

A Teacher's Life Is the Life For Me: Exploring Motivations and Factors Shaping Recruitment and Retention of Early-Career K-12 Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the factors that motivate K-12 teacher candidates to join and remain in the teaching profession, with the goal of identifying strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers. Narrative interviews were conducted with a sample of early-career teachers with 1 to 5 years of teaching experience, who taught in both elementary and secondary settings with various concentrations. The interviews explored participants' experiences as early-career teachers, and the factors that influenced their decision to become and remain teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

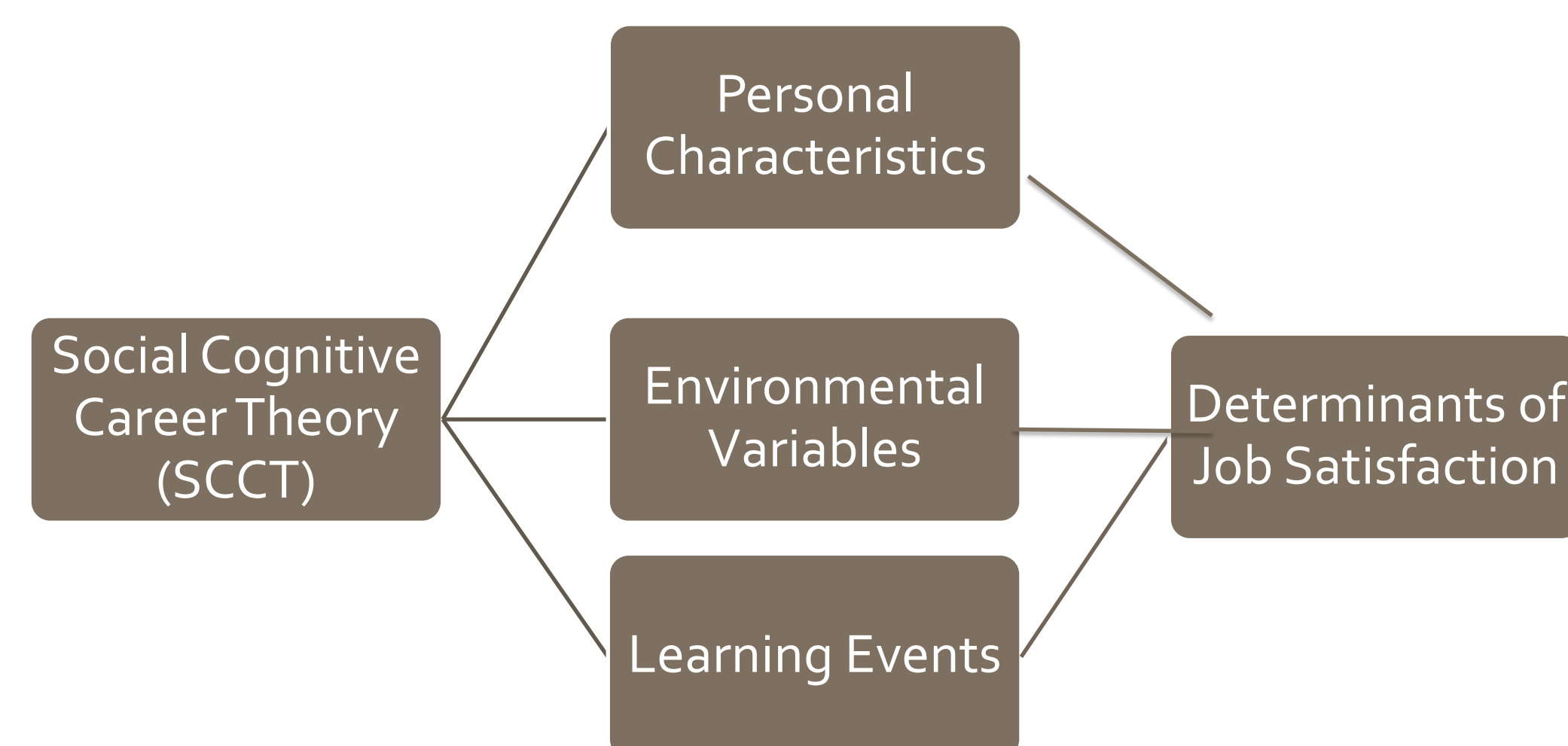
Teacher work conditions and work environment are recognized factors that significantly impact teacher recruitment and retention. Despite various incentives such as loan forgiveness programs and educational grants to encourage enrollment into teacher education programs, the United States is currently facing a persistent teacher shortage. Player et al. (2017) discovered that early-career teachers are more prone to leaving the field of education. According to Poll (2019), nearly 17% of novice teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching. The unappealing combination of inadequate salaries, unrealistic accountability policies, excessive role responsibilities, lack of support and professional development, and poor working conditions have contributed to the dearth of prospective candidates (Podolsky et al., 2016). Despite extensive research on the reasons for high teacher attrition rates, limited literature is available regarding why early-career teachers choose to remain in the profession.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- (1) What are the factors that motivate individuals to become K-12 teachers, and how do these motivations shape their experiences as early-career teachers?
- (2) How do early-career teachers make decisions about whether to remain in the teaching profession, and what factors influence their decisions to stay?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

