts regarding their roles and responsibilities as educators.

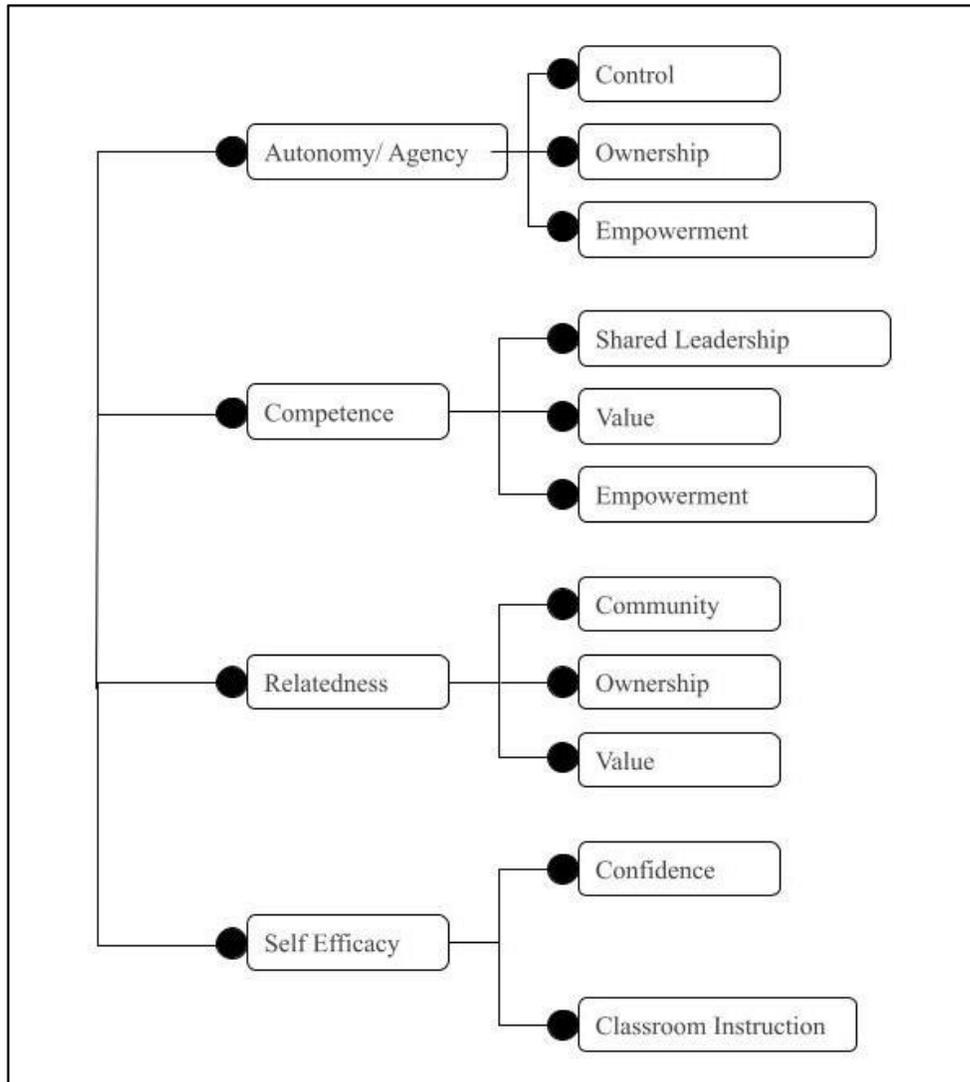


Figure 4.1 Coded Themes and Sub-themes

Autonomy/ Agency

Participants were asked questions regarding their perceived levels of control along with their definitions of ownership. The purpose of these interview questions was to gain an understanding of the teachers' ideas of autonomy and ownership and its impact on them and professional educators.

Control

Participants were asked if they felt they had a level of control over instructional decisions in their classrooms. They made statements like the ones below, which denote their feelings regarding autonomy in the classroom. The majority of teacher participants believed they had autonomy in their classrooms with the exception of one teacher, Kristin. They exercised agency in choosing methods of instruction for their students and making decisions about how and when to change instruction to meet particular student needs.

- “I do have some control over the instruction, how it’s delivered and bringing in some other material to enhance instruction” (Danielle).
- “Yes, I do. I'm saying because as long as I am able to hit the standards. I feel like, as long as I can do it my way, as long as I'm hitting the standards, I'm good” (Harley).
- “I will say a little. Yes, we have certain standards we have to follow. At my school we do the workshop model. So you know trying to follow with that...but how we have a little bit more freedom in how we choose to get the content across the students and the resources that we use” (Gwen).

- “I feel like I'm able to take what I'm supposed to teach and teach it to what, to the best way that my children need to learn, because not all children learn the same way” (Natalie).
- “No, because I was actually on an improvement plan going on three years, where they actually monitor what I taught [and] how I taught it” (Kristin). Kristin was placed on an improvement plan because of her struggles with parent-teacher relationships. She stated that her parent-teacher relationships have improved, but administrators keep finding other areas to use to keep her on the plan.

When asked about their perceived level of control outside of the classroom, the responses were varied. Participants understood this question differently. Some referenced literal spaces such as the playground and hallways where they feel they still have autonomy. Other teachers interpreted this question as their opinions and decisions being considered for school as a whole with a wider impact on students other than their own classroom. Some teachers who perceived autonomy in their classrooms, did not feel the same when it came to the environment outside of their classrooms. There were a few that did feel a sense of control or autonomy outside of the classroom, but the majority of participants did not have a sense of autonomy outside of the classroom.

- “I do not. I definitely do not [have a sense of control] outside of my classroom... I feel like an outsider at the school. So because of that, I'm not sought out for questioning, understanding, [or] advice...I just don't feel like my opinion matters at the school level” (Emily).
- “I do have some control. I don't think it's as much as in my classroom, but I think outside, you know, I think my opinion is valued” (Briana).

- “I think I do. I think I do have some control because there are a lot of organizations and groups that we’re placed [on] as team members to build leadership” (Hope).
- “Outside of the classroom, I don't think so; but, in the classroom, I think I have pretty complete control” (Harley).

