



A Qualitative Study Exploring
Novice Teacher Attrition

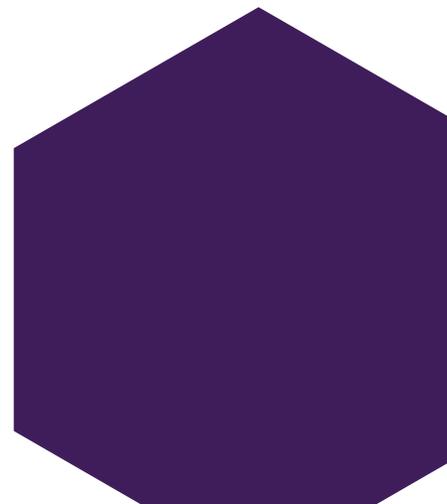
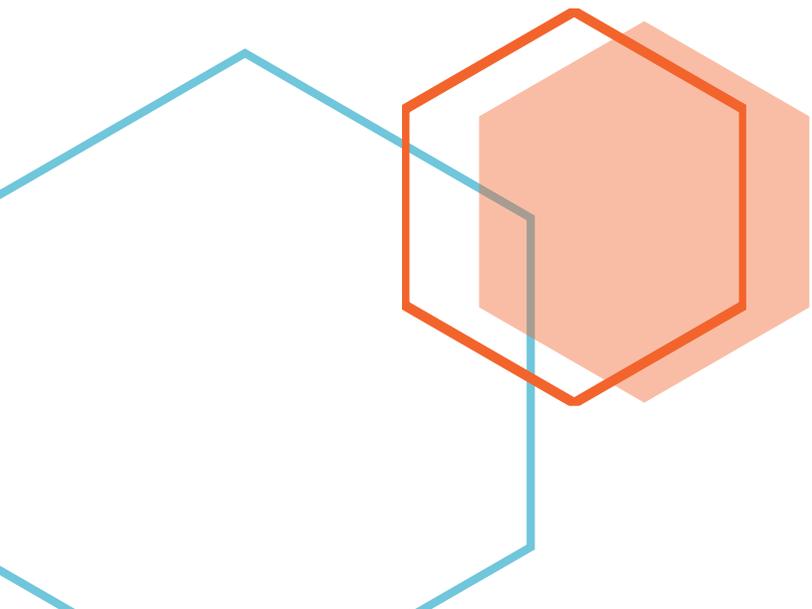


It's All About Relationships

**Leader-Member Exchange in Education: The Effects of
Principal and Teacher Dyadic Relationship Quality on
Beginning Teacher Retention**

A phenomenological qualitative research study conducted by:

Dr. Robin L. Smith





Introduction

Six newly hired novice teachers are anxious and at the same time elated to attend their first days of professional development in the school district. Their principals are nervous for them but confident in the new hire's ability to apply their university training into professional practice in the classroom. The enthusiastic teachers trim the classroom with brand new decorations, arrange desks, and see a learning space they have envisioned come to life. By the time the year is over, two of the six will decide to take down the bulletin boards, classroom posters, their name off the door, leaving a career in teaching behind.

Statement of the Problem

In the fall of 2016, approximately 155,600 beginning teachers opened their classroom doors for the first time (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016). According to NCES (2016), when they celebrate the last day of school, approximately 26,900 will also close the door on their teaching careers.

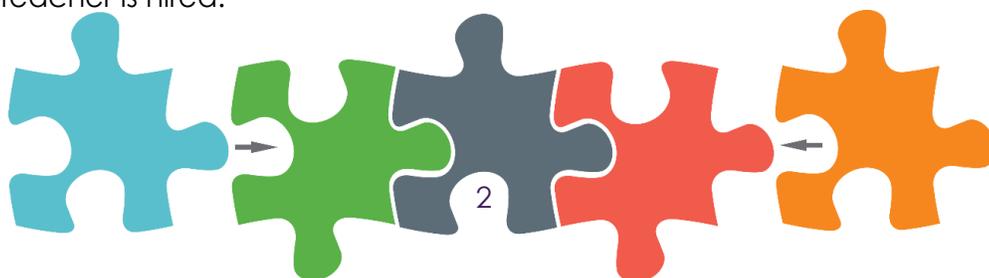
The relational trust developed between teacher and leader has an impact on the sense of belonging a new teacher develops and a correlation to teacher attrition or retention (Edwards-Groves, Grootenboer, & Ronnerman, 2016). Ultimately, the principal is responsible for establishing and maintaining a collegial culture that will be accepting of new teachers and lead to teacher satisfaction (Price, 2012).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the emergence of a Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) relationship as experienced by a first-to-five-year teacher and their principal. Using phenomenological reduction, the essence of the experiences of novice teachers was explored through meaning making of their lived experiences. This study explored the impact of the leader-member relationships on retention of the beginning teacher in the classroom. The study investigated how these relationships shaped the novice teacher's sense of self-efficacy, communal and cultural fit within the school, and sense of satisfaction in their choice of a teaching career.

The novel approach (Colquitt & George, 2011) of this research is to use LMX, traditionally used in business analysis models, as a theoretical lens that examined educator leader-member relationships in public K-12 schools, traditionally not-for-profit entities.

