Perceptions of Leadership Practices and the Impact on Teachers' Morale

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Abstract

Teachers' morale has been steadily declining in recent years. Teachers who demonstrate low morale provide inadequate opportunities for students and detrimentally impact a school's climate and culture. Although significant research has been conducted on teachers' morale, there is a large gap in the literature to provide school administrators information regarding how their practices could influence their teachers' morale. Using the Teacher Perception of Administrative Practices survey, this study asked 1,067 K-6 teachers in 16 Southern Indiana School Corporations across 64 schools to convey their perceptions of school principals' administrative practices and how each practice affects teachers' morale. The participants shared their perception of how well their administrator performed each practice and listed any morale identifiers not included in the survey. This study aimed to help school administrators recognize their administrative practices' effects on teachers' morale and provide information on how school administrators can improve their practices to improve teachers' morale.

This study's results indicated that school administrators significantly impact teachers' morale. All 16 administrative practices listed in this study were considered to have a high or very high impact on teachers' morale. The data also suggested that principals who performed tasks effectively have statistically significantly higher morale in their school at the $\langle$ = .01 level. This study found that the most effective administrative practice a principal can utilize to increase morale is supporting the teachers in enforcing student discipline. Administrators can utilize these results by identifying the morale level at their school and reflecting on their practices in each area.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my wife, who reminds me that our students will see the impact of this study and

that we can provide teachers with the opportunity to make school a place intended for love, learning,

and excitement.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

In recent years, the teaching profession has become emotionally exhausting, leading to

plummeting teachers' morale and low student achievement (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020; Gant, 2020;

Shen et al., 2015). Teachers worldwide are unmotivated and demonstrate low morale in the workplace

(Abazaoglu & Aztekin, 2016). It has been acknowledged that teaching in 2021 is the most challenging

and emotionally exhausting year for educators (Jandrić et al., 2021). Teachers' morale does not only

pertain to the teachers' well-being but also provides students with the best possibility to succeed. When

teachers' morale is low in a school, stress levels increase, students' academic outcomes decline, and

emotional exhaustion spikes (Lumsden, 1998; Skaalvik et al., 2011).

Teachers who report having high morale are identified as putting more effort into their jobs and

building stronger relationships with students (Wagner & French, 2010; Willis & Varner, 2010). When

students have strong relationships with their teachers, they feel that their success is important and

cared for. This feeling can promote increases in students' achievement and positively impact the school

climate (Lumsden, 1998). Teachers' morale is also a predictor of teacher retention. Schools with high

teacher retention have teachers who are likely to seek professional development and perceive high

student achievement (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020; Ige, 2018).

Teachers' morale in the K-6 settings is low (Berridge & Willis, 2020; Mackenzie, 2007). When

schools have low teachers' morale, it leads to burnout, lack of positive relationships, lower student

achievement outcomes, decreased levels of job satisfaction, and an overall diminishing school climate

and culture (Shen et al., 2015). Teachers deserve to be excited about teaching, just as students deserve

to be excited about learning. Teachers work in extreme conditions with maximum workloads, large class

sizes, low salaries, and insufficient recognition (Barmby, 2006; Delaney, 1991). In this context, even

though school administrators cannot change all factors that affect teachers' morale, principals can influence their teachers' morale based on their leadership practices. This study investigates teachers' perceptions of the leadership practices that they find the most impactful regarding teachers' morale. School administrators have a responsibility to increase their teachers' morale. This increase, in turn, improves the school's climate and culture and students' success (Jones & Schindler, 2016; Malik, 2021).

The term "morale" is often used to explain the excitement, motivation, and pleasure a person experiences by being a part of an organization. Although it can be felt individually, this feeling of morale is often represented as a feeling from the whole organization. In most fields, morale is associated with increases in productivity through improved attitudes and motivation (Deci, 1971; McGregor, 1960). Teachers are tasked with the critical job of preparing students for the future. When school teachers demonstrate low morale and productivity, student achievement suffers, and students' opportunities for success decline (Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021).

In this study, the researcher has used the definition of morale examined in Bentley and Rempel's (1963) research, identifying that morale is the enthusiasm individuals feel toward achieving a goal in their working environment. This definition of morale was coined based on Child's (1941) research, acknowledging that morale is derived from the factors in an individual's life that encourage them to increase their efforts to effectively benefit the group in accomplishing their goals. Many factors affect morale. Bentley and Remple (1967) divided morale into ten categories. The categories ranged from personal characteristics to salary to facilities and communities. Although Bentley and Remple (1967) identified contributing factors to morale, they could not provide a solution on how to increase morale based on principals' behaviors. Although diagnosing the root cause of teachers' morale is important, this study focuses on identifying the relationship between teachers' perceptions of school administrators' leadership practices and teachers' morale. As school principals are the direct report of most teachers,

they facilitate the liaison for the teachers' morale in their establishments (Sterret & Irizarry, 2015). If the relationship between leadership practices and teachers' morale remains unsolved, it could be challenging for schools to improve their teachers' morale, which, in turn, would affect student achievement. However, by recognizing this relationship, school principals have a starting point to improve positive relationships, increase student achievement outcomes, and create a positive culture and climate in their schools.

School administrators play a significant role in the teachers' morale. In some cases, when school administrators wish to see improved academic results from their students, the number of policies amplify to increase student achievement. These practices often increase the workload and stress of the teachers and students, decrease the feeling of trust between teachers and administrators, and reduce the level of morale in schools (Barmby, 2006; Paufler, 2018). When morale is low, student achievement suffers, indicating that the increased policies are often ineffective, as high morale is a predictor of high standardized test scores (Abazoaglu & Aztekin, 2016; Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020). Recognizing the connection between teachers' morale and student achievement can provide school principals with the necessary information to improve student achievement outcomes. In cases when the relationship between teachers' morale and student achievement is not recognized, the principals drive policies to see student achievement when increasing morale instead could be the necessary action step (Abazoaglu & Aztekin, 2016). A struggling school may have policies implemented at the district level. If this is the case, the building principal can still improve teachers' morale and see improvements in their students if they demonstrate specific leadership practices (Scallon et al., 2021).

The leadership styles of building-level principals affect teachers' morale and the achievements of students and teachers. Typically, four leadership styles are acknowledged; however, some terms are used interchangeably. The four common leadership styles are directive or authoritarian, supportive or

transformational, participative or democratic, and achievement-oriented (Lal 'Arya, 2017; Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018). The initiative to introduce the leadership styles to school principals can provide a starting point for improved school morale, climate, and culture. Principals with a supportive leadership style are hypothesized to promote high teachers' morale and student achievement. If principals focus on their leadership styles, they can influence teachers' effectiveness and professional development (Wagner & French, 2010). The relationships a principal builds with their teachers is another factor affected by leadership style. Teachers who do not relate to their principal have significantly lower morale (Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018). A lack of positive relationships can lead to resentment during the school day, including during faculty meetings or any opportunity for administrative feedback (Delaney, 1991). The promotion of positive relationships with teachers also contributes to positive student–teacher relationships (Mingazheva, 2018).

Directive leadership is at the other end of the spectrum. This leadership style entails micro-managing the teachers, thereby harming the school morale (Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018). When principals do not allow teachers to intervene in the decision-making process and limit collaboration, teachers' morale suffers due to a lack of trust in the administration regarding their ability to perform their job effectively (Paufler, 2018). The concern with this style of leadership is that it often begins during times of change. School principals wish to see results from their teachers and drive new initiatives. During these periods of elevated stress, allowing collaboration can increase morale and promote a positive culture and climate, improving student achievement. Although it may seem necessary to be policy-driven during certain times, the literature indicates that empowering the teachers, allowing autonomy, and building relationships is the most efficient way to achieve the desired results (Barmby, 2006; Malik, 2021).

When school administrators ensure high morale from their teachers, the culture shifts in a positive direction. A successful strategy to promote high morale is for principals to remain visible throughout the school day (Morris et al., 2020). Visible principals are seen as relatable—a key factor in seeking school improvement (Andrews et al., 1985). There are strategies to improve morale even during times of change. Some research-based strategies, for example providing recognition to teachers, building relationships, and allowing teachers to participate in decision-making, have been identified to be effective when boosting morale (Lal 'Arya,' 2017; Lambersky, 2016; Morris et al., 2020). Identification of these strategies is important. However, understanding teachers' perceptions of leadership practices may provide the necessary information on the contributing factors in teachers' morale, along with how well the administrator executes these practices in their schools. In this context, appropriate data gathering can work as a roadmap for principals to develop high morale in their schools.

Significance

Teachers are tasked with educating students during the most challenging time for educators (Jandrić et al., 2021). Teachers' challenges, in turn, have led to high turnover rates, emotional exhaustion, and decreased student achievement (Erichsen & Reynolds 2020; Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021; Gant, 2020; Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014). This study provides the appropriate information to help school administrators promote teachers' high morale. An atmosphere with high morale improves the climate and culture of schools. By collecting data from the research questions, school administrators can better promote positive relationships, increase student achievement outcomes, and improve schools' culture and climate.

Research Questions

This research aims to identify how teachers' perceptions of school administrators' leadership practices can affect teachers' morale in their schools. The endeavor to study administrative practices

and teachers' morale is necessary as teachers' morale is negatively impacted, and school administrators are often at a loss when determining where the problem stems from. The researcher investigates the following three research questions to identify the relationship between school principals' leadership practices and teachers' morale:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of their level of morale in the workplace?

2. Which administrative leadership practices do elementary teachers identify as having the greatest impact on teachers' morale?

3. How does teachers' perception of the capability of their school principal to execute the listed administrative practices affect their teachers' morale?

Research Methods

The research method for this study comprises a survey. The research goal is to identify how certain responses to each question correlate to the morale level of the participants. Each participant voluntarily completed a survey. The survey used in this research is based on Bentley and Rempel's (1967) and Delaney's (1991) research. The final survey, Teacher Perception of Administrative Practices, is a modified version of the surveys used in Bentley and Rempel's (1967) and Delaney's (1991) research studies, which was tested for validity by four teachers in Southern Indiana and one university instructor of teacher education. The population for this study consists of 1067 full-time, licensed K-6 teachers in 16 Southern Indiana public school corporations consisting of 64 schools. The participants varied in terms of primary grade taught, gender, years of teaching experience, percentage of students receiving free or reduced-priced meals, and enrollment at the school they are employed. Three recruitment letters were sent to the prospective participants with the questionnaire attached, using the survey tool, Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT). The responses were accepted for four weeks following the initial recruitment

letter. All responses were kept confidential and secure using a password-locked file on the researcher's computer.

Definition of Terms

This research may use terms with which the participants or readers are unfamiliar. The following are the definitions of such words or phrases used in this research.

Administrative practices—Includes the administration's relationship with the teachers and the implemented policies, including communication, support, and cooperation (Delaney, 1991).

Directive leadership—A top-down approach to leadership where orders are given, and employees are expected to provide prompt results (Lal 'Arya,' 2017). This is also known as authoritarian leadership.

Participative leadership—A style of leadership where the employees play a significant role in collaboration and decision-making (Lal 'Arya,' 2017). This leadership style is also known as democratic leadership.

School climate—A set of measurable properties of the work environment of teachers and administrators based on their collective perceptions (Ellis, 1988).

School culture—Attitudes, beliefs, and principles that guide a school toward its goal (Fullan, 2007).

Supportive leadership—A style of leadership that promotes a culture where school administrators praise and recognize the achievement of teachers (Lal 'Arya' 2017). This style of leadership is also known as transformational leadership.

Teachers' morale—The professional interest and enthusiasm that a person displays toward the achievement of individual and group goals in a given job situation (Bentley & Rempel, 1963).

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

Overview of School Leadership

School principals are responsible for the seamless execution of all aspects of school operations. Lunenburg (2010) suggested that the principal's goal is to ensure the high performance of students and faculty in achieving the school's mission. However, a key factor in school principals' failure is their inability to connect with others (Lunenburg, 2010). School principals' leadership practices can affect a school's morale drastically. The climate and culture of a school can affect many aspects of the learning environment. Thus, one of the focuses of a school administrator must be to improve the well-being of their teachers. School principals facilitate the liaison between teachers, students, and the community and must ensure that the morale in their school is high (Sterret & Irizarry, 2015).

History of Morale

The issue of teachers' morale is an ongoing problem. Bentley and Rempel (1963) sought a solution to improve teachers' morale nearly sixty years ago. Before Bentley and Rempel's (1963) research, morale was researched to unify the country in the years after World War I. Child (1941) recognized that morale was low throughout the nation, noting that World War I threatened the way of life that Americans had become accustomed to and that morale must be studied to ensure that Americans could return to their previous lifestyle (Child, 1941). Anderson (1953) acknowledged that in the years following World War II, thousands of teachers left the profession, and those who remained were increasingly vocal regarding their dissatisfaction with their careers. Although there has yet to be a one-size-fits-all solution to increasing morale, many ideas have been proposed for improving morale. Some schools have successfully implemented a supportive leadership style to boost morale (Lal 'Arya,'

2017). In contrast, others have identified security as a key factor in promoting teachers' morale (Delaney, 1991).

Factors Influencing Morale

A significant number of factors that influence morale can be identified through a principal's leadership style (Lal 'Arya,' 2017). Delaney (1991) divided teachers' morale into six factors—security, status, working conditions, administrative practices, staff relations, and community conditions. All six factors were found to significantly impact teachers' morale in this study (Delaney, 1991).

Other studies have acknowledged that there are many more factors that influence teachers' morale. Bentley and Remple (1967), for example, divided teachers' morale into ten different categories—teacher rapport with the principal, satisfaction with teaching, rapport among teachers, teacher salary, teacher load, curriculum issues, teacher status, community support of education, school facilities and services, and community pressures (Bentley & Rempel, 1967). Most factors contributing to morale can be addressed by one of the leadership styles recognized by Lal 'Arya' (2017). School principals can lead with many different styles. One of those styles could be supportive or transformational leadership, which mainly focuses on relationships with teachers (Lal 'Arya,' 2017). Another style might be participative leadership, which allows teachers to engage in decision-making. School administrators can also lead with a directive leadership style—a top-down approach where orders are given, and the employees are expected to provide prompt results (Lal 'Arya,' 2017).