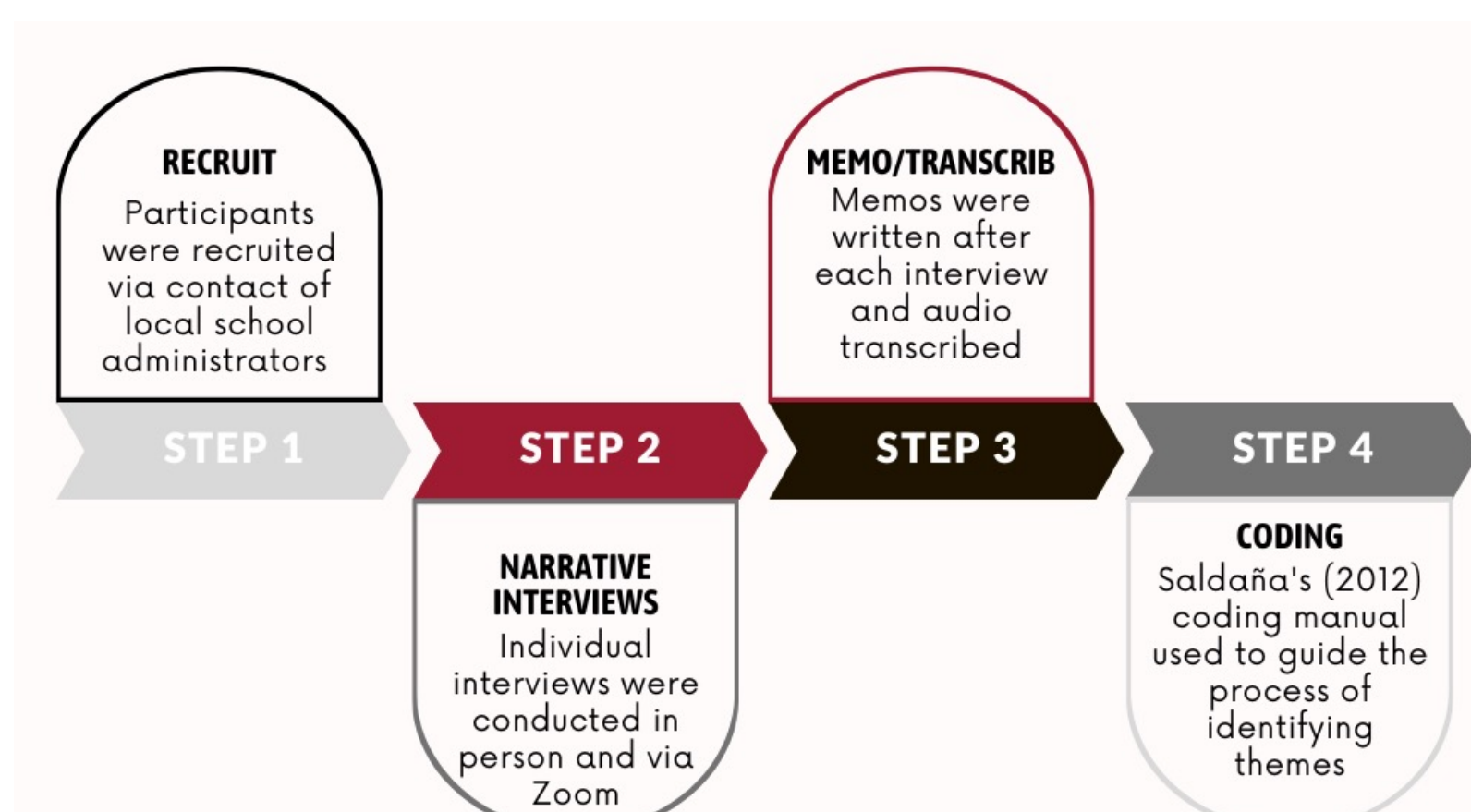
This research is guided by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). According to SCCT, personal characteristics (e.g., self-efficacy, interests, beliefs), environmental variables (e.g., societal support, opportunity structures), and learning events all impact people's job options (e.g., feedback, mentoring (Lent et al, 2002)). SCCT is being used in this research to investigate how early-career teachers' personal characteristics, such as self-efficacy and values, impact their desire to enter and stay in the teaching field