Autonomy is defined as the way one experiences control over one’s actions and the ability to govern self (Chirkov, 2009) while agency is defined as an action- what people choose to do and efforts they exert within their environment (Biesta, Priestley & Robinson, 2015). The responses provided to questions about control inside and outside their classrooms shows the level of autonomy teachers feel within their school buildings. Teacher responses varied in different schools. In the snapshot of responses, Emily and Harley are at the same school. Both feel autonomous and a sense of agency in their classrooms, but feel none within the building as a whole. Briana and Hope are at different schools, and they feel like they have a level of autonomy both inside their classrooms and in the school as a whole.

According to self-determination theory, autonomy is a psychological need that must be met in order to improve motivation (Chirkov and Ryan 2001; Pelletier et al. 2001). The need for autonomy is being met by the different schools even though the levels of autonomy differ.

Relatedness

Self-determination theory posits that learners need to feel connected in their environment with people who reciprocate their feelings of collegiality (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Being connected with a community promotes feelings of relatedness (Baumeister

& Leary, 1995; Ryan, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Participants were asked questions about belonging to their community. The purpose of these questions were to discover their perceived relatedness as professional educators within their workplace.

Community

Teacher participants asked to describe the community in their schools and tell whether or not they felt like they were a part of the school community where they worked. Teachers interpreted this question differently, so to get responses to the question I verbally contextualized the different communities one might find in a school system to include grade level community, school level community, and community outside of the school. Responses to this question were mixed overall but were related to school climate. Teachers from the same school generally expressed a common sentiment regarding their perceived community at the school. The feelings of community outside of school varied from the participants, and there were no commonalities based on school.

Community Outside of School

- “I don’t have a lot of interaction in the immediate area around the school. It’s not the zone I live in” (Emily).
- “With my parents, we do have a relationship, a love/hate relationship. Sometimes they love when I call them and stay on top of their kids, other times they don't like ... [when I] ask their students to stay after for like 10 to 15 minutes...Other times they reach out for personal things that are going on in their life...I understand that. So we do have a good relationship, I wouldn't trade it for the world, honestly” (Renee)

- “Yes. Well, because, you know, I go out, too, when we were able to go to the parts of the community to help kids. I would go out and help them, like tutor them reading or math” (Harley).
- “I live in the [school] neighborhood so that does make me feel like a whole part of everything... because I know the people in the neighborhood. That makes me feel good” (Natalie).
- “I’m a teacher that loves to be involved. When there are events at the school, I try not to miss any of those. I also have a student that brought me their baseball schedule. I love going to the games. I love going to competitions. Not that long ago, I went to one of my students who’s a cheerleader, one of her competitions at the civic center.... I just love being involved and also showing my students that I care about going to their games or events and because that makes a big difference. Seeing their teachers at their games really does make them very happy. I love being involved so I definitely make sure I try to be a part of our community” (Bridget).

Community Within the School

- “I really think it’s because I’m teaching virtually this year. I honestly feel like I am isolated from the general population of school. There are times where people feel we forget that I’m even out in my classroom” (Emily).
- “As far as the school building, I do think this year, more than ever, it has been a little bit divided because we’re virtual; and a lot of people feel like virtual is different...I don’t feel connected with others” (Renee).

- “Oh, no, I don't because I feel like I get a lot of information, secondhand from other people...I'm just myself...I'm just by myself” (Harley).
- “For the first time ever teaching, I don't feel any real connection to anybody that makes me want to be at this particular place” (Kristin).
- “My building is just a community. We all, you know, watch out for each other and help each other” (Natalie).

Community Within Grade Level Team

- “Now as far as grade level goes, my team, I definitely feel like a part of the community-that we're a close knit team. We can call on each other at any given time for support, suggestion, for an ear, a shoulder to cry on. All those things are found within my team” (Emily).
- “As far as my team goes, we have such a great relationship and we blend so well together...Some of us are virtual, some of us are face to face; but, I think we have a really good...team system going...We vent, you know, we celebrate the rewards and things like that” (Renee)
- “Overall, I feel like there's a community atmosphere but I feel like each individual grade level is more of a tight knit community” (Danielle).
- “Within my grade level, yes we talk, conversate (sp), plan and those things; but as far as having personal relationships, as it is afforded outside the parents and stuff like that, is not there” (Kristin).

After teachers expressed themselves regarding their feelings of belonging within their school community, they engaged in conversation about the impact of community on their classroom instruction. All the participants felt that being a part of the school

community at any level had a positive impact on their classroom instruction and social and mental well-being as a teacher. However, many participants felt intrinsically motivated within themselves to perform their best for their students regardless of their feelings of belonging.

Lisa believes belonging to the school community “sparks drive...[and] definitely has an effect on your classroom and stuff”. Kristin asserts that not being part of the school community “...makes it kind of hard because you know everybody wants to be accepted by their peers and their co-workers”. Simone describes the impact of belonging to the school community as a “push and pull feeling”. She goes on to note that when “you feel like you don't really matter, or they [administration] don't really care what you think, then it's kind of hard to stay. But at the same time, I have the greater factors keeping me there. I have the students. I have parents. I have the other teachers. That is my reason. That's my why” (Simone).

It is evident that many of the teacher participants feel a stronger sense of community with their grade level peers than with the school at large and the surrounding community. Emily's comment about being able to call on her team for support is an example of this feeling of relatedness.

Value

Teacher participants were asked what makes them feel valued. The purpose of this question was to gather data regarding their feelings of relatedness. Teachers who feel valued have an increased level of motivation and are more likely to use best practices for classroom instruction (Marshik, Ashton & Algina, 2017). Intrinsic motivation has been linked to persistence related to completing tasks, effort and enjoyment (Ryan & Deci,

2000). Furthermore, relatedness and value are integral for fostering and maintaining intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The responses to feelings of value highlight the need for relatedness with colleagues, students, and administrators.