Some schools have found that teacher relationships greatly affect teachers' morale (Wagner & French, 2010). Potentially, the greatest factor in teachers' morale is the number of policies implemented by an administrator (Dunn, 2020). Lastly, a principal's poor communication skills significantly impact teachers' morale (Morris et al., 2020). Although there are many reasons behind low teachers' morale, this problem can be combated if principals implement different strategies (Morris et al., 2020).

Existing Theories

Self-efficacy Theory

Research has proposed multiple theories regarding staff morale and motivation of individuals. Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory has gained prominence in this regard. This theory states that people's beliefs in their abilities reflect how they perform a given task (Bandura, 1977). Bandura hypothesized that individuals with a higher level of self-efficacy persevere when faced with stressful situations if they live healthy lifestyles, show improved employee performance, and demonstrate educational achievements (Bandura, 1977). Based on the 1977 research, Bandura claimed that self-efficacy can be derived from four different sources—performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states. A leader can reinforce the four sources and increase employee productivity to positively influence an individual's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

Self-determination Theory

Edward Deci's (1971) self-determination theory is another prominent theory regarding motivation. In developing this theory, Deci ran multiple tests to identify if external or internal rewards could improve the motivation of individuals completing a task. Thereafter, Deci hypothesized that if an individual is intrinsically motivated to complete a task, they do not need external rewards, such as money, to continue completing it. If a monetary reward is given, then the individual's intrinsic motivation diminishes (Deci, 1971). His other hypothesis in this experiment was that if an individual has intrinsic motivation, then this motivation is increased by praise and positive acknowledgment of their accomplishments (Deci, 1971). Both hypotheses were proven correct in that praising individuals for their accomplishments is the best approach to boost motivation in a work environment (Deci, 1971).

Theory X and Theory Y

Theory X and Theory Y are the final two major theories regarding morale. These theories are products of the research conducted by McGregor (1960), which focuses on premeditated ideologies of employee morale. Theory X states that employees inherently dislike work and avoid it when possible (McGregor, 1960). Moreover, Theory X postulates that employees like being directed to avoid responsibility (McGregor, 1960). Theory Y, on the other hand, has different assumptions about leadership and employee relationships. Theory Y states that employees can learn to be trusted and work autonomously. This theory motivates employees to commit to the organization's common goal (McGregor, 1960). Leaders who believe in Theory X do not perceive the value in morale, think that work ethic is a fixed variable, and ideate employees do not exert their maximum effort regardless of their leadership style. On the contrary, Theory Y leaders feel that they can influence the morale of their employees to increase productivity (Delaney, 1991).

Accountability Practices

Some of the first steps that administrators take when they fail to see the necessary outcomes from their students are to add further responsibility and pressure on their teachers. Schools and educators want to be recognized as successful or exceptional (Dunn, 2020). However, when too many accountability practices are implemented, even being recognized as exceptional is insufficient to keep morale high (Dunn, 2020). Research performed by Erichsen and Reynolds (2020) focused on how principals and district-level administrators can drive accountability to decrease teachers' morale rather than improve student achievement outcomes. Using a survey, the researchers investigated whether pedagogical teacher culture, professional teacher culture, and teacher collaboration could limit the pressure of accountability on teachers' morale. The teachers indicated that, by increasing the pressures of accountability, they no longer felt trusted to do their job (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020). Not only do the added accountability pressures harm teachers' morale, but when the accountability policies are driven

from the district level, this also harms administrators' morale (Paufler, 2018). A top-down approach to evaluations makes teachers and administrators feel that they are not trusted to do their job (Paufler, 2018). When teachers feel they are being overwhelmed with accountability measures, teacher job satisfaction decreases, student achievement diminishes, and the teacher turnover rate increases (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020).

Combating Morale with Accountability Measures

Sometimes, the accountability pressures overwhelm teachers and administrators, even when strategies to boost morale have been implemented (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020). However, the turnover rate can be alleviated through accountability measures (Scallon et al., 2021). If specific strategies are implemented to retain teachers and morale in turnaround schools, even during a time of increased accountability and anxiety, then it is possible to see positive results (Scallon et al., 2021). By investigating the behaviors of school principals in schools with high and low turnover rates, school administrators can distinguish between behaviors that promote teacher retention (Scallon et al., 2021). To retain teachers, school administrators must demonstrate behaviors such as recognizing the teachers' accomplishments, communicating a strong vision for the school, and focusing on student learning (Scallon et al., 2021). Schools that do not demonstrate these behaviors struggle with teacher retention, especially when low morale is identified (Scallon et al., 2021). Moreover, school administrators who offered higher autonomy to their teachers saw higher retention rates than those who operated using a top-down approach (Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021). This finding is not only true for teachers. Giving administrators the autonomy to freely evaluate their teachers also boosts the morale of administrators (Paufler, 2018). Schools whose administrators demonstrate high morale have teachers who are more motivated to succeed (Abazoaglu & Aztekin, 2016). Teacher retention is significant for predicting teachers' morale and positive student achievement outcomes (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020).

Number of Policies

When leading a school with a top-down approach, the school or school corporation's policies may significantly influence teachers' morale (Dunn, 2020). Dunn (2020) indicated that policies are often implemented to improve classroom outcomes, but many policies have the opposite impact and harm students' academic outcomes. Barmby (2006) identified that teacher workload is a significant reason behind why teachers leave the teaching profession within the first few years of their careers. When more policies are implemented in a school setting, teachers' morale is harmed, which, in turn, decreases students' motivation (Dunn, 2020; Shen et al., 2015). The recognition and acknowledgement of teachers as exceptional benefits teachers' morale in certain cases. However, when too many policies are implemented, teachers' morale is negatively impacted (Dunn, 2020; Scallon et al., 2021).

Leadership Style and Teachers' Effectiveness

Directive and Authoritarian Leadership

A study conducted by Lal 'Arya' (2017) researched the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' effectiveness. Lal 'Arya' focused on the Path-Goal theory of leadership, which states that there are four key leadership styles—directive, supportive, achievement-oriented, and participative (House, 1971). Lal 'Arya's (2017) research aimed to identify which leadership style was the most effective for promoting teachers' effectiveness. In the directive leadership style, the principal gives orders and expects prompt results from the teacher or staff (Lal 'Arya, 2017). This leadership style, which has been classified as authoritarian, includes leaders who limit collaboration among teachers, make decisions alone, and often micro-manage their staff, harming teachers' morale (Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018). This leadership style is the least effective when boosting morale (Lal 'Arya, 2017). To boost morale, teachers prefer collaborating and participating in decision-making (Lane et al.,

2019). Administrators who demonstrate caring characteristics to their teachers rather than demanding results notice that their teachers feel more confident in their pedagogical expertise (Dunn, 2020).

Supportive and Transformational Leadership

Supportive leadership style promotes school administrators praising and recognizing the achievement of teachers (Lal 'Arya,' 2017). Praising and encouraging teachers has promoted motivation and morale in classroom settings (Lal 'Arya,' 2017). Administrators who wish to promote teachers' morale and motivation using a supportive leadership style can do so by examining intrinsic motivational factors such as celebrating achievements, ensuring good communication, and facilitating positive modeling (Hargis, 2018). Another characteristic of supportive leadership includes principals' visibility in the hallways and classrooms throughout the school day (Morris et al., 2020). Morris et al. (2020) explained that when principals are visible in the school premises rather than spending the majority of the work day in their offices, they can better support their teachers, thereby boosting morale. Principals also demonstrate supportive leadership characteristics when building relationships with their staff (Morris et al., 2020). When principals are not relatable to their teachers and do not engage in conversations about non-school-related topics, morale is considerably lower (Morris et al., 2020; Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018). When principals relate to their staff, they can increase their teachers' intrinsic motivation (Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018). One of the benefits of supportive leadership is that the teachers who feel supported are more likely to focus on professional development and grow in the teaching profession (Wagner & French, 2010).

On the contrary, administrators who practice transformational leadership focus on building trust and relationships with their teachers (Rosenburg, 2013). Another goal of transformational leadership is to empower the teacher (Malik, 2021). When principals empower their teachers, they have a greater sense of belonging and improved pedagogical practice (Malik, 2021). Principals who wish to encourage

their teachers and increase their passion for teaching can do so by celebrating their teachers and recognizing their work (Ciccone, 2019). Principals who practice a transformational or supportive leadership style perceive an increase in intrinsic motivation from their staff and promote positive school environments (Rosenberg, 2013; Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018).

Participative Leadership

Participative leadership ranks lower than supportive or transformational; however, it can still be beneficial in promoting teachers' effectiveness (Lal 'Arya', 2017). Participative leadership is observed when school administrators involve the entire organization in decision-making and problem-solving (Lal 'Arya', 2017). Principals with participative leadership styles strongly encourage collaboration among staff members and delegate responsibilities to individuals to complete given tasks (Lal 'Arya', 2017). Although participative leadership does have its benefits, it can be harmful when taken to the extreme (Gant, 2020). Principals who lead with a laissez-faire mentality see an increase in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Gant, 2020). Administrators and teachers must work interdependently to improve morale using a participative leadership approach (Gant, 2020).

Work Performance

According to Wagner and French (2010), teachers with high morale and motivation enjoy their work more and are more likely to grow in their teaching practice. Similar to the findings of the research conducted by Ciccone (2019), Wagner and French (2010) researched the relationship between teachers' motivation and professional growth and the factors contributing to such motivation for professional growth. Teachers were more likely to focus on professional development if they felt the school administrators supported the staff (Wagner & French, 2010). The components of teachers' motivation to improve their practice and attend professional development included supervisors' support, the topics being addressed, and their relationships with their co-workers (Wagner & French, 2010). These findings

are similar to Morris et al. (2020)—teachers' motivation can be increased when there are more social opportunities for the staff members. The improvement of the depth of relationships between teachers can play a significant role in teachers' growth by focusing on professional development and improving teachers' morale (Morris et al., 2020; Wagner & French, 2010).

When school principals' leadership styles promote teachers' morale, it also affects teachers' performance (Malik, 2021). When teachers demonstrate high morale in the teaching profession, administrators state that their work performance increases (Malik, 2020). Malik (2020) interviewed teachers regarding their principals' behaviors and leadership styles. Based on these interviews, teachers who felt empowered by their principal had a stronger morale for the teaching profession and were recognized as having higher quality work than those whose principals who were not empowering (Malik, 2021). When administrators empower their teachers, the staff feels they belong to the organization, which, in turn, correlates to high-quality work and increased teachers' morale (Malik, 2021). Principals who are not empowering and demonstrate negligence toward their staff experience lower morale and work performance from their teachers (Malik, 2021).

Teachers' Effectiveness

Administrators must motivate faculty to improve their practice to provide students with effective teachers (Ige, 2018). Highly motivated teachers are more likely to attend professional development and desire to improve their teaching (Ige, 2018). Some examples of motivating teachers may include praising teachers, promoting growth through professional development, and allowing teachers to have a say in decision-making (Ige, 2018).

Similar to the findings of the research conducted by Lal 'Arya (2017), Gant (2020) from Claremont Graduate University explored how a principal's leadership style can predict teachers' effectiveness and morale. This investigation aimed to find if there is a correlation between teachers'

perspectives of their principal's leadership style, teachers' morale, teachers' effectiveness, and a

school's poverty levels (Gant, 2020). The results included that there was no correlation between

teachers' effectiveness or morale in regard to a school's poverty level; however, there was a strong

correlation between teachers' effectiveness, teachers' morale, and principals' leadership styles (Gant,

2020). Principals' leadership styles majorly affect teachers' burnout (Gant, 2020). Principals who lead

with a laissez-faire approach tend to have teachers who feel depersonalized from the school and feel

emotionally exhausted (Gant, 2020). The laissez-faire approach involves an administrator who is limited

in decision-making and expects the staff to make decisions without formal leadership or guidance

(Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018). Administrators and teachers must collaborate in decision-

making to improve teachers' morale and effectiveness (Gant, 2018). A participative leadership style may

influence teachers' effectiveness and morale (Lal 'Arya,' 2017). Allowing teachers to participate in

decision-making can also positively influence teachers' confidence and self-efficacy and students'

achievement (Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014). However, school principals who demonstrate negligence

toward their teachers and play a limited role in decision-making can harm the morale and effectiveness

of their teachers (Malik, 2020).

Democratic Leadership

A democratic leadership style involves faculty input while using effective collaboration strategies

(Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018). Leaders implementing a democratic leadership style

improve teachers' motivation (Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018). Highly motivated teachers

are more likely to receive professional development and be classified as highly effective teachers (Ige,

2018). According to Deci's (1971) self-determination theory, teachers' intrinsic motivation is the highest

when they are offered autonomy, their ability to perform is recognized, and their administrator is

relatable. These three psychological needs were met best when the principals operated with a democratic style of leadership (Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018).

Student Achievement Outcomes

Relationships

The policies that amplify teachers' burnout and emotional exhaustion harm the well-being of the teachers and intrude on the motivation and well-being of the students (Shen et al., 2015). Shen et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between teachers' burnout and their students' motivation. Teachers who were emotionally exhausted had students who felt inadequately supported (Shen et al., 2015). Teachers' emotional exhaustion leads to burnout, negatively impacting school-related relationships. In turn, student achievement suffers when teachers' burnout and emotional exhaustion lead to retention issues (Barmby, 2006; Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020). Students also mimic the behaviors of their teachers, leading students with unmotivated teachers to demonstrate a lack of motivation (Mingazheva, 2018). Intrinsic motivation suffers when an environment lacks positive relationships (Shen et al., 2015). Teachers who feel emotionally exhausted also struggle to act with autonomy—a factor that plays a significant role in teachers' morale and motivation (Hargis, 2018).

Academic Performance

Low levels of motivation from teachers negatively affect positive relationships and students' academic outcomes (Abazoaglu & Aztekin, 2016). Schools with highly motivated teachers have students who score higher on math and science standardized tests (Abazoaglu & Aztekin, 2016). Moreover, administrators who demonstrate high motivation and morale have teachers who report the same (Abazoaglu & Aztekin, 2016).