The goal of this research is to bridge the knowledge and literature gap using LMX to study relationships in an educational setting, motivate researchers to use the LMX lens to conduct educational research, and identify retention strategies that can be implemented proactively when a new teacher is hired.





Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How does the leader-member relationship impact a novice teacher's decision to stay or leave teaching?
2. How does the leader-member relationship contribute or detract to the perception of teacher self-efficacy and job performance?
3. How does the leader-member relationship impact the novice teacher's ability to make independent instructional design decisions?
4. How does the generational identity of the leader and member impact their ability to understand and communicate each other's needs? See *figure 3, pg. 9*

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory was the lens used to examine the relationships between principals and teachers. LMX theory is interested in the dyadic relationship between superior and subordinate (Northouse, 2016). Using the LMX lens, the researcher examined relationships looking for trust, communication, mutual respect, friendship, inclusive behaviors, and increased understanding (Bauer & Erdogan, 2016). This lens was selected because as novice teachers begin their careers, they are trying to establish meaningful relationships, develop a sense of belonging, and head off the stress that leads to emotional and professional exhaustion (E. Skadlvik & S. Skadlvik, 2011). If a high LMX dyadic relationship does not exist between the principal and teacher, the teacher may experience a lack of trust, and a sense of exclusion from certain activities within the community (Erdogan & Bauer, 2014).

Review of Literature

A review and synthesis of scholarly published literature was performed for the purpose of exploring the current information relative to this study. Scholarly articles that were utilized were timely and topical regarding LMX, relational trust, self-efficacy, retention and attrition of novice first-to-five-year teachers.

DAY-TO-DAY IMPLICATIONS OF LMX QUALITY:

- Mutual Influence
 - Communication
 - Respect
- Access to Resources
- Risk Aversion
- Conflict Management
- Forgiveness
- Learning and Growth Opportunities
- Job Attitude and Workplace Behavior
- Motivation to Perform
- Organizational Citizenship
- Creativity

(Bauer & Erdogan, 2016)



Interpersonal Trust

- The concept of trust in an LMX relationship is about human emotion and loyalty; trust, mutual respect, communication, and obligation are at the core of LMX dyadic relationships (Bauer & Erdogan, 2016).
- "Interpersonal trust is quite possibly the most pivotal, least well-defined, and least directly measured concept affecting individuals and organizations that must successfully maneuver complex and dynamic human-centric environments" (Borum, 2010, pg. 11).
- "There is good theoretical reason to suspect that interpersonal relationships between principals and their teachers influence school professional attitudes that define the broader school climate" (Price, 2012, p. 1).
- "Team members sharing of general attitudes, beliefs, or values underpins trust relations" (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011, p. 438).
- Interpersonal trust that develops between leaders and teachers leads to a school culture that is nourishing and accepting of change initiatives and directives (Edwards-Groves, Grootenboer, & Ronnerman, 2016).

Self-Efficacy

- The benefits to teachers that develop a trusting relationship with their principal is an increased sense of self-efficacy and well-being in the workplace based upon a high level of perceived trust and confidence from their principal (Le Blanc & Gonzalez-Roma, 2012).
- Role definition is critical to the development of a sense of self-efficacy; developing an understanding of the principal's perspective of what a teacher's role is vital to effective communication in the principal-teacher relationship (Clemens, Milsom, & Cashwell, 2009).
- "A teachers' willingness to participate in school decision making is influenced primarily by their relationship with their principal" (Smylie, 1992, p. 63).
- Teacher empowerment is defined as "...decision-making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact" (Bogler & Somech, 2004, p. 278) in addition to a positive relationship with a principal will result in teacher retention (Somech, 2010).

Retention and Attrition of Beginning Teachers

- A positive dyadic relationship with the principal, being a member of the in-group, a feeling of belonging instead of isolationism, a sense of self-efficacy, and support in the classroom are integral factors of teacher retention (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).
- The increasing cost to hire, maintain, and train teachers make it imperative that principals understand the impact of their dyadic relationship have on novice teachers (Runhaar, Konermann, & Sanders, 2013).
- The feeling of isolation, not being in the in-group, being lonely in their position have a negative retention correlation (Lam & Lau, 2012) and result in further employee withdrawal (Erdogan & Bauer 2014). Lack of recognition and support, combined with a lack of influence among peers also leads to poor retention (Ingersoll, 2003). Teachers that do not have confidence in their leaders or do not develop a sense of self-efficacy leave teaching (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Figure 1. Review of Literature



Design of the Study

Methodology

This study utilized qualitative phenomenological research design to investigate the essence of shared experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) of teacher members in a leader-member dyadic relationship.

Setting

The study includes five teacher participants from four typical (Creswell, 2014) K-12 public elementary, middle, and secondary schools in the Southcentral and Southeast quadrants of the State of Missouri.

Participants

The participants for this study were former first-to-five-year novice teachers that decided to leave a career in teaching. The sample size for this study was five participants. Interview participants were, "typical, normal, and average" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.97) and were selected from a purposeful sample based on the Southeast and Southcentral geographical regions in the State of Missouri. The criteria for selecting typical teacher participants from the purposeful sampling are: (a) years of experience in teaching or (b) varying sociodemographic characteristics such as age, gender, and first or second career. Individual demographic data was gathered during each interview.

