Superintendents in the South: An Examination of Grit, Commitment, and Retention

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Abstract

The United States has long struggled with retaining superintendents in public school districts, with a retention rate of only 32% to 43% over the past decade. The low retention rate is concerning as it can negatively impact the quality of education offered to students and staff morale. The twofold purpose of this research was to identify factors predicting superintendent retention and examine the relationship between grit, organizational commitment, and retention. A survey was distributed to 462 active superintendents during the 2022-23 school year using revised instruments for the Grit Short Scale and the Three-Component Model revised, as well as demographic questions and retention information. I used two quantitative approaches, Pearson correlation (RQ1) and binary logistic regression (RQ2), to analyze the relationships and predictability of grit and organizational commitment to superintendent retention. According to the study findings, continuance and organizational commitment were identified as predictors of retention. The findings indicated the combination of gender and district description as significant predictors of retention. The results of the study did not find any significant evidence to suggest grit played a role in predicting retention. The findings indicated strong positive correlations between grit and grit subscales (passion and perseverance) and organizational commitment and its subscales (affective and normative commitment). There was a positive association between grit and affective commitment. These findings can provide valuable insights for school boards, higher education leaders, and superintendent preparation program leaders in developing policies to enhance superintendents' recruitment, selection, training, and leadership development.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

One of my daily mantras is by Joel Osteen: "When you have the spirit of excellence, you don't do the minimum amount required; you go the extra mile." The journey of writing a dissertation is like running a marathon that requires going the extra mile while embodying the spirit of excellence. From start to finish, it demands grit and affective commitment, and it is not for the faint-hearted.

My chair, Dr. Bochenko, exemplifies the spirit of excellence in every way. I realized this from our first encounter as a doctoral student in his class. His patience and coaching abilities are what every doctoral candidate needs during the dissertation phase. For this reason, I am forever grateful and have immense respect for him.

Dr. Nobles, thank you for your willingness to serve as my researcher. Your dedication to your craft and commitment to sharing your knowledge with others is a testament to your status as a true exemplar of the "lead learner" archetype. Please know your contributions are respected, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for all you have done.

To my top-notch dissertation reader, Dr. Hill: Thank you for your support, critical feedback, and expertise. Your attention to detail and specificity have not gone unnoticed. You have made me a better writer!

I would like to express my gratitude to the superintendents in the southern region of the United States who took part in my study. Your work is extremely important and significantly impacts the lives of many children. By leading public education, you are changing the trajectory of many individuals, both children and adults. I truly appreciate your dedication and willingness to take education to the next level.

DEDICATION

I am incredibly grateful! First and foremost, I want to thank God for His mercy, grace, and blessings over my life. He deserves all the glory for helping me complete this dissertation journey. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my hubbin' Sunny, who has been my biggest "hype man", best friend, helpmate, and "ride-or-die" partner throughout this rollercoaster of a journey. Thank you for your unwavering love and encouragement. Even after all we've been through, "I still, He still, and We still" love and cherish each other. All glory to God!

I am also grateful to the lights, joys, and loves of my life, which includes my mother, Adoralyn, my sister Shelia, my niece Kailen, my brother Roy Jr., my father Roy Sr., my uncles Victor and Lionel, my stepdad Michael, my brother-in-law Byran, and my nepson Quintin. Thank you for your unwavering patience, encouragement, and love.

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To all the young girls who dream of being pioneers, breaking the barriers, shattering the ceiling, and taking a seat at the table, I want you to know that you deserve it. Despite being born and raised in the lower ninth ward of New Orleans, I have achieved a lot. I am the first person in my family to teach mathematics at the middle, high, and college levels. I have also supervised the K-12 mathematics curriculum in a large school system, earned a specialist degree, started a consulting business, served as the Chief Academic Officer, and even earned a DOCTORATE! I accomplished all of this with passion and perseverance, and I want you to know that you can do the same. The possibilities are endless!

Chapter I

Introduction

Background

In districts across the United States, the number of resignation letters from school superintendents is a red flag for communities everywhere. Superintendent retention has a "direct connection to students, teachers, policies, and achievement" (Yates & De Jong, 2018, p.18). School boards of appointed superintendents and citizens of elected superintendents must consider external factors encouraging superintendents to stay in their school system (Marzano & Waters, 2009; Simpson, 2013). Kowalski et al. (2011), for instance, mention essential factors school boards and citizens must consider. The first factor is the superintendent's relationship with the school board (Kowalski et al., 2011). Superintendents who were satisfied or had a positive relationship with their board were likelier to stay (Alsbury, 2008; Kowalski et al., 2011). The second factor is the community culture regarding the positional power of the superintendent within the community (Kowalski et al., 2011). Superintendents stayed in the system if they viewed the decision-making power as a collaborative, synergistic culture (Kowalski et al., 2011). The last factor is the associated cost-benefit analysis (e.g., fringe benefits, amenities, and stressors) by the superintendent against the perceived value of the position in a different school system (Grissom & Mitani, 2016; Kowalski et al., 2011).

Asher-Schapiro (2014) and Mitchell (2020) reported superintendents need a specific skill set to lead their districts successfully. Skill sets are a collection of developed abilities, attributes, and aptitudes applied to a profession (Merriam Webster, n.d.-d; Merriam Webster, n.d.-e). According to Hutchings and Brown (2021), joy and fulfillment

are skill sets needed to support retention of superintendents. Superintendents reported joy

and fulfillment from "ensuring that education is results-driven and student-focused" and

establishing strategic plan coherence with "progress toward achieving targets"

(Hutchings & Brown, 2021, p. 41). Researchers suggest superintendents experience

contentment and happiness when the school system's core values are operational

throughout the learning environments, including teacher observation and feedback on

instructional improvements (Harvey et al., 2013; Hutchings & Brown, 2021). The joy and

fulfillment attributes relate to aligning achievement goals and experiencing personal

success.

Superintendents must exhibit actual leadership skills to be effective at their

positions (Marzano & Waters, 2009). The way superintendents lead and their level of

effectiveness has an undeviating impression on the schools within the school system

(Asher-Schapiro, 2014). In particular, high levels of student achievement are linked to

effective superintendent leadership (Hart et al., 2019; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Myers,

2011). In light of significant concerns expressed due to the rapid turnover rate of the

superintendent, retention is vital for school improvement (O'Connor, 2018). Identifying

additional factors to understand superintendent retention is essential to selecting, training,

and retaining superintendents.

Statement of the Problem

In the United States, public school districts have been facing difficulties in

retaining superintendents for decades (Björk et al., 2014; Carter & Cunningham, 1997;

Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski, 2006; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011; Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

Research conducted by Glass and Franceschini (2007) revealed 40% of the

superintendents in the United States maintained employment in a district for less than three years. According to Kowalski et al. (2011), approximately 68% of the 2,000 superintendent respondents in *The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study* survey did not plan to remain in the same position during the 2015 school year. In 2012, Grissom and Andersen (2012) revealed approximately 50% of California superintendents exited their current position within three years. Chingos et al. (2014) denoted the typical superintendent remained in their position for three to four years. Grissom and Mitani (2016) posited approximately 20% of superintendents leave the position annually due to retirement, promotions in another district, or acquired positions outside of K-12 education. Petersen and Title (2021) elaborated further by saying *The American School Superintendent: 2020 Decennial Study* survey results showed 57% of 1,205 superintendents did not plan to remain in the same position during the 2025 school year. Based on this information, it is imperative for school districts to make significant efforts to retain superintendents long-term, as superintendent turnover can negatively impact academic success (Kamrath, 2015; Marzano & Waters, 2009). In districts with low superintendent retention rates, stakeholders experience a shift in priorities and expectations due to changes in executive leadership. Such changes lead to difficulty in sustaining educational improvement efforts (Chingos et al., 2014; Kamrath, 2015). A low frequency of superintendent retention generates a culture anticipating turnover, a work environment of instability, a limited focus, and a lack of commitment or investment in the district's vision and operations (Buchanan, 2006; Kamrath, 2015). Subsequently, stakeholders can become complacent and resistant to the initiatives and direction of a newly elected or appointed superintendent (Kamrath, 2015; Marzano & Waters, 2009;

Simpson, 2013). Consistent, stable, and effective district leadership promotes, endorses, and supports a positive organizational culture where staff and students thrive (Chingos et al., 2014; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Simpson, 2013).

The superintendent's role and responsibility have become increasingly challenging and demanding (Brunner et al., 2002; Hart et al., 2019; Kowalski, 2005; Sharp & Walter, 2004). Superintendents function as the chief executive officer of a school system, overseeing essential components of the district's short-term and long-term operations (Björk et al., 2014). Effective strategic planning, recruitment procedures, financial management, and instructional leadership create a positive learning environment within schools, resulting in student achievement (Alsbury, 2008; Hart et al., 2019). Superintendents receive praise when student achievement rises; however, when scores decline, the chief executive officer is ostracized (Chingos et al., 2014). These stressors contribute to decreasing superintendent retention (Chingos et al., 2014). The importance of a school district's superintendent and the concerns of superintendent retention make a critical topic for research (Alsbury, 2008; Björk et al., 2014; Chingos et al., 2014; Hart et al., 2019; O'Connor & Vaughn, 2018).

Purpose of the Study

There is a twofold purpose of this quantitative correlational and predictive research study. The primary purpose of this study is to examine how grit, grit subscales (i.e., perseverance and passion), organizational commitment, organizational commitment subscales (i.e., affective commitment [AC], normative commitment [NC], and continuance commitment [CC]), gender, and district description predict retention among superintendents in the southern region of the United States. The secondary purpose of this

study is to explore relationships between self-reported attributes of grit, organizational

commitment, and retention of superintendents in the southern region of the United States.

As displayed on the map in Figure 1 (Kiersz, 2018), the southern region of the

United States includes 17 states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia,

Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina,

Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Figure 1

Southern Region of the United States Map
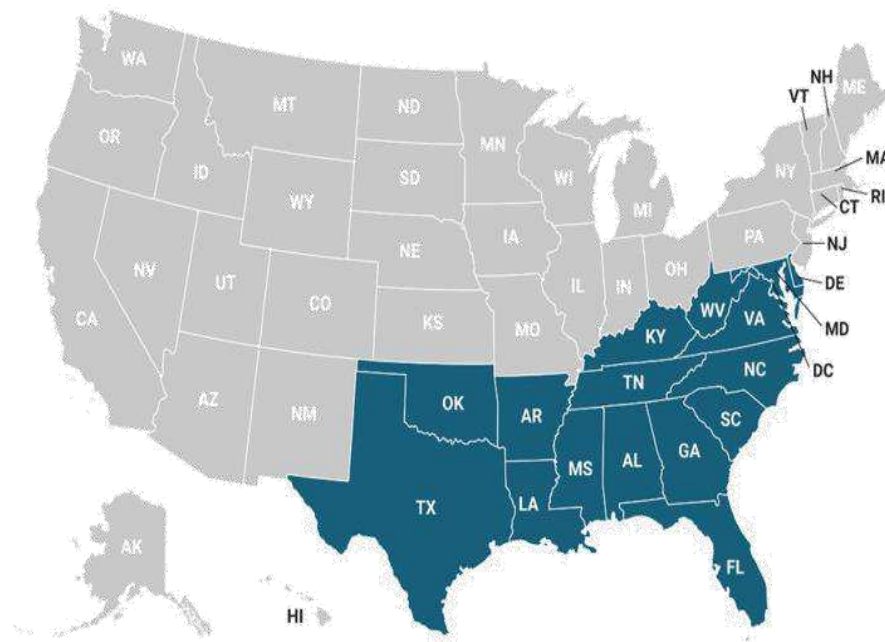
Note. Map of the southern region from Business Insider. Adapted from Region 3: South,
by A. Kiersz, 2018, https://www.businessinsider.com/regions-of-united-states-2018-5.
Copyright 2018 by the U.S. Census Bureau. Adapted with permission. (Appendix A)

Research Questions and Hypotheses

I addressed the following research questions and hypotheses in this study:

- Research Question 1 (RQ1): Are there relationships among grit, organizational commitment, and retention among superintendents in the southern region of the United States?

- Research Question 2 (RQ2): What factors (grit, grit subscales [passion and perseverance], organizational commitment, organizational commitment subscales [AC, NC, and CC], gender, and district description), if any, predict retention among superintendents in the southern region of the United States?

  - Hypothesis 1 (H1): Passion and perseverance will predict retention.

  - Hypothesis 2 (H2): Grit will predict retention.

  - Hypothesis 3 (H3): Affective, normative, and continuance commitment will predict retention.

  - Hypothesis 4 (H4): Organizational commitment will predict retention.

  - Hypothesis 5 (H5): Gender and district description will predict retention.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is the existing, tested, and validated "theory-driven" blueprint of the research (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p. 12). It is the foundation for this dissertation research. The framework of this quantitative study includes Angela Duckworth's theory of Grit and Meyer and Allen's Three-Component Model of employee commitment (TCM) theory. The two theories serve as the basis to (a) examine

the relationship between a superintendent's level of grit and organizational commitment and (b) to predict their intention to remain in the superintendency.

The graphical concept map in Figure 2 displays the independent variables – grit, perseverance, passion, organizational commitment, NC, AC, CC, district description, and gender. They are self-reported factors. The one-way dashed arrows denote the potential predictive relationship of variables on retention. The two-way arrows represent the potential interconnected relationships of variables. Grit and organizational commitment include subcomponents such as passion, perseverance, AC, NC, and CC, respectively. In addition to the variables for this particular study, demographic data (i.e., age, race, tenure, state, and district enrollment) were collected to describe the basic features of the respondents of the study. For this study, I focused on the extent to which the independent variables related to or predicted superintendent retention.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework Graphic
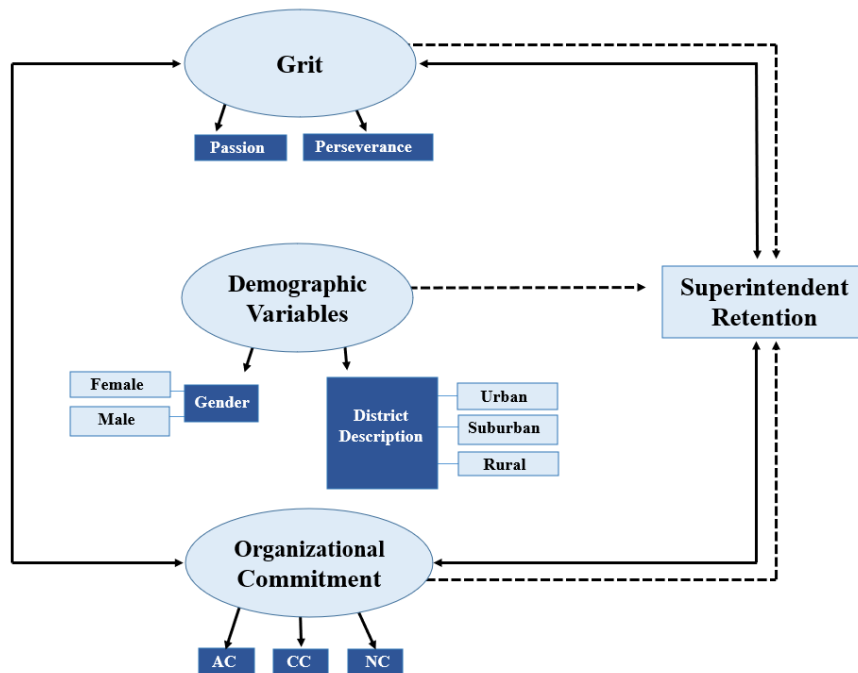
Note. Illustration of the important variables of this study.

Methodological Approach

A quantitative approach is the methodological strategy for this research study. In quantitative research, researchers use measures like surveys to gather numerical data from a targeted population to determine statistical relationships or influences (Neuman, 2018). I employed two statistical procedures: correlation and logistic regression. A Pearson correlation analysis addressed RQ1 to determine if there was a relationship between the two independent variables (i.e., grit and organizational commitment) and the one binomial dependent variable (i.e., retention versus no retention). Such analytical methods may reveal patterns, allowing for predictive forecasting of superintendent retention. Binary logistic regression was deemed the most appropriate statistical procedure to address RQ2 because it is a statistical technique used to predict the value between a binomial dependent variable (i.e., retention versus no retention) and some combination of two or more independent variables. The administration of one survey to superintendents in the southern region of the United States included (a) two valid and reliable instruments, Grit Scale (Grit-S) and TCM revised; (b) demographic questions for age, gender, race, district description, district enrollment, and tenure as a superintendent; and (c) retention (i.e., intention to remain in the district). Data collected were the self-reported attributes of each superintendent.