In other studies, researchers identified a correlation between teachers' job satisfaction and the feeling of belonging to the organization (Skaalvik et al., 2011). When two leadership styles were

compared, it was identified that a specific structure contributes more positively to teacher buy-in to

organizational initiatives, a teacher's feeling of belonging, emotional exhaustion, and teachers' desire to

remain in the teaching profession for a longer duration (Skaalvik et al., 2011). Mastery goal structure

focuses on classroom behaviors, whereas performance goal structures focus on standardized tests

(Skaalvik et al., 2011). Administrators who focus on mastery goals, which include relationship building,

rather than performance goals, see more success in student achievement outcomes (Erichsen &

Reynolds, 2020). The behaviors associated with performance goals increase emotional exhaustion—a

major contributing factor to teachers' burnout and teachers' decision to leave the profession (Shen et

al., 2015). A positive way for administrators to promote a high retention rate and student achievement

outcomes is to offer autonomy in the classroom (Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021). In relation to student

achievement, teacher retention is a key factor in student academic success (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020).

Autonomy

One of the major ways that administrators can contribute to teachers' morale is to allow

teachers autonomy over their classrooms (Hargis, 2018). When a top-down approach to leadership is

active, and teachers are not offered autonomy, they no longer feel trusted to perform their jobs

(Paufler, 2018). When researching teachers' motivation, Hargis (2018) found that autonomy was the

greatest factor in increasing or decreasing teachers' motivation. Principals who offer autonomy to

teachers in classrooms notice improved confidence and motivation in teachers (Hargis, 2018). According

to the self-determination theory, leaders who support their employees with autonomy reassure their

competence, and their relatability motivates employees and increases performance and creativity (Deci,

1971). The same theory suggests that if a leader does not support these areas, productivity decreases,

and the culture and climate of a facility suffer (Deci, 1971). Jones and Schindler (2016) deem climate and

culture as the most significant factors impacting students' achievement. Herein, Fradkin-Hayslip (2021)

proposed a study to identify if there is a correlation between teacher autonomy, motivation, and job

satisfaction. The results suggested that school administrators who offered higher autonomy to their

teachers saw higher retention rates and student achievement than those who operated using a top-

down approach (Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021). Administrators who allow autonomy in their schools also

promote higher competence and job satisfaction in their teachers (Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021).

Self-efficacy

Supportive Behaviors

Branching off of Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, researchers have investigated how a

teacher's level of self-efficacy can affect teachers' morale and classroom instruction (Holzberger et al.,

2013). Teachers who report low self-efficacy harm the educational setting compared to those reporting

high self-efficacy (Holzberger et al., 2013). However, low teacher self-efficacy can be combated by

principals' positive influence on teachers' emotions and self-efficacy ratings (Lambersky, 2016).

Principals who desire to improve self-efficacy in their teachers must show professional respect for

teachers' capability, recognize teachers' efforts, support teachers during emotional situations, be visible

throughout the school day, allow teachers to participate in decision-making, and communicate the

school's vision appropriately (Lambersky, 2016). These specific actions to promote self-efficacy closely

reflect a supportive leadership style (Morris et al., 2020).

Turnaround Schools and Self-efficacy

Morale and retention can be challenging in turnaround schools (Scallon et al., 2021). In this

context, Lane et al. (2019) investigated some of the influencing factors of morale and self-efficacy during

the turnaround school process. Turnaround schools often increase policy implementation, which, in

turn, harms teachers' morale and self-efficacy (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020). According to Lane et al.

(2019), six themes portray suffering self-efficacy and teachers' morale in schools undergoing the

turnaround process. These themes include teachers feeling powerless, having too many visits from the administrators, decreasing confidence, demonstrating ineffective instructional practices, increasing stress and burnout, and facilitating poor professional development opportunities (Lane et al., 2019). If principals wish to improve the confidence of their teachers in their pedagogical practices, they must demonstrate caring behaviors toward their teachers (Dunn, 2020). Another effective strategy to increase self-efficacy is to allow autonomy in the classroom (Hargis, 2018). To improve self-efficacy, teachers report that they need more collaboration opportunities (Lane et al., 2019). Collaboration also increases retention rates (Lane et al., 2019). Teachers who report higher self-efficacy also report having higher job satisfaction (Türkoğlu et al., 2017).

Self-efficacy and Academic Achievement

Teachers confident in their teaching abilities also have students with higher academic achievement (Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014). Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy also have students who rate their student satisfaction higher than those with low self-efficacy (Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014). Teachers wishing to increase student satisfaction in their classrooms can demonstrate considerate behaviors (Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014). By recognizing that a significant factor in teacher self-efficacy is student behaviors, principals who support teachers in enforcing student discipline may improve teachers' self-efficacy in their schools (Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014). Acknowledging that students mimic the behaviors of their teachers, highly considerate teachers also have students who demonstrate similar behaviors, leading to compassionate and considerate students (Shen et al., 2015).

Training to increase Self-efficacy

Bosman et al. (2021) recognized the importance of relationship-building in elementary school classrooms. The teachers in the study reported their self-efficacy levels regarding behavior management and emotional support for their students. Students in classrooms without a significant teacher–student

relationship can be labeled as high conflict or highly dependent (Bosman et al., 2021). These students

are often identified as at risk for motivational challenges, behavioral issues, and low academic

achievement (Bosman et al., 2021). This research investigates the achievement outcomes of students

and teachers who received "Teacher–student Interaction Coaching" (Bosman et al., 2021). This coaching

included opportunities for teachers to reflect on their emotions and associate the behavior challenges

and interactions with individual students. The teachers who participated in this study identified students

who struggle to have positive relationships with their teachers (Bosman et al., 2021). The results

indicated that teachers who received appropriate teacher–student interaction coaching significantly

increased positive relationships with their students and reported increased confidence when handling

classroom behaviors and emotionally supporting their students (Bosman et al., 2021).

Addressing Low Morale

Morris et al. (2020) focused on the key behaviors of administrators in secondary schools and

how these behaviors can improve the staff culture. When identifying a school culture, the principal's

behaviors are often linked to the positive culture and the emotional state of the teachers (Morris et al.,

2020). In tandem with the research conducted by Lambersky (2016), the literature indicates that visible

principals have higher morale in their schools and can support teachers more efficiently than those who

are not visible (Morris et al., 2020). To identify this connection, the researcher used pre and post-test

surveys and interviews to identify the main administrative behaviors that contribute to a positive school

culture (Morris et al., 2020). After the pretest, the leadership team organized professional development

where staff-created interventions were implemented to increase appraisal and recognition, participative

decision-making, professional growth, and supportive leadership (Morris et al., 2020). The categories in

which administrative behaviors were selected were closely correlated to Lal 'Arya's (2017) study that

identified supportive and participative leadership. The schools that implemented training in each focus section saw improvement in all sections and increased teachers' morale (Morris et al., 2020).

School principals can increase morale by providing administrative support to teachers (Morris et al., 2020). When increasing teachers' morale, schools can find success by providing teachers with the appropriate recognition. This can be derived from the administration, but peer-to-peer interactions and opportunities to recognize each other's success are crucial in building morale (Morris et al., 2020). Teachers who are recognized for their accomplishments increase morale and confidence in the classroom (Lambersky, 2016). Teachers who are more confident in their teaching abilities have higher job satisfaction and student achievement outcomes (Holzberger et al., 2013). One strategy that has successfully increased this dilemma is allowing teachers to nominate fellow teachers for teacher-of-the-month or similar awards (Morris et al., 2020).

With regard to participative decision-making, the teachers noted that they felt that changes were often made, and the staff would be informed about a change after it had already occurred (Morris et al., 2020). A solution to poor administrative communication skills includes offering opportunities for teachers to see recent changes in a common area such as the teachers' lounge or a teachers' work area (Morris et al., 2020). Administrators with good communication skills engage teachers who feel respected and report higher morale (Hargis, 2018).

Bentley and Rempel (1967) authored another research study to identify the specific reasons behind why teachers' morale was low by creating the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire. This research aimed to identify if receiving teacher feedback and providing this feedback to administrators would increase the morale in the school (Bentley & Rempel, 1967). This study defined morale as "the professional interest and enthusiasm that a person displays toward the achievement of individual and group goals in a given job situation" (Bentley & Rempel, 1967, p. 3). In this study, the authors identified correlations

between teachers' morale and selections on the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire (1967). This is one of the

few studies that enquire, "Can definite and deliberate procedures improve morale?" (Bentley & Rempel,

1967, p. 1). This study is unique as it includes reasons behind high or low school morale and

acknowledges the student achievement aspect of teachers' morale. Bentley and Rempel (1967)

identified the following ten categories that affect teachers' morale: (1) teacher rapport with the

principal, (2) satisfaction with teaching, (3) rapport among teachers, (4) teacher salary, (5) teacher load,

(6) curriculum issues, (7) teacher status, (8) community support of education, (9) school facilities and

services, and (10) community pressures. This study identified multiple factors influencing morale.

However, due to a lack of funding, the principals could not give the participating teachers the necessary

training after identifying morale issues (Bentley & Rempel, 1967). The principals who simply identified

issues but did not follow through with solution implementation perceived decreased morale (Bentley &

Rempel, 1967). However, the principals who addressed low morale issues regardless of the funding saw

a significant increase (Bentley & Rempel, 1967).

Conclusion

Themes

The research had multiple themes, including accountability policies, autonomy, self-efficacy, and

leadership styles. The four themes can work together to promote teachers' high morale in schools. The

previous literature review outlines the importance of improving morale, as it also increases student

achievement, teacher retention, and positive relationships. Based on the literature, the researcher can

identify a leadership style that promotes the themes that guide schools to improve teachers' morale.

The common theme in the research was that administrators who empower their staff and recognize

their success perceive the most significant increase in morale from their teachers (Malik, 2021).

Gaps in Literature

Although some research has been conducted regarding specific strategies to improve morale, there is a significant gap in the research addressing how significantly each administrative practice influences teachers' morale. Most studies explain the factors that cause morale to be at a certain level. However, they disregard the opportunity to identify teachers' perceptions of which specific administrative behavior impacts their morale the most. Bentley and Rempel (1967) created the "Purdue Teacher Opinionaire" to assess teachers' morale but were unsuccessful in supporting their participants to follow through in the experiment (Bentley & Rempel, 1967). Specific leadership behaviors can be identified to promote a positive culture and climate in schools by investigating the relationship between teachers' perceptions of their administrator's leadership practices and their level of morale.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction and Statement of Purpose

Teachers face the challenge of educating students in environments where stress levels are high and morale is low (Nolan & Stitzlein, 2011). In recent times, teachers' morale has plummeted nationwide as 85 percent of participating teachers reported in a 2021 Ed Weekly survey that their morale was lower in 2021 than in the previous three years (Hill, 2021; Reimers, 2022). When teachers report low morale, student achievement suffers, teachers' burnout increases, and the stress levels of teachers and students increase (Lane et al., 2019; Lumsden, 1998; Shen et al., 2015).

Generally, teachers' morale in the elementary schools is low. Teachers' low morale often leads to burnout, lack of positive relationships, lower student achievement outcomes, decreased levels of job satisfaction, and overall diminishing school climate and culture (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020; Lumsden, 1998; Wagner & French, 2010). This research aimed to identify how school administrators can better support their faculty to improve morale by investigating the relationship between teachers' perceptions of their principals' administrative practices and teachers' morale. The definition of "morale" used in this study has been derived from the research conducted by Bentley and Rempel (1963) as individuals' enthusiasm toward achieving a goal in their working environment. This definition was coined based on Child's (1941) research acknowledging that morale is derived from the factors in an individual's life that encourage them to increase their efforts to effectively benefit a group in accomplishing their goals. This study addressed the following three research questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of their morale level in the workplace?

2. Which administrative leadership practices do elementary teachers identify as having the greatest impact on teachers' morale?

3. How does teachers' perception of the capability of their school principal to execute the

listed administrative practices affect their teachers' morale?

By identifying teachers' perspectives in Southern Indiana, administrators can better understand

their role in improving the teachers' morale and utilize the information to promote positive

relationships, student achievement outcomes, and culture and climate in elementary schools.

Research Design

The research method for this quantitative study is a survey. This study aimed to identify if

selections to each survey question correlate to a morale level amongst teachers. The survey used in this

study measures teachers' perceptions of administrative practices and how well each administrator

performs and implements these practices (See Appendix A).

The survey used in this research is based on Delaney's (1991) research, Teacher Perceptions of

the Effect of Administrative Practices on Teachers' Morale in Newfoundland and Labrador Schools. The

modified version of this survey is addressed throughout this study as the "Teacher Perception of

Administrative Practices" survey. Delaney (1991) used the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire, developed by

Bentley and Rempel (1967), as a reference for this survey. The Teacher Perceptions of Administrative

Practices survey used Bentley and Rempel's (1967) and Delaney's (1991) research to create the final

survey used in this study. The survey was sent electronically through email, and data was collected using

the survey tool, Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT). This survey allowed administrators to see specific areas

of growth and understand where to begin with respect to the basic implementation of strategies. SPSS

(Version 27) was utilized for analyzing the data collected from each survey.

Instrumentation

The survey used in this study was created using Delaney's (1991) and Bentley and Rempel's

(1967) research as a reference and modifying each survey used in the respective studies. The Teacher

Perception of Administrative Practices survey focuses on school principals' administrative practices and surveys teachers' perceptions of how these behaviors affect teachers' morale. This survey is separated into six sections. Each section is identified with the letter A-F. Embedded within these sections are questions that fall into three categories of administrative behaviors. The three categories include the principal's personality, policies, and competency.

Section A of the survey collects data on the participants' demographic information. The information collected in this section includes the gender of the participant, years of teaching experience, the total student enrollment of the school the teacher is employed at, the primary grades that the teacher has taught in the last five years, and the percentage of students who receive free and reduced meals in their school. Modifications were made to this section for question one, allowing the participant to choose a non-binary option or a prefer not to answer option, along with an opportunity to choose between men and women to ensure that all prospective participants can answer the question honestly. Other modifications to Section A include adding questions asking the participants about the enrollment of the school they are employed in and the percentage of students receiving free or reduced meals in the school. These questions were added to identify if total student enrollment or socioeconomic status of students can be a factor in administrative practices or teachers' morale.