When asked about feeling valued, nearly all teacher participants mentioned that their students help them feel a level of value. Renee said, “My students, I think above all else make me feel valued”. Harley talked about her students and parents making her feel valued, as well. Teachers also felt valued when colleagues looked to them for assistance. Natalie said, “Oh my goodness, the children telling me how much they enjoy what I teach, and other people asking my opinion of, how might you handle something”. Several participants also described having words of affirmation or thanks. Bridget asserts that, “I like to hear that I’m doing a good job”. Emily noted that, “...just a thank you every now and that is all I really need to feel a little more valued as a teacher”. Danielle, too, liked words of affirmation, but described tangible items as well such as increased pay and leave 30 minutes early passes. While talking with Danielle, she spoke about not feeling valued this school year. Here are her thoughts.

“Overall this year, really, as an educator I didn't feel valued, you know. I know times are different. Things have been different this year because of the pandemic and because of everything else. Not so much a feeling of value from, like, my personal administration, but it was just like from people who are higher up, you know, like state level. You know you have your legislators and all that. Just hearing the news and hearing everything that was brought on us. [It was] like they really don't value us and appreciate what we do. And I just felt like... they really don't value us because I feel like they were just wanting to throw us into

something, you know. [They were] not caring about us [or] thinking that we wanted to be laid back and lazy because of the pandemic, but really wanting to protect ourselves too and be concerned about our kids as well. So I feel like this past year I really didn't feel valued”.

As evidenced by their responses, teacher participants felt most valued from their students and colleagues rather their administration. This fulfilled part of their need for relatedness. However, the lack of perceived value from administration seemed to diminish their overall sense of value which can negatively influence their motivation.

Competence

Elliot, Dweck, & Yeager (2017) define competence as “a condition or quality of effectiveness, ability, sufficiency, or success” (p. 3). Teachers feel a measure of competence regarding their performance at the classroom and school level. Deci and Ryan (2000) note that competence is a psychological need that is an influential factor that enhances intrinsic motivation. Teachers were asked if they felt successful as a way to gather data regarding their feelings of competence.

Success

All teachers felt a level of success and competence rather or not they felt heightened perceptions of ownership and empowerment. The teacher participants gave differing reasons for their feelings of success, but most of the reasons involved their students. Harley measures her success by the gratitude her former students share with her. Lisa notes her passion for teaching as a measure of success because she likes to focus on the whole child. Renee believes she is successful because she scores well on state and local teacher evaluations while Danielle measures some of her success by her students’

test scores. Simone states that she is successful because “I can see my students grow, and I have other professionals that look up to me”.

Kristen feels she is a successful educator because prior to coming to this school district, she had a stellar record. Additionally, she has success with her students because they are still showing growth.

Some of the teacher participants felt like they were successful overall, but their success ebbs and flows. Emily told of being able to pull small groups and provide targeted help to students which is something she is not able to do every day. “Today felt like a win for me. It's not like that every day”.

When every teacher participant was asked to give an example of success, they all shared mastery learning experiences in which they told of a student they helped to learn content or overcome an academic issue. There were also examples of social persuasion influencing competence of teachers like Simone, Renee, and Kristin who felt efficacious when colleagues looked to them or when they had positive teacher evaluations.

Shared Decision-Making

Shared decision-making is related to teacher agency in their ability to influence their environment (Priestley, Edwards, Priestley, & Miller, 2012). Having a role in decision-making with support from school administrators promotes autonomy and fosters a school climate that satisfies teacher psychological needs for relatedness and competence (Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007).

Teachers were asked if they believed their professional opinions and recommendations were considered when decisions were made that directly impacted their classrooms. The purpose for this question was to understand if teacher participants

believed their administrators trusted their recommendations and recognized their competence to influence school decisions. Another purpose was to discover evidence of relatedness with administrators. Their answers seemed to vary depending on the school much like the responses regarding belonging to the community.

Some teachers feel that their opinions matter while others think that they do not matter in the school community. Gwen believes that her opinions are considered but that they do not hold much weight. Emily, a virtual teacher in a non-traditional school, responded with an emphatic “Not at all... We’re still like an afterthought for many of the decisions that are made, and I do not feel like I'm part of it in any way”. Bridget is a virtual teacher in a traditional school and said, “I do feel that the school and the leaders at my school do try really hard to bring in our opinions”. Hope and Briana are at different schools but also feel like their opinions matter and will be taken into consideration when possible. Simone is not a virtual teacher and believes that most of the time, her opinions did not matter. She stated that the school administration has an open door policy but, “there's no change made after you say something and it really doesn't feel like you're being heard. It doesn't feel like it matters”.

Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as a person's belief in their abilities and knowledge to complete a task. Gavora (2010) noted that Bandura went on to identify four sources that influence high teacher self-efficacy. These include a) mastery learning experiences, (b) vicarious experiences, (c) social persuasion, and (d) physiological and emotional states.

Confidence

Teachers were also asked if their perceptions of ownership and empowerment had any impact on their confidence as an educator as a way to gauge their perception of self-efficacy. Whitney shared her thoughts by comparing her experiences in a previous school in the district. Here is what she had to say.

“In the past, I didn't feel valued, and I didn't feel like I had a say in anything that happened in my room. Well I'm gonna say it bothered me, but it didn't impact me as the teacher. Because as a teacher, I love what I do, and I'm gonna do what's best for the kids no matter what is on the outside. I guess now that I do feel more valued. Maybe I feel I put more effort into my lesson planning and little things. But, I don't think as the teacher that it would change or it has changed me ever, because I've always been the same teacher that I am today. I give it my all when it comes to those kids”.

Kristin has had a very different experience and believed that her confidence was impacted by the constant doubt and lack of support from her administrators. She felt that this kind of treatment can wear on a person's belief in themselves.

Teacher efficacy has been linked to classroom instruction in many research studies in relation to teacher effectiveness (Gavora, 2010). Teachers who have a high level of efficacy are willing to try new ideas in the classroom are less likely to experience professional burnout (Ross & Bruce, 2007). Hope and Bridget discussed the importance of ownership and empowerment on their classroom instruction and confidence. Teachers' descriptions show how having some level of ownership and empowerment helps to meet the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Notions of being

valued and respected show how social persuasion can influence teacher efficacy. They also mentioned how lack of ownership and empowerment makes teaching difficult. Kristen's response is a perfect example of teacher burnout from a lack of ownership and empowerment which does not meet psychological needs according to self-determination theory nor foster teacher self-efficacy.

