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## Investigating the Effect of Perceived Social Support and Professional Support on the Ability to Persist as a Building Administrator in Arkansas

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Investigating the Effect of Perceived Social Support and Professional Support on the Ability to  
Persist as a Building Administrator in Arkansas

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Adult and Lifelong Learning

by

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## **Abstract**

Across the United States, our K-12 public schools have very low levels of principals persisting in their jobs. The national average for principal tenure is four years, and one out of every five principals in poverty districts leaves after one year (Levin et al., 2019). The tenure average of four years is a devastating statistic because, according to an investigation commissioned by the Wallace Foundation (Leithwood et al., 2011), it takes an average of five years with a new administrator for a school's performance to rebound to the level of achievement that existed before the administration change. At the current principal turnover rate, school performance declines cannot recover. According to The National Teacher and Principal Survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, only 11% of principals stay in their schools for at least ten years (Taie et al., 2017). Arkansas is the basis for this study because 23% of building administrators in Arkansas are persisting ten years or longer in their current school. Arkansas' relatively high level of principal retention will provide valuable information regarding the relationship of principals viewing their environment as supportive and their ability to persist. The purpose of this study is to investigate the predictive relationship between perceived support levels and job persistence after controlling for perceived self-efficacy for building administrators in Arkansas Public and Charter Schools using binary logistic regression analysis. This study will provide insights into whether two factors of perceived support (i.e., social and supervisor) are predictive of a principal's retention. These factors can be targeted through training programs and, as such, have the potential to have an immediate influence on principal retention rates.

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Introduction .....	1
Background .....	2
Need and Purpose .....	4
Definitions.....	6
Problem Statement.....	7
Scope and Limitations.....	7
<b>Chapter 2</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Literature Review Overview .....	10
Methodology .....	10
Conceptual Framework.....	12
Persisting as an Administrator . .....	12
Perceived Social Support .....	16
Perceived Supervisor Support.....	21
Perceived Self-efficacy .....	24
Relationship between Perceived Support and the Ability to Persist.....	26
Theoretical Framework.....	27
Research Question .....	29
Hypotheses and Rationale.....	29
<b>Chapter 3</b> .....	<b>31</b>
Methodology .....	31
Research Questions and Hypotheses .....	31
Methods.....	32

Study Design.....	32
Study Setting.....	32
Participants and Placement.....	33
Materials.....	35
Measures.....	37
Data Collection.....	38
Data Analysis.....	38
Internal and External Validity.....	41
<b>References.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>60</b>
Appendix A.....	60
Letter for Participants.....	60
Appendix B.....	61
Demographic Survey.....	61
Perceived Supervisor Support Survey.....	62
Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (Shortened Version).....	64
Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale.....	66
Appendix C.....	67
Figure C1.....	67

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

The national average for principal tenure is four years, and one out of every five principals in poverty districts leaves after one year (Levin et al., 2019). The tenure average of four years is a devastating statistic because, according to an investigation commissioned by the Wallace Foundation (Leithwood et al., 2011), it takes an average of five years with a new administrator for a school's performance to rebound to the level of achievement that existed before the administration change. At the current principal turnover rate, school performance declines cannot recover.

Previous studies have focused on the prevalence of principal burnout, and the challenges principals need to overcome (Baker et al., 2010; Beteille, 2012; Fuller et al., 2009; Papa et al., 2002; Ringel et al., 2004). Aaron (2018) summarized many of the abundant studies examining the movement of principals from New York, Texas, Colorado, Illinois, North Carolina, and Missouri. The trend noted by Aaron (2018) was that the principals had resigned to move to a school with less poverty or higher achievement, took an assistant principal job, went back to teaching, or left the field of education. None of Aaron's (2018) reviewed studies discussed circumstances regarding the principals who stayed. (Baker et al., 2010; Beteille, 2012; Fuller et al., 2009; Papa et al., 2002; Ringel et al., 2004)

According to The National Teacher and Principal Survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, only 11% of principals stay in their schools for at least ten years (Taie et al., 2017). Arkansas is the basis for my study because 23% of building administrators in Arkansas are persisting ten years or longer in their current school. Arkansas' percentage of persisting is more than twice the national average and puts Arkansas at the second-highest state

percentage in the nation. The only state with a higher percentage of building administrators persisting ten years or longer is South Dakota at 36% (NCES, 2018). However, according to the Digest of Education Statistics, Arkansas has more than twice the number of administrators as South Dakota (NCES, 2020). This data means the actual number of administrators persisting in Arkansas is higher than in South Dakota. I want to study the data from a relatively successful state to provide recommendations for other states. This chapter will summarize why the study is needed, provide general conceptual background information, and introduce the research problem and the study's limitations.

### **Background of the Study**

Many terms are used synonymously, according to the research I reviewed for this study. In the research covering Kindergarten through twelfth-grade (K-12) education, the terms building administrator, building principal, administrator, and principal are used interchangeably. These four terms will refer to the participants of this study who will be the leaders of any public or charter school in the state of Arkansas that serves students between the grades of Kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12). In the reviewed research, the terms professional support and supervisor support are used to name a leader's support to employees. Therefore, this study will use professional and supervisor support interchangeably.

Aaron (2018) conducted a qualitative study of 12 retired principals who had remained in their positions for a minimum of five years. The principals were asked how and why they stayed in their positions. The four themes that emerged were: relationships, personal goals that matched the district goals, student success, and commitment despite challenging circumstances. Aaron's (2018) study is one of the very few that has investigated how principals persist and what

mechanisms or social supports they have in place that allow them to remain in their school setting.

The literature reveals the obstacles to principal retention, such as time commitment, level of responsibility, insufficient resources, low pay, lack of decision-making authority, and high-stress accountability (Guthery et al., 2022; Levin et al., 2019). Bandura et al. (1977) explain that a person's ability to overcome obstacles is determined by their level of self-efficacy. The level of motivation and how long a person will strive in a difficult situation varies based on their amount of self-efficacy.

In order to determine how communities and districts can improve principal retention rates, this study seeks to determine if the external variables of social support (such as a network of relationships) and supervisor support (such as a feeling of safety at work) positively affect retention despite the level of self-efficacy. A quantitative study of 306 school administrators found that their level of burnout decreased with increased social support (Morkeviciute et al., 2013). Principals consistently cite lack of social support and supervisor support as the top two reasons they leave the field (Daloisio, 2017). Based on the existing research, I believe higher levels of external support (such as social and professional support) will positively affect principal retention rates.

Principal retention impacts students and their futures in many ways. A study by the New Teacher Center (2018) found that when leadership is consistent, dropout rates decrease, levels of student performance increase, and student preparedness for post-secondary training or post-secondary education increases. Reduced dropout rates positively affect a school's students as they enter the workforce (New Teacher Center, 2018). The United States Bureau of Labor and Statistics earnings for 2020 revealed that students with a high school diploma earned an average



of \$648 more per month than students without a high school diploma (Torpey, 2021). This study addresses the problem of low levels of principal retention in K-12 public and public charter schools, specifically in the state of Arkansas.

### **Need and Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between a principal perceiving their environment as supportive and their ability to persist as a principal in their setting. Despite the many pieces of research indicating the importance of the retention of our K-12 principals in public schools, few studies have examined how to mitigate principal attrition (Guthery et al., 2022; Wells, 2013). My investigation of the research evidence suggests a positive predictive relationship between perceived support and the ability to persist. I am focusing on these variables because they can be targeted and changed (i.e., increased social support and supervisor support).

Across the United States, our K-12 public schools have very low levels of principals persisting in their jobs. The New Teacher Center (2018) reported that 25,000 principals leave their jobs yearly. The United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2022) reports that 21,200 public school principals take new positions each year. Additionally, at least half of new school leaders leave by their third year in the position (New Teacher Center, 2018). Guthery et al. (2022) conducted an 18-year qualitative study of principals in Texas. They followed over 11,000 principals to determine their impact on the school as they gained five years or more tenure. However, the authors had to make many projections with the data because most principals left their positions by year four.

Many multi-layered negative consequences occur in schools due to the frequent principal attrition. The ramifications of the high turnover of public and public charter school principals include the loss of personnel productivity, the time needed to allow leaders to assimilate into the

role, low teacher retention, and cultural ramifications, including staff morale and relationships with the community (Guthery et al., 2022). Unfortunately, the reverberations caused to the whole school organization by these issues create an aftermath of financial costs and reduced student performance.

Financially, onboarding a new principal is a significant expense for a public school. Tran et al. (2018) found that an average of 207-man hours from 37 separate employees are required when replacing a principal. Daloisio (2017) found that the national average cost to hire, train, and place a principal into the job was \$75,000. Taking Daloisio's (2017) cost findings of \$75,000 and multiplying by the 21,200 principals in new positions annually as reported by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2022) equals over 1.5 billion dollars of educational spending. Weinstein et al. (2009) proposed that high principal turnover may force schools to redistribute money away from academic priorities.