Section B of the Teacher Perception of Administrative Practices survey was omitted. Section B asks participants to identify the greatest contributing factor regarding teachers' morale. The focus of this study was to identify how teachers' perceptions of administrative practices impact teachers' morale. As the factors provided in Section B are items such as salary or facilities, these are not items that the school administrator has control over. Thus, this information is not relevant to this study.

Section C of the survey lists 16 administrative practices. This section asks the participants their perspectives on how each administrative practice affects teachers' morale. The participants responded

to each question with Likert-type scale responses. The possible selections on the Likert-type scale for

Section C range from "No effect" to "very high effect." This section allows the researcher to identify

each administrative practice's perceived impact on teachers' morale. Each question in Section C also

correlates to one of the three categories of administrative qualities. These behaviors include the

principals' personalities, policies, and competencies. Questions 1,2,6, and 16 in Section C correspond to

the principals' personalities. Questions 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, and 15 of Section C correspond to their

principal's policies. Questions 3, 5,7, and 12 of Section C correspond to the principals' competency. The

collected data on these three categories identified the teachers' perception of principal qualities, which

impact teachers' morale. In the creation of the Teacher Perception of Administrative Practices survey,

14 questions were eliminated or combined based on the face validity tests, which included four

Southern Indiana teachers and one university instructor in teacher education. All provided feedback was

taken into consideration when developing the final survey.

Table 1

Questions Related to School Administrators' Personalities

School Administrators' Personalities
Practice 1. The work of the individual teacher is appreciated and commended by the principal.
Practice 2. The principal is fair and consistent in their dealings with teachers.
Practice 6. The principal listens to teachers' concerns and is considerate and courteous of the teachers when resolving such concerns.
Practice 16. The principal is courteous and considerate of students, parents, and the community.

Table 2

Questions Related to School Administrators' Policies

School Administrators' Policies

Practice 4. The principal ensures there is meaningful communication between teachers and the administration.

Practice 8. The principal supports teachers in enforcing student discipline.

Practice 9. The principal ensures that the working conditions, including appropriate resources, are sufficient for a successful classroom.

Practice 10. The principal is cooperative with teachers and assists them whenever possible.

Practice 11. The principal takes the teachers' professional opinions into consideration when creating or implementing new policies.

Practice 13. The principal ensures that the teachers have relief from pupil contact in their teaching schedule to allow for planning or other job-related tasks.

Practice 14. The principal ensures that the class size is appropriate for the subject/grade level being taught.

Practice 15. The principal welcomes constructive criticism of administrative policies by teachers.

Table 3

Questions Related to School Administrators' Competencies

School Administrators' Competencies

Practice 3. The principal understands and recognizes good teaching practices.

Practice 5. The principal shows interest and is engaged with various grade levels and/or departments.

Practice 7. The principal makes effective use of teachers' capacity and talent regarding teaching assignments.

Practice 12. The principal runs a well-organized school with formulated policies.

Section D of the survey has the same administrative behaviors as Section C. Herein, the participants again answered with Likert-scale type responses. The difference between Sections C and D is that while section C asked which administrative behaviors most impact teachers' morale, Section D asked the participants how well their principal perform each practice. The Likert-scale type responses in Section D range from "failing" to "excellent."

Section E also asked participants to provide a Likert-scale response to one question. This question asked the participants their perceived feelings about their morale in the workplace. The participants chose five options—very low, low, medium, high, or very high. This section allowed the researcher to identify the participants' morale and compare it to their responses in Section D.

Section F of the survey allows participants to include any administrative practices not listed in the survey that impacts teachers' morale. Although Section F does not directly correlate to one of the three research questions, this question has identified other ways to improve teachers' morale based on teachers' perceptions of administrative practices. The following chapters have recorded and explained the results of this question and can provide necessary information for future research.

Research Procedures

Participants

The intended population of this study is K-6 public school teachers in Southern Indiana. This population was chosen to allow enough participants to collect a large sample size and minimize the region being surveyed. Keeping this study contained to Southern Indiana public schools has allowed for more specific morale identifiers because each school is under similar requirements from the Indiana Department of Education. If the study extended to private schools or varied amongst states, then these requirements could be factors pertaining to teachers' morale. Southern Indiana schools also vary in regards to socioeconomic class. Southern Indiana school corporations have schools with 94 percent of

students who receive free or reduced-priced meals, whereas other schools' enrollment consists of only 15 percent of students receiving free or reduced-priced meals. Southern Indiana school corporations also vary in urban and rural settings. The researcher collected demographic information from each participant.

There are four multiple-choice options for the participants' gender—male, female, non-binary, and choose not to answer. To collect data to identify the total student enrollment of each participant's school, six options range from 0 to 199 total student enrollment to greater than 1000 students enrolled. The participants who differed in the grades they have primarily taught in the last five years chose one of seven options ranging from K-6 grade. The participants are also diverse in years of teaching experience. These participants typed the completed years of teaching experience into the answer key. The participants were also asked to provide the percentage of students in their school receiving free or reduced meals. They were given the following three choices: 0–33, 34–66, and 67–100 percent.

The survey and recruitment letter were sent to 1,067 K-6 teachers across 16 Southern Indiana school corporations. The teachers were employed at one of the 64 schools in Southern Indiana. Brooks and Yahuda (2008) indicated that recruits answer surveys with a 35.7 percent response rate with a standard deviation of 18.8 percent. Due to the high levels of teachers' burnout and stress, it was anticipated that teachers might see this survey as adding another responsibility or task to their already full plate. Thus, it was anticipated that 18 percent of recruits would participate in this research (Lane et al., 2019). After the data collection process, 9.6 percent of prospective participants equaled 102 participants.

In this research, non-full-time licensed teachers were excluded from participation. The exclusion of part-time teaching staff or paraprofessionals was necessary as these employees often push into classes instead of persisting with the same class for most of the school day. In instances where teachers

work with many different groups of students on a given day, such as related arts or resource periods, there are fewer opportunities to build classroom relationships, affecting the factors impacting teachers' morale and impeding the connection between teachers' morale and student achievement (Vandenbroucke et al., 2018). Middle and high school teachers were also excluded from this research, as traditionally these teachers have a rotation of students instead of the same students for most of the school day.

In scenarios where a school hosts grades K-8, only the K-6 teachers were surveyed. The exclusion of seventh to eighth-grade teachers in these schools is due to the level of training the teachers may have received during their licensure program. Teachers who met the requirements for licensure in elementary education develop the skills necessary to teach grades K-6, indicating that training would be different for teachers in the middle school setting (ETS Praxis, 2022). If the sixth-grade teachers were employees at grades 6-8 schools, they were also excluded as they are recognized as middle schools rather than elementary schools in the State of Indiana (Indiana Department of Education, 2022).

Data Collection

The recruitment letter and survey for data collection were sent four times to the 1,067 K-6 teachers in Southern Indiana. The recruitment letter and survey dates were August 5, 2022, August 15, 2022, August 29, 2022, and September 5, 2022. Data collection was completed on September 11, 2022. The participants' emails were collected from each Southern Indiana school corporation's public school website. Teachers received this survey through an email and participated through the survey tool, Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT). To further investigate the topic, demographic data was also collected from all participants.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to collect appropriate data to identify teachers' perception of their school administrators' leadership practices and their effects on teachers' morale. The researcher determined which leadership practices affect teachers' morale and how each practice affects this morale by utilizing the four research questions and identifying the appropriate statistical tests through SPSS (Version 27). The results of each research question were reported based on the collected demographic information, including the participants' gender, years of teaching experience, enrollment at the school they are employed, the primary grade that the participant has taught in the previous five years, and the percent of students in their school that receive free or reduced priced meals. This study's data analysis includes findings on teachers' morale regarding demographic information, teachers' perceptions of leadership practices, and their principals' ability to execute each practice.

RQ1. What are teachers' perceptions of their morale level in the workplace?

Research question 1 was used to identify the morale level of each participant. This data was collected in Section E of the survey, which asked participants to select the response that best correlates to their morale, ranging from very low to very high. A frequency table was run to identify the morale level of the participants. The frequency table reported how many participants selected each morale level. The participants' responses were placed into 1 of 5 groups used in the data collection process for research question 3. The five groups include very low, low, medium, high, and very high. After data collection was completed, the researcher combined groups "low" and "very low" to create one "low" category. The researcher also combined groups "high" and "very high" to create one category labeled as "high." Combining these groups allowed for equal group sizes for data analysis. The mean scores from research question 1 were also reported based on the demographic information collected from each participant. Teachers' perception of their morale was categorized by the participants' gender, years of teaching experience, the total student enrollment of the school the teacher is employed at, the primary

grades that the teacher has taught in the last five years, and the percentage of students who receive

free and reduced meals in their schools.

RQ2. Which administrative leadership practices do elementary teachers identify as having the

greatest impact on teachers' morale?

Research question 2 was used to report the administrative practices identified as having the

greatest impact on teachers' morale in Southern Indiana elementary schools. The data was collected

from Section C of the Teacher Perception of Administrative Practices Survey. In this section, the

participants answered 16 Likert-scale questions regarding leadership practices and the participants'

perception of how impactful each practice is to the teachers' morale. This information was collected by

identifying the mean response, ranging from no effect, little effect, moderate effect, high effect, and

very high effect, for each of the 16 questions in Section C. To identify the mean of each response, the

researcher quantified each response to correspond to a number. The responses ranged from no effect

to very high effect and had a value ranging from 1 to 5. After the results were derived for all

participants, a separate result was found by running the same tests for each demographic group. These

demographic groups include the participants' gender, years of teaching experience, the total student

enrollment of the school the teacher is employed at, the primary grades that the teacher has taught in

the last five years, and the percentage of students who receive free and reduced priced meals in their

school.

RQ3. How does teachers' perception of the capability of their school principal to execute the listed

administrative practices affect their teachers' morale?

Research question 3 compares the teachers' perception of their school principal's ability to

execute each administrative practice and their morale level. The data for research question 3 was

collected using the 16 questions in Section D, which ask the participants to answer how well each

administrative practice is performed in the school they are employed, ranging from failing, needs improvement, satisfactory, good, and excellent. The responses from Section D were also categorized into the three qualities of school principals—the principals' policies, competency, and personality. The responses for each category were quantified to determine the mean response of the perception of how well the participant's school principal executes each administrative practice related to each quality. The responses in Section D were then compared to the results of Section E of the survey, asking the participants to rate their morale level ranging from very low, low, medium, high, and very high. To report this data, three separate one-way ANOVA tests were run. The independent variables for these tests were the mean scores for administrative qualities, whereas the dependent variable was the levels of morale that each participant had selected. After data collection, this test reported if there are statistical differences amongst morale groups in relation to teachers' perception of how well their administrator executes each administrative practice.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Due to the number of prospective participants, the topic being covered, and the ability to collect responses anonymously, it has been assumed that this study's results are valid and reliable. The topic in this study, teachers' morale, is associated with no risks for the participants beyond everyday life. Due to the lack of risks in this study, it has been assumed that the participants have answered their survey honestly, resulting in the collection of valid data.

Limitations

There are multiple limitations in this study. One of the limitations is the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased stress, workload, burnout, and decreased morale for teachers across the United States (Reimers, 2022). Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools have

implemented new strategies to help students learn, increasing school personnel's anxiety (Pressley, 2021). The increase in teacher stress, anxiety, and health-related factors regarding the COVID-19 pandemic may have limited the scope of this study.

This study was performed at the beginning of the 2022–2023 school year. This may have been a limitation to the study as teachers were busy with beginning-of-the-year activities and ensuring that their school year gets off to a strong start. Due to the timing, teachers may have skipped the survey or disregarded the recruitment letter while prioritizing their classroom activities over completing the survey.

Scope

This study focused on the factors controllable by the school administrators regarding teachers' morale. A sustained focus on these factors can allow school administrators to implement strategies to improve teachers' morale. Elementary school teachers were the studied population as teachers with high morale were identified to have a greater impact on students when they remained in their class for most of a school day rather than a class rotation, which would conventionally be seen in a middle school or high school setting (Vandenbroucke et al., 2018).

Delimitations

Based on the longevity of the issue regarding teachers' morale, the researcher did not include the COVID-19 pandemic in this research. This research pertains to the areas of teachers' morale that school administrators can control. As the COVID-19 pandemic is an external factor that affects schools, it was excluded as a topic for this study.

While selecting the school corporations to participate in this study, the researcher opted to keep the research secluded to public schools in Southern Indiana. These districts were chosen due to their

wide range of demographics and socioeconomic statuses. Opting to exclude all private schools from this

study allowed the researcher to ensure that all participating schools are under similar state regulations.

Chapter 4: Results

Analysis of Date and Statements of the Findings

This chapter outlines the results of the Teacher Perception of Administrative Practices survey. The survey and recruitment letter were sent to 1,067 potential participants between August 4 and September 11, 2022. The responses to this survey were collected from 102 K-6 public school teachers in Southern Indiana. In total, 20 participants stopped populating the survey after providing demographic information. This data was omitted as the participants did not complete the data collection process for the questions regarding their morale or perceptions of their administrators' practices. In total, 82 participants completed the survey beyond the demographic information. Section E of the survey instructs the participants to score their perceived morale level. In total, 76 participants answered this question. Only the participants who answered this question had their data included for research questions 1 and 3, which compare the scores from previous survey sections to their morale level. The participants who did not answer this question had their responses omitted from these sections. In some cases, questions were skipped or left unanswered. All missing data were omitted when analyzing the data for each question. This chapter reports the data collected for the three research questions:

RQ1. What are teachers' perceptions of their morale level in the workplace?

RQ2. Which administrative leadership practices do elementary teachers identify as having the greatest impact on teachers' morale?

RQ3. How does teachers' perception of the capability of their school principal to execute the listed administrative practices affect their teachers' morale?

The data is organized, so the three research questions should be discussed in sequential order.

Research Question 1

Morale Levels

This section reports the findings for research question 1, "What are teachers' perceptions of their morale level in the workplace?" In this study, teachers' morale was defined using Bentley and Rempel's (1963) research as the professional interest and enthusiasm a person displays toward achieving individual and group goals in a job situation (Bentley & Rempel, 1963). In this research, morale was divided into five categories. The participants were asked to rank their level of teachers' morale on a Likert Scale ranging from very low, low, medium, high, and very high. Among the 102 participants in this study, 76 responded to the question, "What do you perceive to be your level of teachers' morale?"

