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The Role and Importance of Athletic Trainers in Mississippi High Schools

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ABSTRACT

Access to athletic trainers should be a priority for all high schools in the nation not only to reduce their liability, but to improve the overall health care experience for student athletes. The importance of having a full-time athletic trainer on the high school athletic staff will benefit the organization in a multitude of ways. Common roles include the development of emergency action plans, monitoring environmental conditions, coordinating injury prevention programs, and communicating with physicians about injuries, rehabilitation, and return-to-play programs. Coaches, athletic directors, parents, and students will be able to maximize health care benefits by retaining the services of an athletic trainer. Once coaches, faculty, and staff are more aware of the benefits of a full-time athletic trainer, budget funding may be increased to add the position to their school.

Literature Review

Introduction

    Approximately 7.5 million athletes participate in high school sports in the United States (McGuine, Adam, Post, Hetzel, Brooks, & Broglio, 2018) with more than 1.4 million injuries occurring each year (Wham, Saunders, & Mensch, 2010). The American Medical Association (AMA) and National Athletic Training Association (NATA) endorse and encourage secondary schools to hire athletic trainers to help prevent and treat injuries, implement emergency action plans (EAPs), eliminate unnecessary doctor visits, and help prevent deaths due to sport participation (Pike, Pryor, Vandermark, Mazerolle, & Casa, 2017). Despite this clear rationale, there is not blanket coverage across all secondary schools. The purpose of this review is to illustrate the role that athletic trainers should be within the secondary school setting and that their role prevents catastrophic injuries to those students.

Athletic Trainer Coverage

    A study that surveyed over 8,500 secondary schools nationwide illustrated that 70% of schools reported having athletic training services on either a full-time (37% of schools) or part-time (31% of schools) basis, with only 2% of schools utilizing athletic trainers on a per diem basis. In addition, only 48% of the schools surveyed had medical coverage during all sporting practices (Pryor et al., 2015). In general, therefore, this data suggests that 30% of schools have no athletic training coverage whatsoever. Although concerning, this degree of coverage is actually an improvement over previous reports indicating that a mere 35% of high schools utilized athletic training services (Lyznicki, Riggs., & Champion, 1999).

    When data is analyzed by state, schools in Mississippi are seen to be generally reflective of national trends. Athletic training services are provided at 81% of schools in Mississippi, with full- and part-time athletic trainers providing their services at 29% and 45% of secondary schools, respectively (Pryor et al., 2015). Interestingly, the nature of the secondary school can be a determining factor as to the scope of athletic training coverage. Data suggest that public secondary schools provide more athletic training services and coverage (70%) than the private secondary school sector (58%) (Pike et al., 2017). Larger schools in more dense population offered athletic trainer services, while smaller/rural schools had limited access to athletic trainer services (Vogelpohl., 2017).

Barriers to Athletic Trainer Coverage

    Barriers to employing athletic trainers in secondary school settings (both public and private sectors) include a lack of awareness of what an athletic trainer actually does, perceived budgetary constraints, and school size. An additional barrier in public school settings can be rural location (Pike et al., 2017). This is evidenced by Weitzel, Millier, Giannotta, & Newman (2015), who suggest that in addition to citing budget constraints and geographical location as reasons for not having a full-time athletic trainer, many athletic directors feel that a school nurse or the coach were qualified enough to perform emergency care to athletes. Assuming that non-qualified personnel can provide coverage and medical care to student-athletes in lieu of certified athletic trainers is concerning.

    Strategies that have been proposed addressing barriers to hiring athletic trainers include requiring parents of athletes to pay for their child to play, fundraising efforts, and raising taxes or tuition at public or private schools, respectively. The "pay-to-play" concept is a strategy that many schools are already using to increase the athletic budget and might be considered by other private and public secondary schools. This money could be put toward an athletic trainer's salary, medical equipment, and supplies. Employing an athletic trainer may help cut other costs including insurance premiums, as risk and liability are reduced with appropriate medical care. Barriers for a small school are cooperative teams with surrounding towns, and shared coverage. Schools that are in a rural area are seven times more likely to run the risk of death than urban schools. Athletic trainers who are on-site in these remote schools can decrease these chances. (Pike et al., 2017).

    Another barrier is the lack of awareness of the role that athletic trainers can play. Athletic trainers should team up with local physicians, nurses, and others in the medical community to help educate the principal, athletic director, and coaches on the importance of having and athletic trainers cover sporting events. Though the healthcare professional is very knowledgeable, they may not have the precise knowledge to act as an athletic trainer would. Dissemination of this information to appropriate individuals could act as a facilitator for change

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and a means of promoting the athletic training profession (Pike et al., 2017).

When athletic trainer services are not available to the high school, coaches and administrators have to determine how to properly care for the medical emergency. Most coaches and administrators do not have the proper training and cannot recognize a medical emergency nor are they trained to treat a life-threatening injury (Pryor et al., 2015). When coaches were given a survey on how to handle an emergency situation, 63% reported that they felt like they were prepared to handle an emergency situation like exertional heat stroke (Adams, Mazerolle, Casa, Huggins, & Burton, 2014). However, in this same study, when asked to give signs and symptoms of an exertional heat stroke, results revealed that these coaches did not identify the all the signs and symptoms (Adams, et al., 2014).