Reduced student performance is a negative consequence of the nation's high principal turnover rate. Burkhauser et al. (2012) studied 519 first-year principals in Memphis, Chicago, New York City, Washington D.C., Baltimore, and Oakland. They measured student achievement by calculating average gain scores on math and literacy statewide assessments for the students at each school. Burkhauser et al. (2012) collected the gain score data in the years leading up to the turnover and the year of the new principal. The same data collection process was completed for a second school year. This data represented some of the new principals' second year in their respective districts, while some districts had another new principal. The results consistently indicated that principal turnover's most considerable negative impact on student achievement (decline in gain scores) is experienced the year following the turnover (Burkhauser et al., 2012).

Arkansas' relatively high level of principal retention will provide valuable information

regarding the relationship of principals viewing their environment as supportive and their ability to persist. Gathering data in a state with a larger than average percentage of persisting principals will assist in accomplishing the long-term effect of this study (increasing student performance and personnel productivity by increasing principal retention). Guthery et al. (2022) indicated a need for research to identify the support needed to allow principals to stay due to the interference of principal turnover with their study. Suppose perceived social support and supervisor support have a significant predictive effect on principal retention. In that case, recommendations can be made, and strategic programs can be further explicitly developed targeting social and supervisor support.

### **Definition of Concepts**

The following terms will be used in this study.

- *Persisting as an administrator* refers to the sustainability and retention of the building-level administrator (Robertson, 2011).
- *Perceived social support for a building administrator* is the complex emotional, functional, and social network of relationships that provide resources comprised of someone to talk to, a sense of belonging, and help (Cohen et al., 1985; Basol, 2013).
- *Perceived supervisor support for a building administrator* consists of employees' perception of whether their managers care about and value them (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2007).
- *Perceived self-efficacy* refers to feeling the most productive, optimistic, work satisfaction, high personal accomplishment sense, and beliefs of success (Basol, 2013; Schwarzer et al., 1995; Thompson-Gray, 2019).
- *Principal attrition* is the scale to which principals leave the position (Goldring et al.,

2014).

- *Principal retention* is the extent to which a principal remains in the principal position (Branch et al., 2013).
- *Principal turnover* consists of the number of occurrences in which a school changes its principal (Beteille et al., 2012).
- *Building administrator* refers to a school leader in a building that serves students in the range of being in Kindergarten through twelfth grade (Neumerski, 2013).

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Principals are leaving their jobs and their schools at an alarming rate. This turnover in building leadership causes problems in the entire school organization. Given the limited research on factors predictive of principal attrition, this study focuses primarily on the following research question: Do higher levels of perceived social support and perceived supervisor support result in lower principal attrition when controlling for self-efficacy?

### **Scope and Limitations**

#### **Limitations**

The study's limitations will be the listserv of building administrators available from the Arkansas Department of Education Data Center. Therefore, this study is cross-sectional and cannot be used to answer causality questions. In other words, we can investigate the predictive relationships, but not causal predictive relationships (i.e., are higher levels of support causing higher principal retention?). Further, as a cross-sectional study, questions about the role of perceived social and supervisor support over time cannot be answered. Assessing perceived social and supervisor support over time could provide more insight into how principals' perceptions change and could be the focus of a future research study. This

study measures principals' self-report, which may or may not reflect actual social support and supervisor support. The current study does not directly assess how principals experience support in their daily jobs due to its reliance on self-reporting and mono-method bias.

### **Delimitations**

The delimitations provide the boundaries within which the proposed study will be conducted. The population surveyed for this study is public and charter school building administrators in Arkansas in 2022. According to the Arkansas Education Data Center, as of June 17, 2022, there are currently 1,055 building administrators (ADE, 2022). Self-reported measures are the most appropriate method for gathering the information as data that would answer the research question is unavailable. Surveying the entire population is the most appropriate method. Random selection cannot be used due to the population being studied.

### **Summary**

This chapter has stated the purpose of the proposed study and its potential contribution to the research field. Through the use of binary logistical regression, this study will ascertain if building administrators' perceptions of their environments as supportive are significantly related to their persisting in their roles. The research findings will be important for administrator training. More specifically, it will provide insights into whether two factors of perceived support (i.e., social and supervisor) are predictive of a principal's retention. These factors can be targeted through training programs and, as such, have the potential to have an immediate influence on principal retention rates. Findings may further optimize or develop by targeting the increase of perceived support, which will increase principal retention rates. Targeting support can help mitigate the high turnover in school districts and impact how the education system supports future and existing administrators. This research study's primary

purpose is to understand factors that can help increase principal retention. This study may significantly contribute as higher principal retention will result in higher student retention, academic performance, improved school performance, and less financial loss to the districts.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

The literature review that follows consists of nine sections: (a) the concept of persisting as an administrator; (b) the concept of perceived social support; (c) the concept of perceived supervisor support; (d) the concept of perceived self-efficacy; (e) the relationship between perceived support and the ability to persist; (f) the theoretical framework; (g) the research question and hypotheses; (h) the theoretical rationale; and (i) summary. The review begins by reviewing the literature related to the concepts. The concepts are then used to examine the literature, reviewing the relationships between the concepts. The Exchange Theory as the lens for understanding the concepts was reviewed. The research question is introduced with the hypotheses. The summary provides a synthesis of the information.

### Methodology

Sources were obtained through searches of five systematic databases: (a) Ebook Central, (b) ProQuest Central, (c) University of Arkansas Libraries QuickSearch, (d) ERIC (Ebsco), and (e) Google Scholar. Search terms included the following terms separately and together in differing combinations: persisting, administrators, social support, supervisor support, self-efficacy, educators, Exchange Theory, perceived organizational support, leader-member exchange, perceived social support, perceived supervisor support, dispositional resiliency, principal retention, principal turnover, principal perspective, principal attrition, principal mobility. Other sources were obtained by reviewing the references of other pertinent writings and research. At the beginning of this project, I attempted to use research less than ten years old. However, the research regarding this topic is very minimal. I expanded my search to include more dated research. These additional sources provided valuable

information regarding my topic, including how the problem has evolved.

Across the United States, 30% of public-school K-12 principals leave their position each year. This number is up to ten percent higher in districts of poverty (Beteille, 2012; Grissom et al., 2021). Principals may leave their positions for many reasons other than retirement. Styron et al. (2011) identified accountability without support as the most critical challenge identified by the principals in a survey. The identified challenge was consistent among all ages, sexes, building levels, and degrees completed (Styron et al., 2011). Aaron (2018) determined the primary reasons principals are leaving are difficulties in the position, lack of support, new job opportunities, and choosing to leave the field of education. In a study by Federici (2012), the reasons principals left the field of education completely were linked to their levels of self-efficacy, burnout, and job satisfaction.

A public-school principal's leadership establishes the work environment culture, teacher turnover rate, student achievement, and school performance (Beteille et al., 2012; Grissom et al., 2021; Guthery et al., 2022; Harbatkin et al., 2019). The Wallace Foundation reviewed 20 years of research regarding school leadership and principals' impact on schools. The research synthesis established the principals' impact as larger than anyone predicted (Grissom et al., 2021). Principal turnover has been associated with many negative consequences, including increased teacher turnover and decreased student achievement (Beteille et al., 2012; Grissom et al., 2021; Guthery et al., 2022; Harbatkin et al., 2019). Student achievement decreases by 0.01 to 0.02 standard deviations in the year following a principal change and continues for multiple years (Grissom et al., 2021; Guthery et al., 2022).

Principal resilience is essential for today's schools (Day, 2014). Research indicates that for a principal to influence change, they must stay in their district for at least five years



(Guthery et al., 2022). The average principal tenure is 3.83 years (Fullan et al., 1988; Fuller et al., 2009; Seashore-Louis et al., 2010). Goldring et al. (2014) reported on a 2012-2013 U.S. Department of Education survey that more than 70% of principals do not have five years at their present school. Unfortunately, little research exists on how to help principals remain in their positions (Aaron, 2018; Guthery et al., 2022). "There is a void in the literature that addresses principal longevity and retention...current research does not include what aspects allow building leaders to stay in challenging roles until they affect changes within a school" (Aaron, 2018, p. 41).

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Persisting as an Administrator**

Historically, some of the first discussions of principal turnover at the state level began during the 1978-1979 school year. A six-year study of the principal turnover data at the Kansas Department of Education was conducted from 1978 to 1984. The data reviewed indicated the following main reasons for principals leaving the position: accepting a promotion to the superintendent, superintendents that were also serving as principals stopped serving in that additional role, superintendents that were also acting as principals left the district, closure of schools, and consolidation of schools (Wilson, 1984).