Table 4

Frequency of Participants' Morale Ranking

Morale Group	*F*	%	Cumulative %
Very Low	10	13.2	13.2
Low	18	23.7	36.8
Medium	25	32.9	69.7
High	19	25.0	94.7
Very High	4	5.3	100.0
	N = 76	100.0	

An examination of the responses collected in this table indicates that 36.8 percent of participants feel their morale is either low or very low, 32.9 percent of participants feel that their morale falls in the medium category, whereas 30.3 percent ranked their morale as high or very high. The data was combined to create three morale categories for similar-sized grouping—low, medium, and high. To

create these groups, the researcher combined very low and low responses. The participants ranked their

morale as "medium" in the "medium" category. The respondents identified as "high" and "very high"

were also combined. Each category was quantified to provide a mean response for each morale

category. A very low or low ranking was represented by a score of 1. A medium ranking was assigned a

score of 2. The participants who ranked their morale as high or very high were provided a score of 3.

Table 5

Frequency of Modified Morale Groups

Morale Group	F	%	Cumulative %
Low	28	36.8	36.8
Moderate	25	32.9	69.7
High	23	30.3	100.0
	N = 76	100	

Data collection allowed the researcher to identify data trends based on demographic

information. The perceived level of teachers' morale was collected and divided into five demographic

categories—the participants' gender, years of teaching experience, total student enrollment at the

school the participant is employed at, the grade that the participant has primarily taught in the past five

school years, and the socioeconomic status of the school based on the percentage of students who

receive free and/or reduced priced meals. Each morale response was quantified to ascertain the mean

response for each demographic category.

Table 6

Mean Morale Scores by Gender

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	2.30	10	.82
Female	1.89	65	.81
Total	1.95	75	.82

This table shows that on a three-point scale, male K-6 teachers, on average, have a morale ranking of 2.3. This ranking indicates that male participants have a perceived morale level that falls between medium and high. On average, female participants ranked their morale between low and medium.

Table 7

Mean Morale Ranking by Experience Level

Experience Group	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Little Experience	2.04	24	.75
Moderate Experience	1.91	23	.79
High Experience	1.87	29	.92
Total	1.93	76	.82

This table shows the mean morale rates amongst K-6 public school teachers in Southern Indiana with varying years of teaching experience. In total, 76 participants identified the years of teaching experience they had completed. To maintain a common group size, participants completed 1–7 years of teaching were listed in the "little experience" category. On the other hand, participants with 8–19 years

of teaching experience were listed in the "moderate experience" category. The participants with 20–35

years of teaching experience were labeled "highly experienced." The comparison of means from this

table indicates that teachers with seven or fewer years of experience have the highest morale. The

participants with completed 8–19 years of teaching experience were categorized in the middle morale

group, whereas the most experienced teachers who had accumulated 20–35 years of teaching

experience were identified as having the lowest morale of the three experience groups.

Table 8

Mean Morale Score by Student Enrollment

Student Enrollment	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0–199	2.00	1	.00
200–399	1.73	26	.83
400–599	1.96	28	.84
600–799	2.08	12	.90
800–999	2.25	8	.71
Greater than 1,000	2.00	1	.00
Total	1.93	76	.82

Table 9

Mean Morale Score by Grade Level Taught

Grade Taught	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Kindergarten	1.91	11	.83
First Grade	2.09	11	.94
Second Grade	1.92	12	.90

Grade Taught	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Third Grade	2.08	13	.76
Fourth Grade	1.60	10	.84
Fifth Grade	1.85	13	.80
Sixth Grade	2.00	5	.71
Total	1.92	75	.82

The total student enrollment at a school where the teacher is employed was also calculated to identify if this could affect teachers' morale. In comparing the mean responses amongst student enrollment and teachers' morale, it was found that schools with student enrollment between 800–999 have teachers with the highest ranking of teachers' morale.

While identifying which grade level had teachers with the highest morale, participants were allowed to select the grade they had primarily taught in the last five years. An examination of the data for this question indicates that teachers who teach first grade have the highest morale with a mean score of 2.09, which places third-grade teachers just above a medium morale ranking, whereas the lowest morale group includes fourth-grade teachers with a mean morale score of 1.6, indicating a morale score between low and medium. The data in Table 9 does indicate different morale levels by each grade level, but there are no obvious trends regarding teachers' morale and grade level taught.

Table 10

Mean Morale Score by Free and Reduced Priced Meals' Percentages

Students receiving Free/Reduced-priced Meals	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0%–25%	1.75	12	.87
26%–50%	2.00	18	.91

Students receiving Free/Reduced-priced Meals	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
51%–75%	1.79	14	.80
76%–100%	2.03	32	.78
Total	1.93	76	.82

This table shows the mean morale scores amongst schools with varying percentages of students who qualify for free and/or reduced meals based on students' socioeconomic status. An examination of this table reveals that the highest morale scores belong to the teachers who work in schools, with 76–100 percent of its students receiving free or reduced meals. Teachers who work in schools with the lowest socioeconomic rankings have, on average, just above a medium morale ranking. The lowest morale group belongs to the schools with 0–25 percent of their students who qualify for free or reduced meal prices through the school. The teachers who participated from the highest socio-economic standing had an average morale ranking between low and medium morale. Although Table 10 indicates different morale levels when comparing the socioeconomic status of the schools, there are no obvious trends in this report.

Research Question 2

Administrative Practices

This section reports the findings associated with research question 2, "Which administrative leadership practices do elementary teachers identify as having the greatest impact on teachers' morale?" Herein, the participants were asked to answer 16 Likert-type questions that listed administrative practices and how the participant perceived each practice to impact teachers' morale, ranging from "no effect" to "very high effect." Each response was quantified to report a mean score for

each practice. The responses deemed "no effect" received a score of 1, whereas the responses that read

"very high effect" received a score of 5. The mean score for each question was reported, and a separate

score was collected for each demographic group. Each practice in this section was labeled by order of

practices listed on the survey (See Appendix F).

Table 11

Perceived Impact of Administrative Practice on Teachers' Morale

Administrative Practice	N	Mean
Statement 1	80	4.11
Statement 2	82	4.33
Statement 3	82	4.34
Statement 4	82	4.43
Statement 5	81	4.23
Statement 6	82	4.59
Statement 7	81	4.49
Statement 8	82	4.60
Statement 9	82	4.34
Statement 10	82	4.38
Statement 11	82	4.41
Statement 12	80	4.29
Statement 13	81	4.48
Statement 14	81	4.47
Statement 15	81	4.06
Statement 16	81	4.28

The responses in this table identify how each administrative practice impacts teachers' morale from the perspective of K-6 public school teachers in Southern Indiana. Based on this data, the participating teachers' perception of administrative practice indicated that principals supporting teachers in enforcing student discipline had the greatest impact on teachers' morale. The response for this administrative behavior accumulated a mean score of 4.60. The administrative practice that had the least impact on teachers' morale is principals who welcome teachers' constructive criticism of their administrative policies. This administrative practice had a mean score of 4.06. According to the data in this table, each of the 16 administrative practices falls between high and very high effects.

Table 12

Perceived Impact of Administrative Practice by Gender

Administrative Practice	N Female	Mean Female	N Male	Mean Male
Statement 1	69	4.13	10	4.10
Statement 2	71	4.34	10	4.30
Statement 3	71	4.35	10	4.20
Statement 4	71	4.52	10	4.00
Statement 5	71	4.27	10	4.00
Statement 6	70	4.56	10	4.70
Statement 7	71	4.19	10	4.20
Statement 8	70	4.62	10	4.80
Statement 9	71	4.39	10	4.20
Statement 10	71	4.39	10	4.30
Statement 11	71	4.42	10	4.50
Statement 12	69	4.32	10	4.10

Statement 13	70	4.53	10	4.30
Statement 14	70	4.49	10	4.40
Statement 15	70	4.11	10	3.80
Statement 16	70	4.30	10	4.10

By examining the impact of administrative practices on demographic groups, the data suggest that female participants feel that principals who support teachers in enforcing student discipline have the biggest impact on teachers' morale, with a mean score of 4.62. The female participants also identified that principals who welcome constructive criticism had the lowest impact on teachers' morale, with a mean score of 4.11.

The male participants identified that the most impactful administrative practice on morale was principals who support teachers in enforcing student discipline. This administrative practice collected a mean score of 4.80 from the male participants. According to male participants, the weakest administrative practice impacting teachers' morale was principals who welcome constructive criticism of the administrative policies. This administrative practice collected a mean score of 3.80 from the male participants.

In each test run, male and female participants felt that principals who support teachers in enforcing student discipline have the highest impact on teachers' morale, whereas principals who welcome constructive criticism of administrative policies have the weakest impact on teachers' morale. While comparing the data from the male and female participants, the most striking differences among the responses appear in statement 4. This statement refers to "meaningful communication between the teachers and the administration." The male participants responded with a mean score of 4.00, whereas

the female participants responded with a mean score of 4.52. The 0.52 difference in responses was the

greatest in morale identifiers amongst genders.

Table 13

Administrative Practices' Perceived Impact on Teachers' Morale by Teacher Experience

Administrative Practice	N Little Experience	Mean Little Experience	N Moderate Experience	Mean Moderate Experience	N High Experience	Mean High Experience
Statement 1	26	4.19	24	3.79	30	4.11
Statement 2	26	4.38	25	4.20	31	4.33
Statement 3	26	4.31	25	4.12	31	4.34
Statement 4	26	4.38	24	4.36	31	4.43
Statement 5	26	4.19	25	4.17	31	4.23
Statement 6	26	4.69	25	4.44	31	4.59
Statement 7	25	4.08	25	4.04	31	4.19
Statement 8	26	4.58	25	4.44	31	4.60
Statement 9	26	4.31	25	4.36	31	4.34
Statement 10	26	4.42	25	4.20	31	4.38
Statement 11	26	4.42	25	4.28	31	4.41
Statement 12	26	4.27	25	4.12	29	4.29
Statement 13	26	4.35	25	4.44	30	4.48
Statement 14	26	4.50	25	4.44	30	4.47
Statement 15	26	4.04	25	3.80	30	4.06
Statement 16	26	4.31	25	4.04	30	4.28

Table 13 shows how K-6 public school teachers in Southern Indiana perceive each administrative practice to impact teachers' morale based on their teaching experience. The participants with one to seven years of teaching experience identified that the administrative practice of welcoming teachers' constructive criticism of administrative policies had the lowest impact on teachers' morale. The administrative practice collected a mean score of 4.04, placing it just above having a high effect. Teachers with one to seven years of experience perceived that principals who listen to teachers' concerns and are considerate and courteous of teachers when resolving such concerns have the highest impact on teachers' morale, with a mean score of 4.69.

The participants in the moderate experience group identified that the least impactful administrative practice for teachers with 8–19 years of teaching experience was principals who appreciate and commend the teacher's work, with a mean score of 3.79. This ranking indicates that appreciating and commending the teachers' work as principals affects teachers' morale between moderate and high. The moderate experience group also identified four administrative practices with the highest impact on teachers' morale. The principals who listen to teachers' concerns and are considerate and courteous of teachers while resolving such concerns, principals who support teachers in enforcing student discipline, principals who ensure that teachers have relief from pupil contact during their teaching schedule to allow for planning or other job-related tasks, and principals who strive to ensure that class sizes are appropriate for the specific subject and grade level being taught had the highest mean score of 4.44. A 4.44 mean score falls between a high effect and a very high effect regarding teachers' morale.

The participants in the high-experience group had accumulated 20–35 years of teaching experience. These participants perceived that the administrative practice with the lowest impact on teachers' morale was principals who welcome constructive criticism of administrative policies by

teachers. The high-experience group collected a mean score of 4.06 for this administrative practice. The

high experience group also perceived the greatest administrative practice to impact teachers' morale

was principals' support of teachers in enforcing student discipline.

Table 14

Administrative Practices' Perceived Impact on Teachers' Morale by Student Enrollment

Administrative Practice	N 0–399	0–399 Mean	N 400–599	400–599 Mean	N Greater than 599	Greater than 599 Mean
Statement 1	28	4.21	29	4.00	23	4.13
Statement 2	29	4.38	30	4.23	23	4.39
Statement 3	29	4.38	30	4.33	23	4.30
Statement 4	29	4.59	30	4.20	23	4.52
Statement 5	28	4.39	30	4.17	23	4.13
Statement 6	29	4.76	30	4.33	23	4.70
Statement 7	29	4.21	30	4.07	22	4.32
Statement 8	29	4.72	30	4.37	23	4.74
Statement 9	29	4.45	30	4.07	23	4.57

Administrative Practice	N 0–399	0–399 Mean	N 400–599	400–599 Mean	N Greater than 599	Greater than 599 Mean
Statement 10	29	4.52	28	4.20	23	4.43
Statement 11	29	4.62	29	4.23	23	4.39
Statement 12	29	4.38	29	4.29	23	4.17
Statement 13	29	4.66	29	4.24	23	4.57
Statement 14	29	4.62	29	4.28	23	4.52
Statement 15	29	4.24	29	4.00	23	3.91
Statement 16	29	4.52	29	4.24	23	4.04

This data indicates how each participant perceived each administrative practice's impact on teachers' morale based on the total student enrollment in the school where they are employed. To create similar-sized groupings, the participants with a total student enrollment of fewer than 399 students were combined into the same group. Schools with a total student enrollment of between 400–599 were placed in the same group, and participants whose schools had an enrollment of more than 599 students were combined to create one group.

A review of the data from this table indicates that the schools with an enrollment of fewer than 399 students perceived that showing appreciation to the teachers and principals who consider the

teachers' talents when assigning teaching assignments have the smallest impact on teachers' morale.

This group also perceived that principals who listen to teachers' concerns and are considerate and

courteous of teachers when resolving these concerns had the greatest impact on teachers' morale.

Teachers with a total student enrollment of 400–599 students in their schools had slightly

different results than those with smaller student enrollments. The perception of the teachers who fall

into this category acquiesces that the least effective leadership practice when it comes to impacting

teachers' morale is principals who show appreciation to the teachers. However, they also perceived that

principals who welcome constructive criticism of administrative policies by teachers had an equally small

impact. This group also perceived that the leadership practice with the greatest impact on teachers'

morale is principals who support teachers in enforcing classroom discipline.