Significance of the Study

Superintendents are responsible for providing stable support through strategic planning to educate elementary, middle, and secondary students. Superintendents set the expectations and the pathway to improve a school district. As the highest-ranking official

in a school district, this job comes with internal and external pressures and expectations from stakeholders, including the school board, parents, and community partners (Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Hart et al., 2019). The role of a superintendent is overwhelming, based on internal and external pressures (Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Hart et al., 2019). Superintendents need more than instructional knowledge and the ability to maintain job success. Researchers suggested a significant relationship exists between superintendent tenure and positive student achievement (Chingos et al., 2014; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Simpson, 2013). It is essential to provide school boards with data supporting the improvement of the retention of superintendents in education systems.

If grit and organizational commitment predict superintendent retention, school boards could use these measures to select superintendents for their school system during the hiring process. Secondly, it may provide new information influencing education leadership preparation courses at the university level and superintendent leadership programs. The results may provide information regarding work-related conditions leading to a longer tenure of superintendents based on the components of organizational commitment. Current school superintendents can use strategies (e.g., modeling perseverance) to mentor rising superintendents if there is a significant relationship between grit and retention. Lastly, districts can potentially see the benefits of educational initiatives by retaining superintendents and reducing efforts and expenses to replace superintendents.

The findings from this study will fill gaps in the literature by examining the relationship between superintendent retention, grit, and organizational commitment. There are very few studies that investigate how retention is related to grit and

organizational commitment of superintendents. This study would add to the knowledge base by specifically studying variables to predict superintendent retention in states within the southern region of the United States. I sought to determine whether grit and organizational commitment are correlated as predictors for superintendent retention to provide school boards with information to revisit superintendent hiring policies and practices.

Assumptions of the Study

An assumption is a detail the researcher believes to be true that may or may not have evidence to support it (Mills & Gay, 2019). There are two assumptions with this study. Primarily, the Grit-S and TCM questionnaires are appropriate instruments to measure grit and organizational commitment of superintendents in the southern region of the United States. Secondly, all collected data helped to sufficiently answer the research questions, but the data could not account for everything superintendents have learned and experienced in their careers. I determined the practical validity and reliability of these assumptions during data collection and analysis.

Limitations of the Study

According to Mills and Gay (2019), limitations are probable weaknesses of a study because uncontrollable elements could negatively affect the study. There are three limitations to this study. First, this study is limited to describing characteristics – grit and organizational commitment – as it relates to the retention of superintendents in the southern region of the United States. This study does not include northern or western state superintendents. Second, convenience sampling is the selection strategy, which limits the generalizability of results. The sample size, however, is 3,546 at the onset of

the study. Third, the data collection method is limited to the self-reported response of grit and commitment through an electronic survey. Superintendents may not respond with frankness.

Definition of Terms

The following defined terms are used in this study:

Affective commitment. The emotional affinity an employee has toward the organization (Wu & Lui, 2014). The employee has a desire to stay with the organization because they feel valued and connected.

Continuance commitment. The employee's perceived loss of monetary, professional, or social connections if they leave the organization (Wu & Lui, 2014). The employee needs to remain with the organization because the perceived loss is disadvantageous.

District description. The regional location of the district categorized into three categories: urban, rural, or suburban (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006).

District enrollment. The number of students enrolled in the school system categorized into five categories: large (25,000+), medium (10,000 – 24,999), small (2,500 – 9,999), very small (300 – 2,499) and tiny (less than 300).

Grit. An individual's ability to pursue long-term goals with passion and sustained persistence (Duckworth, 2016).

Normative commitment. The employee's obligatory moral connection to stay with the organization (Wu & Lui, 2014). The employee has the desire to stay and do what is right.

Organizational commitment. The bond employees experience in their company, exemplified by organizational commitment, is the strength of an employee's connection, identity, and participation (Keskes, 2014; Wu & Lui, 2014). An employee's faith and trust in the organization's mission, desire to remain a part of the team, and commitment to work on behalf of the organization are components of organizational commitment (Keskes, 2014).

Retention. The "act of retaining" (Merriam Webster, n.d.-c) an employee for a duration of time in one organization. Superintendents who stay in the same district and role from one year to the next (Goldring et al., 2014).

Southern Region of the United States. The region includes 17 states (Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia) (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

Superintendent. A public-school district's chief executive officer who oversees the school system (Tienken, 2021).

Tenure. The length of service a superintendent has held his or her current position (Glass et al., 2000; Yates & De Jong, 2018).

Turnover intention. An employee's deliberate intent to leave an existing organization (O'Connor, 2018; O'Connor & Vaughn, 2018).

Organization of the Study

The study contains five chapters providing information about the grit, commitment, and retention of superintendents in the southern states. Chapter I is a comprehensive overview of the study, including the statement of the problem, purpose of the study,

significance of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, assumptions of the study, limitations of the study, and definition of essential terms. Chapter II is an in-depth literature review on the evolution of superintendency, including gender differences, roles, responsibilities, needs, grit, organizational commitment, and retention of superintendents. Chapter III describes the quantitative research design and procedures used for this study. Chapter IV outlines the quantitative results and analyses. Chapter V summarizes the study, findings, conclusions, discussion, and recommendations for practice and further research.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter details a thorough review of the literature. It provides an overview of the research pertaining to superintendent retention, history, grit, and organizational commitment. This chapter begins by discussing the historical evolution of superintendency, as well as the gender disparities. The literature review contains a discussion of each variable used in the study—demographic variables (e.g., gender and district description), grit, passion, perseverance, organizational commitment, AC, NC, CC, and retention. Next, there is a discussion on superintendent retention, which includes female retention and urban school-type retention. The grit and organizational theoretical frameworks are addressed according to their relevance to the variable of retention. The chapter culminates with a summary of the literature review.

Superintendency History

The superintendency position originated in the late 1830s at Buffalo Public Schools in Buffalo, New York (Blount, 1998; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Grieder et al., 1969; Tienken, 2021). The second appointment of a district superintendent was in Louisville, Kentucky (Björk et al., 2014; Grieder et al., 1969). By the 1850s, 13 school boards appointed superintendents to govern the school systems (Grieder et al., 1969). Nearly 25 years after the inception of the position, in 1870, 30 large cities hired superintendents (Kowalski, 1999). By 1900, most city school districts appointed superintendents of schools (Björk et al., 2014). The superintendent position was established to support the large city school board's desire to have an administrator responsible for the day-to-day operations of a changing school system (Björk et al., 2014;

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Tienken, 2021). Scholars agree that the creation of the superintendent position overlapped with the Common School Movement, enabling all children to receive an education funded by local tax dollars (Grieder et al., 1969).

The Common School Movement mandated all students attend public school, regardless of race, religion, or class. The movement increased student populations (Kowalski & Björk, 2005). The need for the superintendent position arose due to a variety of factors, including increased student enrollment in city school districts, consolidations of rural schools, expanded state curriculum, and required attendance laws, all of which necessitated greater accountability and efficiency (Kowalski, 2003; Kowalski & Keedy, 2005). The new regulations increased the workloads of the school board (Kowalski, 2003; Kowalski & Björk, 2005; Kowalski & Keedy, 2005). In turn, Boards appointed an administrator, known as the superintendent, to manage the workload (Kowalski, 2003; Kowalski & Björk, 2005; Kowalski & Keedy, 2005).

Superintendency Role Evolution

The role of the public-school superintendent has evolved since its creation over 180 years ago. The superintendent's role is defined by the "economic, social, political, and technological changes that ensued over successive eras" (Björk et al., 2014, p. 1). In 1837, since the onset of the position, the role evolved from school board clerk to communicator. As the American educational system changed, so did the superintendent's role to meet the needs and demands of a growing public-school system. The six-role conceptualization associated with the superintendency are *school board clerk* (1837 to 1850), *teacher-scholar* (1850 to early 1900s), *business manager* (early 1900s to 1930s), *democratic leader* (1930 to mid-1950s), *applied social scientist* (mid-1950s to

mid-1970s), and *communicator* (mid-1970s to present) (Björk et al., 2014; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Kowalski, 2006; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Björk et al. (2014) argues:

Separating the characterizations is impossible because practitioners often assume two or more of them at any given time. The roles are woven into the fabric of superintendents' work. Taken together, these role conceptualizations provide an important framework for understanding the complexity of the position as well as define the knowledge and skills required for effective practice. (p. 9)

According to Björk et al. (2014) and Hutchings and Brown (2021), the superintendent position entails multiple responsibilities requiring individuals to possess various skills. Specifically, the research further denotes this role demands someone who can effectively serve as a scholarly leader, a business manager, a democratic leader, a social scientist, and a communicator. These various roles require the superintendent to have expertise in multiple areas and be able to switch from one role to another seamlessly (Björk et al., 2014; Hutchings & Brown, 2021).

Superintendent as School Board Clerk

From 1837 – 1850, the initial superintendent's role was minimal, serving as school board clerk. The school board hesitated to relinquish power to the newly developed position (Björk et al., 2014; Carter & Cunningham, 1997). School boards were accustomed to leading their school systems. During this period, the school boards assigned "modest clerical and administrative tasks" to superintendents (Björk et al., 2014, p. 8). Scholars identified the school board clerk as the initial superintendent role (Björk et al., 2014; Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Other scholars such as Callahan (1966) and Tyack and Hansot (1982) acknowledged the role of the school board clerk as the initial

one. However, they did not view the role as a relevant component of the historical

evolution of superintendents due to the impermanence of the position. The

superintendent's position as a school board clerk was temporary, only lasting one decade.

Superintendent as Teacher-Scholar

Superintendents were teachers of teachers. From 1850 to 1910, superintendents

supervised teachers and implemented the state-mandated curriculum. The school board

was responsible for finances and human resources (Björk et al., 2014). During this era,

superintendents were master teachers and pedagogical experts (Callahan, 1962; Cuban,

1976; Kowalski, 2003). Superintendents led professional learning sessions with teachers,

inspected instructional expectations learned during the professional learning sessions, and

were a visible presence in the school district (Cuban, 1984). Superintendents were

instructional leaders. Cuban (1976) summarized the superintendent's role as teacher-

scholar in an 1890 report on urban superintendents:

> It must be made his recognized duty to train teachers and inspire them with high
>
> ideals; to revise the course of study when new light shows that improvement is
>
> possible; to see that pupils and teachers are supplied with needed appliances for
>
> the best possible work; to devise rational methods of promoting pupils. (p. 16)

According to Tienken (2021), the superintendent's role of teacher-scholar

spanned 60 years since the inception of this role. It was essential to student academic

growth. It still remains an essential component of the 21st-century superintendent's role

as instructional leader (Tienken, 2021).

Superintendent as Business Manager

Between 1910 and 1930, the role of business manager emerged as a result of the economic shift from agrarian to industrial (Björk et al., 2014; Carter & Cunningham, 1997). The change in the economy shifted the structure and composition of public schools. The student population changed as rural communities merged with urban cities, which increased the number of students in school districts (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). Elitist community members who served on the school board grew concerned with the superintendent's ability to lead large districts (Björk et al., 2014). In the past, superintendents did not focus on managerial tasks such as budget, personnel, operations, and facilities because they focused more on their scholarly leadership (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). School boards adopted the industrial management principles and required superintendents to "learn and apply" the principles to school district leadership (Kowalski, 2005, p. 6). School boards assigned superintendents organizational management responsibilities such as fiscal development, administration, operational management, personnel management, and facility management (Björk et al., 2014). According to Tienken (2021), the role of business manager did not alleviate the teacher-scholar role. Superintendents were required to be business managers while maintaining their previous position as academic leaders (Tienken, 2021).

Superintendent as Democratic Leader

The rise of the superintendent as a democratic leader emerged between the 1930s and mid-1950s (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). The democratic leader role required superintendents to serve as public affairs spokespersons

and political lobbyists for financial support (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). In the 1930s, the financial scarcity of resources for public education was a challenge (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2005). The competition between public schools and other public agencies forced superintendents to lobby at the state and federal levels to secure resources for their school districts (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2005). Superintendents shared their needs with policymakers and the community to support their district's initiatives (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2005). The galvanization of the local taxpayers and policymakers directly impacted the financial support needed at the local level (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2005). The role of a democratic leader added to the previous roles of the instructional leader and business manager (Tienken, 2021). The author further notes presently, all three roles are essential duties and responsibilities of superintendents.

Superintendent as Applied Social Scientist

Societal conditions continued to alter the landscape of public education. By the mid-1950s, the superintendent's role shifted from a democratic leader to the position of an applied social scientist (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). After World War II, several societal influences caused the shift in superintendents' role (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). In his book, *The Superintendent of Schools: A Historical Analysis*, Callahan (1966) explains citizens' dissatisfaction with democratic leadership and the application of social science research to public education, which led to the transformation of the superintendent's role. By the late 1940s, public education dissatisfaction was growing, and the rapid development of social science was instrumental in changing the narrative of K-12 public schooling (Björk

et al., 2014). Kowalski (2005) and Kowalski and Brunner (2011) also support this view. Parsons and Shils's (1951) pivotal book, *Toward a General Theory of Action,* illustrated how social science was the core of leadership, influencing districts and school leaders. The Kellogg Foundation's financial contribution to universities to conduct social science research influenced the professional shift of the superintendent's role as an applied social scientist (Callahan, 1966). At the university level, education administration courses shifted from organizational management to research-based theory, making school administration a reputable academic discipline (Björk et al., 2014). The applied social scientist role was included in superintendents' vital duties and responsibilities, thereby deeming the superintendent's role as multifaceted. This additional role linked their school decision-making practices to observation or experimental evidence (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005).

Superintendent as Communicator

Communication has been an essential leadership skill of the superintendent since the inception of this position (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). Superintendents communicated in various roles, including school board clerk, teacher-scholar, business manager, democratic leader, and applied social scientist (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). In the early 1970s, scholars predicted a shift from an industrial to an information-based society (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). The information-based society transformed the superintendent role from an applied social scientist to a communicator (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). According to Björk et al. (2014) in *The School District Superintendent in the United States of America,* superintendents' communicator role is shaped by two

conditions — the need to restructure school cultures and the need to access and use information in a timely manner to identify and solve problems of practice" (p. 13). *A Nation at Risk* committee stated American public schools inadequately prepared students to compete globally (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). This call to action shifted the way superintendents led their school districts. Superintendents began to work collaboratively with stakeholders – principals, teachers, parents, and other taxpayers — to develop and build shared visions of the district and school improvement (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). To effectively engage and influence stakeholders, the superintendent needed to be an expert communicator (Björk et al., 2014).