Ownership

Ownership in education is psychological in nature. It provides for professional agency in the teacher's influence to make changes within their workplace as needed for success (Vähäsantanen, 2015). Ownership also enhances feeling of belonging in the workplace (Duncan, 1981). Teacher participants were asked what comes to mind when they hear the word ownership and to give examples of ownership in the workplace. They were also asked to describe their perceived levels of ownership and low, average, or high. The purpose of these questions were to gather data regarding their perceptions of ownership and how it impacts them as professionals.

Meaning of Ownership

Teachers had different ideas regarding the meaning of ownership and their level of ownership in their schools. Some thought of ownership as accountability. Gisele thought of ownership in this manner. She stated, "I feel like owning up if I make this a mistake" (Gisele). Natalie stated the following in her description of ownership, "I work to get the children to take ownership of their learning".

Other participants thought of ownership as literal ownership of items in the classroom. Simone discussed ownership in terms of students taking charge of their learning and how she feels she is taking ownership of their learning when they do not do

so for themselves. Simone further described ownership when she gave the example of her role in starting the after school program. Then she stated, “I wish I saw it [ownership] more with the actual leaders in the school. I feel like that ...some of the ownership they should be taking is put on the teachers and others in the school building”.

Hope stated that, “I feel invested in the school, in this particular school for quite a while, then I do have ownership”. She also noted that she felt she had an average level of ownership at the school level, but a high level of ownership in her classroom because she stated, “I make the decisions”.

Emily described ownership as follows:

“When I hear the term, ownership, I think of things that I can control, things that I can manipulate, things that I have a direct impact on or influence with. ...the only thing that I truly believe that I have ownership of is what I do in the classroom with my students, and that just comes down to the lessons that I teach, how I teach them, and the best way to reach my students. I know them better than anybody else at this point, so I know the best way to reach them. So, I definitely feel like I have ownership in that respect, in that area. But beyond that, I do not feel I have any ownership over anything else that occurs outside of my classroom.”

Harley talked about ownership in terms of how she runs her classroom. She stated, “I take ownership in the way that I teach [and]...how I interact with my students and parents...I do my style...I take ownership on all that. That’s me. Brianna shared the same sentiment as Harley when she described ownership as “my own decisions, my own thoughts...within my classroom”.

Statements such as these were echoed from many of the teacher participants and illustrate their perception of ownership as autonomy and competence in their classrooms. The participant descriptions of ownership are also evidence of relatedness because feelings of ownership were directly tied to their environment whether it was the physical items in the classroom, being accountable for what happens in the classroom, or being fully invested in their school.

Empowerment

Bogler & Somech define teacher empowerment as “a process whereby school participants develop the competence to take charge of their own growth and resolve their own problems” (p. 278). Teacher empowerment has an impact on job satisfaction and commitment to the profession (Bogler & Somech 2004).

Meaning of Empowerment

Teacher participants were asked to describe their definition of empowerment and to tell what empowers them as professional educators. Gisele described empowerment as “getting up, being motivated, ...giving 110% [and] making sure the needs of teachers and students are met”. When asked what empowers her, she mentioned her students and her mother.

Danielle mentioned that teacher voice is important to her. She states, “So I feel like in order to feel empowered, I feel like when my voice is heard on certain decisions or my voice is heard about certain things that are going on within the school or decisions that need to be made, or opinions about ... instruction or discipline”.

Hope described empowerment as “how I pick a strength that gives me what I need to do what I need to do as far as my job, to motivate me and to help me set goals, not only from my students but from myself”. When asked to give an example of when she felt

empowered, she talked about getting to voice her opinions, collaborating with colleagues, and working on committees.

Natalie described empowerment as a feeling of satisfaction or fulfillment. She stated,

“...being fulfilled in what I do, from what I've learned from all the professional development training and just making me feel like ‘Hey, I could do this’, you know. I can go that next step to really move my kids to where they need to be. I just feel empowered when I learn something new”.

Harley talked about words of affirmation from her parents and students as a means of empowerment. Renee talked about her colleagues as a source of empowerment. She stated that, “Sometimes you don't get the value from your students, but then you have a colleague come in complaining about the same thing. [Then] you say, I'm not alone. That empowers me. So I know we're going to keep going together”.

Emily shared that her students and her parents empowered her along with her grade level team. Speaking of her students' parents, she said, “They have given me the courage and the boost, to continue on as well. So it wasn't just my students but because my students had the backing of really supportive parents”.

When Kristin was asked this question, she shared the following, “I don't really feel empowered. I mean I feel like they took everything from me that I knew”.

The teachers gave different ideas of empowerment, but they all spoke about what motivates them to continue in the profession. In the case of Kristin, she spoke about how the lack of empowerment has led to her decision to leave the profession. Using the lens of self-determination theory, the participant responses regarding empowerment highlights

their need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness in the workplace. Danielle's and Hope's need for their voices to be heard shows their need for competence. Harley's and Emily's source of empowerment are words of affirmation from students and parents which illuminates her need for relatedness. Natalie's empowerment through professional learning and the ability to move things along in her classroom illustrate the need for autonomy.

Sources of Empowerment

Teacher participants were asked what motivates them in an effort to understand what influenced their perception of empowerment. Up until this point, empowerment was researched from the perspectives of the school and classroom. However, when asked the open question about motivation and empowerment, several of the participants cited outside sources for their reasons why they continue to teach and give it their all.

Several participants listed their spiritual connections and religious beliefs and family as a source of empowerment. Kristin, even though she is leaving, considers herself to be motivated by her spiritual beliefs. She noted that "...for me to get through this school year and continue to do what I do, it had to be me and the Lord". Lisa also relies on her spiritual relationship with God. She noted that, "Motivation resides inside of me is a direct correlation to empower me to boost myself up...with a lot of prayer and help from God".