At present, the turnover of principals is a problem at the national level (Miller, 2009). The U.S. Department of Education studied principal attrition and mobility through The Institute of Education Statistics (Goldring et al., 2018). This study was conducted via principal follow-up surveys of public and public charter K-12 school principals between 2008 and 2017. The results were consistent across the years and similar between public and public charter schools. The number of principals staying in their positions each year ranged from 71.2% to 82.5%

(Goldring et al., 2018). A study of principals in Massachusetts determined that increased academic challenges and responsibilities have decreased the number of years a principal remains in their position (Gajda, 2008). Cohorts of newly hired principals were followed in three states: New York, Illinois, and North Carolina. Fifty-four percent of the principals in New York left their position within the first four years. Seventy-nine percent of the principals left their positions in North Carolina within six years. Illinois lost 63% of its leaders within six years (Gates et al., 2006; Papa Jr., 2007). A five-year study of 180 schools revealed that high principal turnover was consistent among nine states (Leithwood et al., 2011). The reasons for turnover have changed over time, as well as the expected role of the building leader.

The role of the principal has changed drastically over time. The principal was considered a headteacher in the 1800s. The role shifted to managing budgets, employees, and discipline in the 1960s and 1970s (Hallinger, 1992; Kafka, 2009). The school reform efforts of the 1980s ushered in the age of the principal becoming the instructional expert (Clifford et al., 2012; Goodwin et al., 2005; Marzano et al., 2005). Currently, a building principal's job description is difficult to describe. Their roles can differ based on the programs, grade levels, individual needs of students, and decisions made by the school. The principal is always responsible for the professional culture, curriculum, quality of teaching, and relationships with parents and the community (Bartoletti et al., 2013; Gates et al., 2014; Habegger, 2008; Hart et al., 1995; Hull, 2012; Peterson, 1999). The responsibilities of the principal also include: analyzing data, managing staff, overseeing discipline, managing finances, inspecting facilities, overseeing contracts, compliance with regulations, following district policies, and mediating between stakeholders engaged in conflict (Davis et al., 2005; Devita, 2009). Clifford et al. (2021) reported on a survey of 188 principals during the 2020-2021 school year. The principals

indicated they spend an average of 60.5 hours per week at work. The principals reported that their roles had shifted significantly because of the international pandemic, political division, major weather events, racial violence, and calls for social justice (Clifford et al., 2021). Local educational agencies and the states use the Professional Standards of Educational Leaders (PSEL) to guide principals' work. The PSEL covers ten standards: mission, vision, and core values, ethics and professional norms, equity and cultural responsiveness, curriculum, instruction and assessment, the community of care and support for students, professional capacity of school personnel, a professional community for teachers and staff, meaningful engagement of families and community, operations and management, and school improvement (Clifford et al., 2021).

The principal determines a school's success. "There is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership" (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 14-15). Mitgang (2012) reported on a study by the Wallace Foundation that followed 180 schools in nine states for six years. The findings indicated that building leadership was the second most important predictor of student success next to teaching. However, a recent study indicated that effective teachers must have effective leaders for student success to continue (Grissom et al., 2021).

Since a building's principal determines students' academic success, recruiting and retaining talented leaders are vital to our nation's school systems (Aaron, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2004; Turnbull et al., 2009). A case study of the Loysburg School District was conducted to determine why principals are leaving or want to leave. Three main themes emerged as to why principals left or sought to leave the Loysburg School District: lack of respect and support; relationships with central administration; and increased job tasks (Daloisio, 2017). The

principals' concerns and statistics are reaching teacher leaders and hindering the recruitment of new principals. Teacher leaders are teachers who are considered the future leaders of the school. Many teacher leaders already hold the required licensure to become a principal but are choosing not to apply for the jobs (Gajda et al., 2008). Hewitt et al. (2009) reported that Arkansas teacher leaders had no interest in a principal position. The 391 teachers surveyed indicated their perception of the challenges, stress, level of responsibility, and time constraints as the reasons for not pursuing building principal positions (Hewitt et al., 2009).

Studies frequently address principal turnover instead of looking at reasons principals persist in their roles (Aaron, 2018; Guthery et al., 2022). Berry (2014) studied the organizational planning involved in assisting a new principal as the successor in the building. He discovered a trend indicating improved principal persistence when a school's staff participated in the restructuring of the principal's role. If a principal can persist in their position, they can learn to manage the challenges and gain the necessary experience to become effective school leaders (Aaron, 2018; Hull, 2012).

The concept of persisting as an administrator is defined in the literature as a set of characteristics, that slightly vary based upon the focus of the author's research. Robertson (2011) described the concept as the district's ability to sustain and retain the building-level administrators. Persisting as an administrator is also explained through personal traits such as resiliency, confidence, self-efficacy, conscientiousness, goal orientation, and the need to succeed (Johnson, 2018; Saracino, 2020). The overall theme of the literature regarding persisting as an administrator indicates that principals who have a strong reason why they perform the job (i.e., for the students, for the community, a calling) are more likely to persist. However, commitment to the role is not enough when support is lacking and the workload is

overwhelming. A five-year narrative study of two principals in two separate school districts was conducted. Both principals began the study with hope for their futures in the position. However, by the end of the study, both principals had resigned from their positions (Smit, 2017). The principals studied by Smit (2017) had solid reasons why they wanted to become principals of the schools they served, but this could not prevent them from resigning and indicating a feeling of hopelessness. The principals indicated overwhelming workloads and lack of support as their reasons for leaving. The case study of these two principals parallels the information found consistently in the literature. Principals are not persisting due to overwhelming workloads and lack of support.

### **Perceived Social Support**

Social support is comprised of a network of relationships that are complex, emotional, functional, and social. Social support is comprised of three subareas of support: appraisal support (support provided through aid and information, i.e., having someone to talk to), belonging support (social network structure, i.e., number of friends), and tangible support (perceived support and perceived acceptance by the social network) (Cohen et al., 1985). Cohen et al. (1985) developed an interpersonal support evaluation list to measure perceptions of social support.

Perceived social support for an administrator can be defined as resources provided by other persons. Social support for building administrators typically comes from many different sources: family, friends, colleagues inside and outside the school, supervisors, and the broader school community, including parents, alumni, community leaders, and school board members (Basol, 2013; Beusaert et al., 2016). During Johnson's (2018) qualitative study of ten African American male principals, he found the participants consistently credited having the support of

their family as the reason for remaining in the position and becoming successful leaders (Johnson, 2018).

Although work experience is saturated with emotion, research has generally neglected the impact of everyday emotions on work life. Ashforth (1995) conducted a study that illustrates how the perception of social support can improve motivation, leadership, and group dynamics. Relational methodologies and increased social support levels can elicit relational leadership styles, setting caring and supportive examples for teachers and learners and decreasing burnout (Basol, 2013; Smit, 2018). In a mixed-method study to investigate the most effective proactive behaviors to improve organizational socialization of K-12 principals, Nobili (2018) found that principals repeatedly expressed the importance of establishing positive relationships with staff. Relationship building was seen as a critical mechanism for growing the school culture and creating opportunities for principals to distribute some of their responsibilities to trusted insiders.

School culture consists of how the staff treat and support each other. Building school culture also includes improving relationships with the community, students, and parents. Therefore, better school culture leads to better support (Wagner, 2006). During a study of administrators with at least two years of experience in high-performing poverty schools, the researchers found that successful administrators "were unintentionally intentional about building a positive school culture" (Garcia-Velasquez, 2019, p.163). Wagner (2006) developed a tool to allow school leaders to assess and improve their school culture. He emphasized that how people treat and value one another, share their teaching strategies, and support one another is important in today's schools. Relational vitality with students, parents, the community, and especially with one another is the foundation for healthy school culture

and maximizing student learning. (p. 44)

Social support appears in many different forms and impacts all areas of our lives. The research indicates that social support improves physical health, mental health, productivity, and overall life satisfaction. Lack of social support leads to behaviors of self-isolation which causes a vicious cycle of less social interaction. Administrators provide social support to stakeholders, students, and staff members. The administrators suffer when they do not have a supportive social environment for themselves. Goldring et al. (2018) reported on principal survey data between 2008 and 2017. The number of principals leaving their positions ranged between 17.5% and 28.8% each year. The numbers were consistent despite poverty levels, school size, discipline reports, and job responsibilities (Goldring et al., 2018). The survey data did not measure the principals' perceived levels of social support.