In 2002, the Appropriate Medical Care for Secondary School-Age Athletes Consensus Statement established recommendations for the prevention, care, and management of injuries and illnesses in high school athletes. The statement called for an athletic health care team for every American high school athletic program and identified several areas in which the health care provider must be trained. These areas included training to allow for the development and implementation of an athletic health care administrative system, promotion of safe and appropriate practice, competition, and treatment facilities, oversight of athletic equipment to ensure proper fit, implementation of an emergency action plan, protocols for adverse environmental conditions, on-site evaluations and including the ability to provide treatment of injury and illness with referrals, facilitate rehabilitation and reconditioning, provide psychosocial consultation and referral, provide nutritional counseling and education, and develop injury and illness prevention strategies (Wham et al., 2010).

FIGURE 1: Benefits of having a full-time athletic trainer (Pike, et al., 2017 & Vogelpohl, R.E. 2017)

Benefits of having a full-time athletic trainer
Oversee the development and implementation of an athletic health care administrative system
To promote safe and appropriate practice, competition, and treatment facilities
To oversee proper fit of athletic equipment on each athlete
Implementing emergency action plans for each setting of the school and athletic fields
Having proper protocols for adverse environmental conditions
On-site evaluation and ability to provide treatment of injury and illness with referrals
Facilitate rehabilitation and reconditioning on an everyday basis with athletes
Being able to provide psychosocial consultation and referral
Being able to provide adequate nutritional counseling and referral
To educate the athlete on certain injuries and the prevention that goes along with the injury

Catastrophic Injury Prevalence

The National Center for Catastrophic Sports Injury Research (NCCSIR) reported that 81% of all catastrophic sports injuries occurred in the secondary school setting (Pike et al., 2016). The majority (70%) of direct catastrophic injuries are to the head and neck, while 69% of indirect catastrophic injuries are related to sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), with a further 10% being heat-related (Hirschhorn et al., 2018). When an athletic trainer is available, their training can help determine if an athlete needs to be transported by emergency medical services (EMS) (Hirschhorn et al., 2018). From July to December 2015, 14 football athletes died from sports participation (exertional heat stroke, sudden cardiac arrest, and exertional sickling). Fifty percent of these deaths would have been preventable with the appropriate recognition, treatment, and care (Adams, Scarneo, & Casa, 2014). When an athletic trainer is available, they are able to recognize, prevent, and treat catastrophic injuries as well as appropriately activate and coordinate with EMS (Pryor et al., 2015).

SCA is the leading cause of death in young athletes. Athletic trainers are capable of implementing EAPs to ensure that there are automated external defibrillators (AEDs) at high schools, informing the local EMS, a communication system to activate the EAP, training the staff in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and walking through the steps of the EAP to ensure all know their roles in case a SCA occurs. Automated external defibrillators have shown to have a 64% survival rate after a SCA (Toresdahl, Harmon, & Drezner, 2013).

Exertional heat illness (EHI) can be prevented by recognition of its causes and symptoms to aid in its prevention, along with rapid and appropriate treatment when it does occur. Five different types of EHI are recognized, namely exercise-associated muscle cramps, heat syncope, heat exhaustion, exertional heat injury, and exertional heat stroke. Exercise-associated muscle cramps, commonly known as heat cramps, can be painful muscle contractions during or after exercise. Heat syncope occurs in an unfit or non-acclimated person who stays outside in the heat for too long causing them to pass out. Heat exhaustion is the inability to continue an exercise in the heat. Heat exhaustion is caused by elevation of core body temperature, and heavy sweating and dehydration (Casa et al., 2015). Exertional heat injury is a heat illness by organ and tissue injury associated with high body temperature. Exertional heat stroke (EHS) is one of the main causes of death within the athletic population. EHS is characterized by neuropsychiatric impairment and high body temperature above 40.5 °C. EHS can cause multiple organ failure if the proper treatment care is not taken timely (Casa et al., 2015).

Another major risk factor that is becoming more relevant in the athletic world is concussions. Being able to have a full-time athletic trainer present will increase the chances that concussions would not go unnoticed (Wallace et al., 2017). A survey was conducted by Wallace, Covassin, Nogle, Gould, and Kovan (2017) on 438 student athletes to evaluate their knowledge of concussions and reporting behaviors in high school athletes who did or did not have access to an athletic trainer. It showed that athletes that had an athletic trainer were much more knowledgeable about concussions and the signs and symptoms. Approximately 55% of high school athletes did not report their concussion to an authority figure. When having an athletic trainer present at sporting events, athletic trainers are able to recognize the signs and symptoms of concussions that go unreported or unnoticed (Wallace et al., 2017). Although many go undiagnosed, there are approximately 34,000 sport-related concussions every year in the United States. Concussions account for 8-13% of injuries in high school athletics (McGuire et al., 2018). In 2009, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have enacted concussion legislation. Forty-three out of 51 states have officially required concussion-education programs for student-athletes (McGuire et al., 2018).

Conclusion

Athletic trainers are healthcare professionals. They are board certified and are required by the NATA to do continuing education courses to ensure they provide the appropriate evidence-based care. Athletic trainers are the first emergency healthcare professional to provide life-saving actions to a student athlete.

Though 70% of public schools and 58% of private schools offered some sort of level of athletic training, only 37% of public school and 28% of private schools have a full-time athletic trainer (Pike et al., 2017). This means that half of the time, specifically at practices, the student athlete life depends on the coaches to determine if they are experiencing a SCA, EHS, concussion, musculoskeletal injury or another life threating injury.