Gisele talks to her mom as a "huge influence". "She's always praying for me and telling me I'm doing a wonderful job. Every morning she talks to me on the way to school...and that always starts my day off great...We normally pray on the way to school".

Briana talks to her husband about work, and he always encourages her. She was also one of the few participants who believed that her principal empowered her by asking her to serve on committees.

These influences outside of school are important as factors of relatedness. Family and spiritual beliefs are part of the culture and social environment of the teachers' individual communities. Deci and Ryan (2000) note in their cognitive evaluation theory (1985) that social environments can influence intrinsic motivation and support psychological needs.

Classroom Instruction

After discussing perceptions of ownership and empowerment, teacher participants were asked if their perceived level of empowerment or ownership had any influence on their classroom instruction. When asked about this, Hope responded, "If you don't have enough ownership of what you can do and decide for your students, you're not going to enjoy your job". Bridget and other teacher participants voiced that empowerment and ownership do play a role in teacher performance. The sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness build their confidence to believe that what they do in the classroom matters.

Conclusion

The problem of practice in this study led to an exploration of the influence of ownership and empowerment on teacher self-efficacy and motivation. The study began initially as a study on professional learning and how it can impact ownership and empowerment. However, the study took place during a pandemic in which professional learning was impacted and diminished somewhat during the challenging 2020-2021

school year. It was during this time that teachers needed extra support. There were different modalities of instruction happening throughout the school year to include complete virtual instruction, complete face to face instruction, and a hybrid model. Teachers were given flexibility to adjust as needed while subject area coordinators were directed to organize curriculum and instruction to fit these models.

Prior to the pandemic, a conversation I usually had with teachers involved their need for more autonomy in the classroom and the opportunities to share in the decisions that impact their instruction. This led to a case study on ownership and empowerment and its influence on teachers' self-efficacy.

Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory served as the theoretical frame for this research. While thinking about its application to the data, I devised a rough rubric to rate how this theory was illustrated through participant responses. This study is still qualitative in nature, but analyzing in this manner helps to visualize how different participants expressed their feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness. In the case of autonomy and relatedness, participants discussed their perceptions of these factors both inside and outside of their classrooms. So, for instance, Briana felt a sense of autonomy in both areas, she gets a three. Harley feels autonomous inside her classroom only, so she gets a two. Gwen feels she has some autonomy in the classroom and none outside of the classroom, so she received a one. Kristin feels she has no autonomy at all, so she gets a zero. A snapshot of participant ratings is shown in Figure 2 below.

Table 4.2 Psychological Needs Rubric

Perceived level of needs met			
3=High level 2 = Medium level 1= Low level			
	Autonomy	Competence	Relatedness
Briana	3	3	3
Emily	2	3	2
Gwen	1	2	3
Harley	3	3	1
Kristin	0	2	0
Natalie	2	3	3

The study findings show that empowerment and ownership can influence teacher self-efficacy by instilling in teachers a feeling of competence, that what they do matters. Additionally, empowerment and ownership can influence teacher motivation by fulfilling the needs of autonomy and relatedness to operate as professionals in the field of education. The findings further illustrate the theoretical frameworks of self-determination theory and self-efficacy theories. Using these lenses, helped me understand how ownership and empowerment can be influential factors for teacher self-efficacy and motivation. The focus group and individual interviews with teachers helped to highlight the connections among self-determination theory’s basic psychological needs and self-efficacy theory as they relate to ownership and empowerment.

When I started this study, I was focused on school administrators as the source of empowerment and ownership for teachers. As I interviewed teachers, I realized that most teachers believed their source of empowerment and ownership to be their students and

their colleagues. This, however, does not allow administrators to escape their roles in meeting teachers' psychological needs. In several cases, when teachers did not feel supported by administration, they were able to rely on their relationships with their colleagues to fill their need for relatedness and competence. Teachers gave evidence of being intrinsically motivated to do their job well regardless of their needs being met, but they all made statement that alluded to the fact that having their needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness met by their administrators as well as colleagues and students would positively influence them in the classroom.

Another realization occurred when several teachers mentioned their lack of "voice" and feelings of isolation. There were notable differences in responses from complete virtual teachers compared to those who were face to face. The virtual teachers had more feelings of isolation than their face to face counterparts as a result of the pandemic.

All teacher participants want to be valued, feel like they matter and that their voices are heard. Findings further denote the importance of community in the school setting. Teacher descriptions of their experiences illustrate the need for administrative support to build stronger communities in the school building to dispel feelings of isolation and voicelessness. Findings also provide support for increased opportunities for school and district administration to seek ways to foster feelings of value in an effort to support a positive school climate. Chapter Five will explore more implications of the study with discussion for future plans for further research.

"I feel it's gonna make us not just happier, but we'll feel better about the job we're doing if we feel we're able to take ownership in what we're doing and not just

always being told to do this or that. I feel having that confidence, being empowered, [and] having that ownership is definitely gonna affect how we perform in the classroom too. Because if we're feeling good about what we're doing, then I feel we're gonna be happier and also just feel we're gonna be more effective when it comes to what we're doing in the classroom". - Bridget

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLICATIONS

If you keep telling the person that you're not doing something or that they're not up to your standard. Eventually they want to believe that.... I'm like, I will never be perfect in your eyes. I don't expect to be perfect in your eyes. I just want to be respected. (Kristin)

Overview of Study

This study served to address issues regarding the importance of teacher ownership and empowerment in a school district in South Carolina. The purpose of this research is to explore the influence of teacher perception of ownership and empowerment on self-efficacy and motivation. The question that guided this study is: Within the school culture, how do the perceptions of ownership and empowerment influence teacher self-efficacy and motivation? The purpose of this chapter is to further analyze the results of the study in relation to the literature reviewed. This chapter will also include recommendations for practice in addition to a plan for sharing the results of this study with members of the participating district. A reflection of methodology followed by limitations and recommendations for future research will help to close out this chapter. Finally, a conclusive summary will close the dissertation.