Gender Historical Perspective of the Superintendency

In the 19th century, at the onset of the superintendency, males were elected or appointed by school boards to manage school districts, shifting the day-to-day administration of schools from the school boards to the superintendent (Kowalski, 2013; Sharp & Walter, 2004). In 1837, New York Buffalo Public Schools appointed the first superintendent of schools, Oliver Gray Steele (Sharp & Walter, 2004; Tienken, 2021). The first appointment of a male as a superintendent began the upswing of the historical trajectory of the superintendency as an androcentric position. During the early 19th century, women did not have voting rights and could not hold public office (Blount, 1998). School boards selected superintendents paralleled with their demographics, such as Caucasian men (Blount, 1998). Most often, men were elected or appointed superintendents (Blount, 1998; Glass, 2000; Finnan et al., 2015; Finnan & McCord, 2017, 2018, 2019; Grogan & Nash, 2021). Securing a superintendent appointment was

challenging for women due to the demographical hiring barrier imposed by school boards (Blount, 1998). Throughout the early 20th century, the superintendency role shifted from scholarly leaders to business managers (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2003; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). During this phase, the business manager role was male-dominated and focused on day-to-day supervising operations as teaching became the focus for women (Callahan, 1966; Kowalski 2003, 2013). As a result, females assumed the responsibility of teaching, and the role of the superintendent was not an option (Kowalski, 2013). Women entered the superintendency role more than three decades after the first male superintendent (Bonney, 1981; Sharp & Walter, 2004; Tienken, 2021). In 1874, Phebe Sudlow was the first woman superintendent of a public school in the United States (Bonney, 1981). Phebe Sudlow was appointed the superintendent of Davenport Schools in Iowa (Bonney, 1981). A female being selected as a superintendent during the 19th century was unprecedented. In 1909, Ella Flagg Young was appointed superintendent of a major city school district, Chicago Public Schools (Blount, 1998). During Ella Young's superintendency, more than 5,000 teachers were in the school system (Blount, 1998). Phebe Sudlow and Ella Flagg Young were revolutionary trendsetters who paved the way for women to hold future superintendent positions. Ms. Young had ambitious visions concerning leadership roles for women in the 20th century. Ella Flagg Young predicted more women than men would have K-12 chief executive positions (Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993). The 20th century did not achieve Ella Flagg Young's optimistic expectations for women, nor has the first 20 years of the 21st century (Blount, 1998; Glass, 2000; Finnan et al., 2015; Finnan & McCord, 2017, 2018, 2019; Grogan & Nash, 2021). The

percentage of female superintendents increased in recent years, but not nearly as expected by Ella Flagg Young (Grogan & Nash, 2021).

<p align="center">***Superintendent Gender Gap***</p>

A variety of factors have been used to explain the gender disparity in the superintendent positions over the years. Whether it was barriers such as positional disadvantages or school board perceptions, explanations often focused on women lacking some key component, allowing them to successfully take on a top leadership role as superintendent (Glass, 2000). The rate of females entering the superintendent role increased over time (Blount, 1998; Glass, 2000; Finnan et al., 2015; Finnan & McCord, 2017, 2018, 2019; Grogan & Nash, 2021). There is still a significantly disproportionate number of female superintendents compared to the number of females in the K-12 education workforce (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010; Tienken, 2021). The rate of female superintendents rose from 8.9%, as noted in the 1910 research study (Blount, 1998), to 26.7%, as outlined by *The American School Superintendent: 2020 Decennial Study* (Grogan & Nash, 2021). Refer to Figure 3 for a display of the historical trend of female superintendents in the United States. Over the past 100 years, the number of female superintendents increased by approximately 16%. The number of female superintendents increased every decade, beginning in 1982. The most substantial increase within 100 years was from 2000 to 2020, which is recognized as a 13.5% growth. The percentage of female superintendents in 2015 is not representative of the superintendent population due to the limited number of respondents reflected in the mid-decade survey (Finnan et al., 2015).

Figure 3

Percentage of Superintendents 1930 – 2020
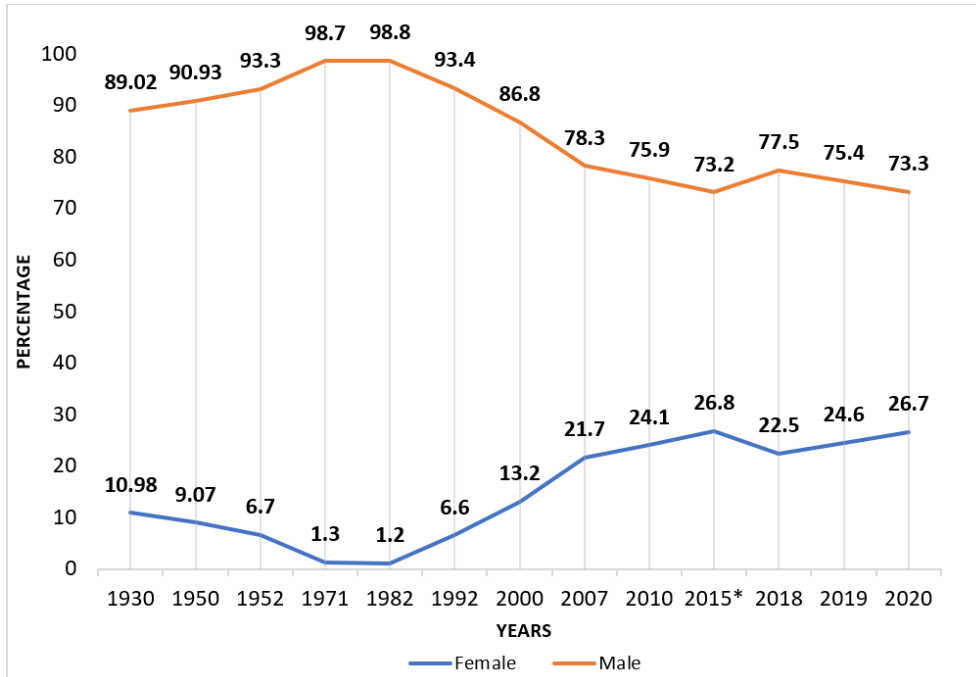
Note: Illustration on the percentage of superintendents.

The substantial decrease in female superintendents from 1952-1971 was a direct correlation to states changing their selection process for superintendents from a "traditional election [of county superintendents] by popular vote to appointment by the county board" (Blount, 1998, p.87). In *Destined to Rule the Schools: Women and the Superintendency, 1873-1995*, Blount (1998) discussed women being "excluded from the male political networks responsible for placing most superintendent candidates" (p.85). During this era, approximately one percent of women were superintendents. Also, school boards appointed candidates with professional school administration credentials based on recommendations from the National Education Association (NEA) (Blount, 1998). The appointment of credential superintendents eliminated women as potential candidates

because women were not allowed to attend professional school administration programs, deeming them unfit to serve as superintendent of schools (Blount, 1998).

While the role of the superintendent operates as the most powerful position in a school system, it has consistently remained the most male-dominated executive role in the United States (Gewertz, 2006; Glass, 1992). The superintendency, heavily dominated by males, poses a gender inequity in the highest possible position in the K-12 education field. As teachers, women have played a significant role in leading American education (Glass, 2000). Nearly 75% of America's teaching profession is female (Glass, 1992; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Skrla, 2000). Researchers confirmed gender inequity in senior educational leadership roles, as only 26.7% of superintendents were female in 2020 (Grogan & Nash, 2021; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010).

Gender Barriers in the Superintendency

Since the creation of the superintendency, the role expectations assumed the characteristics of men's work (Blount, 1998; Grogan, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1989; Skrla, 2000). Classifying the superintendency as a male's job led to the stereotypical expectations of the required skills for the position. Traditionally, the superintendent's responsibility was focused on managerial and operational effectiveness, not student improvement (Tyack & Hansot, 1982), and it kept the job almost exclusively male-dominated for decades.

Furthermore, Glass (2000) suggested four reasons women struggle to gain superintendent positions compared to their male counterparts. First, the author suggested women are not in positions to ascend to the level of superintendency (Glass, 2000). With 89% of female teachers at the elementary level (National Center for Education Statistics,

2023) and 75% of superintendents reporting no elementary school experience (Glass, 2000), women are at a positional disadvantage at the onset of their careers. According to Glass, secondary educators are at an advantageous entry point to become a superintendent, if desired. Second, school boards are interested in hiring superintendents with experience in fiscal management skills; however, there is a perception that women lack economic management skills due to not being secondary administrators (Glass, 2000). Secondary administrators typically carry more financial management duties and responsibilities than elementary administrators. Glass reported 76% of female superintendents confirmed school boards perceive them as incapable of managing district finances. Third, the workload and mobility issues associated with the superintendent can interfere with personal life, which is unappealing to women who prefer a healthy work-life balance. The average workweek of a superintendent exceeds 50 hours of work, including sporting events, night events, and weekend events. Most school boards do not hire superintendents within their school system (Glass, 2000). Superintendents must move to the superintendency location, which often causes the entire family to be uprooted and relocated (Glass, 2000). Finally, the glass ceiling effect — the invisible barrier to the advancement of women — in school district management impedes women (Glass, 2000). Approximately half of male superintendents agreed school boards perceived women as incompetent when managing a school district (Glass, 2000). The school board's perception contributes to the few females hired as superintendents.

Conceptualizing Superintendent Retention

Superintendent retention is a trending issue for districts across the United States (Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Grissom & Mitani, 2016;

Kowalski et al., 2011; Petersen & Title, 2021). Since 1970, researchers have been interested in understanding why superintendents leave their superintendency (Buchanan, 2006; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Cooper et al., 2000; Cuban, 1976; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Thomas et al., 2022; Yates & De Jong, 2018). Superintendent retention, turnover, and tenure are connected concepts; therefore, this researcher discusses essential concepts of tenure and turnover as they relate to retention. Generally, retention is the act of keeping an employee for a duration of time in one organization (Merriam Webster, n.d.-c). In this study, the term retention refers to superintendents who stay in the same district in the same role for the next three to five years. Turnover intention is the superintendent's deliberate desire to leave a school system for various reasons (O'Connor, 2018). Tenure is the length of service a superintendent has held in his or her current position (Yates & De Jong, 2018).

The superintendency is a critical leadership position; therefore, understanding retention is essential. The superintendent's office is responsible for making vital decisions impacting the educational well-being of hundreds and even thousands of students in the United States (Grissom & Mitani, 2016). The author further notes the most influential person in a school system is the superintendent, the chief executive officer. Grissom and Mitani (2016) suggest the superintendent's role and responsibilities are crucial for the proper functioning of a school system, including communicating and executing a clear vision and creating a supportive environment for all schools within the system.

Many districts cannot retain their superintendents for extended periods for various reasons. Retaining superintendents is vital because turnover causes a rippling effect on

the school system, resulting in mistrust, instability, and turnover of other employees

(O'Connor, 2018; O'Connor & Vaughn, 2018). According to O'Connor (2018), the low

retention of superintendents in a district can hinder initiatives to improve the district,

leading to disruption throughout the system. The constant change in the vision and focus

can cause frustration and resistance among faculty and staff towards these initiatives

(O'Connor & Vaughn, 2018). Districts with superintendent retention challenges

"repeatedly experience a shift in priorities and expectations with changes in leadership,

and they face the ongoing challenge of effectively sustaining educational improvement

efforts" (Kamrath, 2015, p. 104), prohibiting long-term student achievement.

In *The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study*, 32% of the

respondents planned to remain a superintendent in their current district (Kowalski et al.,

2011), leaving a 68% retention deficit in school districts nationwide. Grissom and

Andersen (2012) indicated 45% of California superintendents had exited their positions

within three years. The 2020 Decennial Study survey results showed 57% of

superintendents did not plan to remain in the same position during the 2025 school year

(Tienken, 2021). The retention rate increased by 11% between 2010 and 2020. However,

this increase was not due to the quality of the survey results but rather due to the

inconsistency of the total number of respondents in 2010 and 2020. In 2010, there were

1,900 respondents, while in 2020, there were only 1,218 respondents, representing a 44%

decrease over the decade. According to Grissom & Mitani (2016), superintendents leave

their positions annually for various reasons, including retirement, promotion, school

board issues, more pay in another district, or to pursue other job opportunities outside of

the education field. While superintendent retention is a priority in many school districts,

"the factors contributing to superintendent turnover are poorly understood" (Grissom & Mitani, 2016, p. 351).

When reviewing the literature on superintendent turnover, tenure, and retention, the reported rate and length of the superintendency fluctuated over time. In 1992, the average time a superintendent remains in one superintendency was approximately six years (Glass, 1992). After seven years, a study of 1,719 superintendents showed a slight increase in superintendent retention. Cooper et al. (2000) reported the average superintendent tenure in their current position was approximately seven years. In 2000, the national average tenure of a superintendent was approximately five years per district served (Glass et al., 2000). In the 2000 national study of 2,262 superintendents, the researcher reported the average superintendent served approximately nine years in two districts. The average tenure calculation by Glass et al. (2000) includes the total years as a superintendent divided by the number of superintendent positions. In the 2007 *State of the American School Superintendent Mid-Decade Study* authored by Glass and Franceschini (2007), the mean tenure for superintendents was five-to-six years. The authors of the study implied 80% of superintendents could retire or change positions by 2011 based on 39% of anticipated retirements and potential turnover of 2,204 superintendent respondents across the United States. Glass and Franceschini's (2007) overly stated prediction did not come to fruition. By 2010, 68% of superintendents did not plan to remain in their current superintendency (Kowalski et al., 2011). According to the 2017, 2018, and 2019 American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Salary and Benefits Study, half of the respondents indicated they have been in their current position for one to five years (Finnan & McCord, 2017, 2018, 2019). By 2025,

57% of superintendents did not plan to remain in the same position (Petersen & Title, 2021). Within the past 20 years, the tenure range of superintendents maintained an average of five-to-six years.

State departments of education utilize student achievement data, among other indicators, to rate school districts as successful or unsuccessful (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). As Robert Rammer (2007) stated, "public school superintendents ultimately are responsible for the success or failure of the schools within their district" (p. 67). Successful school systems have an effective, proactive, and productive superintendent of schools (Rammer, 2007). Kamrath and Brunner (2014) affirmed the correlation by asserting "research examining the effects of superintendent leadership on student achievement found a positive correlation between longer superintendent tenures and higher student test scores" (p. 435), indicating superintendent retention correlates to student achievement. Superintendents who remain with a district provide long-term strategic planning of instructional expectations and monitor academic performance (Kamrath & Brunner, 2014; Marzano & Waters, 2009). Superintendent turnover negatively impacts academic success in the school district (Marzano & Waters, 2009). The authors point out school districts must employ substantial efforts to retain the superintendent long term to maintain consistent academic success.

Superintendents who serve in their position for less than five years document less growth in student achievement than their peers who stay beyond five years (Simpson, 2013). Oppositely, Chingos et al. (2014) findings indicate "student achievement does not improve with the longevity of superintendent service within their districts" in Florida and North Carolina (p. 1). A weakness of this argument is the achievement comparison only

included mathematics achievement and not overall achievement in all academic subjects (Chingos et al., 2014). Nationally, mathematics achievement is an academic thorn across the United States (NAEP, 2019; NAEP, 2023). Based on the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the overall mathematics proficiency placement of students in the United States was 41% for 4th-grade students and 34% for 8th-grade. Based on the 2023 NAEP Nation's Report Card, 81% of the state's 4th-grade mathematics scores decreased, and 96% of the state's 8th-grade scores decreased (NAEP, 2023).

A superintendent's average time in their current school system is less than five years (Rogers et al., 2021; Rogers & McCord, 2020; Thomas et al., 2022). The average tenure of superintendents is within the recommended time to improve student achievement (Marzano & Waters, 2009). However, it takes ten or more years to experience complete school reform (Fullan, 2000, 2009, 2010) with the leadership of the superintendent. When the superintendent leaves within five years, the complete district-wide reform pauses or stops due to new leadership with a new vision (Alsbury, 2008; Marzano & Walters, 2009). The purpose of school is to educate students; therefore, student achievement is the cornerstone of public schooling. Retaining superintendents for at least ten years is imperative to effectuate school reform to continually improve or sustain student achievement (Fullan, 2000, 2009, 2010).

Female Superintendent Retention

In the American public school system, women in the chief executive-level positions are underrepresented, and their tenure is shorter than their male counterparts (Knight et al., 2018; Rogers & McCord, 2020; Rogers et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2022;

Thomas et al., 2023). In the 2019 through 2023 AASA Superintendent Salary and Benefits Studies, males have more time in their present positions than females (Rogers & McCord, 2020; Rogers et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2022; Thomas et al., 2023). According to the Broad Center 2017 report, women remained superintendent in one school system for approximately 5.18 years, while men stayed for approximately 6.42 years (Knight et al., 2018). Districts retain male superintendents for approximately 1.24 years longer than female superintendents, which is equivalent to about 15 months. The Broad Center research included an analysis of 100 large school systems' superintendents in the United States from 2003 – 2017, utilizing hire and departure dates from self-reported survey results, periodicals, and district employment announcements (Knight et al., 2018). The calculation of the tenure of a superintendent in one school system includes the number of days served converted to years. The analysis found the women superintendent's ongoing tenure was shorter than male superintendents (Knight et al., 2018). One-fifth of superintendents surveyed were females. The Broad Center report is in alignment with the AASA findings, stating approximately 24% of the population of superintendents are female superintendents (Knight et al., 2018; Rogers et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2022; Thomas et al., 2023). The Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS, 2014) reported an average of three years of tenure for female superintendents of large urban school districts. The Broad Center discovered gender disparities that were evident in the retention of female superintendents.