The benefits of having a full-time athletic trainer at the high school level far outweigh the factors preventing administrations from hiring athletic trainers (Mazerolle et al., 2015). Benefits of having an athletic trainer in high-school settings are: general care over student athletes, coordinating care with coaches, implementing

rehabilitation and preventative care protocols for injuries, developing Emergency Action Plans (EAP's), communicating with parents about the severity of their child's injury, and recognizing life threatening injuries that coaches are not aware of. Being able to have a full-time athletic trainer onsite at a high school for all sporting events increases the efficiency of all the aforementioned tasks. Having an athletic trainer to rely on for the best protocols in emergency action plans, injury prevention, and rehabilitation care immensely benefits everyone at the school.

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Why Stay So Long? Exploring Physical Education Teacher Persistence

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ABSTRACT

Much attention has been given to the causes of teacher attrition, but why do some teachers stay for so long? This study explores why seven physical education teachers have persisted in the field. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary source of data collection. The study also relied on the researcher's reflective journal, follow-up emails, and participant self-checks in its aggregated data. Constant comparison and open coding were used to formulate themes. The findings of the study show that the participants stayed due to the love of the job, workplace support, opportunities to enhance learning, personal strengths, and uniqueness. Chapman's model of the influences associated with teacher attrition was used as a guide. An individual's "uniqueness" should be studied in more detail in the future.

Keywords: retention; attrition; physical education teacher characteristics

Introduction

As the saying goes, "If you want a physical education job you have to wait until someone retires or dies." Why do some teachers persist while others do not? Teacher retention and attrition have been in the spotlight for many years. Lawson (1983) stated there are many reasons why teachers leave the field, and at the time, little was known about why teachers persist. Ingersoll (2003) indicated that 46% of teachers would leave the field before they hit the five-year mark. This number surprisingly includes physical education professionals, so that adage is not entirely correct. Recent research conducted by Ingersoll (2012) discovered a "greening" (p. 49) of teachers or a younger teaching force with beginning teachers being the most common. In the last 20 years, an increase in new teachers has produced an increase of attrition rates that are slightly higher than the previous 30% reported by Smith & Ingersoll (2004). The purpose of this study was to explore the characteristics of physical education teachers with 20 or more years of teaching experience in the field of physical education.

This study explores seven physical education teachers who have persisted for more than 20 years in hopes to gain knowledge on why these individuals have chosen to stay. It is the researcher's hope that the information provided will assist in the improvement of induction programs and professional development, and will help with retention efforts of teachers, not just in physical education, but in other areas as well.

Literature Review

Teacher retention and attrition is not a new topic, and yet a high percentage of teachers leave (Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll, 2012; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). In Chapman's (1984) research in which 400 teachers were surveyed using the Survey of Graduates with Teaching Certificates (Hutcheson & Chapman, 1978), the teacher's fell into one of three demographic groups: teachers who graduated from a teaching program and continued teaching, teachers who graduated from a teaching program and started teaching but left the professions within five years, and those who graduated from a teaching program and never entered the field (Chapman & Green, 1986). From the five reasons described in Chapman's (1984) proposed model, teachers who have continued teaching after graduating reported a commitment to becoming a teacher and to positive experiences during the early years as reasons for staying in the teaching profession.

Reasons for Being Satisfied and Committed

The idea of preconceived commitment to employment is not uncommon, but it is more complicated than just wanting to stay (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001). Research conducted on workplace "job embeddedness" (Mitchell et al., 2001, p. 1102) identified factors that impacted employee retention, two of those being non-work factors and organizationally focused factors. Non-work factors include family, pastimes, and spiritual influences regarding work (Mitchell et al., 2001). Organization factors include group project commitments, possible union connections, and other group structures. It is clear that being satisfied and committed are the reasons for some individuals to continue working (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Satisfaction and commitment have been linked to longevity (Convey, 2014; Squillini, 2013; Makela, Hirvensalo, & Whipp, 2014; Whipp, Tan, & Yeo, 2007). Two studies involving Catholic school teachers was conducted by Convey (2014), and Squillini (2013). The researchers surveyed teachers from multiple states who taught at varying grade levels. Findings from Convey (2013) and Squillini's (2014) research included satisfaction of the school, administrative leadership, positive workplace support, teaching freedoms, and student behavior. Squillini (2014) noticed those teachers who persisted in the field had the characteristics of being life-long learners, having a feeling of satisfaction with their commitment to their jobs, attending professional development opportunities, and exploring different teaching methods. One major reason for attrition cited by both Convey (2014) and Squillini (2013) was a lack of initial commitment to the teaching profession, low salaries, and a lack of support from administrations. Administrative leadership had a strong connection to a teacher's retention.

Besides the initial commitment, gained experience may be a determining factor in teacher retention as well (Kurtz, 2015). In a study conducted by Kurtz (2015), it was indicated that teachers are not planning on returning to their current position decreased as teachers gained "more teaching experience at their current school" (p. 92). Teachers with less than five years of teaching experience leaving their current place of work were 39.5%; teachers with 20 or more years not returning was 13.6% (Kurtz, 2015). Kurt (2015) found that most of the teachers not returning were retiring.

Experiences that May Lead to Attrition

Physical education teachers may wear many hats, including sport coaching activities and teaching physical education class to multiple grade levels (Makela et al., 2014). Thus many physical education teachers may experience a more than usual workload (Makela at al., 2014). All this extra work is done with poor resources and less career advancement than other fields (Makela et al., 2014; Whipp et al., 2007). The perception of one's workload may contribute to stress or burnout in veteran and novice physical education teachers. (Whipp et al., 2007). Other reasons for burnout could be the lack of opportunities in the decision-making, a lack of respect for the field, not being challenged intellectually, and the lack of support from other teachers and parents (Makela, Hirvensalo, Laakso, & Whipp, 2014; Makela et al., 2014; Spittle et al., 2015).