Self-determination theory served as the theoretical lens to discover the extent to which teacher psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Although they are listed and discussed separately within the dissertation, they are truly

interconnected. Analyzing the data demonstrated the interconnectedness of these psychological needs as teacher participants discussed the factors that motivated them to include relationships with colleagues, students, parents and administrators which shaped their school communities as examples of relatedness. They talked about their relationship with their students as most important for reaching them intellectually, and this relatedness helped to showcase their competence as teachers and their students' competence as learners. Using their autonomy to choose and carry out instructional experiences in the classroom helped to strengthen their relationships with their students and build the teacher's self-efficacy and competence. Teacher needs were interwoven in the ways they discussed their perceptions of ownership and empowerment.

The psychological needs discussed in self-determination theory are related to self-efficacy in that efficacy is social in nature (Bandura, 1989). According to Shefi (2015) in the discussion of Bandura's theory, "school is a social event" that involves teachers, students, and parents who all play a part in the end goal of success (p. 472). This success is shared among all these groups which create the community of teachers, students, and parents. The social aspect of Bandura's theory of self-efficacy is recognized in the need for autonomy, relatedness and competence for teachers.

Major findings show that teachers' basic psychological needs were met by different groups in the school settings which proves the notion that "people motivate people" (Shefi, 2015, p. 472). Perceptions of ownership and empowerment were impacted by factors such as sense of belonging, shared decision-making, and feelings of value. Most teacher participants were intrinsically motivated to perform well for the

students they serve. However, it is noted that low perceptions of ownership and empowerment influenced job satisfaction and perception of school climate.

Results

Findings from this research conclude that teacher perception of ownership and empowerment are influential factors as they relate to school climate, teacher self-efficacy, and motivation. Most teacher participants were intrinsically motivated to perform well because of their commitment to students rather than their perceived levels of ownership in the school culture as a whole. While some teachers believed that they did not feel a high sense of ownership at the building level, they felt a high level of ownership in their classrooms because they could feel autonomous in that environment. For teachers who perceived a high level of ownership inside and outside of the classroom, they seem to be more empowered as educators. Lack of autonomy and ownership at the classroom level resulted in diminished perceptions of empowerment as evidenced with Kristin's experience. Natalie, on the other hand, believed she had autonomy and a level of control both inside and outside her classroom resulting a high level of ownership and empowerment.

Empowerment was a more influential factor than ownership for teachers. Teachers defined empowerment in different ways. When speaking about the things that empower them as teachers, they spoke about their students, colleagues, family, and spiritual beliefs more than their administrators. This was surprising because the researcher believed that empowerment from school administrators would have been a larger influential factor. All participants wanted to feel valued by their administrators and believed that having more ownership in the form of shared decision making would

help them feel more empowered and valued. Despite a lack of perceived empowerment from administrators and administrative involvement, the participants were determined to give their all in educating the students in their classrooms with or without extrinsic motivation or empowerment from administrators. Teachers compensated for the lack of administrative support through their relationships with colleagues and the success they felt when working with their students, which are perfect examples of relatedness and competence. The internal drive to be committed to a high level of performance is most likely driven by the teacher level of self-efficacy which is a personal characteristic that helps workers discover ways to overcome negative situations in the workplace (Bandura, 1997; Schmitz and Ganesan, 2014).

Several participants discussed how their sense of value played a major role in their sense of belonging within their school community outside of their classrooms. Participants who did not feel valued as professionals or felt voiceless in decision making did not feel as though they were a member of their school community also had low perceptions of ownership and empowerment. Harley is a teacher who had a low level of relatedness with her colleagues and administrators and believed she was voiceless and did not feel a sense of ownership and empowerment from them. Teachers like Brianna felt like a true team member in her school because of her relationship with her colleagues and shared-decision making with administrators. Therefore, she perceived value and a higher level of ownership and empowerment. A few teacher participants who worked in other schools and districts noted dissatisfaction within their school environment, including lack of ownership and empowerment, as a factor for their exit from previous schools and districts. This is the reason one of the participants in this study is not returning to the

profession at all after her experience in this school district. Those teachers who have a higher perceived level of ownership and empowerment claim this as a reason to remain in their current job assignments.

Results show that ownership and empowerment was quite influential in teacher sense of self-efficacy. All of the participants believed in their ability to provide quality instruction. However, some participants did note that they would like school administrators to acknowledge them more for their efforts. Kristen's quote opened this chapter is evidence of this factor. Acknowledging teacher effort would aid in maintaining and strengthening their self-efficacy.

Lastly, results indicate that perceptions of ownership and empowerment are influential in job satisfaction and are motivating factors for their continuance as professional educators. School culture was not a major part of this research study, but it became the center of discussion when talking with teacher participants about their feelings of ownership and empowerment for classroom instruction. The factors of ownership and empowerment, based on psychological needs, along with teacher sense of self-efficacy and community create the school culture. Collaboration among colleagues, support from administrators, and positive relationships are determining factors of school climate and culture (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009) which promote teacher sense of ownership and empowerment. In this study, teacher sense of ownership and empowerment was intertwined with their relationships which create the school culture. In the overall school culture, the perception of ownership and empowerment was often quite different from their perception of ownership and empowerment in their classrooms.

One factor that was not considered in this research, but is noted in the data, was the impact of different instructional models on teacher perceptions of ownership and empowerment. This study took place during the COVID19 pandemic which led to a variety of schooling models to meet the needs of students in our nation. In this district, school was taught in three ways: a hybrid face-to-face and virtual model, a fully virtual model, and a fully face-to-face model. Teachers participants who were fully virtual teachers reported feelings of isolation and a lower sense of community and belonging with their peers who taught in one of the face to face models. Their perception of teacher ownership and empowerment also tended to be lower. However, like their face to face counterparts, they built community within their grade levels and with other virtual teachers who may or may not be on their grade level.

These results were consistent with the body of research and existing literature regarding teacher perception of ownership and empowerment. According to the theory of self-determination, as the framework for this study, the results confirmed the premise of increased motivation based on meeting the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Teachers' need for autonomy was met within their classrooms since nearly all participants believed they were able to make decisions that best fit their students' needs within their classrooms. Their need to feel competent was met based on various experiences with student successes, and teachers' need for relatedness was met by their relationships with their colleagues and students. Having these needs met aid in their intrinsic motivation and helped to maintain or improve their self-efficacy and motivation.