### *Appraisal Support*

Appraisal support is a component of social support that represents the network that provides advice, listens to concerns, and offers support to cope with professional problems (Alvy, 1983; Cohen et al., 1985). People in many workplace settings report greater job satisfaction when collaborating with others (appraisal support). The workers receiving the appraisal support have a stronger sense of efficacy, increased optimism about their ability to achieve improved outcomes, created links to outside agencies, and are more optimistic about meeting new demands (Leithwood et al., 2011).

Principals must be given opportunities to have sustained collaboration with other principals. This collaboration occurs naturally through attending events such as workshops, institutes, and seminars (Weinstein et al., 2009). Aaron (2018) conducted a qualitative study of principals that had persisted for at least five years in Ohio. These principals consistently

reported that their districts valued their professional and personal growth by paying for professional memberships and conferences that allowed them to network with other leaders. In a qualitative study conducted by Johnson (2018) of ten African American male principals, the researcher asked the participants how they "remained resilient when experiencing challenges that could hinder their success" (Johnson, 2018, p. 94). Eighty percent of the participants credited their professional network of colleagues for their ability to remain resilient in their positions (Johnson, 2018).

Principal mentorship programs are an avenue that can provide appraisal support from a colleague. Beusaert et al. (2016) conducted a longitudinal study to identify the causes of principal stress and burnout. The discovered theme indicated that the more appraisal supports a principal receives from colleagues, the less stress and burnout they experience. Unfortunately, many principals do not have professional peers with similar responsibilities in their immediate environment. A lack of professional peers in their immediate environment makes it difficult to find peers that can offer support to cope with professional problems (Alvy, 1983; Smit, 2017). Principals who have been assigned mentors reported higher job satisfaction and more enthusiasm for their careers. Principals who reported enthusiasm for their job were likelier to stay (Beusaert et al., 2016; Berry, 2014).

### ***Belonging Support***

Belonging support represents companionship and acceptance. This type of support includes receiving invitations to do things with others and having social companions that will participate in outings. Belonging support is a feeling of acceptance and opportunities to participate with colleagues (Cohen et al., 1985). Educators in an environment of belonging support indicated they feel like they are part of the school environment (Langher et al., 2017;



Ritchey, 2021).

During a four-year longitudinal study, Beusaert et al. (2016) discovered what happens when employees believe they belong. The findings indicated that employees working in an environment viewed as more family-supportive experience lower Work-Family Conflict (WFC) levels. Reduced WFC translates into greater job and family satisfaction and overall life satisfaction (Beusaert et al., 2016). These findings were generalizable across five samples of teachers. However, this same study found different responses for principals. The more a principal feels they belong to the community, the higher their stress level and risk of burnout. The researchers explained this as the "downside of empathy" (Beusaert et al., 2016, p. 360). When principals are strongly connected to their community, the community's struggles will become the principal's struggles (Beusaert et al., 2016).

### ***Tangible Support***

Tangible support systems provide help. This form of support includes physical help with tasks, chores, and help during times of crisis. In a medical study investigating the role of tangible support on health outcomes, the researchers found that perceived unmet tangible support needs were associated with worse health status. Unmet tangible support needs had a more significant impact on health status than isolation (O'Connor et al., 2019).

Tangible support may also provide help by providing information in the form of advice, guidance, or other helpful information (Cohen et al., 1985). Incantalupo-Kuhner (2015) found that educators who provide and receive tangible support have the most dispositional resiliency. Henderson et al. (2003) defined principal resiliency as "the capacity to spring back, rebound, successfully adapt in the face of adversity, and develop social, academic, and vocational competence despite exposure to severe stress or simply to the stress that is inherent in today's

world" (p. 7). Experienced and successful K-12 principals use knowledge and skills when conducting informal classroom walkthroughs and provide feedback to teachers. This tangible feedback support improved classroom instruction and student achievement (Hammit, 2014).

### **Perceived Supervisor Support**

Perceived supervisor support is employees' perception of whether their managers care about and value them (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2007). At the organizational level, supervisor support refers to the mechanisms or opportunities to promote a sense of connectedness (Bauer et al., 2013). If the emotional requirements of a job are not balanced with the support provided by the organization, the worker will begin to feel threatened and experience a loss of purpose. Lack of perceived supervisor support can cause Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms and emotional effects similar to those experienced by military veterans (Ashforth, 1993; Sugrue, 2020). K-12 professionals experiencing a lack of supervisor support in the workplace exhibited guilt, troubled conscience, burnout, and the intention to leave their job.

Emotional safety at work is imperative for a healthy job force (Ashforth, 1993; Sugrue, 2020). The building administrators are primarily responsible for ensuring employees, parents, and students feel safe (Bozonelos, 2008; Cancio, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2008). Building administrators must create an environment that teachers perceive as supportive supervision through ongoing personnel appraisals, such as frequent and constructive feedback about their performance, information about what constitutes effective teaching, and clear guidelines regarding job responsibilities. This type of leadership exemplifies a commitment to helping followers develop to their fullest potential rather than an accumulation of power for the leader.

Building administrators are responsible for understanding and developing people.

An effective principal's primary aim is building not only the knowledge and skills that teachers and other staff need to accomplish organizational goals but also the dispositions (commitment, capacity, and resilience) to persist in applying the knowledge and skills. Administrators who excel in creating an environment perceived as supportive improve their staff's motivation. (Bozonelos, 2008; Cancio, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2008).

Relationships are based on back-and-forth interactions between individuals. The imbalance of social exchanges is caused by unilateral interactions, which causes one member to project superior status. When principals provide their staff with high levels of support but do not receive it themselves, they experience unilateral interactions. This imbalance can cause the principals to elevate the needs of students, teachers, staff, parents, and the greater community above their own, often to their detriment (Taylor, 2021). Not all principals have a superior willing to listen to their problems at work (Beusaert et al., 2016). These administrators eventually feel the effects of this lack of support, leading to frequently changing jobs or leaving the field entirely.

The research reviewed indicates a lack of supervisor support for building administrators. Honig (2012) found that previous work in educational leadership has barely explored job-embedded professional supports for school principals' learning, let alone how executive-level central office staff might participate as primary agents. In an early study, new principals perceived a lack of assistance in over 40% of their problems (Witty, 1972). Farkas et al. (2001) found the same theme almost 30 years later. According to the research on why principals are leaving, district office support of principals is an area many schools lack. Although pressure on school and district leaders is increasing, the level of support (professional development and expertise) extended to them has remained constant or has

declined (Farkas et al., 2001). State- and district-level policymakers need to strategically determine how states can provide support, not just pressure, for implementation (Leithwood et al., 2011).

Research has shown that principal turnover is reduced when district offices support their principals with staffing, maintenance, community, parents, and political pressures (Bottoms et al., 2009). The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) conducted focus groups with 188 principals during the spring of 2021. The principals made recommendations to improve principal preparation, professional development, and supervision. Each recommendation involved professional learning networks, social support, and supervisor support (Clifford et al., 2021). Amancio (2019) conducted a qualitative study by interviewing seven Latina women who were or had been principals of K-12 schools. The findings indicated a theme of barriers, including lack of supervisor support and lack of mentors. Amancio (2019) also asked the participants to describe any factors contributing to their leadership role success. The immediate answer was formal and informal mentoring support. In Aaron's (2018) study of principals who stayed at least five years, she found that they had strong and positive relationships with their leaders. Two separate studies reported by Honig (2012) and Sanders (2014) investigated how some schools attempt to change the current reality that district leaders often expect a great deal from principals without providing the resources and support necessary to meet these expectations. Central offices in some districts were trying to shift not simply their organizational charts and stated priorities but also their day-to-day work to provide job-embedded support for principals' development as instructional leaders. These districts did so by elevating such principal support to an executive-level responsibility. Providing support to the principals improved buy-in of reform programs (Honig, 2012; Sanders, 2014).

Principals have faced even more significant challenges in the last two years since the COVID 19 Pandemic began. Clifford et al. (2021) interviewed principals to determine how the profession had changed within the last year. Principals indicated a disruption to the work-life balance due to working from home. Many principals indicated that their central offices and stakeholders understood the challenges for the first half of the 2020 calendar year. Then, the understanding mentality diminished when the 2020-2021 school year began. The overall theme was summed up in a quote from one of the principals interviewed:

[At] the beginning of the year, we were in ‘survival mode,’ and people were sympathetic to it. Parents and fellow administrators in our central office were like, ‘We’re just going to let you try and get your building organized and get it done.’ Well, since we came back [in] the second half of the year, it’s like, ‘Yeah, we understand it’s a pandemic, but. . . .’ So they’re trying to cram in all this in the next few months.

(Clifford et al., 2021, p. 4).

### **Perceived Self-efficacy**

The concept of perceived self-efficacy for an administrator is explained as feeling the most productive, optimistic, work satisfaction, high personal accomplishment sense, and success beliefs (Basol, 2013; Schwarzer, 1995; Thompson-Gray, 2019). People in many workplace settings report that when they collaborate with others, they have a stronger sense of efficacy (Leithwood et al., 2011).