As one experiences an adverse environment, isolation can occur emotionally and physically (Makela et al., 2014). Emotional isolation was usually formed from perceptions that physical education is a break for other teachers, or has no value to education (Whipp et al., 2007). Bartel, Wrzesniewski, and Wiesenfeld (2012) found a link between an individual's perception of being physically isolated to "lower perceived respect" (p. 752).

According to MacDonald (1995), negative experiences can lead to proletarianization. Proletarianization can be defined as taking power away from the individual by increasing routines and workloads that result in a decreasing acknowledgment of one's skill set (MacDonald, 1995). MacDonald (1995) stated that proletarianization causes an individual to question "how" instead of "what" or "why" (p. 130). Whipp, Tan, and Yeo (2007) described this as a lack of empowerment. With the lack of empowerment, a lack of participation by the individual may lead to one not having the experience of being a part of the decision-making within the institutional structure, thus feeling an absence of control in classrooms (Whipp et al., 2007).

Behaviors and Characteristics of Teachers

Observed behaviors and characteristics of teachers, in general, have been captured and reported on in research (Haerens et al., 2013; Matosic et al., 2015; Williams, 2003). Some studies have used the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Ryan and Deci (2000) as a model for observing teacher behaviors and characteristics. In brief, the theory "is an approach to human motivation and personality" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 68) with a focus on behaviors (Matosic et al., 2015). These behaviors and characteristics of motivation can be classified into two groups: autonomy-support and controlling (Matosic et al., 2015).

One such observational study conducted by Haerens et al. (2013) observed 74 physical education teachers in a classroom environment. During the research, 21 need-support behaviors were observed. When these results were analyzed, two sets of behaviors in physical education teachers emerged. The first set of behaviors included empathy, questioning, and providing attention to the student. According to Haerens et al. (2013), these behaviors reflected "a positive, friendly, and warm-teacher-pupil interaction" (p. 10) in which the physical education teacher tried to view the issue from the student's perspective. Behaviors from the second set included behaviors such as enthusiasm, eagerness, and energy, which are focused on the presentation of the lesson. The results do support that these behaviors may assist in motivation among students (Haerens et al., 2013).

A pattern emerged from research on the characteristics of teachers (Bobek's, 2010' Herringer, 2007; Williams, 2003). Williams (2003) described the characteristics observed in a twelve-participant study. The characteristics Williams noted included the following: having a sense of humor, continual learning, "determined, courageous, and resilient" (p. 72), and having a deep love for teaching and students. With physical education teachers, the characteristics included relationships with stakeholders (i.e., students and administration), continual learning, and self-efficacy (Herringer, 2007). Bobek's (2010) research produced similar results in revealing characteristics of teachers; these characteristics included relationships, knowledge of subject content, self-efficacy, and a sense of humor.

Theoretical Framework

There has been much focus on novice teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll, 2012; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). According to Hong (2012), the reasoning behind teacher attrition has been based on management or organizational perspective of outside influence. Novice teachers may experience low status or feel unimportant, lack support from faculty members in the school, face inadequacies in classroom management and lesson planning (Banville & Rikard, 2009; Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1993). These inadequacies are

influenced from outside sources. Hong (2012) stressed these outside pressures are not solely responsible for a teacher leaving or staying in the profession but are embedded within the "individual's meaning making process and internal value system" (p. 418). This internal decision-making derived from an embedded value system as self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy was described in Bandura's Social Learning Theory; today the theory is known as the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). Bandura (1977) hypothesized that a cognitive process while also being formed by external influences or "performance-based procedures" (p. 191) formed human behavior. Bandura believed that self-efficacy could be altered by other means than just external factors.

Chapman (1984) developed a model examining the influences on teacher retention grounded in Bandura's social learning theory. Chapman (1984) believed, like Bandura, that internal and external factors could alter self-efficacy. Chapman's (1984) belief that the internal factors (e.g., genetic factors, values, and initial commitment levels) and external factors (e.g., education, work environment, and interactions) influenced teacher retention. Chapman's model (see Figure 1) takes into account multiple influences that may be associated with teacher persistence. These influences could affect the teacher's characteristics, teacher preparation, and training, initial commitment to the career of teaching, first-year experiences as a teacher, outside influences, assimilation into teaching practices, job satisfaction, and the decisions to remain in the career of teaching (Chapman, 1984).

Figure 1 – Chapman's Suggested Model of the Influences Associated with Teacher Attrition

Pre-service   In-service (entry, growing, stable exit)
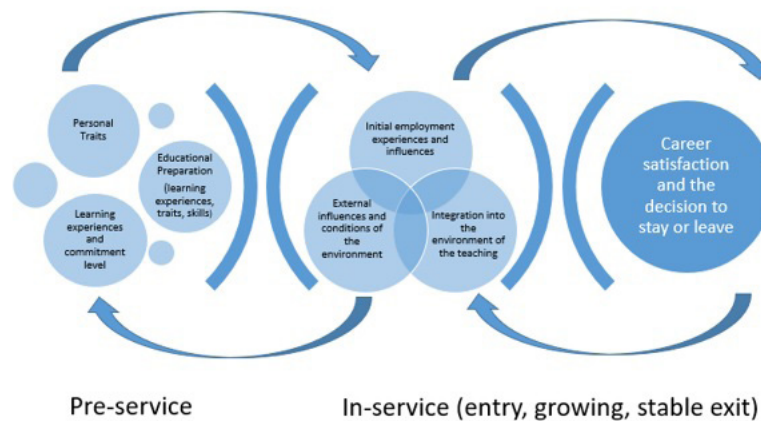
Note: This figure has been modified. The original figure is found in Chapman, D. W. (1984). Teacher retention: The test of a model. *American Education Educational Research Journal, 21*(3), 645-658.