Practice Recommendations

Findings from this study reveal the need to improve school culture within the district by fostering an environment that values teachers as professionals and promotes community within school buildings. Empowering teachers in the school community, allowing for greater autonomy, and participation in decision-making will improve teacher perception of value (Cobanoglu, 2021). These factors will positively influence teacher perception of ownership and empowerment which can help to further motivate teachers in the classroom, increase teacher self-efficacy and aid in teacher retention in an effort to prevent experiences like Kristin's.

Recommendations for improved school climate include honoring teacher voice as part of the larger school discussion and administrative decisions (Klingner, 2004; McLaughlin, 1990). Opening the lines of communication and creating dialogue between teachers and administrators will be a way to acknowledge the issue and begin the work of creating solutions. Recommendations from teacher participants also included small tangible tokens of appreciation such as encouraging notes from administrators, leave-early passes, and dress-down days. Most teacher participants noted that simple words of appreciation are what make them feel valued by the school administrator. This will help to meet the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness to improve intrinsic motivation for teachers as well as positively influence teacher self-efficacy.

A needs improvement plan is another recommendation based on this case study. Even though some school sites and teachers perceived high levels of empowerment and ownership from their interactions with their administrators, quite a few of them did not.

Results from this study could be used to create an improvement plan for school culture in all schools in the district in an effort to ensure that teacher psychological needs are being met to promote teacher retention and increase motivation.

Results of this research and recommendations for practice will be shared with the administrators of the school district through an electronic presentation. Additionally, suggestions will be made to include these recommendations as school and/ or district goals related to school climate.

Using an ethnographic approach to this qualitative study was a good methodology for this study because it allowed the gathering of thick, rich descriptive data that can be used to create a narrative of the lived experiences of teachers in the local school district. Teacher interviews turned out well since teachers were willing to share these experiences. The findings related to collegiality, empowerment from students, and isolation of virtual teachers were unexpected, but it provided insight into other factors of motivation and amotivation to consider. Personally, this research is valuable because it will help me as I continue in my career as an administrator to be mindful of the fact that teachers are professionals and deserve to be valued and treated as such. Additionally, it helps to uncover behaviors that teachers find empowering. Professionally, this research is valuable because it can inform the district as a whole on the influence of teacher sense of ownership and empowerment on school climate, classroom instruction and teacher retention.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included sample size. This district has thirteen elementary schools with over 200 elementary teachers of grade kindergarten through

grade five. The sample size for this study was fourteen teachers from third and fourth grades. This study could be strengthened with a quantitative measure such as a scale to measure teachers' perceived levels of ownership and empowerment along with their rich descriptions. The quantitative measure could add a measure of validity to the current research. Increasing the number of participants and including a larger pool with more grade levels could also add to the validity of the research.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research could be completed to explore the perceptions of ownership and empowerment at the secondary level to see if there is a difference in these perceptions based on level of practice. Additional research could also investigate the intrinsic motivation of teachers in virtual schools versus traditional schools. Another area of interest for research could be the perception of ownership and empowerment of school administrators and its influence on school reform or school climate. The teachers in this study discussed the role their administrators played in their perception of ownership and empowerment. Future researchers may investigate how the administrator perception aligns with teacher perception. Additional research could replicate this study after the COVID19 pandemic to see if there are any changes in teacher perception during a more traditional school year.

Summary

In this study, the researcher sought to explore the influence of ownership and empowerment on teacher self-efficacy and motivation. Fourteen teacher participants volunteered to participate in a focus interview and individual interviews to discuss their definitions of ownership and empowerment and provided rich, thick descriptions, of their

experiences as evidence of their sense of ownership and empowerment through their responses to questions about autonomy, shared decision making, confidence and school community. The narrative was collected through visual and audio recordings of online interviews. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using a thematic approach to produce themes and subthemes that were used to code the data using the theoretical lens of self-determination theory and self-efficacy. A combination coding system that included an a priori coding system prior to the interviews and a grounded coding system after the interviews was used to analyze data. Data was coded a priori based on the psychological needs in the theory to include autonomy, competence, and relatedness while a grounded method for coding was used to uncover subthemes of control, community, value, and success. The data indicated that ownership and empowerment have a major influence teacher self-efficacy and motivation and some influence on classroom instruction. Teacher participants were more intrinsically motivated and empowered through relationships with their students, colleagues, families, and spiritual beliefs than empowerment from school administration.

The results show that school culture varies by school, and teachers who feel valued by their administration tend to have more of a voice in decision making and sense higher levels of ownership and empowerment. Their school culture supports teacher autonomy, fosters a positive community in the building, and boosts teacher morale and confidence. Whereas, teachers who did not feel valued by their administration were not included in decision-making and often believed they did not matter. Feeling valued impacted their feelings of ownership and empowerment but did not diminish their motivation to do their best for their students.

At a time when this nation is facing a teacher shortage, it is imperative that districts and schools make teacher well-being a priority. This means meeting their basic psychological needs to create an atmosphere that fosters ownership, empowerment, and self-efficacy. When this happens, teachers are more likely to stay in the profession and work toward the common goal of educating students and preparing them to be productive citizens. Continued research into the factors that influence teacher motivation will be instrumental for working toward this common goal.

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APPENDIX A

IRB LETTER OF APPROVAL



OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN RESEARCH
APPROVAL LETTER for EXEMPT REVIEW**

Katrina Rouse
820 Main Street
Wardlaw College 238

Columbia, SC 29208

Re: **Pro00107322**

Dear Mrs. Katrina Rouse:

This is to certify that the research study *Teacher Ownership in Professional Learning Communities: Influences on Empowerment and Self-Efficacy* was reviewed in accordance with

45 CFR 46.104(d)(1), the study received an exemption from Human Research Subject Regulations on **1/26/2021**. No further action or Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight is required, as long as the study remains the same. However, the Principal Investigator must inform the Office of Research Compliance of any changes in procedures involving human subjects. Changes to the current research study could result in a reclassification of the study and further review by the IRB.