Bandura et al. (1977) described people with high self-efficacy as individuals that set higher goals and had firmer commitments to their plans. He developed the concept of self-efficacy as a cognitive mechanism that regulates behavior (Bandura, 1994). Bandura (1994) explained that regulated behavior is evidenced by goal setting and planning. Bandura et al.

(1977) asserted that self-efficacy could be strengthened through social modeling, social persuasion, and mastery experiences. According to Bandura (1994), self-efficacy is a trait developed through social modeling, described as watching others navigate through circumstances and difficulties. Social persuasion is described as a self-fulfilling prophecy of others believing that a person's success increases their chances for success. Bandura (1994) affirms the necessity of failed attempts and accomplishing mastery of tasks after trial and error as imperative to developing self-efficacy.

Medley (1977) was one of the first to implement the idea of self-efficacy in education. He studied self-efficacy as it is related to teacher effectiveness. He contended that previous studies of teaching effectiveness had not bothered to consider the teacher's motivation or the contextual situation (Medley, 1977). Ashton (1986) linked teachers' sense of self-efficacy to student achievement. They gathered data on the factors contributing to a teacher's sense of efficacy and the relationship of that perception to teaching performance and student achievement. As teachers model overcoming obstacles in the presence of students, they teach students to keep persevering. In other words, teachers that are learning create students that are learning. Ashton (1986) gathered data on the factors contributing to a teacher's sense of efficacy and the relationship of that perception to teaching performance and student achievement.

Given the principals' responsibilities for their teachers' work environment and students' outcomes, they should perceive themselves as efficacious and autonomous to deal efficiently with constraints and work-related tasks. Federici's (2013) study of 1,818 principals demonstrated the importance of principals' self-efficacy concerning perceived job autonomy, job satisfaction, and perceived contextual constraints to autonomy. Principals with high self-

efficacy were likelier to experience more job autonomy under the same restrictions than those with a weak sense of efficacy. Administrators will have more positive job satisfaction when they can cope successfully (Federici, 2013). Aaron (2018) interviewed principals that attributed their increased self-efficacy to their supervisor's support of their leadership style.

### **Relationship between Perceived Support and the Ability to Persist**

While there is much research regarding serving children and supporting teachers in schools, there is much less research regarding how principals persist and what mechanisms or social supports they have in place that allow them to remain in their school setting (Aaron, 2018). The research reviewed in this study indicates a trend that principals with high self-efficacy can persist more frequently in all environments (Aaron, 2018; Ashton, 1986; Basol, 2013; Federici, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2011; Schwarzer, 1995; Thompson-Gray, 2019). In addition, previous research indicates that people with high levels of self-efficacy persist longer under challenging circumstances and that self-efficacy can become stronger over time (Bandura, 1994). It has been shown that principals in supportive environments have improved self-efficacy (Aaron, 2018; Federici, 2013).

Controlling for self-efficacy will promote the study of the unique effects of supportive environments on principals' abilities to persist. This control variable will allow me to investigate, in isolation, whether perceived levels of support are predictive of persistence regardless of one's self-efficacy. According to the reviewed research, administrators that are leaving named job stressors and lack of support as reasons for leaving. Consequently, research evidence suggests a positive predictive relationship between perceived support and the ability to persist. In other words, a positive predictive relationship between perceived support and the ability to persist is to be anticipated after controlling for perceived self-efficacy. Evaluating this predictive relationship

is my primary research interest and will be investigated in my proposed study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study explores the relationship between the perception of supportive environments on building administrators' ability to persist. Therefore, a theoretical framework developed to explain the power of the exchange of communication on human behavior (Refer to Figure 1) has been chosen. Blau (1964) developed the Exchange Theory in sociology in the 1960s. The reciprocity of social exchanges is based on a cost-benefit analysis regarding the give and take between at least two people. The imbalance of social exchanges is caused by unilateral interactions, which causes one member to project superior status.

The Exchange Theory explains human social interaction expectations as a need to receive more from the interaction than is expected. Therefore, each time a person decides about social interaction, they conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the proposed interaction (Blau, 1964; 1986; 2017). The Exchange Theory is critical as the lens of this study because it focuses on how human social interactions relate to trust, perception, and commitment. This theory will be used to determine the effect of perceived support on building administrators' ability to persist. The Exchange Theory is used as a general framework to investigate my research question, which is listed in the following section.

The Exchange Theory explains the social exchange relations in terms of only the interactions or the past and expected future interactions. This theory observes the impact of the interactions by excluding the impact of background, character traits, or motivations. Blau (1964; 1986; 2017) assumes that two conditions must be met for behavior to lead to social exchange. The task can only be achieved through social interaction, and the performance of the task will be improved through social interaction. Blau (1964) used the theory to explain the

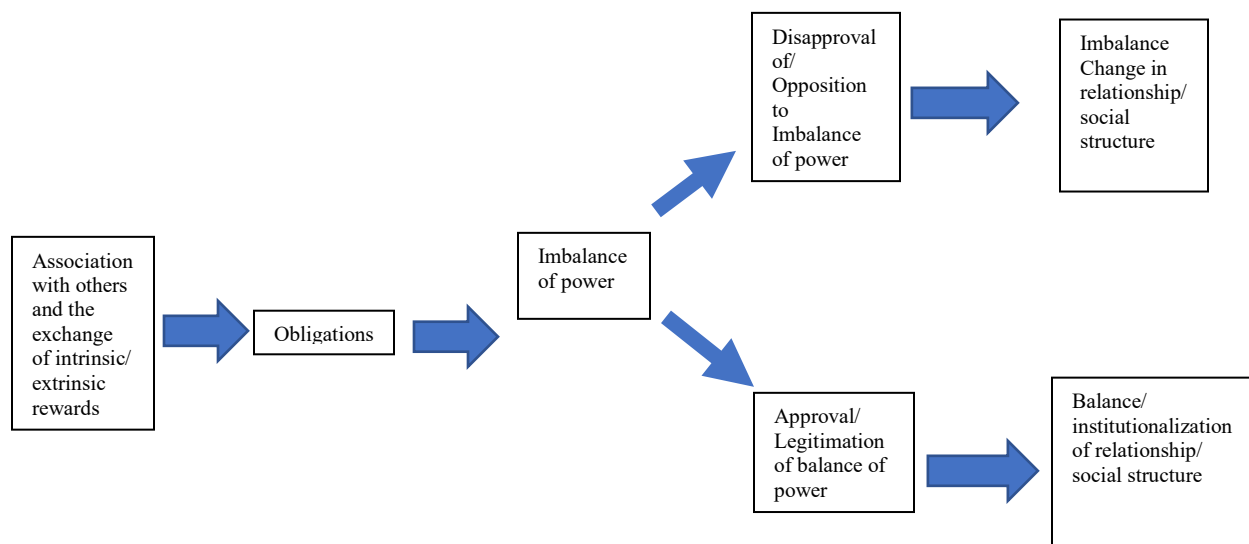


impact of perceived support from superiors on the individuals being led.

Previous studies have used the Exchange Theory as a lens for studying human social interactions (Afzal et al., 2019; Wayne et al., 1997). Wayne et al. (1997) used the Exchange Theory to determine the effect leader-member exchange had on perceived organizational support and perceived support from immediate superiors. The study determined that leader-member exchange strongly affected perceived organizational support. Afzal et al. (2019) studied the relationship of perceived supervisor support with turnover intention and task performance for professors at a private university in an undeveloped nation. This research study used the frameworks of social learning theory and social exchange theory (Afzal et al., 2019).

### **Figure 1**

#### *Blau's Model of Exchange and the Structure of Social Relations*



*Note.* Adapted from “Sociological Theory in the Contemporary Era: Text and Readings” by Applerouth, S. & Edles, L.D. 2007, Page 139.

### ***Research Question***

The following research question guides this study.

Do higher levels of perceived social support and perceived supervisor support result in lower principal attrition when controlling for self-efficacy?

To answer this question, I propose two hypotheses.

***Hypothesis 1.*** Controlling for perceived self-efficacy and perceived social support, there is a positive relationship between perceived supervisor support and persistence.

***Hypothesis 2.*** Controlling for perceived self-efficacy and perceived supervisor support, there is a positive relationship between perceived social support and persistence.

***Theoretical Rationale.*** Principals elevate the needs of students, teachers, staff, parents, and the greater community before (and often to the detriment of) their personal needs (Taylor, 2021). The reciprocity of social exchanges is based on a cost-benefit analysis regarding the give and take between at least two people (Blau, 1964). The lack of perceived supervisor support may be related to some of the primary reasons principals list for not persisting in their role: lack of respect, support, and poor relationship with central office staff (Daloisio, 2017). Therefore, I assume that higher levels of perceived supervisor support result in increased administrators' persistence.