Chapman (1984) found that the model supported his initial thoughts on why some teachers remain and persist while others do not. Chapman's (1984) research on teacher retention explored novice teachers: those who had attended a teacher preparation program and entered the field, and those who did not enter the field after attending a teacher preparation program. This research explored the late stage of teacher careers as described by Huberman (1989) to determine if the model held true. The intent of this research was to gain insight as to why the physical education teachers in this study have persisted in their teaching field for 20 or more years using Chapman's model as a guide.

Methodology

Purpose and Research Questions

With many studies examining attrition of novice teachers, one should try to understand why some teachers are retained in the field and thrive. To understand teacher longevity, one must ask a simple question: Why? The purpose of this study was to examine why physical education teachers have persisted in the field. The research was driven by the following questions:

1. What characteristics does the participant possess that has allowed veteran physical education teachers to persist in the field?
2. What circumstances has the participant experienced that has influenced the persistence in the field of physical education?

Design

A qualitative case study approach was used and included interviews, the researcher's reflective journal, participant self-check, and follow up emails. The interview was semi-structured in nature and focused on the physical education teacher's persistence in the field. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour. Participants were purposively (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993) targeted for the survey with the main requirement having 20+ years of experience in teaching physical education. The seven participants were randomly selected upon completion of a survey from a previous study. Semi-structured interviews are a chosen technique by qualitative researchers when few participants are used (Merriam, 2009) and due to the "interactional" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003, p. 67) nature and flexibility.

Participants

A total of seven (7) physical education teachers with 20+ years of experience were interviewed. All participants were asked to provide background information such as their name, college or university they received their degree(s), how many years they had been teaching, and other information the participants deemed as important. Participants chose pseudonyms for confidentiality.

TABLE 1

Participant Snapshot

Name	Years Taught	Education	Age	Teaching Status
Jane	41	Master's Degree	62	Active
Larry	34	Master's Degree	64	Retired
JoAnn	44	Two Master's Degrees	73	Retired
Sue	41	Ph.D.	66	Active
Bill	24	Master's Degree	47	Active
Mary	31	Master's Degree	55	Active
Tracy	23	Master's Degree	46	Active

Data Collection

After the interviews had been transcribed, transcriptions were emailed to participants for member-checks. Member-check, as described by Merriam (2009), as a way to ensure reliability and validity. The use of member-checks is discussed in the reliability and validity section. Follow up emails were employed when more details were needed (e.g., years teaching). The researcher's journal was another means of data collection, a way to keep record while constantly comparing the data as well as to keep biases in check. The reflective journal is discussed in the reliability and validity section.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed informally using open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Open coding includes the process of developing categories based on

commonalities. For example, when a participant used a descriptive to explain why they have persisted in the field (e.g., love it, like, or it was a calling) these words or phrases were placed in a category (Merriam, 2009). Once a category or theme was developed, any new data was compared to collected data to determine if it was a fit, or if new categories needed to evolve (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). NVivo 11 was also used to finalize and confirm the themes that formed during open coding and constantly comparing.

Trustworthiness

Establishing reliability and validity is important in qualitative research as a way to produce trust in research (Merriam, 2009). Trustworthiness was established, as Guba (1981) suggested, in the following areas: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was established using multiple methods to collect data, in this case, the use of interviews and member checks (Merriam, 2009). Transferability is the process of applying these findings to other situations. In this case, from physical education teachers to others teachers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure transferability, purposive sampling was used in selecting participants initially, then randomly selecting from that sample. Dependability was used to "examine the process and the product" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 601) for consistency, often to repeat the experiment. Lastly, confirmability was established using an audit trail, which Merriam (2009) described as a "detailed account of the methods, procedures, and decision points in carrying out the study" (p. 229).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are important for qualitative research to ensure ethical standards have been met (Merriam, 2009). Member-checks and researcher reflexivity were strategies used to ensure reliability and validity occurred. Member-checks were used to ensure the participants were represented correctly and allowed for correction of incorrect information if needed (Merriam, 2009). Emails were collected from the member-checks of transcribed data to provide another level of ethical standards. The researcher's reflective journal was used to critical self-reflect on biases that may have occurred during the process of data analysis (Merriam, 2009).

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Findings

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After a thorough data analysis, four themes emerged that the participants expressed were reasons each one had persisted in the field as long as they did. The themes were: affections for their jobs, workplace support, opportunities to enhance learning, personal strengths, and uniqueness.

Affections for Their Jobs

Participants expressed love for their jobs as one reason for persisting in the field. Participants used the following language to describe affections for the job: love, making a difference, giving back, influence, enjoyment, and a calling. Below are statements made by the participants regarding how they felt about their jobs.

Jane, who has been teaching for 41 years said, "I just like what I do." Jane added:

I feel like I'm making a difference, and because I'm making a difference, it's been easy for me to stay there (in her field). I think this is easier than making a change, but I've liked being where I've been and what I've done.