Because this study was determined to be exempt from further IRB oversight, consent document(s), if applicable, are not stamped with an expiration date.

All research related records are to be retained for at least three (3) years after termination of the study.

The Office of Research Compliance is an administrative office that supports the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board (USC IRB). If you have questions, contact Lisa Johnson at lisaj@mailbox.sc.edu or (803) 777-6670.

Sincerely,
Lisa M. Johnson

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa M. Johnson".

ORC Assistant Director and IRB Manager

APPENDIX B

INVITATION LETTER TO PARTICIPATE

Dear Florence 1 Schools,

My name is Katrina W. Rouse. I am a doctoral student in the Teacher Education Department at the University of South Carolina. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am studying the impact of teacher ownership in professional learning communities. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete some surveys, meet with me for an interview, and participate in a group discussion about your feelings of ownership and empowerment in your classrooms and school. You will also be asked to describe your feelings of self-efficacy as it relates to your profession and classroom instruction.

You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. The meetings and interviews will take place virtually or over the phone, and should last about 15 minutes for each occurrence. The session or interview will be recorded so that I can accurately transcribe what is discussed. The recordings will only be reviewed by members of the research team and destroyed upon completion of the study.

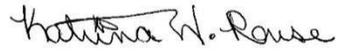
Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at the University of South Carolina. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed. Participation is anonymous, which means that no one (not even the research team) will know what your answers are. So, please do not write your name or other identifying information on any of the study materials.

In the focus group meetings, others in the group will hear what you say, and it is possible that they could tell someone else. Because we will be talking in a group, we cannot promise that what you say will remain completely private, but we will ask that you and all other group members respect the privacy of everyone in the group.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at 843-618-4150 or kwrouse@email.sc.edu or my faculty advisor, Todd Lilly at LILLYT98@mailbox.sc.edu.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please open the attached Google form and begin completing the consent form and with demographic data. When you are done, please submit the survey.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katrina W. Rouse". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Katrina W. Rouse, Ed. S.

Florence, SC 29505

843-618-4150

kwrouse@email.sc.edu

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHICS AND VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION GOOGLE FORM

Demographics and Volunteer Participation Form

Information provided in this form is for the researcher's use only. It will be kept confidential and personally identifiable information will not be shared.

Email *

Name (First and Last) *

Preferred Email Address (If you prefer that I use a personal email address, please include it here.) *

Phone Number (Please provide the best number to use to reach you.) *

When is the best time to call you? Select ALL that apply. *

- Early Morning 6:00 am- 9:00 am
- Mid-Morning 9:00 am -12:00 pm
- Afternoon 12:00 pm - 3:00 pm
- Late afternoon 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm
- Evening 6:00 pm- 9:00 pm

What is your gender? *

- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say
- Other:

What is your race? *

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African-American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Two or more races
- Other:

What is your ethnicity? *

- Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin
- Not Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin
- Other:

How many years have you been in the education profession?

Which grade level do you teach? *

- 3rd
- 4th
- Other:

At which school do you teach? *

Statement of Understanding

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary. *

- Yes
- No

I understand that all responses to interview questions will be kept confidential. *

- Yes
- No

I understand that in the focus group meetings, others in the group will hear what is stated, and it is possible that they could tell someone else. Because we will be talking in a group, we cannot promise that what is said will remain completely private, but we will ask that group members respect the privacy of everyone in the group.

- Yes
- No

I understand that interviews will be recorded to help the researcher analyze the data. These recordings will be destroyed after data collection and analysis is complete.

- Yes
- No

APPENDIX D

TEACHER EXPERIENCE GOOGLE FORM

Email *

Have you ever taught in another district? *

Yes

No

How many other districts have you taught in besides Florence 1?

If you have taught in another district, how many years have you taught in Florence 1?

Have you ever taught a different grade level from the one you're teaching? *

Yes

No

What other grade levels have you taught before teaching at your current grade

APPENDIX E

FOCUS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your role as a professional educator?
2. Do you feel you have a level of control or ownership over instructional decisions made at your school that directly affect your classroom?
3. What comes to mind when you hear the term ownership?
4. Do you feel like you are a part of the community where you work? Why or why not?
5. Do you feel empowered in your role as an educator?
6. What makes you feel empowered?

APPENDIX F

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your role as a professional educator?
2. Thinking about teaching as a profession, what do you consider most important in helping you fulfill your role and responsibilities?
3. Do you feel like you are a part of the community where you work? Why or why not? Can you provide an example?
4. How does a sense of community or belonging impact your role as a professional educator?
5. Do you feel you have a level of control over instructional decisions in your classroom? Why or why not? Can you give an example?
6. In what areas of your role as a professional educator do you feel you have a sense of control? Can you give an example?
7. In what areas of your role as professional educator do you feel you have no control? Can you give an example?
8. Do you feel you are a successful, professional educator? Why or why not? Give an example.
9. Do you feel that your professional opinion and recommendations are considered when decisions are made that directly affect your classroom? Why or why not? Can you give an example?

10. What makes you feel valued as a professional? Can you give an example?
11. Do you feel belonging and being valued have any impact on your classroom instruction? Why or why not?
12. What comes to mind when you hear the term ownership as it relates to your profession?
13. How do you perceive your current level of ownership? Explain.
14. Can you provide an example of ownership in your current position?
15. Do you see ownership in other parts of the school? Have you seen it in other schools?
16. What comes to mind when you hear the term empowerment in your profession?
17. How do you perceive your current level of empowerment? Explain
18. Can you provide an example of empowerment in your current position?
19. Do you see empowerment in other parts of this school? Have you seen it in other schools?
20. How does perception of ownership and empowerment impact you as a professional educator?
21. Does ownership and empowerment impact your classroom instruction at all? If so, how?
22. Does ownership and empowerment impact your confidence in your abilities as a professional educator? If so, how?
23. What influences your sense of ownership and empowerment the most? Why?