Superintendent Retention in Urban Schools

Superintendent tenure for urban school districts is shorter than the overall national average of all superintendents. The three-to-four years of superintendent tenure reported

by many researchers often reflects urban school superintendents (Chingos et al., 2014; CGCS, 2014; Grissom & Andersen, 2012). The urban school superintendent retention rate is two years shorter than their non-urban colleagues (CGCS, 2014; Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Urban school districts have different struggles than suburban and rural districts. Most students in urban school districts are low-income, students of color, and English language learners. The CGCS represents the nation's largest urban school districts. As of 2014, 66 large urban school districts are members of the CGCS, representing 40% of the nation's low-income students, 25% of students of color, and 40% of English language learners (CGCS, 2014). A superintendent's average length in one urban school district was three years. Within ten years, a superintendent's total number of years in an urban district increased by 0.38 years, from 2.8 years in 2003 to 3.18 years in 2014 (CGCS, 2014). As outlined in the 2014 CGCS report, 89% of the CGCS superintendents have not been in their current position for more than five years (CGCS, 2014).

Superintendent Retention and Skill Set

The superintendent's skill set was the topic of discussion through many eras (Björk et al., 2014; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Kowalski, 2005, 2006; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). The superintendent role conceptualizations included six different roles and several skills transformed over time (Björk et al., 2014; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Kowalski, 2005, 2006; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). As mentioned, the superintendent's role changed based on societal needs (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). Superintendents were required to acquire a specific skill set to remain in their positions (Tienken, 2021).

Skill sets are important to the superintendent's duties and responsibilities (Björk et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2003; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). According to O'Connor (2018), "as rapid superintendent turnover continues to be of great concern, finding ways to cultivate and identify more quality candidates will be vital" (p. 2).

Grit and the Current Study

Previous studies suggested higher grit levels correlated to increased retention of individuals in various settings (Burkhart et al., 2014; Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014; Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014). In previous studies, the focus on retention and grit included whether individuals who possessed grit remained in a workplace but did not investigate the population of superintendents (Burkhart et al., 2014; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). The current study is an expansion of the previous research on grit by determining whether there is a correlation between retention of a new population – superintendents in the southern region of the United States – and determined if grit, passion, and perseverance predict retention. A comprehensive review of the literature on grit follows this section.

Historical Conceptualization of Grit

Grit dates back to the late 19th and early 20th century. Francis Galton (1869), Charles Darwin (1859), and William James (1907) posited ability, zeal, and hard work differentiated people within the same profession. Innovative forerunners like Galton believed intelligence alone did not equate to longevity and success in any field.

Catherine Cox (1926) advanced Galton's research by analyzing over 300 biographies of noteworthy leaders such as Napoleon Bonaparte, Isaac Newton, Mozart,

and George Washington. Cox's findings were consistent with Galton's research, obtaining a similar conclusion "persistence of motive and effort, confidence in their abilities, and great strength or force of character" (Cox, 1926, p. 218) were more predictive than intelligence as indicators distinguishing people within the workforce. The work of pioneers like Galton, Darwin, James, and Cox led to the development of grit. Based on Cox's analysis of each successful leader's biography, four indicators emerged differentiating eminence from everyday people (1926). The four indicators are grouped into passion (zeal and interest) and perseverance (activity and tenacity). Cox's research findings established a description of passion as "working toward a definite goal" (Cox, 1926, p. 174) and perseverance as the ability not to quit tasks when faced with adversity but to persevere with firmness (Cox, 1926). Duckworth et al. (2007) utilized Cox's foundation of passion and perseverance when developing the original grit construct.

In recent literature, grit has a variety of definitions. Farrington et al. (2012) defined grit as "the degree to which students stay focused on a long-term goal despite obstacles" (p. 20). Merriam-Webster's dictionary (n.d.-a) defined grit as "firmness of mind or spirit; unyielding courage in the face of hardship." Shechtman et al. (2018) referred to grit as "perseverance to accomplish long-term or higher-order goals in the face of challenges and setbacks" (p. 3).

One component of this study's theoretical framework is rooted in Angela Duckworth's grit theory. Duckworth et al. (2007) expounded the term grit into a research-based theory grounded on empirical research studies. Duckworth explored the concept of grit in her 2006 dissertation, and her ongoing research on grit led to the development of the 2016 book *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. In 2009,

Duckworth and Quinn defined the theory of grit as "trait-level perseverance and passion for long-term goals" despite obstacles and distractions (p. 166). She concluded consistency of effort (i.e., perseverance) and consistency of interest (i.e., passion) are essential to meeting long-term goals, including success and retention. Grit is the relentless pursuit of long-term goals despite setbacks, plateaus, or boredom and the ability to achieve those goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). Duckworth et al. declared grit to be an attribute used to predict achievement and retention. Researchers focused on two types of grit relationships: 1) the relationship between achievement and grit and 2) the relationship between retention and grit (Duckworth, 2016; Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). The construct grit includes two components: passion (i.e., consistency of interests) and perseverance (i.e., consistency of efforts) (Duckworth, 2016). The character trait of grit contributes to successful leadership (Duckworth et al., 2007; Kelly et al., 2014), including educational leadership (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Grit is a character trait resulting from prolonged and sustained talent and effort (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Maddi et al., 2012). As a result, people with more grit tend to be more successful and remain in positions longer (Duckworth et al., 2011; Von Culin et al., 2014). Individuals with more grit can maintain their determination and motivation over extended periods despite adversity because they approach achievement and retention as a series of steps, failures, and successes over time (Duckworth, 2016).

Passion

Passion is a common term in the English vocabulary. The meaning of passion can vary depending on the individual and the situation. Passion is a conviction driving an individual towards goals, hobbies, or achievements related to commitment and effort

(Duckworth et al., 2007; Kelly et al., 2014). Passion has fondness, enthusiasm, and desire. Passion motivates intentions and behaviors toward goals (Jachimowics et al., 2018) or an intense desire, drive, or conviction for something (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-b). Angela Duckworth (2016) described passion as an "ultimate goal in an abiding, loyal, and steady way" such that the individual is intensely dedicated to the pursuit with gusto for extended periods (p. 64).

Perseverance

In psychology, perseverance is a character trait (Woolley & Fishbach, 2016) described as focused, sustained effort (Duckworth, 2016). Researchers defined perseverance as the ability to stick with successive goals to achieve a higher goal over an extended period (Duckworth & Gross, 2014). Peterson and Seligman (2004) described perseverance as the "voluntary continuation of a goal-directed action despite obstacles, difficulties, or discouragement" (p. 229). Perseverance is a character trait requiring an individual to pursue their goal with stamina and determination persistently. According to Duckworth (2016), perseverance and effort are related terms. Duckworth (2016) defined perseverance as deliberate practice and consistent effort. Perseverance is not a talent; it is an effort-based trait promoting achievement and retention when implemented successively. Duckworth (2016) developed two simple equations explaining how an individual gets from talent to achievement: a) talent x effort = skill b) skill x effort = achievement. In Duckworth's equation, effort counts twice: it builds skill and makes skills productive.

Four Stages of Grit

Angela Duckworth's (2016) grit theory includes four stages: interest, practice, purpose, and hope. In her book, *Grit: The power of passion and perseverance*, she explained grit as a changeable quality that is not fixed and can be cultivated by developing the four stages. The four stages of grit are sequential.

The first stage of the grit theory is interest. Interest is an individual's ability to intrinsically enjoy what they do (e.g., job and hobby), including the good and bad components. It is an overall enjoyment of what they do (e.g., job and hobby). Passion begins with interest. Individuals need to care genuinely and be curious about something (e.g., job and hobby) to cultivate interest. For example, an individual who enjoys their work views their job as exciting, fascinating, and fulfilling (Duckworth, 2016). Developing grit is a long-term process; therefore, it is essential to try different interests (e.g., jobs, hobbies, and activities) to determine what interest in a particular area an individual genuinely enjoys (Duckworth, 2016).

The second stage of the grit theory is practice. One form of perseverance is the daily discipline of trying to do things better than before. Duckworth (2016) described daily disciple as being dedicated, "focused, full-hearted, challenge-exceeding skill practice that leads to mastery" (p. 91). Duckworth suggests deliberate practice is for preparation. It is a decisive and methodical behavior requiring focused attention with a specific performance improvement goal. Individuals with more grit engage in more frequent bursts of deliberate practice (Duckworth, 2016). Fostering deliberate practice involves setting a specific stretch goal, eliminating distractions, dedicating sustained effort, receiving immediate feedback, and reflecting frequently (Duckworth, 2016).

Purpose is the third stage of the grit theory. Duckworth's research indicated people with more grit could persevere through conflict and failure because they feel they contribute to the greater good; it is their calling (Duckworth, 2016). Purpose is the "intention to contribute to the well-being of others" (Duckworth, 2016, p. 146) to adequately contribute to society. Some individuals develop a passion either because of their interest in it or because it gives them a sense of purpose. In this context, purpose is another form of interest (Duckworth, 2016). Typically, after individuals enjoy something, they reflect on how to pivot their joy to helping others as their passion (Duckworth, 2016). The author further suggests purpose does not happen in a single event. It is an ongoing pursuit that may take several years and iterations of refinement before an individual declares their work as purposeful (Duckworth, 2016).

The belief in improving one's future is how Angela Duckworth (2016) described hope, the fourth stage of her grit theory. Hope is a "raising-to-the-occasion kind of perseverance" igniting the individual's willpower to keep going even when they have failed repeatedly (Duckworth, 2016, p.169). Individuals with hope embrace mistakes as learning opportunities in the journey to success. Duckworth implied hope is developed through an optimistic outlook about one's ability to overcome obstacles and improve a specific skill set utilizing three steps — "growth mindset, optimistic self-talk, and perseverance over adversity" (Duckworth, 2016, p.192).

Grit Scale

Duckworth et al. (2007) developed the original grit scale, Grit-O, meaning original, to gauge grit. Grit-O is a self-reported 12-question grit assessment with six questions focused on consistency of interest and six questions focused on consistency of

effort. The passion and perseverance scales can be calculated separately using the grit scale (Duckworth et al., 2007). In 2009, Duckworth and Quinn revisited the Grit-O questionnaire and reduced the items to eight questions – four passion and four perseverance questions. The revised measurement scale is called Grit-S, a short scale. Researchers recommend using the Grit-S instrument due to its psychometrically substantial nature (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). The Grit-S instrument is used in this study. Duckworth (2016) described the grit scale as "a test that, when taken honestly, measures the extent to which you approach life with grit" (p. 9). When the instrument is completed with trustworthiness, the instrument more accurately predicts retention and success in long-term goals than IQ scores and grade point averages (Duckworth, 2016).

Grit and Superintendents

There is scant scholarly research on superintendents and grit. Three doctoral researchers investigated the relationship between grit and California superintendents using qualitative and mixed-methods studies. Using a mixed-method methodology, Kearns (2015) studied the relationship between California superintendent success and grit. The researcher surveyed the California superintendents with at least three years of service as a superintendent in their current school system. Individuals selected for this study were exceptional and successful superintendents. The researcher's findings noted successful superintendents possess a lot of grit, scoring high on each of the eight grit attributes (Kearns, 2015). Similarly, subordinates rated their superintendents as having a high grit level in both grit components (Kearns, 2015). A work-specific vision, competitive nature, high expectations, dynamic work ethic, work-personal life balance,

supportive work network, and uplifting celebration of accomplishments all contributed to the amount of grit superintendents possess (Kearns, 2015).

Arias (2017) examined the relationship between grit traits and perceived leadership characteristics of seven California superintendents in urban public-school systems. The scholar's research identified attributes aligned with the components of grit, including courage, conscientiousness, endurance toward long-term goals, optimism, resilience, and excellence over perfection. Similarly, Hubbard (2018) analyzed the superintendents' grit level and its relationship to tenure length. Hubbard's findings indicated superintendents in their positions for "twice the average length or more" possessed more grit (p. 108). The research indicated a positive relationship between high grit levels and average tenure lengths.

Grit and Retention

Retention and grit have been the topic of study by many scholars. In recent years, several researchers have explored the construct grit, a trait of passion and perseverance, adding to the body of knowledge in the fields of education and psychology (Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014; Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014; Von Culin et al., 2014) to explain further the trait of grit and its influences on retention. These researchers found grit to predict retention across multiple contexts, including military cadets, Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF), workplace environments, students, teachers, and married couples.

Researchers conducted studies of U.S. Military cadets to examine grit as a predictor of retention. After the initial summer training led by the U.S. Military, Duckworth et al. (2007) and Kelly et al. (2014) investigated the retention of three cohorts

of cadets. Successful West Point cadets endured a rigorous training camp. The initial study by Duckworth et al. included 1,218 cadets who entered the academy during the summer of 2004. The researchers investigated summer retention and five predictors — grit, self-control, Whole Candidate Score, academic GPA, and Military Performance Score. Grit predicted completion of the summer academy better than any other predictor. The study revealed cadets with high grit levels were likelier to complete their summer training camp (Duckworth et al., 2007). In 2006, Duckworth et al. repeated the study with 1,310 cadets. As reported in the previous study, grit predicted summer retention, whereas the Whole Candidate Score did not (Duckworth et al., 2007). Kelly et al. studied the four-year West Point program with 1,558 cadets utilizing grit and hardiness as predictors for retention. Grit predicted "persistence across the remaining four-year period" (Kelly et al., 2014, p. 327).

Similarly, in another study, Maddi et al. (2012) examined 1,285 cadets entering basic training in July 2008. To predict retention, the researchers examined hardiness, grit, past-performance, and first-year performance factors. Grit had a more significant effect on retention than the other three factors. The findings of the study conducted by Kelly et al. (2014) substantiated the findings of the previous studies with Duckworth et al. (2007) and Maddi et al. (2012) as researchers. In the military setting, cadets with higher grit levels are likelier to remain in the program (Duckworth et al., 2007; Kelly et al., 2014; Maddi et al., 2012).

The earlier mentioned type of rigorous training program for the U.S. Military indicated higher grit predicted successful program completion (e.g., West Point Academy training completion). Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014) studied ARSOF soldiers admitted

during four consecutive cohorts between November 2008 and February 2009. The researchers analyzed the relationship between retention and four factors: grit, general intelligence, physical fitness, and years of education. Grit predicted retention in the military cadet program beyond general intelligence and physical fitness. Soldiers with higher grit scores selected as ARSOF training candidates are more likely to complete the 24-day program than candidates with lower grit scores (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). The results of this study confirmed the previous military cadet studies indicating cadets with higher levels of grit are retained in the program (Duckworth et al., 2007; Kelly et al., 2014; Maddi et al., 2012).

Robertson-Kraft and Duckworth's (2014) study found retaining new non-traditional teachers in low socioeconomic public schools was significantly related to grit. Teach for America is a non-profit organization recruiting non-traditional college graduates (i.e., individuals with a bachelor's degree in education but do not possess a teacher certification). These graduates are hired to teach in low-socioeconomic public schools. The teachers must enroll in an alternative certification program while teaching full-time. The first study included 154 first- and second-year teachers. The Grit-S was used to rate teacher grit. The researchers noted teachers who possessed more grit were less likely to quit teaching mid-year (Robert-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014). In a second replicated study of 307 new Teach for America non-traditional teachers in low-income public schools, grit predicted a teacher's likelihood to stay in the field of education (Robert-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014).

Two studies were conducted on grit and retention in workplace environments. One pertained to the retention of 442 sales professionals of vacation ownership

corporations, and the other focused on 180 general surgery candidates during their

residency period (Burkhart et al., 2014; Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). In both cases,

individuals with more grit were more likely to remain at their jobs (Burkhart et al., 2014;

Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). Burkhart et al. (2014) could not provide statistically

significant data due to the low attrition rate of 2% but noted the findings were

encouraging. Surgeons who left the program had below-median grit scores.