JoAnn had taught for 44 years and said, "I liked where I worked, yes, I liked my students. I liked the town, the community." She added, "I really liked it, I liked the students, I liked teaching them." JoAnn continued, "My belief is I work as hard as I can for the students, that's why I'm still giving back to our profession because I'm working for the students."

Mary had taught for 31 years said, "I love teaching I love working with kids, I love wellness and health, and I think that has kept me invested."

Sue had taught for 41 years, always believed teaching physical education was something she was called to do. Sue said:

I thought I was called to do, to be doing what I was doing. So here I am, and I just absolutely love it. I just, as I say at 66, I can't imagine living without my kids (students), so I don't see retirement in the near future.

Larry had taught 34 years before retiring, said, "I enjoyed the interaction with the kids."

Bill was in his 24th year of teaching. Bill said, "I love it! You know I decided a long time ago when I stopped wanting to come to work, and it stopped being fun, then I would look for something to do." Bill added, "I love to come to work every day." Bill believes that the affection for the career assists him in his success. Bill

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stated, "It's easier to stick with something if you're successful at it, you know. I enjoy what I'm doing; I think the kids can tell that I enjoy what I'm doing and that makes my job easier."

Tracy was in his 23rd year and said, "I realized how much influence I had with students in teaching, and I want to be better at teaching." Tracy added, "All I can say is I enjoy trying to push the profession forward."

Participants expressed affection for their jobs. Enjoyment of being a physical education teacher was expressed with the involvement with students, the environment, the subject matter, and the belief of making an impact. It was clear; these physical education teachers had affection for their jobs.

Workplace Support

The participants believed a reason for longevity in their teaching field was due to workplace support and specific individuals within the educational environment. Areas that were recognized as workplace support included support from administration and principal, teachers, and organizations.

The participants in this study agreed that administrative support and support from other teachers was a reason for retention in the field of physical education. The participants agreed that having supportive administrators/principals who were not micromanagers but cared about students, and the facilities helped with the mindset of staying. Bill said, "I would describe them (principal) as supportive, but hands off. I think they've got confidence in my abilities, so they're not looking over my shoulder and micromanaging everything I'm doing and if issues do arise they are very supportive." Sue's response echoed that of Bill's. Sue said, "I've got a really good principal." Larry was encouraged by his principal, "She (principal) would show up in the gym just randomly and sit down. I would ask her if she needed anything and she would tell me no, I just wanted a break and see some good teaching going on."

Tracy has a supportive principal and a supportive department. In regards to his principal, Tracy said, "He is an awesome guy. I really like him a lot. He cares about the kids; he cares about the staff." Tracy added, "I know that he believes in what we're doing and he has a high level of confidence in me." Tracy is involved in an integrated program and works with two other teachers. He described his collaboration as cohesive:

> We have a really pretty cohesive department. I think we shared the same similar passions as far as professionalism, where we want to go professionally, and where we want out students to go. So it's easy to put the time in.

The participants recognized teacher support as being a big reason why they have stayed teaching. Jane stated, "It's good. It's good they (teachers) are supportive." Mary said:

> Our staffing at our school has become such a positive place to be. We have a tremendous principal, which I think makes a big difference. I know that has also played a big part for me as far as staying in the field. Our school, I have to say, we are one school out of four total in my district, our school is leading the way as far as a very positive environment, very positive collegial relationships.

Mary added, "I have a very positive relationship with teachers, and we've worked at that (relationship) as a staff."

A few participants recognized the importance of support from organizations. The organizations mentioned were state and national physical education organizations. JoAnn was very involved with her state organization. JoAnn said, "We have 1,500 to 2,000 people who come to our convention." Advocacy is vital to her, and that is one way she receives and gives support to physical education teachers. Tracy and Mary also attend conferences offered at the state and national levels for ways to look for outside help. For these individuals, organizations also allow for growth.

Opportunities to Enhance Learning

For these participants, the opportunity to enhance learning was important. The participants expressed the need to learn to assist in renewing the passion for continuing to gain and share knowledge. Two subthemes, self-learning and assisting in the learning of others, will be discussed. Self-learning and assisting others with learning motivated the participants.

Self-learning. Self-learning is one's ability to monitor and control behaviors as one builds a knowledge skill set (Sellers, Dochen, & Hodges, 2015). Self-learning includes gaining certification, advanced degrees, professional development, and engaging in research. As discussed in the description of the participants, all of the participants have advanced degrees. Jane, Larry, Bill, Mary, and Tracy all held a Master's degree, JoAnn held two Master's degrees, while Sue held a Ph.D.

The participants continued to learn about their field, engaging in research, and exploring topics to improve their teaching. Mary was furthering her education by engaging in quality professional development with a focus on physical education, where in the past she had experienced professional development that was designed for a broad and diverse audience. Mary said, "I've done a lot of professional development over the years, it's probably some of the best professional development I've experienced because I'm working with a group of people who are working with the same students I'm working with." Mary was surprised to find out her school district will be flying her to Florida to be trained as a wellness coach.

Larry received a grant to work with an outside group conducting research to determine if physical activity increased classroom learning and decreased behavioral problems. Larry said, "We are working with 4,500 students, fourth graders. Five hundred of those are our control group. We are working with classroom teachers to see if adding 30 minutes during the day will help."

Sue was one of four teachers to be handpicked by her district to visit schools in Arkansas. Sue was able to see a different scheduling technique from what she was accustomed. Sue said, "They (Arkansas schools) try to put the teachers who teach math right after the PE class because that was a hard subject."