The participants in schools with a total student enrollment of more than 599 students perceived

the administrative practice that has the smallest impact on teachers' morale was principals who allow

teachers' criticism of administrative policies. The data also shows that this group perceives that the

administrative practice of supporting teachers in enforcing classroom discipline had the greatest impact

on teachers' morale. This is the same factor that the middle enrollment group identified as having the

greatest impact on teachers' morale.

Table 15

Administrative Practices' Perceived Impact on Teachers' Morale by Primary Grade Taught

Administrative Practice	K	1	2	3	4	5	6
Statement 1	3.92	4.08	4.33	4.08	4.20	4.07	4.00
Statement 2	4.17	4.46	4.50	4.31	4.30	4.27	4.33
Statement 3	4.33	4.38	4.67	4.23	4.00	4.33	4.50

Administrative Practice	K	1	2	3	4	5	6
Statement 4	4.33	4.62	4.67	4.38	4.20	4.20	4.83
Statement 5	4.08	4.46	4.58	4.08	4.10	4.20	3.83
Statement 6	4.42	4.54	4.67	4.77	4.40	4.67	4.67
Statement 7	4.08	4.08	4.42	4.15	4.00	4.13	4.67
Statement 8	4.33	4.46	4.75	4.77	4.60	4.53	4.83
Statement 9	4.42	4.23	4.67	4.31	4.00	4.27	4.67
Statement 10	4.17	4.31	4.67	4.54	4.20	4.27	4.67
Statement 11	4.42	4.46	4.50	4.69	4.10	4.13	4.67
Statement 12	4.33	4.15	4.50	4.54	3.89	4.14	4.33
Statement 13	4.42	4.46	4.33	4.77	4.44	4.33	4.83
Statement 14	4.33	4.46	4.50	4.54	4.22	4.53	4.83
Statement 15	4.08	4.00	4.33	3.92	3.89	3.87	4.67
Statement 16	4.08	4.31	4.67	4.15	4.0	4.40	4.33

This table reports the results of teachers' perception of how administrative practices impact teachers' morale in regard to the grade level that each participant primarily taught in the last five years. The reports show that there are similarities and differences across grade levels. In case of participants who primarily taught kindergarten in the past five years (N = 12), the administrative practice that impacts teachers' morale the least is principals who show appreciation for the teachers and commend their work. The perception of the administrative practices with the greatest impact on teachers' morale by kindergarten teachers is principals who ensure that the teachers have relief from pupil contact to allow for the completion of school-related tasks, principals who consider the teachers' professional

opinions when developing policies, principals who ensure that teachers have the appropriate resources to have a successful classroom, and principals who listen to teachers' concerns and are considerate of the teachers when resolving such concerns.

First-grade teachers who participated in this study (N = 13) perceive that the administrative practice with the smallest impact on teachers' morale is principals who allow teachers' constructive criticism of administrative policies. The first-grade teachers perceived that the administrative practice with the greatest impact on teachers' morale was principals with effective and meaningful communication with the teaching staff.

The participants in this study who primarily taught second grade in the last five years (N = 12) perceive the administrative practice with the smallest impact on teachers' morale to be principals who allow teachers' constructive criticism of administrative policies, principals who ensure that teachers have relief from pupil contact to complete job-related tasks, and principals who commend and show appreciation to teachers for their work. The participants in this group also identified that principals who support teachers in enforcing classroom discipline have the strongest impact on teachers' morale.

The participants who primarily taught third grade in the last five years (N = 13) perceive that the least impactful administrative practice is principals who allow teachers' constructive criticism of administrative policies. The participants in the group also felt that the administrative practice with the greatest impact on teachers' morale was principals who listen to teachers' concerns and are considerate when resolving those concerns and principals who support teachers in enforcing classroom discipline.

The participants who primarily taught fourth grade in the last five years (N = 10) perceive that the administrative practices with the smallest impact on teachers' morale are principals who run a well-organized school with formulated policies and principals who allow teachers' constructive criticism of

administrative policies. This group perceives that the administrative practice that has the greatest

impact on teachers' morale is principals who support teachers in enforcing student discipline.

The participants who primarily taught fifth grade in the last five years (N = 15) perceive that the

administrative practice with the smallest impact on teachers' morale is principals who allow teachers'

constructive criticism of administrative policies. The administrative practices this group perceives to

have the greatest impact on teachers' morale are principals who listen to teachers' concerns and are

considerate when resolving such concerns.

The participants who primarily taught sixth grade over the last five years (N = 6) perceive that

the administrative practice with the smallest impact on teachers' morale is principals who show interest

in various grade levels and departments. This group perceives that the administrative practices with the

greatest impact on teachers' morale are principals who engage in meaningful communication with the

teachers, the principals who support the teachers in enforcing classroom discipline, the principals who

ensure that the teacher has relief from pupil contact in their teaching schedule to complete job-related

tasks, and the principal who ensure that the classes are the appropriate size for the grade level and the

content.

Table 16

Administrative Practices' Perceived Impact on Teachers' Morale by Students' Socioeconomic Status

Administrative Practice	0–25%	26–50%	51–75%	76–100%
Statement 1	4.31	4.00	3.93	4.18
Statement 2	4.46	4.26	4.20	4.37
Statement 3	4.38	4.16	4.53	4.34
Statement 4	4.23	4.47	4.47	4.46
Statement 5	3.92	4.06	4.40	4.37

Administrative Practice	0–25%	26–50%	51–75%	76–100%
Statement 6	4.46	4.58	4.87	4.51
Statement 7	4.23	4.21	4.21	4.14
Statement 8	4.54	4.84	4.60	4.49
Statement 9	4.31	4.32	4.40	4.34
Statement 10	4.15	4.37	4.67	4.34
Statement 11	4.38	4.47	4.53	4.34
Statement 12	4.25	4.00	4.60	4.32
Statement 13	4.75	4.63	4.27	4.40
Statement 14	4.08	4.63	4.47	4.51
Statement 15	3.83	3.95	4.47	4.11
Statement 16	4.08	4.00	4.47	4.43

This table shows teachers' perceptions of how administrative practices affect teachers' morale in relation to the percentage of students who receive free or reduced meal prices in the school they are currently employed. The table is divided into four groups, including 0–25 percent of students who receive free or reduced meals at school, 26–50 percent of students who receive free or reduced meals at school, 51–75 percent of students who receive free or reduced meals at school, and 76–100 percent of students receive free or reduced meals at school. This data shows some similarities and differences amongst groups.

In both groups that fall below 50 percent and the highest group, 76–100 percent of students receiving free or reduced prices meals, the participants perceived that the administrative practice with the least impact on teachers' morale was principals who allow constructive criticism of administrative

policies. The teachers who work in a school with 51–76 percent of students receiving free or reduced-priced meals perceived that the administrative practice with the smallest impact on teachers' morale was principals who show appreciation and commend the teachers for their work.

When identifying teachers' perception of the administrative practice that has the greatest impact on teachers' morale, the 0–25 percent group identified that principals who ensure that teachers have relief from pupil contact in their teaching schedule during the day to complete other job-related tasks had the greatest impact on teachers' morale. The perception of teachers in the 26–50 percent group identified that principals who support teachers in enforcing classroom discipline have the greatest impact on teachers' morale. The teachers who work in schools with 51–75 percent of students receiving free or reduced-priced meals perceive that principals who listen to teachers' concerns and are considerate of the teachers when resolving those concerns have the greatest impact on teachers' morale. Lastly, teachers who work in schools with 76–100 percent of students receiving free or reduced-priced meals perceive that the administrative practices with the greatest impact on teachers' morale are principals who ensure that classes are the appropriate size for the grade level and subject being taught and principals who listen to teachers' concerns and are considerate of the teachers when resolving such concerns.

Table 17

Administrative Practices' Perceived Impact on Teachers' Morale by Morale Ranking

Administrative Practices	Low Morale	Moderate Morale	High Morale
Statement 1	4.19	3.88	4.36
Statement 2	4.36	4.16	4.43
Statement 3	4.39	4.32	4.35

Administrative Practices	Low Morale	Moderate Morale	High Morale
Statement 4	4.46	4.36	4.43
Statement 5	4.25	4.04	4.36
Statement 6	4.61	4.52	4.61
Statement 7	4.18	4.04	4.36
Statement 8	4.64	4.56	4.61
Statement 9	4.25	4.28	4.43
Statement 10	4.39	4.40	4.30
Statement 11	4.43	4.36	4.52
Statement 12	4.42	4.12	4.35
Statement 13	4.70	4.16	4.48
Statement 14	4.59	4.36	4.39
Statement 15	4.22	3.84	4.17
Statement 16	4.3	4.08	4.43

This table reports the teachers' perceptions of the extent to which each administrative practice impacts teachers' morale. The participants who scored their morale as "very low" and "low" were combined into the same group to create equal groups. The same was done for participants who scored their morale as "high" or "very high."

The participants in the low morale group (N = 28) reported that they perceived that the administrative practice with the smallest impact on teachers' morale was principals who considered the teachers' capacity and talent while assigning teaching assignments. This group also perceived that

ensuring teachers have relief from pupil contact to complete other job-related tasks has the greatest impact on teachers' morale.

The participants who scored their morale level in the middle morale group (N = 25) perceived that allowing teachers' constructive criticism of administrative policies was the least impactful administrative practice regarding teachers' morale. This group also reported their perception of the most impactful administrative practice influencing teachers' morale was principals who support teachers in enforcing classroom discipline.

The perception of the high morale group (N = 23) also shows that the administrative practice of the principals allowing constructive criticism of administrative policies has the smallest impact on teachers' morale. The high morale group also identified the principals who listen to teachers' concerns and are considerate of the teachers while resolving those concerns. The principals who support teachers in enforcing classroom discipline greatly impact teachers' morale.

Table 18

Highest and Lowest Perceived Impact on Teachers' Morale by Demographic Group

Demographic Group	Highest Perceived Effect	Lowest Perceived Effect
Female	Statement 8	Statement 15
Male	Statement 8	Statement 15
Littler Experience	Statement 6	Statement 15
Moderate Experience	Statement 6, Statement 8, Statement 13, Statement14	Statement 1
High Experience	Statement 8	Statement 15
0–399 Enrollment	Statement 6	Statement 1, Statement 7

Demographic Group	Highest Perceived Effect	Lowest Perceived Effect
400–599 Enrollment	Statement 8	Statement 1, Statement 15
599+ Enrollment	Statement 8	Statement 15
Grade Taught K	Statement 6, Statement 9, Statement 13	Statement 1
Grade Taught 1	Statement 4	Statement 15
Grade Taught 2	Statement 8	Statement 1, Statement 13, Statement 15
Grade Taught 3	Statement 6, Statement 8, Statement 13	Statement 15
Grade Taught 4	Statement 8	Statement 12, Statement 15
Grade Taught 5	Statement 6	Statement 15
Grade Taught 6	Statement 4, Statement 8, Statement 13, Statement 14	Statement 5
0–25% F/R Lunch	Statement 13	Statement 15
26–50% F/R Lunch	Statement 8	Statement 15
51–75% F/R Lunch	Statement 6	Statement 1
76–100% F/R Lunch	Statement 6, Statement 14	Statement 15

The data from Table 18 represents each demographic group and which administrative practice they perceive to have the highest and lowest impact on teachers' morale. Among the 19 demographic groups, 10 identified that statement 8, "The principal supports teachers in enforcing student discipline," has the greatest impact on teachers' morale. Statement 13, "The principal ensures that the teachers

have relief from pupil contact in their teaching schedule to allow for planning or other job-related tasks," was identified by eight demographic groups as their perception of which administrative practice has the greatest impact on teachers' morale. Among the statements with the lowest impact on teachers' morale, statement 15, "The principal welcomes constructive criticism of administrative practices by teachers," is the lowest-scored administrative practice in 13 demographic groups. The next lowest impact on teachers' morale is statement 1, "The work of the individual teacher is appreciated and commended by the principal." Six demographic groups perceive it to have the least impact on teachers' morale.

Research Question 3

Administrative Qualities

This section investigates research question 3, "How do teachers' perception of the capability of their school principal to execute the listed administrative practices affect their teachers' morale?" The Teacher Perception of Administrative Practices survey listed 16 administrative practices and, in Section D, asked the participants to score their current school principal on how well they performed each task. To score how well each principal performed each task, the participants provided answers on a Likert scale ranging from failing, needing improvement, satisfactory, good, and excellent. Each of the 16 questions also corresponded with one of the three administrative qualities identified in Delaney's (1991) research. The three administrative qualities are the administrator's personality, the administrator's policies, and the administrator's competency. To report the results, three one-way ANOVA tests were run. In each test, the independent variable is the responses from each of the administrative behaviors. The dependent variable for these tests is the morale level selected by each participant.

Table 19

Morale Level by Administrators' Personalities

Morale Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low	28	2.40	1.14
Moderate	25	3.41	.75
High	23	4.35	.54
Total	76	3.32	.11

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	48.11	2	24.05	32.00	< .001
Within Groups	54.87	73	.725		
Total	102.98	75			

A one-way ANOVA statistical test was conducted to compare the impact of teachers' perception of how well their school administrator performs each administrative task and their reported morale level. Table 19 shows the results from this test in regard to the principals' "personality" category. The one-way ANOVA reports that there is a significant effect at the $p < .01$ level for the participants' morale and how well the participants perceive their administrator to execute each administrative practice in the "personality" category [$F(2,73) = 32.00$, $p < 0.001$].

Table 20

Morale Level by Administrators' Policies

Morale Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low	27	2.38	.96

Moderate	25	3.25	.74
High	23	4.20	.71
Total	75	3.23	1.10

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	40.77	2	20.39	30.35	< .001
Within Groups	48.37	72	.67		
Total	89.14	74			

Table 20 shows the data from a one-way ANOVA statistical test which was conducted to compare the impact of teachers' perception of how well their school administrator performs each administrative task in the policy category and their reported morale level. The one-way ANOVA reports that there is a significant effect at the $p < .01$ level for the participants' morale and how well the participants perceive their administrators to execute each administrative practice in the "personality" category [$F(2,72) = 30.35$, $P < 0.001$].