Several researchers have studied the relationship between grit and student

retention. Duckworth et al. (2011) and Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014) studied the Scripps

National Spelling Bee winners and the Chicago Public Schools graduation rate. Both

studies implied individuals with higher grit levels were more successful at completing

goals than those with lower grit. Duckworth et al. (2011) analyzed the study habits of 190

finalists in the Scripps National Spelling Bee. They found frequent, deliberate practice

predicted success during competitions. The researchers concluded thoughtful and

consistent practice of spelling words, also known as grit (perseverance and passion), was

needed to win spelling bees (Duckworth et al., 2011). The researchers found students

with higher levels of grit studied longer and worked harder than their peers, leading to

greater success in the spelling bee and advancing to the final round (Duckworth et al.,

2011). Sustained deliberate practice is a form of retention because it involves persevering

and not giving up on activities that pose a challenge.

Researchers examined over 4,000 high school students enrolled at 98 Chicago

Public Schools to determine whether there was a relationship between retention and grit

(Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). In this case, retention was measured by graduating from

high school. In this study, the demographic predictors of graduation included gender,

race, and socioeconomic status. In addition to demographic predictors, the study included situational factors such as school safety, teacher support, peer support, and parental support (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). Grit was a non-traditional indicator of graduation. Student evaluation was over two years – junior year through senior graduation. The researchers in the study found grit had a strong positive relationship with graduation rates. The predictive logistic regression model yielded grit as a significant predictor of graduation ($OR = 1.21$). Students scoring one standard deviation higher in grit in their junior year had 21% higher odds of graduating from high school on time. Eighty-five percent of students surveyed in the spring of their junior year graduated on time one year later. Grit was a better predictor of retention compared to other factors. In fact, "Grittier juniors were more likely to graduate from high school their senior year" (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014, p. 8).

The studies above include a positive relationship between grit and retention in various settings. However, Credé et al. (2017) critiqued the findings with a grit meta-analysis of the literature. The meta-analysis included 88 independent samples representing 66,807 individuals. Credé et al. (2017) indicated Duckworth and Quinn (2009) misreported effect sizes to mislead the public. However, Duckworth's findings have been replicated and corroborated by other researchers in several studies, including Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2012), Burkhart et al. (2014), Kelly et al. (2014), and Maddi et al. (2012). The researchers' findings indicate grit is "only moderately correlated with ... retention," and the perseverance category has significantly stronger validity than the consistency of interest category (Credé et al., 2017, p. 2). In contradiction, Duckworth's

Grit-S and Grit-O instruments reflected internal alpha consistency ranging from .73 to .85, deeming a valid instrument.

Organizational Commitment and the Current Study

This researcher's study determined the relationship between organizational commitment and retention of superintendents. Other studies connoted organizational commitment levels (e.g., affective, continuance, and normative) correlated to increased retention of employees in various organizational settings and populations (Cohen, 2007; Kaur & Sharma, 2015; Maqsood et al., 2012; Meyer & Allen, 1984, 1991,1997, 2004; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Porter et al., 1974; Somers 2009). Several researchers declared employees with higher organizational commitment levels remained in the workplace (Becker, 1960; Meyer et al., 2002; Porter et al., 1974). A comprehensive review of the literature on organizational commitment follows this section.

Organizational Commitment History

Since organizational commitment was coined as a term more than five decades ago, several academic scholars expanded and theorized the concept of commitment (Becker, 1960; Cohen, 2007; Meyer & Allen, 1984, 1991, 1997; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Porter et al., 1974; Somers, 2009). Organizational commitment is a form of employee guarantee in which the individual has a level of allegiance to an organization. The evolution of organizational commitment spans from Becker's (1960) side-bet theory, Porter et al.'s (1974) affective dependence theory, and two multi-dimensional theories— one from O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) and the other from Meyer and Allen (1984, 1991). The 1960 – 1991 timeline of commitment theories refined and expanded the research of the organizational commitment construct.

Side-Bet Period

Howard Becker is the pioneer of organizational commitment. In his pivotal article, *Notes on the Concept of Commitment, 1960*, Becker proposed the first theory of organizational commitment—the side-bet theory of commitment. Becker (1960) defined side-bets as "commitments [that] come into being when a person … links extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity. Side-bets are often a consequence of the person's participation in the social organization" (p. 32). Side-bets are the accumulation of investments (e.g., vacation time, salary, position, non-work concerns) valued by the employee. Becker's theory states employees are committed to an organization based on their side-bets or hidden investments to remain in the company (Becker, 1960; Cohen, 2007; Meyer & Allen, 1984; Meyer et al. 1993; Powell & Meyer, 2004;). In the 21st century, Becker's side-bet theory is not a prominent theory of study. However, Becker's seminal research advanced the study of organizational commitment, leading to the affective-dependence theory (Becker, 1960).

Affective-Dependence Period

Porter et al. (1974) transformed Becker's side-bet theory from concrete side-bets to emotional connections to an organization. The theoretical shift from the side-bets to affective-dependence theory was pivotal in the 1970s. Porter et al. (1974) argued attitude-centered commitment is essential to determine an individual's commitment level to an organization. Affective influence is a latent connection to an employee's commitment level (Porter et al., 1974). Based on the affective-dependence theory proposed by Porter et al. (1974), the researchers developed the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). Researchers critiqued the scale because the items reflected more behavioral

intentions than attitudes (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; WeiBo et al., 2010). Due to the

OCQ scale's criticism, researchers advanced to the multi-dimensional model (Meyer &

Allen, 1984, 1991, 1997; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).

Multi-Dimensional Period

In the 1980s, two multi-dimensional approaches progressed organizational

commitment research: a three-dimensional approach by Meyer and Allen (1984) and a

two-dimensional approach by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986). O'Reilly and Chatman's

organizational commitment model has two processes (e.g., instrument exchange and

psychological attachment) and three components (i.e., compliance – extrinsic rewards,

identification – desire of affiliation, and internalization – alignment of organizational and

individual values). Before O'Reilly and Chatman's (1986) model, previous research did

not focus on the individual's underlying dimensions of psychological commitment to an

organization. The findings indicated a strong linkage between commitment,

internalization, and identification. However, additional research was needed to validate

the results and develop the three components of psychological attachment (i.e.,

compliance, identification, and internalization).

In the mid-1980s, Meyer and Allen (1984) refined Becker's side-bet theory.

Meyer and Allen critiqued Becker's side-bet approach, deeming the side-bet theory as an

inappropriate instrument to measure commitment. Meyer and Allen reported the Ritzer

Trice Scale and Hrebiniak Allutto Scale, developed by researchers Ritzer and Trice

(1969) and Allutto et al. (1973), respectively. It measured AC, not side-bets. They tested

this contention by comparing the interrelationships of the two scales they developed: AC

(e.g., emotional bind) and CC (e.g., compliance bind). In 1990, Allen and Meyer

expanded their tool to include NC (e.g., obligation). The three dimensions (i.e., affective, normative, continuance) led to the employee commitment according to the theoretical TCM.

Concept of Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is necessary for shaping turnover intent (Meyer et al., 2004) to support the retention of superintendents. The phrase "organizational commitment" has many definitions provided by scholars. Becker (1960) described commitment as a temperament to participate in a "consistent line of activity" (p. 32). In this case, the activity is employment—to ensure the collection of side-bets is applicable until the turnover intent. According to Porter et al. (1974), commitment is the individual's unique connection and organizational participation. Hall and Schneider (1972) and Mowday et al. (1982) viewed organizational commitment as the strength of the relationship between an individual and an organization. Similarly, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) described organizational commitment as "the psychological attachment felt by the person for the organization; it will reflect the degree to which the individual internalizes or adopts characteristics or perspectives of the organization" (p. 493). Meyer and Allen (1984, 1991, 1997) referred to organizational commitment as an emotional trait connecting the individual to the organization. More recently, Newstrom (2015) described organizational commitment as a person's emotional attachment to the organization.

In 1960, commitment was examined as a one-dimensional construct linked to side-bets (Becker, 1960) or affective-dependence (Porter et al., 1974). Over the next two decades, research in organizational commitment advanced and the unidimensional views of commitment transformed into multi-dimensional frameworks (Cohen, 2007; Meyer &

Allen, 1984, 1991, 1997; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Somers, 2009). The most widely accepted multi-dimensional framework in the research community is the TCM of employee commitment by Meyer and Allen (Meyer et al., 2002).

TCM of Employee Commitment

The TCM is one of the theoretical frameworks for this study. Meyer and Allen's seminal work regarding the TCM of employee commitment (i.e., affective, continuance, and normative) is the most researched commitment model often used as a predictor of turnover (Meyer & Allen, 1984, 1991, 1997; Meyer et al., 2002; Solinger et al., 2008). The TCM of employee commitment incorporates different forms of self-reported commitment mindsets to remain with the organization for various reasons (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 1993). The three forms of commitment are affective (the desire), continuance (the perceived cost), and normative (the obligation) commitment. The three distinctive components describe the psychological linkage between the employer and the employee. The components are dissimilar; however, each commitment component can concurrently represent an overall organizational commitment, which is the average of all three components (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Solinger et al., 2008). A detailed description of each component is outlined in the next sections.

Affective Commitment

AC is one of the most researched components of the TCM (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Cohen, 2007; Irving et al., 1997; Meyer & Allen, 1984, 1991, 1997; Meyer et al., 2002; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Porter et al., 1974; Somers, 2009). AC is the emotional connection an employee has with the organization. When an employee has AC, there is a

strong desire to stay within the organization due to their personal and emotional investment in the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 1993) resulting from one's sense of purpose or job-embedded growth (Meyer et al., 2004).

Continuance Commitment

CC is a type of organizational commitment in the TCM of employee commitment framework. CC is the least studied type of commitment since Becker's 1960 seminal research. CC is the level to which an employee decides if the potential loss outweighs the benefits of leaving (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer & Allen, 1984, 1991, 1997). Loss associated with leaving is what Becker (1960) called side-bets. These side-bets are valuable to the employee and require continued employment with the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 1993). The employee may want to leave the organization but realizes the stakes, such as tenure, prestigious title, benefits, decreased salary, vacation time, personal relationships, and other benefits (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 1993) are too high to risk the loss. Thus, the employee remains with the organization. Continuance refers to remaining with the organization in order to retain the set-bets.

Normative Commitment

NC is the remaining component of the TCM, and it is the final dimension on the TCM scale. NC is when an employee feels a moral obligation to stay with the organization because it is the right thing to do (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). For example, an employee may feel indebted to the organization because the company promoted them several times or the company paid for

their degree advancement. Employees feel they ought to remain with the organization because of their beliefs and values.

TCM of Employee Commitment Scale

Meyer and Allen (1991) developed the original TCM version to gauge three levels of organizational commitment—AC, CC, and NC. The original TCM is a self-reported instrument using a 24-question commitment assessment with eight questions focused on each component. The AC, CC, and NC scales can be calculated separately or combined for overall commitment (Meyer & Allen, 2004). Meyer et al. (1993) revised the TCM questionnaire, reducing the total items to 18 questions, six items per subscale. The revised measurement scale is called the TCM of employee commitment revised version. The TCM framework assists in understanding why employees leave or commit to organizations (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 1993). Since the 1990s, the TCM scale has been used and validated in diverse populations nationwide (Cohen, 2007; Kaur & Sharma, 2015; Maqsood et al., 2012; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Morrow, 1993; Sinclair et al., 2005; Somers 2009) further validating the use of the TCM as part of the conceptual framework of this study.

Organizational Commitment and Superintendents

Organizational commitment has been a topic of interest in the workplace for over five decades (Becker, 1960; Hall & Schneider, 1972; Meyer et al., 2004; Newstrom, 2015; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Porter et al., 1974). However, there is limited scholarly literature on the relationship between superintendents and organizational commitment. Williams (2017) examined the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment of 208 Texas superintendents in mid-size districts. Superintendents

completed the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire and TCM instruments. According to Williams (2017), job satisfaction has a "moderately strong relationship" with AC, a "weak relationship" with CC, and a "no relationship" with NC (p. 94). In summary, superintendents with higher job satisfaction exhibited higher AC, and superintendents with higher CC were less satisfied.

O'Connor and Vaughn (2018) studied the relationship between organizational exchange commitment and turnover intent of 306 superintendents in Texas public school systems. The researchers associated social exchange theory with workplace relationships. They argued "exchange between employer and employee" is essential to retaining employees (O'Connor & Vaughn, 2018). When employees are recognized and treated fairly, their commitment to the organization increases. O'Connor and Vaughn hypothesized that Texas superintendents have a "high perception of exchange commitment within their organization and moderate turnover intention" (p. 71).

Organizational Commitment and Retention

An employee's level of organizational commitment reflects their intention to remain in the organization. This concept has been extensively researched nationally by several scholars (Abraham et al., 2016; Anitha & Begum, 2016; Boling, 2017; Brunetto et al., 2012; Hashish, 2017; Mahal, 2012; Naz et al., 2020) adding to the body of knowledge. As specified by the studies discussed in this section, organizational commitment and subcomponents of organizational commitment are correlated to retention in various populations (e.g., nurses, social workers, automobile employees, government employees, high-potential employees, restauranteurs, educators, pharmacy employees, and military) and are predictors of retention (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019;

Chang et al., 2015) in various geographical locations (e.g., India, Alexandria, New Zealand, France, America, Pakistan, Taiwan, and Korea).

Anitha and Begum (2016) examined the association between AC, CC, NC, organizational culture, and employee retention as well as the impact of AC, CC, and NC on the retention of 200 automobile manufacturing employees. Data was electronically collected using a 7-point Likert Scale. The researchers used correlation and regression statistical tools to analyze the results. Organizational culture, AC, CC, NC, and employee retention were highly correlated. AC, CC, and NC were highly correlated with employee retention, indicating a significant positive relationship among the four factors. The regression results suggested the four variables (i.e., organizational culture, AC, CC, and NC) influenced employee retention by approximately 66.4%, signifying a high impact on employee retention. AC had a low impact on retention. CC and NC were positively related to retention. Several of these constructs significantly impact employee retention and should be considered when retaining employees.

Abraham et al. (2016) investigated the relationship between organizational commitment, organizational support, and the intention to stay from 221 high-potential employees in Centre-Val de Loire Region in France. High-potential employees are highly qualified employees whose employers seek to retain them longer. The researchers used a digital survey to collect data and the MEDIATE Macro statistical analysis procedure to analyze results. MEDIATE Macro is based on the least-squares method. The results revealed participants had a moderate organizational commitment level (4.74 out of 7 = 67.71%). According to the regression analysis, organizational commitment positively impacted the intention to stay in an organization over different periods. The impact was

marginally significant over a short-term period of six months, while it was positive and significant over medium-term (one year) and long-term (two years) periods. These results were consistent with the findings of previous studies, suggesting organizational commitment was an important factor in employee retention.

Boling's (2017) research on military employees' findings confirmed significant positive relationships among CC, NC, and retention. Naz et al. (2020) studied the relationship between organizational commitment, employee retention, person-organization fit, and supportive work environment. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between each construct. The relationship between employee retention and organizational commitment indicated a highly significant relationship ($r = .540, p < .05$). The findings of the study conducted by Naz et al. (2020) substantiated the quantitative findings of the previous studies by Abraham et al. (2016), Anitha and Begum (2016), and Boling (2017). In various settings, employees with higher organizational commitment levels are more likely to remain with the organization (Abraham et al., 2016; Anitha & Begum, 2016; Boling, 2017; Naz et al., 2020).

Researchers reported organizational commitment predicts nurse retention (Chang et al., 2015; Han et al., 2015). Nurse retention in Taiwan was directly correlated to CC (Chang et al., 2015), and overall organizational commitment predicted retention of nurses in Seoul, Korea (Han et al., 2015). Both studies utilized a survey-based tool to gather data and quantitative methods to analyze results. Arasanimi and Krishna (2019) confirmed organizational commitment was a predictor of retention among New Zealand government agency employees. The scholars used a cross-sectional research design to determine the relationship between organizational support and employee retention and the predictive

nature of organizational commitment on employee retention. The results confirmed a significant relationship between organizational support and employee retention. According to Arasanimi & Krishna (2019), employer branding is essential to predict retention because "employees deserve some organizational support to meet their socio-emotional needs" (p. 181). Arasanimi and Krishna (2019), Chang et al. (2015), and Han et al. (2015) confirmed organizational commitment predicts retention in different populations (i.e., nurses, government employees).