Assisting in the learning of others.

Some of the participants worked with college students, ranging from undergraduate to Ph.D. candidates, while some work with other physical education teachers advocating for the profession. All of the participants have participated in assisting local colleges and universities with student teachers. The participants who work with teacher preparation programs at their local universities have developed relationships and collaborate with the educational programs. Tracy has received at least 15 student teachers from two local universities. Tracy said, "I really enjoy having an influence over some people that are going to move on into the profession and take over for us." Larry was involved with Ph.D. students and their research; the students were conducting research on Larry's teaching. With the work Larry does with Ph.D. students and his current research on physical activity and behavioral issues, the work will allow him to provide information to administration and other educators. JoAnn advocates for the profession and believes it is important. JoAnn has traveled extensively to speak to about advocating and hosting advocacy workshops. JoAnn said, "I've traveled all over the state, visiting schools to talk to young professionals." JoAnn explains to young professionals how to address concerns about physical education, encouraging them to attend board meetings. "I think that's what you have to do." JoAnn has assisted physical education teachers and is actively engaged in advocacy every year in Washington, D. C.

Strengths

Strengths were a characteristic of the individuals persisting in physical education. These participants, due to longevity in the field, have had the opportunity to develop their strengths. The personal strengths these participants displayed included teaching strengths (directly tied teaching duties) and personal strengths (directly tied to one's personality).

Teaching strengths.

Teaching strengths consisted of characteristics or tasks most common with the aspects of a daily teaching routine, such as lesson planning and classroom management. Teaching strengths that were brought up included use of technology, use of the full class time allotted, transitioning between classes, making connections to other classroom subjects, and lesson planning.

Larry's strength was planning lessons. When Larry worked at a pre-school, he had 11 employees and felt compelled to write the lesson plans to keep consistency in the program. Larry said:

> I had to write very detailed lesson plans for them (employees) to keep the program consistent and high quality. Once I started doing that I realized how effective lesson plans were. I started working on lesson plans then each year and would tweak them and tweak them again until I really had what I thought, after four or five years, really nice lesson plans.

Jane's teaching strength is differentiation and incorporates technology into physical education. She tries to expose her students to various forms of learning. Jane said, "I try to find something they can be successful in."

Personal strengths.

Personal strengths consisted of characteristics other than lesson planning, classroom management, or teaching practices. The personal strengths included making student connections or relationship building, being

a hard worker, enthusiastic, and being passionate. Connections and relationship building is a covert or hidden agenda in many teacher preparation programs, but these areas are not addressed specifically. It is assumed that if an individual learns how to manage tasks and plan, connection and relationships will ensue. Many participants expressed the need to make personal connections and build relationships. Mary said her non-teaching strength was her relationships with her students. Mary has this to say about relationship building:

> It's funny, a high school teacher once said to me, "You know, you elementary teachers could take your elementary kids up to the roof of the school and say 'Come on, we're all going to jump,' and they'd jump with you.

> Other personal strengths were hard work, enthusiasm, and being passionate about physical education.

JoAnn believes her work ethic has helped her persist. JoAnn said, "My belief is if I work as hard as I can for students, I'm working for the students." Sue believes her enthusiasm and passion for running is a strength and encourages the students to run for their health. Tracy said, "I have a real passion for trying to make physical education something different than what people think it is."

Uniqueness

Uniqueness was another theme that emerged. Even though not all the participants had a unique past or a current unique situation, the researcher thought it strange the participants that were chosen just happened to have qualities that are not common. Uniqueness includes achievements of the individual's past or present and characteristics of the participant's place of employment. Larry received a national award for teacher of the year. Larry said:

> The highlights of my year I guess I peaked in 1995, that's when I was the national elementary teacher of the year and Disney teacher of the year. They brought us down to Orlando for three and a half days; then they had like an academy awards thing. All the stars were presenting us with these awards.

Larry had been inducted into his alma mater's Hall of Fame for his success in the hammer throw as well as having a 30-year span in the Scottish Highland Games.

Tracy has been teaching for 13 years in an integrated program setting. Tracy's teaching triad consists of him teaching physical education, English, and science. Tracy stated, "We start with A River Runs Through it, so you know there's some really good integration that can happen." The integration included teaching the students to fly-fish (physical education part) and the eco-system of the river (the biology part).

Bill continues to work at a school specifically created to attract students whose parents wanted to pull their children out of the public school systems and into a private one. Bill explained, "We are now customer friendly. We have an extended school day, science and technology-focused."

Sue brought much experience to her physical education classes; she tried out for the USA Olympic team as a marathoner. "I ran the first women's marathon Olympic trials in 1984 in Olympia, Washington." Sue has a unique background that enabled her to see through a different lens, living in a state where obesity and heart disease are the leading causes of death. Running is Sue's hook for her elementary students; she wrote and received a grant and is proud to boast that her elementary campus has a true quarter mile track. Not many elementary schools can state that fact.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine why physical education teachers persist. The criterion for the participants in this study was that they had to have 20+ years of physical education teaching experience. After conducting semi-structured interviews with the seven participants, it was found that each participant genuinely loved teaching physical education, had workplace support, was engaged in learning, had personal strengths that kept the participants teaching, and a uniqueness factor. Huberman (1984) described late career stages of teachers with over 20 years of experience as the serenity and conservatism stage, and disengagement stage. During the serenity and conservatism stage, career motivations decline; one teacher may separate mentally from one's students. During the disengagement stage, withdrawal from the school environment occurs. Although some of the participants in this study are looking forward to retirement, none are exhibiting these phases. Most, except for the retired participants, appeared to be integrated into teaching and satisfied with their career choice, phases of Chapman's (1984) model.