Previous work in educational leadership has barely explored job-embedded professional supports for school principals' learning, let alone how executive-level central office staff might participate as primary agents in that work (Honig, 2012). Although pressure on school and district leaders is increasing, the level of support (professional development and expertise) extended to them has remained constant or has even declined in some instances (Leithwood et al., 2011).

Principals with high self-efficacy were likelier to experience more job autonomy under the same restrictions than those with a weak sense of efficacy (Federici, 2013). Bandura has asserted that self-efficacy can be strengthened (Bandura et al., 1977). Controlling for self-efficacy will determine the impact of supportive environments on persistence despite psychological traits. Since self-efficacy can be strengthened, a supportive environment could improve persistence as the trait of self-efficacy is developed.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I have reviewed the literature regarding persisting as an administrator, perceived social support, perceived supervisor support, and perceived self-efficacy. This chapter has stated the research question and hypotheses related to the study. The Exchange Theory has been introduced as the theoretical framework guiding the study. If the emotional requirements of a job are not balanced with the support provided by the organization, the worker will begin to feel threatened and experience a loss of purpose. K–12 administrators experiencing this in the workplace exhibited guilt, troubled conscience, burnout, and the intention to leave their job (Ashforth et al., 1993; Sugrue, 2020). Principals with high self-efficacy were likelier to experience more job autonomy under the same restrictions than those with a weak sense of efficacy (Federici, 2013). Controlling for self-efficacy will allow for more focused research on the impact of supportive environments on building administrators' ability to persist.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

The purpose of this study is to investigate the predictive relationship between perceived support levels and job persistence after controlling for perceived self-efficacy for building administrators in Arkansas Public and Charter Schools using binary logistic regression analysis. This analysis technique allows me to investigate the functional relationship between independent variables (either categorical or continuous) with a binary dependent variable (i.e., persist or not persist). This study investigates the effect of perceived supportive environments on building administrators job persistence independent of how much they believe in themselves. After the data has been collected and analyzed for this study, I will make recommendations to improve persistence by indicating the support needed for administrators regardless of their level of self-efficacy (which is a trait that can be changed over time but not immediately). This chapter will start by revisiting the research question and hypotheses. Then, the details of the study will be described using the following topics: the study design, study setting, and participant information. In addition, an overview of the data collection process will be provided, including a discussion of the instruments, a plan for data collection, data analysis, reliability, and validity.

#### Research Question and Hypotheses

Do higher levels of perceived social support and perceived supervisor support result in lower principal attrition, when controlling for self-efficacy?

*Hypothesis 1.* Controlling for perceived self-efficacy and perceived social support, there is a positive relationship between perceived supervisor support and persistence.

$$H_0: b_1 = 0$$

$$H_1: b_1 \neq 0$$

**Hypothesis 2.** Controlling for perceived self-efficacy and perceived supervisor support, there is a positive relationship between perceived social support and persistence.

H<sub>0</sub>:  $b_2 = 0$

H<sub>2</sub>:  $b_2 \neq 0$

## Methods

### Study Design

The study will utilize cross-sectional survey data (data collected at one point in time) from building administrators in Arkansas school districts. The study will be cross-sectional because I am not interested in making causal inferences at this time. Surveying the entire population is the most appropriate method to determine if a relationship exists between perceiving the environment as supportive and a principal's ability to persist. Since very little research exists regarding this issue, the best choice for the study design is cross-sectional. Arkansas' building administrators' names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses will be obtained from the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). A brief survey will be distributed electronically via Qualtrics (2022) to all building administrators of public and charter schools in Arkansas (See Appendix B).

### Study Setting

This study will seek survey responses from all K-12 building level administrators of public and public charter schools in Arkansas. This study will not include assistant principals. Arkansas is the basis for this study because 23% of building administrators in Arkansas are persisting ten years or longer in their current school. This statistic is over double the national average and the second-highest state rate in the nation (NCES, 2018), which will provide me with a better data sample. If social support and/or supervisor support are found to be significant

predictors for a principal's persistency, then measures can be taken to improve these supports for existing principals.

Arkansas is a prime setting for this study, and it is coming with impeccable timing. Arkansas has schools with the opportunity, funding, and leadership to continue setting and achieving goals. The state also has schools that do not have the consistency, leadership, or access to the tools they need. Often, this disparity exists depending on the district's wealth or poverty level. The U.S. News and World Report (2021) investigated each state's K-12 public education data (i.e., graduation rate, college readiness, math and reading score on assessments, preschool availability). According to the report's compilation of data, Arkansas public and public charter schools rank 38th in the nation for education. The state does not exhibit tremendous results, but a few public schools rank nationally. Arkansas is the fifth state in the nation with the highest poverty rate (Center for American Progress, 2022). During his 2021 State of the State Address, Governor Asa Hutchinson (2021) addressed these concerns by urging the legislature to focus on issues to support and provide education fairly across the state. During a recent legislative session, Arkansas passed an act to amend Arkansas Code § 6-17-1901 to begin focusing on teacher and administrator retention in addition to the recruitment language (Act 646, 202).

The law, as amended, states that all school districts and open-enrollment charter schools must prepare and post to their website by August 1st of each year a three (3) year Teacher and Administrator Recruitment and Retention Plan. (Act 646, 2021)

### **Participants and Placement**

The specific population that will be studied are principals of public and public charter schools in the state of Arkansas. The principals will range from serving Kindergarten through twelfth-grade students. Some school campuses offer preschool services within their elementary

or primary school buildings. If the principal also serves school-age students, they will be included.

According to the Arkansas Education Data Center, as of June 17, 2022, there are 1,055 building-level administrators of K-12 public and charter schools in Arkansas (ADE, 2022). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that the demographics of principals in the state of Arkansas in 2017-2018 were: 89% white, 58.2% female, the median age was 48 years, and the average age was 49 years (NCES, 2018). An effort will be made to include administrators of all races, sexes, and ages in this study.

Per the power analysis using G\*Power 3.1.9.7, the analyses will need at least 259 participants to conduct a proper logistic regression (see Figure 2). I assumed that the probability for persisting, given there is no effect, = 0.5. Then, I assumed an increase of 0.05 if there is an effect. In other words, we are looking into the power to detect an increase of 0.05. This results in an odds ratio of 1.5. I set the alpha level to a value of .05 and the power to .80. The proportion of explained variability for the other variables is set to a small value of 0.20 ( $R^2$  - 20%). Then I assumed that the distribution of the independent variables follows a normal distribution with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. Given these parameter values, a sample size of 259 would be sufficient. I prefer to over-sample by 20%, so striving for a sample size of 310.8 or about 311 (Faul et al., 2009; Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, 2021). An alpha value of .05 was used to conduct the power analysis. This alpha value indicates that I will have a 5% or less chance of a type I error (false positive). Setting the statistical power to .80 allows me to have at least an 80% chance of finding statistical significance if the effect does indeed exist. This power value helps prevent a type II error rate (false-negative result). See Appendix C for Figure C1 for a picture of the power analysis.

## Materials

Qualtrics (2022) will be used to conduct the survey. The survey will consist of five parts: a question asking the administrator their number of years as a leader in their current school; a question asking the administrator if they remained in their position from the previous year; asking the administrator to rate themselves on the ten questions Likert-type General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE); asking the administrator to rate their environment on the 12 questions Likert-type interpersonal support evaluation scale; asking the administrator to rate their environment on the 16 questions Likert-type Survey of Perceived Supervisor Support (SPSS) (See Appendix B).

The perceptions of social support will be measured using a shortened version of the original Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL) (See Appendix B). This questionnaire has three subscales designed to measure three dimensions of perceived social support. These dimensions are appraisal support, belonging support, and tangible support. Each dimension is measured by four items on a four-point scale ranging from "Definitely True" to "Definitely False" (Cohen, 1985). Perceptions of social support and their subscales are determined through scoring for the items as follows: items 1, 2, 7, 8, 11, and 12 are reverse scored; items 2, 4, 6, and 11 make up the Appraisal Support subscale items 1, 5, 7, 9 make up the Belonging Support subscale; items 3, 8, 10, 12 make up the Tangible Support subscale. All scores are kept continuous. The participant will receive instructions for completing the scale (See Appendix B). The participant responses for each subscale will be totaled and averaged to create an overall perceived social support score. A community within the National Institutes of Health conducted a study to determine the validity of the ISEL in 1989. This same community, Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC), replicated this study for the ISEL shortened version in 2012. The



scale was confirmed valid (Payne et al., 2012). Payne et al. (2012) determined high reliability by calculating Cronbach's alpha as 0.83. Confirmatory Factor Analysis confirmed the validity of the ISEL shortened version with a goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.92 (Payne et al., 2012).