Brunetto et al. (2012) conducted a mixed-methods study on retention factors of nurses employed in public and private hospitals in Australia. The quantitative component of the study included 1,283 anonymous survey responses. The qualitative component of the study included focus groups and interviews with 136 nurses. A regression analysis noted nurses employed at private and public hospitals had low AC, signifying they were less committed to remaining with the hospital. The qualitative analysis supported the quantitative results. Both private and public hospital-employed nurses have low AC. The nurses' low AC is related to their relationship with their supervisor and coworkers, along with their concern regarding teamwork. The findings indicated improved nurse and nurse-supervisor relationships will likely impact nurses' retention.

Mahal (2012) argued no significant relationship exists between organizational commitment and employee retention. She studied 100 employees in various Indian organizations (i.e., pharmacy, school, banks, hospitals, and government agencies) to determine whether employee retention influenced organizational commitment. The results specified an insignificant negative relationship between employee retention and organizational commitment. However, Mahal indicated other significant factors related to

retention, such as Human Resources and organizational practices. Researcher Mahal contended salary is a critical characteristic to employee retention and organizational commitment among employees. When fairly compensated, employees perform better and are more committed to their jobs (Chang et al., 2015; Mahal, 2012; Naqvi & Bashir, 2015) because they feel valued.

Hashish (2015) examined the relationship between ethical work climate, perceived organizational support, nurses' organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. A descriptive correlational research design was used to investigate the relationship between three hospitals in Alexandria. In Hashish's study, 500 nurses completed a digital questionnaire, and quantitative statistical tools were utilized for the analysis. The results denoted significant positive correlations between perceived climate, support, commitment, and satisfaction. The results indicated significant negative correlations between turnover intention and each factor. These factors account for 33% of the variance in turnover intention. Hashish's findings corroborated Mahal's (2012) findings of insignificant correlation between retention and commitment.

It is unknown whether there is a correlation between organizational commitment and superintendents' retention in the southern region of the United States. Research across several studies authenticates a positive relationship between organizational commitment and retention variables. The studies highlighted a gap in the current literature between organizational commitment and retaining superintendents from the southern region of the United States. There is limited research on the relationship between superintendents and organizational commitment. This study was an expansion of

the research knowledge base because the researcher conducted this study with a different

population, superintendents in the southern region of the United States.

Grit and Organizational Commitment

Grit and organizational commitment constructs are predictors for retention in

various contexts (Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009;

Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014; Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014; Von Culin et al.,

2014). The grit indicators, consistency of interest and persistence of effort, are related to

organizational commitment indicators as both lead to increased retention and a feeling of

pride and contribution to the workplace (Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth et al., 2007;

Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Angela Duckworth (2016) indicated grit as a tool to help

individuals achieve long-term goals by overcoming obstacles and challenges. Similarly,

organizational commitment is a mindset described as a person's psychological attachment

to the organization (Grimsley, 2003) based on the individual's desire, obligation, or

perceived cost (Meyer & Allen, 1991) throughout challenges and celebrations.

Organizational commitment is connected to the employee's sense of pride and

connectedness to the organization.

Few studies in the existing literature examine the relationship between grit and

organizational commitment. The existing studies investigated grit and organizational

commitment with behavioral health medical professionals in the United States, college

professors in Indonesia, and public sector employees in Southeast Asia (King, 2017; Naz

et al., 2020; Widodo & Chandrawaty, 2020). King (2017) conducted a correlational study

of 219 behavioral health medical professionals in the southwest region of the United

States to explore the relationship between organizational commitment and grit, AC and

grit, and NC and grit. The findings revealed no significant relationships with grit and organizational commitment or grit and AC. There was a negative correlation between grit and NC. King's study found behavioral health medical professionals with higher grit levels tended to be less committed to the organization than those with low grit. Widodo and Chandrawaty (2020) investigated the relationship between grit, employability, and organizational commitment of 130 Indonesian college professors using a quantitative approach. The researchers confirmed grit and employability significantly affected organizational commitment, indicating grit and employability are adequate predictors for organizational commitment. Naz et al. (2020) conducted a quantitative study investigating the relationship between organizational commitment, grit, and employee voice of 300 public-sector employees in Southeast Asia. The findings revealed grit and organizational commitment were positively correlated, signifying both constructs as mediators for employee voice. When an employee is committed to an organization, they are more willing to go the "extra mile" for the "betterment [of the organization] by raising their voice" (Naz et al. 2020, p. 6) to share their thoughts to contribute to the overall good of the organization. In summary, several researchers have explored the relationship between organizational commitment and grit in various populations and contexts, only to find varying results. A gap in the prior research includes the relationship between organizational commitment and grit of superintendents in the southern region of the United States.

Summary

This literature review documented the historical, theoretical, and empirical research related to the conceptual framework of this study (grit and organizational

commitment) and superintendent retention. This literature review highlighted agreements and disagreements about grit, organizational commitment, and retention. This study's primary purpose was to examine how perseverance, passion, AC, NC, CC, gender, and district description predict retention among superintendents in the southern region of the United States. The secondary purpose of this study was to explore relationships between self-reported attributes of grit, organizational commitment, and retention of superintendents in the southern region of the United States. Journal repositories, scholarly articles, and dissertations were examined for relevant material. Searches focused on the research available within the last ten years, including seminal studies, pertinent studies, and scholarly articles.

The superintendent is a critical leadership position serving as chief executive officer of a public school system; therefore, understanding retention is essential. The role of grit and organizational commitment among superintendents is important to support the development of a strong, long-lasting superintendent cadre in the public school system. Superintendent commitment, passion, and perseverance are vital to completing district-wide reform to improve and sustain student achievement consistently. Grit and TCM assists researchers, school boards, and higher-education employers with understanding the superintendent's mindset regarding their intent to remain committed to their organization.

Chapter III

Methodology

This chapter details the methodological actions, including the proposed research design, participants, sampling methodologies, instruments, data collection, and analysis procedures employed in the study. The chapter begins with the purpose statement, research questions, and hypotheses. Next, the research design, population, sample, variables, instruments, and data collection methods are discussed. Data analysis, statistical considerations, assumptions, and limitations are outlined extensively. The chapter concludes with a summary of the overall methodology of this study. Before proceeding with this quantitative study, the Institutional Review Board at Valdosta State University provided approval (Appendix B).

Purpose of the Study

There was a twofold purpose of this correlational and predictive research study. The primary purpose of this study was to examine how grit, organizational commitment, gender, and district description predicted retention among superintendents in the southern region of the United States. The secondary purpose of this study was to explore relationships between self-reported attributes of grit, organizational commitment, and retention of superintendents in the southern region of the United States.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

I sought to answer the following research questions and hypotheses through this study:

- RQ1: Are there relationships among grit, organizational commitment, and retention among superintendents in the southern region of the United States?

- RQ2: What factors (grit, grit subscales [passion and perseverance], organizational commitment, organizational commitment subscales [AC, NC, and CC], gender, and district description), if any, predict retention among superintendents in the southern region of the United States?

  - H1: Passion and perseverance will predict retention.

  - H2: Grit will predict retention.

  - H3: Affective, normative, and continuance commitment will predict retention.

  - H4: Organizational commitment will predict retention.

  - H5: Gender and district description will predict retention.

Research Design

A quantitative approach systematically collects data from a target population to determine if a relationship exists between variables utilizing numerical measures (Neuman, 2018). Pearson correlation addressed RQ1, and binary logistic regression addressed RQ2. The correlational component investigated what, if any, relationship exists between grit, organizational commitment, and retention of superintendents in the southern region of the United States. Correlational research is conducted when no variables are manipulated and when a cause-and-effect relationship between variables is not the intent (Mertler & Reinhart, 2017). Binary logistic regression is a statistical technique used to predict the value between a binomial dependent variable and some

combination of two or more independent variables (Creswell, 2014; Mertler & Reinhart, 2017). The predictive component of the study used to investigate what variable (i.e., gender, district description, grit subscales [perseverance and passion], organizational committee subscales [AC, NC, and CC]), if any, predicts retention among superintendents in the southern region of the United States. Subjects completed a survey to determine their level of grit, level of organizational commitment, level of passion, level of perseverance, level of AC, level of NC, level of CC, retention, and several demographic variables (e.g., age, state, gender).

My perspective on research is informed by a postpositivist worldview. This means that I prioritize focusing on definite causes, effects, and relationships based on scientific reasoning and theoretical frameworks. I approach research with a critical lens, scrutinizing past research and encouraging the collection of new data to better understand why things are the way they are. A worldview is a general orientation or paradigm that shapes how we perceive and approach research (Creswell, 2014). For me, this means challenging the certainty of previous research and exploring new avenues of inquiry to expand our understanding of the world. In my research, I am cautious about relying on random samples. While this approach can be useful in certain contexts, I believe that it can fall short in accurately representing the population of interest. Specifically, random samples work with a theoretical population pool, which may not be reflective of the practical, accessible population that I am studying. My approach to research is grounded in the idea that we need to be mindful of the limitations of our methods. While random samples may seem like a good option, they can fall short in practice. Those who assume

that random samples will always be representative of the population are exhibiting the "mind projection fallacy" (Yu, 2008).

It is difficult to understand the complexities of superintendent retention, even with what is already known about it in past literature. More specific questions need to be asked about what makes people stay in their careers longer than others. Reducing different aspects of educational practice into understandable elements helps to find those answers. Using objective instruments such as surveys also helps with the discovery.

Population and Sample

The population of this study included public school superintendents. There are 13,452 public school districts in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). The target population was public school superintendents active during the 2022-23 school year in the southern region of the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.) outlined the Southern Region of the United States as including three divisions and 17 states. The states are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. There are 3,546 public school districts in the Southern Region of the United States (National Education Association, 2018). Superintendents govern each school district. In the southern region of the United States, there are 3,546 superintendents in 17 states.

Given the probability of 0.05, the anticipated effect size of 0.15, and a statistical confidence level of 95%, utilizing the a-priori sample size calculator, it was determined that the minimum number of participants required for this study is 347. The minimum

number is appropriate to generate credible results with the binary logistic regression analysis.

Convenience sampling procedures guided the participant selection methodology for this study. Convenience sampling is a non-random sampling procedure because members are selected based on easy accessibility, availability at a specified time, or willingness to participate (Denscombe, 2017). In this study, geographical location and willingness to participate were the driving forces for the sample size. Contrary to random sampling, convenience sampling requires representatives to be a subset of a specific group, such as superintendents in the southern states (Denscombe, 2017).

Variables

The predictor variables were gender, district description, grit, and organizational commitment. The criterion variable was superintendent retention. The independent variables were grit, passion, perseverance, organizational commitment, AC, NC, CC, gender, and district description. The independent variable, grit, has two subscales: perseverance and passion. For this study, overall grit and each subscale were analyzed. The independent variable, organizational commitment, has three subscales: AC, NC, and CC. Overall commitment results and subscale results were used for this study. The independent variable, gender, has two categories: male and female. The independent variable, district description, has three categories: suburban, urban, and rural. The dependent variable was the superintendent's intention to remain in the current school system as a superintendent for the next three to five years. Demographic variables (i.e., state, age, gender, race, district description, district enrollment, and tenure) were used to

summarize the sample and measures (e.g., frequency of age category and gender percentage).

Data Collection

After the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix B) granted permission to conduct this study, data collection included two reliable and valid instruments. The instrumentation included the collection of self-reported grit (Appendix C), organizational commitment (Appendix D), demographic information (i.e., state, age, gender, race, district description, district enrollment, and tenure as superintendent) (Appendix E), and retention status (i.e., intention to remain in the school system for the next three to five years) from superintendents from the southern region of the United States (Appendix E). Superintendents' names and email addresses were collected from each state's superintendent association website and/or department of education website. Approximately 92% ($n = 3,254$) of superintendent names and email addresses were available on the websites. Each participant in this study met the following criteria: (a) name is listed on the state's superintendent association and/or department of education website with an email address and (b) hold a superintendent position during the 2022-23 school year. Access to the population was attainable. The administration of the combined survey included the following data-collection instruments and items:

- The 8-item Grit-S was validated and deemed reliable by Duckworth and Quinn (2009)

- The 18-item TCM of employee commitment revised version survey was deemed reliable by Meyer et al. (1993)

- The demographic items (i.e., state, age, gender, race, district description,

  district enrollment, and tenure as superintendent), current superintendent

  status, and intent to remain a superintendent

Before contacting superintendents directly, I contacted the president of each state's superintendent association through email and/or phone calls (Appendix F). The purpose was to seek assistance in sharing contact details and sending a pre-introductory email to superintendents, serving as an introduction before sending a cold-call email. Next, I sent an introductory email (Appendix G) to 3,254 superintendents explaining the purpose of the study (Appendix B). The email included the Qualtrics survey link. Using a Valdosta State University Office 365 Outlook email account, I sent emails by state group in alphabetical order (e.g., Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware). Within the Office 365 Outlook email application, the maximum number of recipients per email message was 500. For states with more than 500 superintendents, I sent emails in several batches (e.g., Oklahoma in two batches and Texas in three batches). More than 30% of emails ($n =$ 1025) returned as undeliverable without a new email address. Therefore, this study's total number of active participant emails was 2,229.

After the participants consented (Appendix H), they progressed to sections two and three of the survey. I distributed weekly reminders to complete the survey via email to 2,229 superintendents on the seventh (Appendix I), fourteenth (Appendix J), and twenty-first-day (Appendix K). The survey remained open for four weeks. After the three rounds of reminder emails, the response rate was approximately 22%. In total, 481 superintendents completed the survey. The 35-item survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Instrumentation

The survey included the Grit-S and TCM revised instruments and demographic questions such as age, gender, race, district description, district enrollment, tenure as a superintendent, and retention. I conducted the survey among superintendents active during the school year of 2022-23 in the southern region of the United States. The survey consisted of three sections. The first section pertained to consent from superintendents. It included a final qualifying question to ensure the inclusions of only superintendents active during the 2022-23 school year. The second section combined the Grit-S and TCM revised instruments to assess the superintendent's perseverance and commitment to the job. Finally, the third section included demographic questions, such as age, gender, race, district description, district enrollment, tenure as a superintendent, and retention, to create a superintendent profile to understand the characteristics of superintendents better.

Grit-S Structure

The Grit-S survey consisted of eight questions assessing the level of consistency of interest (passion) and persistence of effort (perseverance) a person has for longstanding goals (Duckworth, 2016). The self-reported survey measured two subscales: passion (e.g., I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.) and perseverance (e.g., Setbacks don't discourage me.). As stated on Dr. Angela Duckworth's (2024) website the Grit scales are allowable for non-commercial academic use by researchers and educators (Appendix L). Grit-S questions have a 5-point Likert scale using *5 = very much like me, 4 = mostly like me, 3 = somewhat like me, 2 = not much like me, and 1 = not like me at all*. The Likert scale is a quantifiable ordinal measurement (Bishop & Herron, 2015). Each question has a different value ranging from one to five,

including reverse scoring for the passion scale. Perseverance subscale items included 2, 4, 7, and 8. Passion subscale items included 1(R), 3(R), 5(R), and 6(R). The overall grit scale included all eight items. I summed the scores for responses on each scale, then divided by eight to determine the overall grit level. Additionally, I averaged each subscale independently. A recoding was necessary for reversed keyed items (e.g., 1 = 5, 2 = 4). The results ranged from one (which indicates low grit) to five (which indicates high grit) (Duckworth, 2016). Likewise, for the passion and perseverance scales, the overall range was one to five, with one indicating low passion or perseverance and five indicating high passion or perseverance.

Grit-S Validity and Reliability

The validity of an instrument refers to the degree to which the instrument measures what the instrument is proposed to measure (Fraenkel, 2015). As identified by Duckworth and Quinn (2009), the measurement validity of the Grit-S survey has predictive validity, test and retest stability, and consensual validity. The original grit scale was 12 self-reported measures identified as the Grit-O (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). The 12 questions were a subset of the original 27 open-ended interview questions converted into 17 questions, then 12 questions focused on six passion and six perseverance questions (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Duckworth and Quinn (2009) ran a confirmatory factor analysis on the Grit-S questions. This scale has four passion and four perseverance questions (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). The confirmatory factor analysis compared the validity of the Grit-O to Grit-S. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) compared the validity of the Grit-O to the new Grit-S. A comparative measure of fit is interpretable when comparing two different

models (i.e., Grit-O and Grit-S) (Neuman, 2018). The index results reflected the validity of the shorter Grit-S scale due to high CFI scores averaging .92 from a series of four CFIs (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009).