Not surprising were the main reasons physical education teachers persisted: love for what they do, having

a support system, the opportunity to learn or to share learning, and personal strengths. All of these reasons were identified in previous research (Bobek, 2010; Haerens et al., 2013; Herringer, 2007; Squillini, 2013; Williams, 2003). Using Chapman's (1984) model, these characteristics including cognitive and emotional responses in the area of career satisfaction may influence teacher retention (refer to Figure 1). Kutz's (2015) research confirms that with more experience teachers felt more inclined to stay in the profession. When physical education teachers experienced positive support, the opportunity to continually learn, while increasing one's skills, may increase retention. Chapman (1984) thought the administration could influence teacher retention by "shaping the tone and quality of new teachers' first teaching experience" (p. 655), this also holds true to the participants in this study.

One might question why student connections and relationship building were considered personal strengths. The researcher brought personal experiences into play. Although these areas are a relevant part of teaching, neither are taught in teacher preparation programs specifically but covertly. Teachers are taught to manage relationships and to connect with students as far as subject matter; but genuine care and empathy may be determined by genetic factors (Walter, 2012). Chapman's (1984) model points to personal characteristics assisting in teacher persisting.

In Chapman's (1984) model, the area of outside influences such as teacher preparation, training, and assimilation into teaching practices aided in the retention of teachers. The participants mentioned strengths that could be considered outside influences. Even though the development of characteristics such as consistency, enthusiasm, passion, and forming relationships are experienced through one's career, these characteristics are cognitively formed internally. These characteristics are consistent with Chapman's (1984) model which states that factors can be influenced by genetics. Hong (2012) suggests this "inner drive" (p. 433) by a teacher may be chosen consciously or unconsciously. The non-teaching strengths may motivate the physical education teacher to stay in the field because of the satisfaction gained (Hong, 2012).

A finding not previously discussed in research was the uniqueness factor of the individual or environment. These participants all shared what the researcher believed to be unique qualities. First, even though furthering one's education was listed under opportunities to enhance learning, the researcher thought it unique that all of the randomly selected participants had advanced degrees. Secondly, some participants had unique life experiences (i.e., running in the marathon trials or participating in the Scottish Highland Games). Lastly, some participants were in unique school environments (i.e., integrated curriculum and building a customer-friendly curriculum). Uniqueness, not specifically mentioned in Chapman's (1984) model of influences, could fall into the following areas discussed by Chapman: personal characteristics, external influences, education preparation, quality of first employment experience, or integration into teaching.

Chapman and Green (1986), after expanding their research on teacher attrition to a larger group of participants, suggested that the six factors are a guide and not the end-all-be-all when it comes to why a teacher stays or leaves the profession. As Chapman and Green (1986) indicated, individuals, respond differently to incentives, such as salaries. Interestingly enough, only one participant jokingly mentioned he did not get paid enough, solidifying the fact that physical education teachers who stay for the long run, do it for the love of teaching (and that having a sense of humor helps!).

Limitations

Several impact limitations occurred during this study. First of all, it was participant specific. Expanding the research to examine physical education teachers at various career stages would add depth to the research in the experiences of physical education persistence. Secondly, the field itself of physical education is a limiting factor. Expanding the research to other teaching fields may determine difference that may occur in the decisions of the teacher to persist.

Implications and Recommendations

Is it fair to say teachers who have left didn't love it? Ingersoll, a well-respected professor and researcher on retention and attrition, said, he "would still be a high school history teacher" (Riggs, 2013). Ingersoll left teaching because of low pay and low respect. Can the same be assumed of physical education teachers? More research attention should focus specifically on physical education teachers that are not retained and the reason why they are not retained.

All participants were asked if they had ever thought about quitting due to other reasons than retirement. Only one participant out of the seven, Mary, answered yes. This supports Chapman's (1984) idea that teacher's entering the field make the decision early on to persist and make a career of teaching as well as Kurtz's (2015) research that when teachers gained more experience, retention rates increase. Research on the initial commitment to teaching should be explored for those professionals entering the vocation of teaching physical education.

In the description of the themes, the researcher's explanation of uniqueness was defined as those achievements of the individual's past or present, and characteristics of the participant's place of employment. The "uniqueness factor" should be explored in more detail. Some of the participants in this study displayed what the researcher determined to be unique qualities (i.e., Olympic marathon team and Scottish Highland games). Do these unique factors play a role in longevity? Is this a characteristic one can seek out in pre-service or novice teachers to determine teacher retention and longevity? The uniqueness factor may lead to the development in identifying professionals who have a higher percentage of being retained.

During analysis, one of the themes, issues of the physical education teacher, was discarded because it did not classify as a characteristic that could contribute to teacher longevity, but rather issues that could contribute to attrition. The issues, such as losing gym space and class time for "picture day" and workshops, having to teach physical education in a cafeteria/gymnasium combination during lunch, and a lack of air conditioning appear to be a problem specific to physical education teachers. More research should be conducted on these issues and why they occur.

In closing, the characteristics of these participants may be helpful in determining teacher persistence in pre-service and novice physical education teachers. Attrition rates, according to research, are declining. If these characteristics can be identified in potential hires, retention rates may increase, thus reducing attrition rates even more.

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