Table 21

Morale Level by Administrators' Competencies

Morale Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low	27	2.40	1.00
Moderate	24	3.52	.82
High	23	4.37	.67
Total	74	3.38	1.17

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	49.03	2	24.51	33.79	< .001
Within Groups	51.51	71	.73		
Total	100.53	73			

Table 21 shows the data from a one-way ANOVA statistical test which was conducted to compare the impact of teachers' perception of how well their school administrator performs each administrative task in the competency category and their reported morale level. The one-way ANOVA reports that there is a significant effect at the $p < .01$ level for the participants' morale and how well the participants perceive their administrator to execute each of the administrative practices in the "competency" category [F(2,71) = 33.79, P < 0.001].

The three separate one-way ANOVA tests run for research question 3 indicate that the ability of school administrators to execute their administrative duties has a significant impact on the teachers' morale in their schools. The three categories, personality, policy, and competency, had a p-value of less than .001. This value rejects the null hypothesis and signifies the strong effect that school administrators have on their teachers' morale.

Section F

Open-ended Responses

All participants of the Teacher Perception of Administrative Practices survey were allowed to respond to the open-ended question, "Are there any other administrative practices that were not addressed in this survey that affect your teachers' morale?" In total, 29 participants answered this

question and identified different administrative behaviors that affect their teachers' morale. Three

themes were identified out of the responses from 29 participants.

Theme 1

District Administration

The first theme addressed in Section F of the survey indicates that the participants perceive that

district administrators have too much control over the operation of the individual school. In total, six of

the 29 participants acknowledged that they appreciated their principals and that the main reason

behind their discontent is district-level administration. One participant stated that their principal is

"great" but that their morale is low due to the corporation they are currently employed at. Another

participant acknowledged, "Much of what we face is not at the fault of the principal, but the district or

state policies." These participants stated that teachers' morale would not improve until policies at the

state and federal levels were improved. The participants who responded to Section F with concerns

about the district-level administration also frequently mentioned blanket terms such as "District level

requirements," "District Policy," and items that are "out of the principals' control." The participants

contributing to theme one spoke highly of their principals by stating that they frequently do their best

but are left with "several bad options" while making decisions.

Another concern of the participants was that district-level administration has too many "levels"

and is unaware of what is best for the individual school. These participants felt that the principal should

have more agency in making decisions regarding new initiatives that fit their schools' needs better. The

participants acknowledged that the principal would like to make changes to better support teachers but

that many negative morale identifiers are present at the district level rather than the school level.

Theme 2

Teachers' Time

The second theme from Section F of the survey was using the teachers' time. Although the survey mentioned this theme, four participants shared that their morale is low due to insufficient time for relief from pupil contact in their teaching schedule. The participants who acknowledged that using their time was a morale identifier commented that their "30-minute lunch," "30-minute plan period," and numerous duties they were asked to cover during the day contributed to their declining morale. These participants also mentioned that there are too many ineffective meetings and they should be trusted rather than using this valuable time in meetings and strongly emphasized teachers' experiences.

Theme 3

Support for Teachers

The third theme identified from Section F of the Teacher Perception of Administrative Practices survey is the lack of support for teachers, especially in enforcing student discipline. This statement was mentioned in the survey. However, four participants addressed the concern of principal support in this section. The participants who supported this theme stated that discipline is not equal for all students in their schools. Others suggested they no longer request office support in enforcing discipline because "nothing will be done about" the students' behavior. These participants also identified that their school administrators are "too easily swayed by influential parents." The teachers perceived that they are not supported in discussions with their students' parents. One participant suggested that principals often "throw teachers under the bus" when working with a challenging student's parents. Another participant suggested why their morale has improved, stating that they have a supportive coach who helps "struggling teachers."

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This research aims to identify how teachers' perceptions of school administrators' leadership practices can affect teachers' morale. This chapter discusses the significant findings in the literature, presents research on school administrators' leadership practices and how these practices affect teachers' morale, and outlines how future research can improve the morale of K-6 public school teachers in Southern Indiana. The conclusion of this chapter includes the limitations and a summary of this research.

The following discussion includes the findings that answer the following three research questions:

RQ1: What are teachers' perceptions of their morale level in the workplace?

RQ2: Which administrative leadership practices do elementary teachers identify as having the greatest impact on teachers' morale?

RQ3: How does teachers' perception of the capability of their school principal to execute the listed administrative practices affect their teachers' morale?

The research indicates that there are multiple ways for school principals to improve the morale in their schools. The literature review suggests that principals' leadership styles influence this morale (Lal 'Arya, 2017). This includes principals who empower and trust their teachers, thereby positively influencing their school's morale (Malik, 2021; Rosenburg, 2013). Recent studies suggest that morale is influenced by the added accountability pressures faced by teachers, whereas others suggest that positive relationships are a major factor (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020; Shen et al., 2015). The data provided in Chapter 4 indicates the practices of school principals that have potential to positively influence morale, and how these practices may differ based on teacher demographics.

Identifying Morale Levels

Research Question 1

The data of research question 1 builds on the existing evidence that teachers' morale has declined. In total, 69.7 percent of this study's participants identified their morale as moderate to low. This is a major concern as previous findings have concluded schools with teachers with high morale and better work performance and student achievement (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020; Malik, 2020). Low teachers' morale also negatively affects the teacher–student relationship, which positively correlates to students' discipline and future high school dropout rates (Barmby, 2006; Noble et al., 2021). The data from research question 1 also identifies trends in teachers' morale based on demographic information.

Previous studies suggest teacher retention is key to student achievement (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020). Recent studies also suggest that teachers' morale is a major indicator of student success (Dunn, 2020). The data from research question 1 crosses these two theories and identifies potential concerns for the future of education. The data from research question one suggests that as teachers progress in their careers, their morale for the teaching profession declines. The data shows that teachers with the least experience have the highest morale in their careers, whereas the teachers with the most experience struggle to demonstrate this high morale for teaching.

Based on this data, principals and building-level administrators must support their teachers to improve the morale of their schools if they wish to see the best results for their students. The data referring to other demographic information suggests a limited relationship among other demographic groups. The male demographic group suggests that male elementary school teachers in Southern Indiana have higher morale for the teaching profession. However, with the much smaller sample size, it is difficult to identify any specific trends for this data. The data from other demographic groups do not show significant trends, indicating that a school's socioeconomic status or the total student enrollment

should not hinder a school from achieving positive morale. In addition, the grade level a teacher primarily teaches does not pose any trends in this data. Based on previous research, the positive morale in different grade levels is most likely influenced by their relationships with their administrators or colleagues (Mingazheva, 2018; Wagner & French, 2010).

Recognizing the Impact of Administrative Practices

Research Question 2

The data collected from research question 2 suggests that each of the listed 16 administrative practices greatly affects teachers' morale. Although some administrative behaviors ranked a higher perceived impact on teachers' morale, the data suggests that each behavior, when incorporated effectively, can positively influence teachers' morale in a school. Like the findings of Rashidi and Moghadam's (2014) research, the greatest perceived administrative behavior to impact teachers' morale is the support the principal offers teachers in enforcing classroom discipline. This data also supports the findings of Bosman et al. (2021), stating that principals who support the enforcement of student discipline nurture teachers with higher self-efficacy, leading to improved teachers' morale and student achievement.

The data also shows that principals who allow constructive criticism regarding administrative policies play the least significant role in influencing teachers' morale. This statement differs from the ones provided by Ige (2018) and Lal 'Arya (2017), who suggest that teachers' morale can be improved by providing a platform for voicing teachers' inputs on administrative policies. Although this is the least significant of the listed 16 administrative practices, it has been recognized as a practice ranking slightly above a high effect. Thus, this practice could benefit school administrators in increasing their school morale.

The next lowest-scoring administrative behavior is statement 1, which relates to the principal showing appreciation toward individual teachers. This data is much different than the related literature, stating that empowering and recognizing staff and their work is a top priority when improving teachers' morale (Malik, 2021). Lal 'Arya (2017) suggests that the best way to lead while improving teachers' morale is to empower the teachers and recognize their accomplishments. The Teacher Perception of Administrative Practices survey data suggests that teachers need actionable items rather than encouragement. The participants recognized support in enforcing student discipline and more time with relief from pupil contact in their teaching schedule to complete job-related tasks as having the greatest influence on their morale. This finding differs from the previous literature, which suggests that encouragement is the solution to teachers' poor morale.

When the data is broken down by demographics, the results remain similar across all groups. Although the results vary slightly, statement 8, regarding support in enforcing student discipline, and statement 13, referring to the teachers receiving relief from pupil contact in their teaching schedule, are at the top of each demographic group. This data suggests that the participants need time and support rather than previously believed recognition and celebration.

Previous research suggests solutions to low teachers' morale by describing a lack of teacher autonomy or a poor leadership style (Hargis, 2018; Lal 'Arya, 2017). However, the data collected from research question 2 suggests that, even though teachers find it important to be recognized, they desire support in their classrooms and more time to complete the tasks they have been asked of them. Based on the findings of this study, actionable practices from principals are now perceived to be more influential to teachers' morale than the characteristics described by any specific leadership style from previous literature.

Administrative Qualities

Research Question 3, Part 1

The data collected from research question 3 suggests that the administrative behaviors of school principals play a significant role in teachers' morale. Part 1 of research question 3 strictly focuses on the principal's personality and how strongly they affect teachers' morale. The data suggest that the personality of the school administrator plays a significant role in the perceived morale of the participants. In each of the morale groups, teachers' morale significantly increased if the participant perceived their administrator to perform tasks regarding their personality at moderate or high levels. The participants who perceived their administrators to perform poorly in the personality category indicated low morale. This trend remained true for the moderate and high groups.

Research Question 3, Part 2

The data collected from research question 3, part 2 strictly focuses on the administrator's policies. Similar to the data collected for the administrators' personality, if the participants scored their administrators well in the policy category, they also identified their morale as higher than if they perceived their administrator to perform poorly in the policy category. Significant trends exist between each morale level and how the participants scored their principals' ability to execute the administrators' behaviors listed in the policy category.

Research Question 3, Part 3

Research question 3, part 3 strictly focuses on the competency of the school administrators. Following the same trends as personality and policy, the participants who perceived their principals to successfully execute the administrative practices in reference to their competency also scored their morale as high. There is a direct correlation between the perception of how well the administrator executes these tasks and the morale of the participants.

Research Question 3 Interpretation

As identified above, a significant direct correlation exists between how well the participants perceive their administrators to execute each task and their morale level. In each of the three administrative quality groups, the low morale group ranked their administrators' ability to execute the tasks between "needs improvement" and "satisfactory." In each of the three categories, the moderate moral ground perceived their administrators to execute each task at a level between "satisfactory" and "good." Lastly, in each of the three categories, the high morale group perceived their administrators to execute the tasks with a score between "good" and "excellent."

The data also suggests that, even though administrative qualities play a significant role in teachers' morale, not each quality is equal. When each administrative practice's perceived effects were ordered from greatest to least, it was identified that characteristics in the "policy" category helped seven of the top eight highest rankings (see Appendix G). The effects of the administrative practices in the personality and competency categories occupied seven of the bottom eight morale effects.

Future Research

Suggestions for Future Research

This research suggests that many administrative practices could influence teachers' morale. Similar to the findings of Bentley and Rempel's (1967) study, future research could be improved by creating this study on a smaller scale. School administrators and researchers could benefit from identifying the teachers' perceptions of their morale and administrative practices by following the same school through the principals' improvement efforts in these areas. This future research will identify if school principals can improve the teachers' morale or if the teachers' morale level influences their perceptions of how well the administrators complete and accomplish tasks.

Future research on teachers' morale could benefit from the principals' perspectives on the topic. Researchers can benefit from recreating the Teacher Perception of Administrative Practices survey and adjusting the questions for principals to self-reflect on how well they execute each practice. This study could identify more specific results if a researcher were to survey specific schools and their administrators and identify if there was a gap between how well the administrator perceived they were executing each task and how well the teachers perceived them to be performing the same task.

Future research could also be improved by identifying the teachers' and building-level administrators' perceptions of the leadership practices of district-level administration. Abazoaglu and Aztekin (2016) and Paufler (2018) suggest that district-level administration can influence the morale of the school administration. These studies also acknowledge that when school principals have low morale, the teachers perceive their morale to be low. Section F of the survey suggests a need for further research regarding district-level administration and its role in each school. Identifying individuals' perceptions about district-level administration could offer suggestions to improve morale based on the open-ended feedback derived from Section F.

Researchers could also benefit from conducting this study at multiple points during the school year. The data for this study was collected at the beginning of the 2022–2023 school year. Future research could benefit from collecting data at the beginning, middle, and end of a school year to identify trends in administrative practices or teachers' perceptions of these behaviors during the school year.

Implications

Practices for Educational Administrators

The data suggests that the practices of school administrators significantly influence teachers' morale. The Teachers' Perception of Administrative Practices survey references 16 administrative practices, all considered to have a high or very high impact on teachers' morale by the participants.

Administrators can use this research to determine where they identify or anticipate their shortcomings and increase their practice in this area to improve teachers' morale. Similar to the findings of Bentley and Rempel's (1967) research, if administrators acknowledge the morale levels in their schools and address these concerns with improved practice, they can perceive an increase in teachers' morale and student achievement outcomes. Additionally, principals who acknowledge the purpose of low morale without addressing a solution perceive greater decreases in teachers' morale (Bentley & Rempel, 1967).

The data also suggests that, even though each of the three administrative categories is valuable to teachers' high morale, strong administrative policies score higher on average than administrator personality and administrator competency. Principals may use this research to identify which category they are the weakest in and develop a plan to improve their practices. Herein, it could benefit a school administrator to survey their staff using a similar survey to identify their perception of their morale, how they perceive each practice to affect morale, and how the administrator executes each practice. The aforementioned data provides the necessary information to understand how teachers, in general, perceive morale and administrative practices but does not provide personalized information for individual schools. If a principal wishes to perceive improved morale, then they should identify the needs of their specific schools rather than the needs of Southern Indiana Elementary Schools.

Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

Limitations

There are multiple limitations to this study. One of the limitations is the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased stress, workload, burnout, and decreased morale for teachers across the United States (Reimers, 2022). Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools have implemented new strategies to help students learn, thereby increasing school personnel's anxiety

(Pressley, 2021). The increase in teacher stress, anxiety, and health-related factors in the context of the

COVID-19 pandemic could limit the scope of this study.

This study also occurred during the first weeks of the 2022–2023 school year. The participants

for this study had returned from their summer vacation within a couple of weeks of data collection. The

researcher believes that two factors could impact teachers' morale. The first factor is that teachers may

feel less burned out at the beginning of the year due to their recent extended time-off. The other factor

is the business of the new school year. Teachers may feel additional stress due to the prospect of

engaging with new students and the added responsibility associated with the beginning of each school

year.

A limitation of this study is the number of participants who did not complete the survey. Among

the 102 study participants, 31 did not answer every question. This could be due to discomfort, time

restraints, or other unforeseen circumstances. There is reason to believe that if participants did not

complete the survey due to increased stress or workload, these participants may have responded to the

survey with low morale scores thus influencing the data that was collected. However, if a participant did

not respond to a question, no score was assigned to that response.

Each administrative practice receiving a mean effect falling between high and very high is

another limitation of this study. To improve this limitation, the researcher may have perceived more

success and accuracy had there been a scale response ranging from 1 to 10. When asking the effect size,

the participants perceived each administrative practice as highly effective. However, the accuracy could

have been improved had they been asked to rank or score each practice on a longer scale.

The data from research question 3 also suggests a significant correlation between the perceived

ability of the administrator to execute each task and their morale levels. Therefore, it could be assumed

that teachers with high morale are naturally more optimistic about how their administrator executes each task, whereas teachers with low morale are more critical of their administrators.

Delimitations

Owing to the longevity of the issue regarding teachers' morale, the researcher did not include the COVID-19 pandemic in this research. This research pertains to the aspects of teachers' morale that school administrators can control. As the COVID-19 pandemic is an external factor affecting schools, it has been excluded as a topic for this study. The COVID-19 pandemic can affect teachers' morale; therefore, it was not included in the data collection.

Conclusion

The hypothesis that school administrators' leadership practices have a statistically significant impact on teachers' morale has been accepted in this study. Although some administrative practices impact teachers' morale less than others, the overall conclusion is that school administrators and their practices impact teachers' morale. K-6 Southern Indiana public school teachers perceive which directly impacts teacher retention, positive relationships, and student achievement (Erichsen & Reynolds 2020; Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021; Gant, 2020; Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014). Although the main focus of this research is to identify and support the morale levels of teachers, research shows that these strategies will also increase student achievement. School administrators who utilize these strategies to increase morale may also see improvements in the schools standardized test scores thus providing students with a greater opportunity for success (Abazoaglu & Aztekin, 2016; Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020).

The data from this study suggests that school administrators can improve the morale in their schools by improving their capacity to execute the listed administrative practices. Although participants felt that many administrative practices had a significant impact on teachers' morale, the results found that principals who executed these practices with fidelity had teachers with higher morale.

If school administrators attend to the results of this study, they could identify the specific needs in their school and work toward a solution to low teacher morale. The literature suggests that school administrators who effectively execute these administrative practices can create many improvements in their schools, ranging from higher teacher retention to more positive relationships throughout the building (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020; Morris et al., 2020). School administrators now have a roadmap to improve morale in their schools. Diminishing morale in K-6 Southern Indiana schools could be a problem of the past if school administrators change their leadership style and reflect on teachers' needs.

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Appendix A: Teachers' Perception of Administrative Practices

Start of Block: Block 1

Gender of participant

    ⚪ Male

    ⚪ Female

    ⚪ Non-Binary

    ⚪ Prefer not to answer

How many years of teaching experience have you completed?

_____

What is the number of enrolled students at the school in which you are currently employed?

    ⚪ 0–199 students

    ⚪ 200–399 students

    ⚪ 400–599 students

    ⚪ 600–799 students

    ⚪ 800–999 students

    ⚪ Greater than 1000 students

Which grade have you primarily taught in the last five years?

⬭ **Kindergarten**

⬭ **First grade**

⬭ **Second grade**

⬭ **Third grade**

⬭ **Fourth grade**

⬭ **Fifth grade**

⬭ **Sixth grade**

On average, what percentage of students in your school receive or qualify for free or reduced-price school meals?

⬭ **0%–25%**

⬭ **26%–50%**

⬭ **51%–75%**

⬭ **76%–100%**

End of Block: Participant Demographics

Start of Block: Block 2

In this section, please indicate to what extent you think the following practices affect teachers' morale by selecting the appropriate response.

	No Effect	Little Effect	Moderate Effect	High Effect	Very High Effect
The work of the individual teacher is appreciated and commended by the principal.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal is fair and consistent in their dealings with teachers.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal understands and recognizes good teaching practices.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal ensures there is meaningful communication between teachers and the administration.	○	○	○	○	○

	No Effect	Little Effect	Moderate Effect	High Effect	Very High Effect
The principal shows interest and is engaged with various grade levels and/or departments.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal listens to teachers' concerns and is considerate and courteous toward the teachers when resolving such concerns.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal makes effective use of teachers' capacity and talent regarding teaching assignments.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal supports teachers in enforcing student discipline.	○	○	○	○	○

	No Effect	Little Effect	Moderate Effect	High Effect	Very High Effect
The principal ensures that the working conditions, including appropriate resources, are sufficient for a successful classroom.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal is cooperative with teachers and assists them whenever possible.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal takes the teachers' professional opinions into consideration when creating or implementing new policies.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal runs a well-organized school with formulated policies.	○	○	○	○	○

	No Effect	Little Effect	Moderate Effect	High Effect	Very High Effect
The principal ensures that the teachers have relief from pupil contact in their teaching schedule to allow for planning or other job-related tasks.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal ensures that the class size is appropriate for the subject/grade level being taught.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal welcomes constructive criticism of administrative policies by teachers.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal is courteous and considerate of students, parents, and the community.	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Block 2

Start of Block: Block 3

In this section, please indicate your perception of how well your school administrator performs each task.

	Failing	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
The work of the individual teacher is appreciated and commended by the principal.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal is fair and consistent in their dealings with teachers.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal understands and recognizes good teaching practices.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal ensures there is meaningful communication between teachers and the administration.	○	○	○	○	○

	Failing	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
The principal shows interest and is engaged with various grade levels and/or departments.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal listens to teachers' concerns and is considerate and courteous of the teachers when resolving such concerns.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal makes effective use of teachers' capacity and talent regarding teaching assignments.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal supports teachers in enforcing student discipline.	○	○	○	○	○

	Failing	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
The principal ensures that the working conditions, including appropriate resources, are sufficient for a successful classroom.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal is cooperative with teachers and assists them whenever possible.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal takes the teachers' professional opinions into consideration when creating or implementing new policies.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal runs a well-organized school with formulated policies.	○	○	○	○	○

	Failing	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
The principal ensures that the teachers have relief from pupil contact in their teaching schedule to allow for planning or other job-related tasks.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal ensures that the class size is appropriate for the subject/grade level being taught.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal welcomes constructive criticism of administrative policies by teachers.	○	○	○	○	○
The principal is courteous and considerate of students, parents, and the community.	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Block 3

Start of Block: Block 4

In this section, please select the response that signifies your perceived morale level for your workplace.

	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
What do you perceive to be your level of teachers' morale?	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Block 4

Start of Block: Block 5

Do other administrative practices, which have not been addressed in this survey, affect your teachers' morale?

End of Block: Block 5

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

Dear Prospective Participant,

The issue of teachers' morale has been gaining importance in Southern Indiana elementary schools. This study, "An Investigation on the Teachers' Perception of Leadership Practices and their Effects on Teachers' morale," focuses on teachers' perceptions of school administrator leadership practices and how these practices affect the teachers' morale in their schools. If you are willing to participate in this research, please click the provided link. No personally identifiable information will be collected to identify any individuals.

This online survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete and pose questions related to teachers' morale, administrative practices that affect teachers' morale, how often you see these practices in the school you are employed at, and demographic questions. There are no risks to individuals participating in this survey beyond those in daily life. By completing this survey, you may help public schools in Southern Indiana improve teachers' morale and retention and improve opportunities for your students.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this important research.

*Please complete this survey and click **Submit** at the end if you wish to participate before September 9, 2022.*

Sincerely*,*
Austin Chamberlain
Researcher and Doctoral Student—University of Southern Indiana
Ajchamberl@eagles.usi.edu

Appendix C: School Corporations Surveyed in Southern Indiana

County	School District or Corporation	Address
Crawford	Crawford County Community Schools	5805 E Administration Rd, Marengo, IN 47140
Daviess	Washington Community Schools	301 East South St. Washington, IN 47501
Dubois	Northeast Dubois County School Corporation	5379 East Main St. Dubois, IN 47527
Dubois	Southeast Dubois County School Corporation	432 East 15th St. Ferdinand, IN 47532
Dubois	Southwest Dubois County School Corporation	113 North Jackson St. Huntingburg, IN 47542
Gibson	East Gibson School District	941 S. Franklin St. Oakland City, IN 47660
Gibson	South Gibson School District	1029 West 650 South Fort Branch, IN 47648
Knox	South Knox School Corporation	6116 East Sr 61 Vincennes, IN 47591
Knox	Vincennes Community School Corporation	1712 South Quail Run Rd. Vincennes, IN 47591
Perry	Perry Central Community Schools	18677 Old Sr 37 Leopold, IN 47551
Perry	Tell City-Troy Township Schools	837 17th St. Tell City, IN 47586
Pike	Pike County School Corporation	211 S 12th St. Petersburg, IN 47567
Spencer	North Spencer County School Corporation	3720 East Sr 162 Lincoln City, IN 47552
Spencer	South Spencer County School Corporation	321 South 5th St. Rockport, IN 4763
Vanderburgh	Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation	951 Walnut St. Evansville, IN 47713
Warrick	Warrick County School Corporation	300 East Gum Boonville, IN 47601

Appendix D: Informed Consent Document for Online or Web Based Survey

University of Southern Indiana

Teachers' Perception of Administrative Practices and their Impact on Teachers' Morale

{1328947-1}

Informed Consent Document for Online or Web Based Survey

You are invited to participate in a research study on school administrator leadership practices and their effects on teachers' morale. Austin **Chamberlain *and the University of Southern Indiana Graduate Studies program*** under the supervision of **Dr** will be conducting this study**.**

Kelly Sparks. Austin Chamberlain can be reached at ***Ajchamberl@eagles.usi.edu and 812-618-5951***

This study will take approximately **10 minutes** of your time. You will be asked to complete an online survey about **the administrative practices of your school principal and the effects of these practices on teachers' morale.**

Your decision to participate or decline participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you have the right to terminate your participation at any time without incurring any penalties. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. If you do not wish to complete this survey, simply close your browser.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, to discuss problems, complaints, or concerns about a research study, or obtain information or offer inputs, contact the University of Southern Indiana Office of Sponsored Projects and Research Administration, 8600 University Blvd., Wright Administration Rm. 104, Evansville, IN 47712-3596, 812-465-7000 or by email at rcr@usi.edu. We request that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in the study.

Your participation in this research will be completely confidential. There are no risks to individuals participating in this survey beyond those in daily life.

Please print a copy of this consent form for your records if you so desire.

Appendix E

Dear Austin,

I was absolutely delighted to receive your email. You have my permission to use my questionnaire.

Good luck with your dissertation. Please let me know when you complete your doctorate. I'd be interested in reading the finished product.

Best wishes,
Dr. Jerome Delaney PhD
Professor—Educational Administration
Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland
P.O. Box 4200 Stn. C
St. John's, NL, Canada A1C 5S7

Office: E4021; Telephone: (709) 864-2071;
Cell: (709) 689-3096; Home Telephone: (709) 579-3300

Appendix F: List of Administrative Practices

Statement Number	Statement Description
Statement 1	The principal shows appreciation to teachers.
Statement 2	The principal is fair and consistent with teachers.
Statement 3	The principal recognizes good teacher practices.
Statement 4	The principal communicates with teachers.
Statement 5	The principal shows interest in all grade levels.
Statement 6	The principal listens to teachers' concerns and is considerate when resolving concerns.
Statement 7	The principal considers teachers' capacity for placement.
Statement 8	The principal supports teachers in enforcing student discipline.
Statement 9	The principal ensures working conditions are favorable.
Statement 10	The principal assists teachers when possible.
Statement 11	The principal takes teachers' opinions into consideration.
Statement 12	The principal runs a well-organized school.
Statement 13	The principal ensures teachers have relief from pupil contact in their teaching schedule.
Statement 14	The principal ensures class sizes are appropriate.
Statement 15	The principal welcomes constructive criticism.
Statement 16	The principal is considerate of students and parents.

Appendix G: Ordered List of Administrative Practices

Administrative Practice	Mean Effect Score	Administrative Quality
The principal supports teachers in enforcing student discipline.	4.60	Policy
The principal listens to teachers' concerns and is considerate and courteous of the teachers when resolving such concerns.	4.59	Personality
The principal ensures that the teachers have relief from pupil contact in their teaching schedule to allow for planning or other job-related tasks.	4.48	Policy
The principal ensures that the class size is appropriate for the subject/grade level being taught.	4.47	Policy
The principal ensures there is meaningful communication between teachers and the administration.	4.43	Policy
The principal considers the teachers' professional opinions when creating or implementing new policies.	4.41	Policy
The principal is cooperative with teachers and assists them whenever possible.	4.38	Policy
The principal ensures that the working conditions, including appropriate resources, are sufficient for a successful classroom.	4.34	Policy
The principal understands and recognizes good teaching practices.	4.34	Competency
The principal is fair and consistent in their dealings with teachers.	4.33	Personality
The principal runs a well-organized school with formulated policies.	4.29	Competency
The principal is courteous and considerate of students, parents, and the community.	4.28	Personality
The principal shows interest and is engaged with various grade levels and/or departments.	4.23	Competency

Administrative Practice	Mean Effect Score	Administrative Quality
The principal makes effective use of teachers' capacity and talent regarding teaching assignments.	4.19	Competency
The work of the individual teacher is appreciated and commended by the principal.	4.11	Personality
The principal welcomes constructive criticism of administrative policies by teachers.	4.06	Policy