According to Neuman (2018), the reliability of any instrument refers to the degree to which an instrument produces similar results from different studies. The statistical testing of the 12 questions reflected internal consistency of $\alpha = .85$. The statistical testing of the eight questions in the Grit-S reflected internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .73 to .83 collectively (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Duckworth and Quinn (2009) mentioned the use of the Grit-S instrument in a repeat study of West Point cadets in 2008 and 2010, yielding similar results (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). In four different reliability studies of adults (Study 1), adolescents (Study 2), cadets (Study 3), and spelling bee competitors (Study 4), the eight-item Grit-S has evidence of overall internal reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .77, a fair range from alpha .73 to .83, alpha as .60 to .78 for perseverance, and .73 to .79 for passion (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009).

TCM of Employee Commitment Survey Structure

The revised TCM of the employee commitment survey consisted of 18 questions measuring participants' affective, normative, continuance, and general organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 2004). I obtained an academic license from the TCM Employee Commitment Survey (2024) website to use the revised TCM of the employee commitment survey (Appendix L). The free academic license was limited to using the survey in one research project per researcher. A 7-point Likert scale was on the revised TCM: *1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = undecided, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = agree, and 7 = strongly agree*. The AC subscale included six items

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with three reversed key items (e.g., I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.). The CC subscale included six items (e.g., Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.). The NC subscale included six items with one reversed key item (e.g., I do not feel obligated to remain with my current employer.). The overall commitment included all 18 items. I summed responses for each subscale and then divided by the total number of questions for each subscale to determine the overall organizational commitment score for each participant. Each question had a different value between one and seven assigned to the answer according to a scoring scale, some with reverse keyed items indicated by (R). Reverse-coded questions deter respondents from mindlessly selecting strongly agree with all statements (Meyer & Allen, 2004). All reverse-keyed items were recoded (e.g., 1 = 7, 2 = 6); hence, the lowest score of one represents low organizational commitment, and the highest score of seven represents high organizational commitment.

TCM of Employee Commitment Survey Validity and Reliability

There are completed studies for Meyer and Allen's TCM with samples in European and Asian countries (Chen & Franscesco, 2003; Mateescu & Charif, 2015; Meyer et al., 2002; Wasti, 2002; Yucel & Bektas, 2012). Three studies, for instance, determined if the instrument was generalizable (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). The three studies included 224 university undergraduate students (Study 1), 157 hospital nurses (Study 2), and 108 hospital nurses (Study 3). The alpha coefficients for the three subscales were .94, .94, and .86 for the university study. Study 1 was a replication of Study 3, which yielded similar results. Garland et al. (2014) demonstrated convergent validity between continuation and affective scales. Dinc and Nurovic (2016) indicated the

construct validity of the normative commitment scale (NCS) with the manufacturing employee study.

Meyer et al. (2002) studied the reliability of the TCM of Employee Commitment survey in a meta-analysis where each component was studied individually. The affective commitment scale (ACS), NCS, and continuance commitment scale (CCS) indicated average reliabilities of .82, .73, and .76, respectively. These reliability averages were based on each category's total number of respondents. The ACS included 47,073 respondents; the NCS included 22,080 respondents; and the CCS included 34,434 respondents. Meyer et al. (2002) deemed the TCM instrument reliable by repeating the implementation of the instrument with the noted respondents at the beginning and end of the year, yielding similar results.

Data Analysis

This quantitative study focused on whether a relationship exists between two independent variables (i.e., grit and organizational commitment) and one dependent variable (i.e., retention), the strength of any relationships found, and the predictability of the seven variables (i.e., perseverance, passion, NC, AC, CC, district description, and gender) onto the dependent variable. I analyzed data using statistical software, IBM SPSS Statistics Version 22 (IBM Corp, 2013). I employed descriptive statistics to provide basic summaries about the sample and measures (e.g., frequency of age category and gender percentage).

Missing Data

Handling missing values before analysis is critical to ensuring accurate inferences about the data. If missing data is improperly handled, the results obtained will differ from

ones where the missing values are present (e.g., overall grit score will be inaccurate with one missing component). Mertler and Reinhart (2017) recommend conducting a test to determine whether a missing data pattern exists. If significant differences do exist, a pattern exists in the missing responses. The number of cases of missing data was small (n < 25); therefore, I omitted those values from the analysis variables (Mertler & Reinhart, 2017). The initial sample consisted of 481 participants. Individuals were removed for not responding to 95% of the survey. The median substitution strategy replaced the remaining missing values on the Grit-S and TCM revised surveys with the median of each survey item.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

I checked construct validity. Construct validity is the degree to which the test reflects the construct it is intended to measure (Mills & Gay, 2019). A method used to investigate construct validity is confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). CFA is a tool for examining the relationships among latent variables (e.g., grit, commitment) and observed variables (e.g., Grit-S indicators) (Mertler & Reinhart, 2017). The use of CFA to investigate construct validity adds a level of statistical precision. I examined the dataset to determine the construct validity of the Grit-S and TCM revised version instruments using CFA. Before conducting the CFA, I confirmed the hypothesized model, sample size, and outlier assumptions. First, I specified the model by identifying the relationships to analyze in the model (e.g., the number of indicators of the two latent variables in this study is five). Next, I confirmed a sufficient sample size of 347 or more respondents (Hair et al., 2010). A larger sample size is desirable for CFA. This study's sample size exceeded the minimal sample size by 134 respondents. I inspected multivariate normality

of the independent variables with a goodness of fit test (e.g., the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the Lagrange Multiplier test) to determine if residuals were normally distributed and examined for univariate and multivariate outliers. I inspected the multicollinearity of the independent variables using the variance inflation factor (VIF) to determine whether or not the IVs (e.g., grit and organizational commitment) were highly correlated.

Correlation and Binary Logistic Regression Analysis

To address the RQ1, I conducted a Pearson correlation analysis with grit and retention, organizational commitment and retention, and grit and organizational commitment to determine if there were relationships with the two independent variables and one dependent variable. I also looked at the extent of the relationship between grit subscales, organizational commitment subscales, and retention. Each bivariate correlation (Pearson *r*) performed addressed the degree of relationship between two continuous, quantitative variables. The data type for each instrument was converted from ordinal to interval type. The conversion process included the Grit-S and TCM revised scales, which are exclusive of one another. This statistical procedure was appropriate to address RQ1. To address the second research question, I used binary logistic regression to determine if independent variables – gender, district description, organizational committee subscales (NC, AC, and CC), organizational commitment, grit, and grit subscales (perseverance and passion) – predict superintendent retention. Binary logistic regression was the most appropriate statistical procedure to address RQ2 because it identified possible predictor variables for the binomial outcome variable (retention versus no retention).

I checked for Pearson correlation assumptions. The first assumption was the sample must be representative of the population (i.e., superintendents in the southern

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region of the United States). Secondly, the dependent variable must be on a ratio/interval scale and normally distributed (i.e., independent variables for this study were converted from ordinal to interval). Thirdly, the assumption of homoscedasticity must hold, where every x value and the distribution of y scores has equal variability. Next, I checked the relationship between x and y for linearity. Lastly, to address the issue of multicollinearity, I checked the independence of the variables to confirm the variables were not strongly correlated.

I checked the binary logistic regression assumptions before conducting the analysis. According to Mertler and Reinhart (2017), researchers need to examine three types of assumptions before conducting a binary logistic regression: a) absence of perfect multicollinearity, b) sufficient sample size, and c) no extreme outliers. Firstly, avoiding perfect multicollinearity assumptions in regression analysis is important, which means independent variables should not be strongly correlated. When variables are strongly correlated, they measure the same thing, making them redundant and leading to unstable results. This researcher checked for correlation among independent variables using correlation coefficients. If two variables are correlated at $r = 0.5$ or higher, they share 49% or more variance and are redundant (Dancey & Reidy, 2017). Including such variables as separate independent predictors in a single model can lead to problems.

To confirm the hypotheses, I analyzed at least 10 cases for the least common outcome of each estimator variable. The ideal sample size for this study was 347 participants. Logistic regression procedures with large sample sizes tend to be more reliable, robust, and valid; however, the study included 462 participants, which exceeded the ideal sample size. Lastly, potential outliers were examined by analyzing standardized

values or *z* scores. Tabachnick and Fidell (2019) state outliers correspond to *z* scores exceeding + 3.29 standard deviations from the mean. I removed identified outliers to prevent skew in the findings.

Statistical Considerations and Assumptions

This study included several statistical considerations and assumptions. Assumptions are the elements of the study conveyed as self-evident truths (Mills & Gay, 2019). I assumed all participants responded in a non-deceptive manner since respondents voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Another theoretical assumption included the instrumentation, Grit-S and TCM revised forms, which were the most appropriate tools to model retention and relevant constructs (e.g., grit and commitment) as identified by gaps in research.

Limitations of Research Design

Several limitations influenced this study's research methodology, results, and validity. Limitations are uncontrollable elements of the study that could negatively affect the research methodology and/or results, such as how many people exist in a specific population (Mills & Gay, 2019). The major limitation of this research was the sampling selection strategy. Convenience sampling, a non-random sampling technique, was selected to determine the results in the southern region of the United States. Participants from a convenience sample are easy to contact, available, and willing to participate (Mills & Gay, 2019). Results were based on superintendents who agreed to complete the survey within the provided timeline. The target population was 3,546 participants based on the current database of superintendents. I emailed superintendents at each school district in the southern region of the United States. Since the number of participants was unknown

at the onset of the study, the sample was unlikely to be representative of the population studied. The potential partial sample size may have limited the generalization of findings to other geographical regions.

Another limitation of the study was the data collection method. This study was limited to the superintendent's self-reported discernments of grit and commitment based on their responses to a digital survey, which may have had response bias. Superintendents may exaggerate or minimize their abilities and commitment to the Grit and TCM surveys. Superintendents may control their responses to show high grit and commitment to receive a more favorable score, skewing data results.

Summary

The quantifiable strategy of this study provided support for using quantitative methodology with a correlational and predictive design for the study. The review of the literature on grit and organizational commitment showed studies using quantitative methods to measure each variable. This study falls into the category of non-experimental design since I did not apply treatments or manipulate variables. Subjects participated in a self-reported survey to determine their self-reported attributes of grit, organizational commitment, and retention. Data collection was conducted through an electronic medium (e.g., Qualtrics). The survey included exact questions from two reliable and valid instruments (i.e., Grit-S and revised TCM), demographic questions, and retention related items. Two statistical procedures, correlation and binary logistic regression were used to determine the relationship between variables and the predictability of independent variables as they relate to superintendent retention.

Chapter IV

Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis conducted in this study. The chapter begins by providing an overview of the purpose and type of analyses performed. Next, descriptive statistics are discussed, including missing data, outliers, frequency, summary statistics, and normality. Validity is also outlined for grit and organizational commitment. The correlational and logistic regression results for RQ1 and RQ2 are presented in detail, including the hypotheses. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of this study's overall data analysis results.

Purpose and Questions

This study's primary purpose is to examine how perseverance, passion, AC, NC, CC, gender, and district description predict retention among superintendents in the southern region of the United States. The secondary purpose of this study is to explore relationships between self-reported attributes of grit, organizational commitment, and retention of superintendents in the southern region of the United States. I used frequencies and percentages to examine the trends in the nominal-level variables. I used to mean and standard deviations to summarize the trends in the continuous-level variables. I conducted correlation and binary logistic regression analyses to address the research questions. The statistical significance level was set at $\alpha = .05$. The research questions and hypotheses are outlined below:

- RQ1: Are the relationships among grit, organizational commitment, and retention among superintendents in the southern region of the United States?

- RQ2: What factors (grit, grit subscales [passion and perseverance], organizational commitment, organizational commitment subscales [AC, NC, CC], gender, and district description), if any, best predicts retention among superintendents in the southern region of the United States?

  - H1: Passion and perseverance will predict retention.

  - H2: Grit will predict retention.

  - H3: Affective, normative, and continuance commitment will predict retention.

  - H4: Organizational commitment will predict retention.

  - H5: Gender and district description will predict retention.

Descriptive Statistics

Missing Data and Outliers

The initial sample consisted of 481 participants. I removed a total of 16 individuals for not responding to majority of the survey. The remaining participants responded to over 95% of the survey. I used median substitution to replace the remaining missing values on the Grit-S and TCM revised surveys with the median of each survey item.

Composite scores were generated on the Grit-S and the TCM revised survey by computing averages of the respective survey items. Potential outliers were examined through examination of standardized values, or *z* scores. As stated in the previous chapter, indicate outliers correspond to *z* scores exceeding $\pm$ 3.29 standard deviations from the mean (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Three outliers were identified for low

perseverance and CC scores. I subsequently removed the cases to prevent skewness in the findings. The final sample size consisted of 462 cases.

Frequency, Summary Statistics, and Normality

The sample consisted of 379 males (82.03%) and 83 females (17.97%). The most prevalent age group was 45-54 years ($n = 172$, 37.31%). The majority of the sample consisted of White participants ($n = 287$, 62.12%). Approximately one-third of the sample was located in Texas. District description included suburban ($n = 132$, 28.57%), urban ($n = 182$, 39.39%), and rural ($n = 148$, 32.03%). District enrollment widely ranged from less than 300 to 25,000 or more. Tenure as a superintendent varied between one year or less to 16 or more years (See Table 1 for more information).

Table 1

Frequency Table for Nominal Variables

Variable	n	%
Gender		
Male	379	82.03
Female	83	17.97
Age		
25 – 34	54	11.71
35 – 44	77	16.70
45 – 54	172	37.31
55 – 64	107	23.21
65+	51	11.06
Racial/Cultural Group		
America Indian or Alaska Native	12	2.60
Asian	30	6.49
Black or African American	53	11.47
Hispanic or Latino	50	10.82
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	12	2.60
White (non-Hispanic)	287	62.12

Variable	n	%
Other	18	3.90
State		
Alabama	21	4.55
Arkansas	67	14.50
Delaware	5	1.08
Florida	11	2.38
Georgia	53	11.47
Kentucky	21	4.55
Louisiana	12	2.60
Maryland	3	0.65
Mississippi	15	3.25
North Carolina	4	0.87
Oklahoma	20	4.33
South Carolina	12	2.60

Variable	n	%
Tennessee	17	3.68
Texas	163	35.28
Virginia	24	5.19
West Virginia	14	3.03
District Description		
Suburban	132	28.57
Urban	182	39.39
Rural	148	32.03
District Enrollment		
Less Than 300	63	13.64
300 to 2,499	103	22.29
2,500 to 9,999	150	32.47
10,000 to 24,999	115	24.89
25,000 or more	31	6.71
Tenure as Superintendent		
1 year or less	41	8.95
1-5 years	119	25.98
6-10 years	120	26.20
11-15 years	111	24.24
16 or more years	67	14.63

Note. Table listing important demographics, frequencies, and percentages.

Overall grit scores ranged from 2.00 to 5.00, with $M = 3.65$ and $SD = 0.51$.

Perseverance scores ranged from 2.00 to 5.00, with $M = 3.98$ and $SD = 0.65$. Passion

scores ranged from 1.75 to 5.00, with $M = 3.31$ and $SD = 0.67$. Overall organizational

commitment scores ranged from 2.39 to 6.11, with $M = 4.40$ and $SD = 0.61$. AC scores

ranged from 1.33 to 7.00, with $M = 4.64$ and $SD = 1.04$. CC scores ranged from 1.33 to

6.17, with $M = 4.11$ and $SD = 0.87$. NC scores ranged from 1.83 to 7.00, with $M = 4.44$

and $SD = 1.04$. The summary statistics can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary Statistics on the Grit-S and TCM Revised

Variable	Instrument	n	Min	Max	M	SD
Overall Grit	Grit-S	462	2.00	5.00	3.65	0.51
Perseverance	Grit-S	462	2.00	5.00	3.98	0.65
Passion	Grit-S	462	1.75	5.00	3.31	0.67
Overall Organizational Commitment	TCM revised	462	2.39	6.11	4.40	0.61
Affective Commitment	TCM revised	462	1.33	7.00	4.64	1.04
Continuance Commitment	TCM revised	462	1.33	6.17	4.11	0.87
Normative Commitment	TCM revised	462	1.83	7.00	4.44	1.04

Note. Summary of descriptive results for the Grit-S and TCM instruments.