METHODOLOGY/METHODS

Narrative Inquiry approach is used for this study. This approach focuses on participants' experiences and the stories they tell about their experiences, which allows for an in-depth exploration of the factors that motivate K-12 teacher early career teachers to join and remain in the teaching profession.

Narrative interviews were conducted with participants to explore their experiences as early-career teachers and the factors that influenced their decision to become and remain teachers. The interviews were conducted in person or through video conferencing, depending on participants' preferences. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.



PARTICIPANTS

The desired number of participants for this study is between five to eight. So far, only three have met criteria to be considered for the study. I am utilizing the snowball recruiting method to recruit more participants. A breakdown of demographic information by participant can be found in the table below. Pseudonyms are used.

Participants

DEMOGRAPHICS

PARTICIPANT	AGE	ETHNICITY	GENDER	TEACHING LEVEL	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	AREA OF FOCUS
Dana Bates	30	White	Female	Middle School	5	English/Language Arts
Yvonne Ryan	36	Black	Female	Middle School	2	Special Education
Isabelle Patton	25	White	Female	Middle School	2	Social Studies

RESULTS (IN PROGRESS)

The study is currently ongoing, and data collection and analysis are still in progress. However, initial analysis of the interviews conducted with three participants revealed several themes. The themes that were identified from the interviews underscore the importance of creating a supportive and positive work environment for early-career teachers. Additionally, the participants highlighted the value of providing opportunities for ongoing professional development and mentoring.



DISCUSSION

The preliminary findings of this study suggest that creating a supportive and positive work environment, along with opportunities for professional development and mentoring, are key factors in early-career teachers' motivation to remain in the teaching profession. Further data analysis will provide additional insights into factors that motivate early-career teachers and help identify strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers in K-12 education.

CONCLUSIONS/SIGNIFICANCE

This study adds to the existing literature on the teaching profession and aids in identifying strategies for creating a supportive and positive work environment for early-career teachers. The results of this study can inform policies and practices aimed at recruiting and retaining teachers in K-12 education, which is crucial in addressing the on-going teacher shortage in many parts of the United States. Additionally, the study can help teacher education programs and policymakers gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by early-career teachers and identify ways to better support them. Overall, this study can contribute to the improvement of the teaching profession and, ultimately, the quality of education for K-12 students.

REFERENCES