The perceptions of supervisor support will be measured using the Perceived Supervisor Support Scale (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 2002). Perceived Supervisor Support will be measured with 16 items (See Appendix B), such as "It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to," "My work supervisor really cares about my well-being," "My manager supports my professional growth and development," and "I do not feel a strong sense of 'belonging' to my organization." The response format for the survey items consists of a Likert-type scale of agreement where (SD = Strongly Disagree(1), D = Disagree(2), N = Neutral(3), A = Agree(4), SA = Strongly Agree(5). Participant responses will be totaled and averaged. The points possible from participant responses will be 16-80. The final sum of points will be divided by 16 (the number of survey items) to create an overall perceived supervisor support score ranging from 1 to 5. Higher scores indicate that participants perceive their supervisors to be more supportive. Cronbach  $\alpha$  was .89, indicating high reliability of the scale, and the goodness of fit index was 0.96 indicating the instrument as valid (Eisenberger et al., 2002).

The perception of self-efficacy will be measured using the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) (Schwarzer, 1995). The response format for the survey consists of a Likert-type scale where (1 = Not at all true, 2 = Hardly true, 3 = Moderately true, 4 = Exactly true). The GSE (See Appendix B) will measure responses to 10 statements, such as: "I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort." "I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities." "When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions." The participant responses will be totaled and averaged to create an overall perceived

self-efficacy score. The points possible from participant responses will be 10-40. The final sum of points will be divided by 10 (the number of survey items) to create an overall perceived self-efficacy score ranging from 1 to 4. The higher the number, the higher the perceived level of self-efficacy. The mean score in many samples has been around 2.9 (Schwarzer, 1995). Its authors have validated the GSE in over 30 countries and languages (Kusurkar, 2013). The Cronbach's alpha for 25 nations is .86, indicating high reliability. The goodness of fit index for the GSE was completed for the results from 13 countries. The GFI was .98, which indicates the instrument is valid (Scholz et al., 2002).

### **Measures**

The independent variable perceived social support will be defined as appraisal support, belonging support, and tangible support. The ISEL will provide scores for each area of support (appraisal, belonging, and tangible) as well as an overall perceived social support scale.

The independent variable perceived supervisor support will be defined as employee assessments of whether their managers care about them and value their work. Each participant's Perceived Supervisor Support Scale will obtain a single score for this variable.

The dependent variable persistence will be defined as a binary variable: the respondents are either persisting or not. This information will be measured by asking, "Are you persisting in the same role you had last year?" The answer options are "yes" or "no."

The control variable of perception of the level of self-efficacy will be defined as perceived optimistic self-beliefs to cope with various challenging demands in life. The belief that one's actions are responsible for successful outcomes. This variable will be measured through the use of the GSE.

## **Data Collection**

The data will be collected using the survey instruments described previously. Survey responses from K-12 building administrators of public and charter schools in Arkansas will be collected using Qualtrics software, Version [XM] Copyright © [2022]. The survey will be distributed electronically via a hyperlink; respondents will choose answers using radio button selections within the survey. The survey is expected to take less than 15 minutes to complete and will be immediately collected and coded via the survey software. To increase participation, the first page of the survey will explain that upon completion, they will receive a coupon code for a free meal at a restaurant chain in Arkansas (See Appendix A). The end of the survey page on Qualtrics (2022) will be edited to redirect the participant to a URL that provides them with a coupon code to use to redeem their free meal as a reward for completing the survey. The survey collection window will be open from January 10, 2023, through March 1, 2023. The initial survey email will be sent on January 10, 2023. I will send a reminder to complete the survey electronically on January 25, 2023. After two attempts to obtain the survey electronically, if I have not reached the desired n, I will send a third reminder.

## **Data Analysis**

A binary logistic regression analysis will be used to estimate the odds that K-12 building administrators of public and public charter schools in Arkansas persist versus not persist in their job using the variables perceived social support and supervisor support (after controlling for perceived self-efficacy). Binary logistic regression analysis can determine the extent to which quantitative variables predict the likelihood of one level of a binary outcome (i.e., persisting). Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) Version 27 will be used to run the analysis. The dependent variable is binary because the questions' options are either yes or no,

whereas the independent variables are interval scaled variables.

This study will seek to determine the effect that perceiving their environments as supportive has on building administrators' persistence despite how much they believe in themselves. The binary logistic regression model, including the variables of interest, is as follows:

$$Persistence_i = b_0 + b_1Social_{1i} + b_2Socialtangible_{2i} + b_3Socialappraisal_{3i} + b_4Socialbelonging_{4i} + b_5Supervisor_{5i} + b_6Efficacy_{6i} + \varepsilon_i(1)$$

In which  $Y_i$  is  $Persistence_i$  and is the observed outcome score for participant  $i$ , and  $b_n$  is the regression coefficient of the corresponding variable  $X_n$ .  $b_1, b_2, b_3, b_4,$  and  $b_5$  indicate the relationships between social (tangible, appraisal, belonging) and supervisor support with the outcome variable  $Y_i$  expressed in log odds. The parameter  $b_6$  is the relationship between the controlling variable self-efficacy and the outcome expressed in log odds.

In logistic regression, instead of predicting the value of a variable  $Y$  from a predictor variable  $X_1$  or several predictor variables ( $X_s$ ), we predict the log odds of  $Y$  occurring given known values of  $X_1$  (or  $X_s$ ). Applied to this study, the binary logistic regression is a way of predicting the fit of the model from which the log odds of persisting ( $Y$ ) is predicted by:

$$\ln\left(\frac{1}{1-p}\right) = b_0 + b_1Social_{1i} + b_2Socialtangible_{2i} + b_3Socialappraisal_{3i} + b_4Socialbelonging_{4i} + b_5Supervisor_{5i} + b_6Efficacy_{6i} + b_nX_{ni} + \varepsilon_i(2)$$

Binary logistic regression is needed because the outcome variable, persistence, is categorical. A linear regression model is not valid as one of the assumptions of this model is that the predictive relationships between each of the independent variables (i.e., perceived levels of support and self-efficacy) and the dependent variable (i.e., persistency) is linear. Therefore, expressing the multiple linear regression equation in logarithm terms as displayed in Model 2 is

needed. The logarithm transformation expresses a non-linear relationship in a linear way, and this overcomes the problem of violating the assumption of linearity.

Once the data has been gathered, the log odds will be put into an equation to provide an interpretation of conditional probability. Equation 3,  $P(Persistence_i)$  indicates the probability that a principal is persisting.

$$P(Persistence_i) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(b_0 + b_1 Social_1 i + b_2 Socialtangible_2 i + b_3 Socialappraisal_3 i + b_4 Socialbelonging_4 i + b_5 Supervisor_5 i + b_6 Efficacy_6 i + b_n X_n i)}} \quad (3)$$

Therefore, the resulting value from the equation varies between 0 and 1. A value close to 0 means that persistency is very unlikely to have occurred, and a value close to 1 means that persistency is very likely to have occurred. Like linear regression, each predictor variable in the logistic regression equation has its own coefficient. When I run the analysis, I will look into the significance of the coefficients for social support ( $b_1, b_2, b_3, b_4$ ) and supervisor support ( $b_5$ ). The values of the parameters will be estimated using maximum-likelihood estimation, which selects coefficients that make the observed values most likely to have occurred.

In sum, the logistic regression model introduced in this study will be used to predict the probability of persisting for a given principal,  $P(Persistence_i)$ , based on data of whether or not the principal persisted,  $Persistence_i$ . In other words, for a given principal,  $Persistence_i$  will be either 0 (the outcome did not occur) or 1 (the outcome did occur). The predicted value,  $P(Persistence_i)$ , will be a value between 0 (there is no chance that the outcome will occur) and 1 (the outcome will certainly occur).

Logistic regression analysis is performed using parametric tests. These tests are completed with the assumption that the data gathered comes from a population that is normally distributed. Violation of the assumptions will change the interpretations of the data and the

results of the study. The assumptions for logistic regression are: (1) binary outcome, (2) linearity of independent variables and log-odds, (3) absence of extreme outliers, (4) absence of multicollinearity, (5) observations are independent, (6) large enough sample size. After gathering the data from this study, I will need to confirm that the data has the characteristics needed to prove the assumptions are met. The binary outcome assumption is met for this study because the responses available for the respondents are either yes or no. The linearity of the independent variables and log-odds will be checked by using a Box-Tidwell test. I will check for extreme outliers by calculating a Cook's distance for each observation. Multicollinearity will be checked by using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The independence of the observations will be confirmed by tracking the respondents as they are only allowed to submit one survey. According to my power analysis, my sample size must 259. (Figure C1 in Appendix C). This assumption will be met upon reaching that number of respondents.