Data Collection Tools

- Individual Interviews
 - Five participants
 - Three interview structure (Seidman, 2013)
 - Neutral location
- The participants were invited to participate
- Informed Consent
- Member-Check

"IN THE PROCESS OF ASKING PARTICIPANTS TO RECONSTRUCT AND REFLECT ON THEIR EXPERIENCE, RESEARCHERS USING PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH ASK PARTICIPANTS TO SEARCH AGAIN FOR THE ESSENCE OF THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCE." (SEIDMAN, 2013)

Data Analysis

- Qualitative data was transcribed from the recordings and analyzed by using hermeneutics, in vivo coding, and the researchers interpretive research skills.
- Imaginative variation occurred by looking at the data from different perspectives.
- After the initial organizational process using index cards and sight analysis, coding analysis software by NVIVO QSR International was utilized to conduct computer-assisted qualitative data analysis.
- NVivo QSR software assisted in organizing excerpts, identifying sentiments, emerging themes and patterns. Through the use of coding software to identify reduction, the essence will "appear, give, or show itself" (Manen, 2017, p. 777).

Trustworthiness

Four strategies for promoting the assurance of validity and reliability of research findings were used in this study. They are: (a) member-check, (b) saturation, (c) rich description, and (d) peer examination (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).



Figure 2. Participant Demographics



Findings

Findings from this study suggest that a lack of relational trust, absence of recognition, a sense of not-belonging, little support, and disillusionment are primary factors resulting in a novice teacher's decision to leave teaching in the first-to-fifth year.

All participants expressed their desire to become a teacher verbally and demonstratively. They were passionate about their rapport and relationships with students and the student's response to learning content. It wasn't the student interaction that led to participant's resignations.

The participants experienced some or all of the following:

- a lack of relational trust,
- a lack of efficacy, feelings of anxiety, and risk aversion;
- the need for support, recognition, and meaningful relationships;
- generational differences;
- disillusionment; and
- compensation discontent.



Figure 3. Research Question Themes and Sub-themes

This work is copyrighted. No part of this work may be used, presented, or reproduced without express permission of Dr. Robin L. Smith, Ed.D. Copyright©2019 / Smith, 2019

**Leader-Member Exchange in Education:
The Effects of Principal and Teacher Dyadic Relationship Quality on Beginning Teacher Retention**
Research by Dr. Robin L. Smith

Statement of the Problem

The attrition rate of first-to-five-year teachers in Missouri public schools is increasing. Novice teacher turnover has a detrimental impact on students, community, school colleagues, school climate and our national interest.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to examine the emergence of a Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) relationship as experienced by the first-to-five-year teacher and their principal. The study will investigate how this relationship shapes the novice teacher's sense of self-efficacy, communal and cultural fit within the school, and sense of satisfaction in their choice of a teaching career.

Theoretical Framework or Conceptual Underpinning

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory will be the lens used to examine the dyadic relationship between principal and teacher. Using the LMX lens, the researcher will examine relationships looking for increased trust, communication, mutual respect, friendship, inclusive behaviors, job attitude, increased motivation, and increased understanding (Bauer & Erdogan, 2016).

Design of the Study

Setting: K-12 Public Schools

Participants: Five novice teachers in their first-to-fifth year of teaching

Sample Size: Five

Qualitative Research: Three Interview Model (Seidman, 2013)

Participant data will identify core shared experiences and uncover the essence of phenomena that may influence a novice teacher to stay or leave teaching.

Data Collection: Qualitative research interviews

Analysis: Transcription analysis using hermeneutics and interpretative skills, reduction by horizontalization and imaginative variation. NVivo coding software and index cards will be used to process data.

Validation: Participant, saturation, member-check, and peer examination was used in searching for the essences of lived experience and making meaning from the experiences.

Research Questions

1. How does the leader-member relationship impact a novice teacher's decision to stay or leave teaching?
2. How does the leader-member relationship contribute or detract to the perception of teacher self-efficacy and job performance?
3. How does the leader-member relationship impact the novice teacher's ability to make independent instructional design decisions?
4. How does the generational identity of the leader and member impact their ability to understand and communicate each other's needs?

Limitations

1. Research was conducted in Missouri using Missouri educators, conclusions that are drawn apply strictly to Missouri educators.
2. Access to participants.
3. Availability of research data regarding teacher attrition that is not conflicting.

Significance of the Study

Research: This research contributes to the practice of educational leaders by informing them of complex intricacies of the dyadic relationship between principal and teacher. Analyzing the effects of high and low LMX relationships will contribute to the understanding of the sense of well-being, existence of workplace conflicts, and stress felt by the novice teacher.

Contribution to Practice: Educating Pre-Service Teachers

Pre-service teachers will benefit from understanding the effects of LMX dyadic relationships upon relational trust, school culture belonging, communication, self-efficacy, and the willingness to be vulnerable and creative (Edwards-Groves, Grootenboer, & Ronnerman, 2016).