### **Internal and External Validity**

This study has the potential to have an internal validity threat of selection bias. The building administrators that choose to complete the study may be more likely to have strong emotions related to their experience as an administrator. Confounding bias is another internal validity threat for this study. I will be studying two independent variables, one dependent variable, and one control variable. A separate variable that I am not studying could influence the outcome.

Threats to external validity include applying the findings to populations outside the field of K-12 administration of public and charter schools in the state of Arkansas. The second external validity threat for this study may be the situation effect, such as the time of day or point of the school year. The time of day the participant completes the survey cannot be controlled, but

the survey will be sent to everyone at the same point of the school year, which will make the results consistent among the population.

### **Summary**

This chapter has provided explanations of the process that will be used to collect and analyze the data related to this logistic regression study. To examine the effect of perceived social support and perceived supervisor support on the ability to persist after controlling for self-efficacy for K-12 building administrators in Arkansas Public and Charter Schools. The materials that will be used have been described along with data to support why the materials were chosen. This study will strive to understand how supportive environments impact the probability of Arkansas' K-12 building administrators persisting in their roles. The statistical reports, data, and equations have been explained to determine how well the proposed models work to determine the probability of persisting.

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## Appendix A

### Letter

Dear <First Name>:

I am writing to request your participation in a survey of Principals in the state of Arkansas.

This study aims to determine if social support and supervisor support have a statistically significant predictive effect on principal's retention. If these variables are found to be statistically significant, then recommendations can be made, and specific programs can be further developed specifically targeting social support and supervisor support.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you may opt-out of any question in the survey. All of your responses will be kept confidential. They will only be used for statistical purposes and will be reported only in aggregated form.

The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

**To participate, please click on the following link:  
[survey link]**

Upon completion of the survey, you will receive a coupon code for a free meal at a Sonic restaurant in the state of Arkansas.

If you have any questions about this survey, or difficulty in accessing the site or completing the survey, please contact Jill A. LaRosa [larosa@uark.edu](mailto:larosa@uark.edu)

Thank you in advance for providing this important feedback.

The survey is being conducted using Qualtrics, a cloud-based software that stores data on secure servers in Ireland.

IRB approval will be added here.

Sincerely,

Jill A. LaRosa

## Appendix B

### Survey

#### Demographic Information:

1. Name\_\_
2. Age: \_\_
3. Sex: M F
4. Race: White  
Black or African American  
American Indian  
Asian  
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander  
Hispanic or Latino
5. Are you persisting in the same role you had last year?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_Yes\_\_\_\_\_No
6. If yes, how many years have you been in your leadership position in your current school?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Perceived Supervisor Support Survey

There are a series of 16 statements below. Please read each statement and decide how much you agree or disagree with each statement. When you have chosen your answer, please circle the appropriate letters to the right of each statement. *Please answer as honestly as possible and circle only one answer per statement.*

If you are in a new position this year, please answer these questions based on your setting last year.

SD = Strongly Disagree D = Disagree N = Neutral A = Agree SA = Strongly Agree

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- |   |    |   |   |   |    |
|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| 1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.                     | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 2. Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.              | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 3. My supervisor cares about my opinions.   | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 4. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.                                     | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 5. It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to.            | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 6. My work supervisor really cares about my well-being.   | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 7. I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization.                                  | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 8. Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization right now. | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 9. My supervisor strongly considers my goals and values.  | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 10. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization.                                      | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 11. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.                       | SD | D | N | A | SA |

- |  |           |          |          |          |            |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|----------|------------|
| 12. My supervisor shows very little concern for me.  | <b>SD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>A</b> | <b>SAI</b> |
| 13. I do not feel like “part of the family” at my organization.  | <b>SD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>A</b> | <b>SA</b>  |
| 14. If I had not already put so much of myself into this organization, I might consider working elsewhere.             | <b>SD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>A</b> | <b>SA</b>  |
| 15. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.   | <b>SD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>A</b> | <b>SA</b>  |
| 16. One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives. | <b>SD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>A</b> | <b>SA</b>  |

### Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (shortened version)

This scale is made up of a list of statements, each of which may or may not be true about you. For each statement, circle "definitely true" if you are sure it is true about you and "probably true" if you think it is true but are not absolutely certain. Similarly, you should circle "definitely false" if you are sure the statement is false and "probably false" if you think it is false but are not absolutely certain.

#### Items:

1. If I wanted to go on a trip for a day (for example, to the country or mountains), I would have a hard time finding someone to go with me.	<b>1. definitely false</b>	<b>2. probably false</b>
	<b>3. probably true</b>	<b>4. definitely true</b>
2. I feel that there is no one I can share my most private worries and fears with.	<b>1. definitely false</b>	<b>2. probably false</b>
	<b>3. probably true</b>	<b>4. definitely true</b>
3. If I were sick, I could easily find someone to help me with my daily chores.	<b>1. definitely false</b>	<b>2. probably false</b>
	<b>3. probably true</b>	<b>4. definitely true</b>
4. There is someone I can turn to for advice about handling problems with my family.	<b>1. definitely false</b>	<b>2. probably false</b>
	<b>3. probably true</b>	<b>4. definitely true</b>
5. If I decide one afternoon that I would like to go to a movie that evening, I could easily find someone to go with me.	<b>1. definitely false</b>	<b>2. probably false</b>
	<b>3. probably true</b>	<b>4. definitely true</b>
6. When I need suggestions on how to deal with a personal problem, I know someone I can turn to.	<b>1. definitely false</b>	<b>2. probably false</b>
	<b>3. probably true</b>	<b>4. definitely true</b>
7. I don't often get invited to do things with others.	<b>1. definitely false</b>	<b>2. probably false</b>
	<b>3. probably true</b>	<b>4. definitely true</b>
8. If I had to go out of town for a few weeks, it would be difficult to find someone who would look after my house or apartment (the plants, pets, garden, etc.).	<b>1. definitely false</b>	<b>2. probably false</b>
	<b>3. probably true</b>	<b>4. definitely true</b>
9. If I wanted to have lunch with someone, I could easily find someone to join me.	<b>1. definitely false</b>	<b>2. probably false</b>
	<b>3. probably true</b>	<b>4. definitely true</b>

10. If I was stranded 10 miles from home, there is someone I could call who could come and get me.	<b>1. definitely false</b>	<b>2. probably false</b> <b>3. probably true</b>	<b>4. definitely true</b>
11. If a family crisis arose, it would be difficult to find someone who could give me good advice about how to handle it.	<b>1. definitely false</b>	<b>2. probably false</b> <b>3. probably true</b>	<b>4. definitely true</b>
12. If I needed some help in moving to a new house or apartment, I would have a hard time finding someone to help me.	<b>1. definitely false</b>	<b>2. probably false</b> <b>3. probably true</b>	<b>4. definitely true</b>

### Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale

This scale is made up of a list of statements, each of which may or may not be true about you. For each statement, circle "exactly true" if you are sure it is true about you and "moderately true" if you think it is true but are not absolutely certain. Similarly, you should circle "not true at all" if you are sure the statement is false and "barely true" if you think it is false but are not absolutely certain.

1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	<b>1. Not at all true</b> <b>2. Barely true</b> <b>3. Moderately true</b> <b>4. Exactly true</b>
2. If someone opposes me, I can find means and ways to get what I want.	<b>1. Not at all true</b> <b>2. Barely true</b> <b>3. Moderately true</b> <b>4. Exactly true</b>
3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	<b>1. Not at all true</b> <b>2. Barely true</b> <b>3. Moderately true</b> <b>4. Exactly true</b>
4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	<b>1. Not at all true</b> <b>2. Barely true</b> <b>3. Moderately true</b> <b>4. Exactly true</b>
5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	<b>1. Not at all true</b> <b>2. Barely true</b> <b>3. Moderately true</b> <b>4. Exactly true</b>
6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	<b>1. Not at all true</b> <b>2. Barely true</b> <b>3. Moderately true</b> <b>4. Exactly true</b>
7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	<b>1. Not at all true</b> <b>2. Barely true</b> <b>3. Moderately true</b> <b>4. Exactly true</b>
8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.	<b>1. Not at all true</b> <b>2. Barely true</b> <b>3. Moderately true</b> <b>4. Exactly true</b>
9. If I am in a bind, I can usually think of something to do.	<b>1. Not at all true</b> <b>2. Barely true</b> <b>3. Moderately true</b> <b>4. Exactly true</b>
10. No matter what comes my way, I'm usually able to handle it.	<b>1. Not at all true</b> <b>2. Barely true</b> <b>3. Moderately true</b> <b>4. Exactly true</b>

## Appendix C

Figure C1