Skewness and kurtosis statistics were used to examine the assumption of

normality. Kline (2010) indicated skewness and kurtosis values should fall between $\pm$

2.00. All the variables of interest fell within the acceptable ranges for univariate

normality. The skewness and kurtosis statistics are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Skewness and Kurtosis Statistics on the Grit-S and TCM Revised

Variable	Skew	Kurtosis
Overall Grit	-0.37	0.30
Perseverance	-0.65	-0.19
Passion	0.12	-0.48

Overall Organizational Commitment	0.30	0.04
Affective Commitment	0.39	0.21
Continuance Commitment	-0.63	0.51
Normative Commitment	0.43	-0.34

Note. Summary of skewness and kurtosis for constructs in study instruments.

The primary dependent variable in the study, retention, was within the following survey item: "In the next three to five years from now, do you plan to stay in your current district as the superintendent?" A total of 329 participants (71.21%) planned to stay in their current district as a superintendent. In comparison, 133 participants (28.79%) did not plan to stay in their current district as a superintendent. See Table 4 for more statistical information on retention.

Table 4

Frequency Table for Retention

Variable	*n*	*%*
Retention: In the next three to five years from now, do you plan to stay in your current district as the superintendent?		
Yes	329	71.21
No	133	28.79

Note. Simple tabular representation of retention frequencies.

Validity

CFA for Grit-S

A CFA was conducted for the Grit-S and assessed the fit statistics for the CFA (See Figure 4). A non-significant chi-square statistic ($p > .05$) indicated an acceptable fit. Other fit indices to be examined were the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). Values larger than .90 for the CFI and TLI indicate a good fit, and values lower than .08 for the RMSEA represent a reasonable fit (Hancock et al., 2018). The chi-square test for model

fit was statistically significant, $\chi^2(19) = 93.71$, $p < .001$, indicating the data did not strongly fit the model. The CFI and TLI statistics were .869 and .807, respectively. The RMSEA had a value of .092. The fit statistics for the model approached the acceptable thresholds. Table 5 presents the fit statistics for the CFA.

Figure 4

CFA for Grit-S
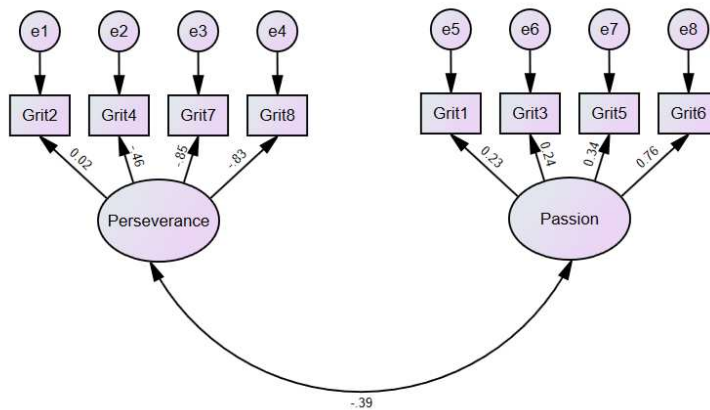
Note. Diagram for CFA model of GRIT-S.

Table 5

Path Model Fit Statistics for Grit-S

Model	χ^2	df	p	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
1	93.71	19	<.001	.869	.807	.092

Note. Tabular representation of path model fit statistics for GRIT-S.

CFA for TCM Revised

I conducted a CFA for the TCM revised and assessed the fit statistics for the CFA (See Figure 5). The chi-square test for model fit was statistically significant, $\chi^2(132) = 688.27$, $p < .001$, indicating the data did not strongly fit the model. The CFI and TLI

statistics were .705 and .658, respectively. The RMSEA had a value of .096. The fit statistics for the model were questionable (See Table 6).

When reviewing the CFA outcomes, it is vital to be cautious when using the revised TCM tool with this population. I carefully considered the underlying factors leading to the model's unsatisfactory fit for TCM revised and a close approach to acceptable thresholds for Grit-S. Despite the inadequate and approaching fit, the strong Cronbach's alpha values for Grit-S (α = .73 to .83) and TCM revised (α = .86 to .94) from the original validity assessments in various populations are indicators that the issue with fit does not compromise internal consistency. Based on these previous validity findings, supporting the validity of the Grit-S and TCM revised tools appeared reasonable when applied to the superintendent population.

Figure 5

CFA for TCM Revised
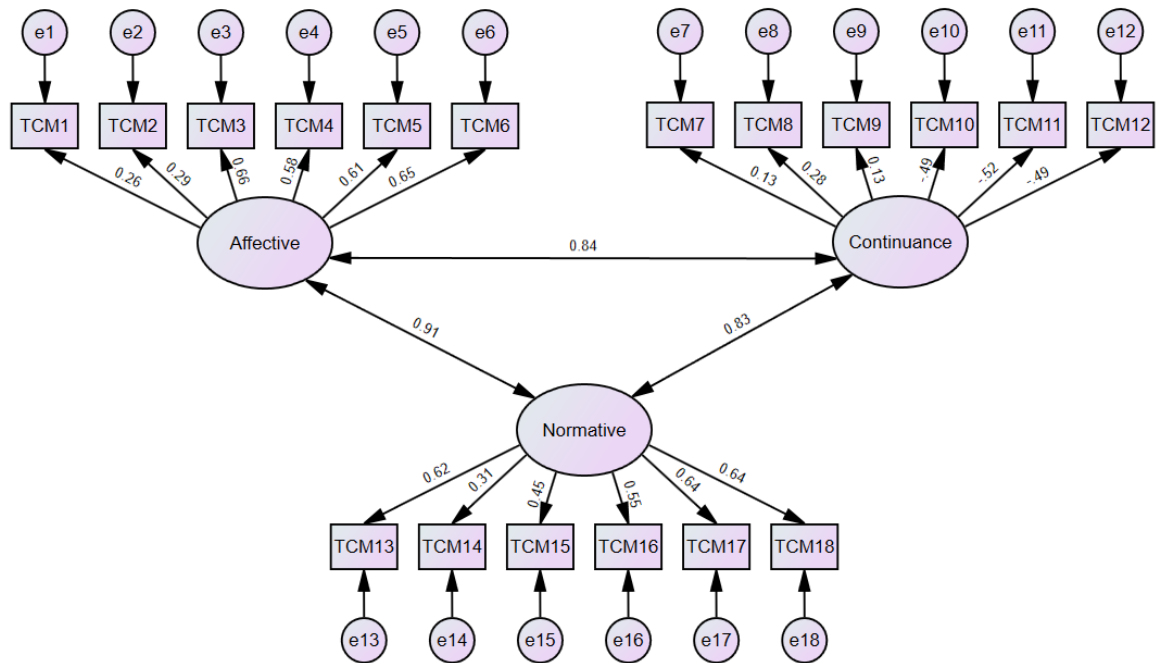
Note. Diagram for the CFA model specifically for the TCM Revised.

Table 6

Path Model Fit Statistics for TCM Revised

Model	χ^2	df	p	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
1	688.27	132	<.001	.705	.658	.096

Note. Tabular representation of path model fit statistics for the TCM Revised.

Research Question 1

Are there relationships among grit, organizational commitment, and retention among superintendents in the southern region of the United States?

I conducted a Pearson correlation matrix to examine the strength of relationships among grit, grit subscales (passion and perseverance), organizational commitment, organizational commitment subscales (AC, NC, and CC), and retention to address RQ1. The correlation between two variables has a range of possible values from +1 to -1 (Dancey & Reidy, 2017). The *r* scores represent the strength of the association, which fall in the absolute value range of 0.00 to 1.00 (Dancey & Reidy, 2017). An absolute value of 0.00 to 0.29 is weak, 0.30 to 0.49 is moderate, and 0.50 to 1.00 is strong (Dancey & Reidy, 2017). A majority of the correlations indicated positive associations. The associations with CC indicated inverse associations.

The results of the analysis indicated seven positive correlations, ranging from very strong to moderate. The strong to moderate correlations were statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level. The results indicated a strong, positive correlation between overall grit and Grit-S subscales – perseverance ($r = .76$, $p < .001$) and passion ($r = .78$, $p < .001$). The results also showed overall organizational commitment had a strong, positive correlation with AC ($r = .75$, $p < .001$) and NC ($r = .84$, $p < .001$). AC was strongly and positively correlated with NC ($r = .61$, $p < .001$). Moreover, there was a moderate

positive correlation between overall grit and AC ($r = .32$, $p < .001$). The results also

revealed CC and AC had a moderate, negative correlation ($r = -.34$, $p < .001$). The study

results reported a weak and insignificant correlation between overall grit and retention (r

$= .01$, $p = .834$). However, the analysis demonstrated weak but significant correlations

between overall grit and organizational commitment ($r = .15$, $p < .001$) and overall

organizational commitment and retention ($r = .15$, $p < .001$). Table 7 presents the

findings of the Pearson correlations.

Table 7

Pearson Correlations between Grit, Organizational Commitment, and Retention

Variable	1)	2)	3)	4)	5)	6)	7)	8)
	r	*r*	*r*	*r*	*r*	*r*	*r*	*r*
1) Overall Grit	1.00							
2) Perseverance	.76*	1.00						
3) Passion	.78*	.18*	1.00					
4) Overall Organizational Commitment	.15*	.06*	.16*	1.00				
5) Affective Commitment	.32*	.23*	.27*	.75*	1.00			
6) Continuance Commitment	-22*	-13*	-22*	.21*	-34*	1.00		
7) Normative Commitment	.12*	-.01	.19*	.84*	.61*	-13*	1.00	
8) Retention	.01	.02	-.01	.15*	.09	.10*	.09**	1.00

Note. Tabular representation of correlation results between grit, organizational
commitment, and retention.
*Indicates correlation is significant at .01 level.
**Indicates correlation is significant at .05 level.

Research Question 2

What factors (grit, grit subscales [passion and perseverance], organizational

commitment, organizational commitment subscales [AC, NC, and CC], gender, and

district description), if any, predict retention among superintendents in the southern

region of the United States? To address the hypotheses, I conducted a series of binary

logistic regression models to examine the predictive relationships among the variables of interest and retention.

H1: Passion and perseverance will predict retention.

To address H1, I performed a binary logistic regression between passion, perseverance, and retention. The overall findings of the binary logistic regression model were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, 462) = 0.12$, $p = .941$, indicating passion and perseverance collectively do not predict retention. The model correctly classified approximately 71% ($n = 329$) of the cases, indicating a very good accuracy rate. The model exhibits good sensitivity as it is able to predict with 100% accuracy superintendents who will choose retention over no retention based on this model. However, less than 1% of the variance in retention could be explained by passion and perseverance, as indicated by Cox and Snell and Nagelkerke's R-square results.

Neither passion (Wald = 0.01, $p = .939$, $OR = 0.99$) nor perseverance (Wald = 0.12, $p = .727$, $OR = 1.06$) were significant predictors in the model. Therefore, H1 was not supported. See Table 8 for findings of the binary logistic regression model.

Table 8

Binary Logistic Regression between Passion, Perseverance, and Retention

Variable	*B*	*SE*	Wald	*p*	*OR*
Passion	-0.01	0.16	0.01	.939	0.99
Perseverance	0.06	0.16	0.12	.727	1.06

Note. Overall model: $\chi^2(2) = 0.12$, $p = .941$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .000$

H2: Grit will predict retention.

To address H2, I conducted a binary logistic regression to examine the relationship between overall grit and retention. The findings of the logistic regression model were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, 462) = 0.04$, $p = .834$, indicating overall grit

does not predict retention. The model correctly classified 71.2% (n = 329) of the cases,

reflecting a very good accuracy rate. The model showed good sensitivity, as it is able to

predict with 100% accuracy superintendents who would choose retention over no

retention based on this model. However, Cox and Snell and Nagelkerke's R-square

results revealed less than 1% of the variance in retention could be explained by grit. Grit

(Wald = 0.04, p = .834, OR = 1.04) was not a significant predictor in the model.

Therefore, H2 was not supported. See Table 9 for findings of the binary logistic

regression model.

Table 9

Binary Logistic Regression between Overall Grit and Retention

Variable	B	SE	Wald	p	OR
Overall Grit	0.04	0.20	0.04	.834	1.04

Note. Overall model: $\chi^2(1) = 0.04$, $p = .834$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .000$

H3: Affective, normative, and continuance commitment will predict retention.

To address H3, I performed a binary logistic regression to determine the

relationship between AC, CC, NC, and retention. The results of the analysis indicate AC,

CC, and NC collectively predict retention. The analysis showed a significant overall

finding, $\chi^2(3, 462) = 13.25$, $p = .004$. The model correctly classified approximately 72%

(n = 333) of the cases, indicating a very good accuracy rate. The model exhibits good

sensitivity as it is able to predict with 100% accuracy superintendents who will choose

retention over no retention based on this model. Moreover, between 28% and 40% of the

variance in retention can be explained by AC, CC, and NC, as identified by Cox and

Snell and Nagelkerke's R-square results, respectively.

The CC variable (Wald = 8.31, p = .004, OR = 1.45) was a significant predictor in

the model, indicating with every one-unit increase in CC scores, the odds of retention

increased by approximately 45%. The AC variable (Wald = 3.21, p = .073, OR = 1.27)

and NC variable (Wald = 0.64, p = .422, OR = 1.11) were not significant predictors in

the model. Therefore, hypothesis three was partially supported. See Table 10 for findings

of the binary logistic regression model.

Table 10

Binary Logistic Regression between AC, CC, NC, and Retention

Variable	B	SE	Wald	p	OR
Affective Commitment	0.24	0.13	3.21	.073	1.27
Continuance Commitment	0.37	0.13	8.31	.004	1.45
Normative Commitment	0.10	0.13	0.64	.422	1.11

Note. Overall model: $\chi^2(3) = 13.25$, p = .004, Nagelkerke R^2 = .040

H4: Organizational commitment will predict retention.

I conducted a binary logistic regression between overall organizational

commitment and retention to address H4. The overall findings of the binary logistic

regression model were statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, 462) = 10.64$, p = .001, indicating

overall organizational commitment does predict retention. According to the analysis, the

model was able to accurately classify 71.6% (n = 331) of the cases, indicating a very

good accuracy rate. The model demonstrated good sensitivity, as it is able to predict with

100% accuracy the cases where superintendents would choose retention over no retention

based on this model. Cox and Snell and Nagelkerke's R-square results indicated overall

organizational commitment could explain between 23% and 33% of the variance in

retention. Specifically, the predictor variable overall organizational commitment (Wald =

10.10, p = .001, OR = 1.76) was a significant predictor in the model, indicating with

every one-unit increase in overall organizational commitment, the odds of retention

increased by approximately 76%. Therefore, the results supported H4. See Table 11 for

the findings of the binary logistic regression model.

Table 10

Binary Logistic Regression between Overall Organizational Commitment and Retention

Variable	*B*	*SE*	Wald	*p*	*OR*
Overall organizational commitment	0.57	0.18	10.10	.001	1.76

Note. Overall model: $\chi^2(1) = 10.64$, $p = .001$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .033$

H5: Gender and district description will predict retention.

To address hypothesis five, a binary logistic regression was conducted between

gender, district description, and retention. Due to the categorical nature of gender and

district description, these variables were dummy coded prior to entry. The overall

findings of the logistic regression model were statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, 462) = 7.564$,

$p = .023$, indicating that gender and district description collectively do predict retention.

The analysis revealed the model accurately classified 71.2% *(n = 329)* of the cases,

indicating a high accuracy rate. The model showed good sensitivity as it could predict

with 100% accuracy the cases where superintendents would choose retention over no

retention based on the model. The results of Cox and Snell, and Nagelkerke's R-square

tests indicated that overall organizational commitment could account for between 1.6%

and 2.3% of the variance in retention. Gender was a significant predictor of retention

(Wald = 5.84, *p* = .016, *OR* = .54). District description was not a significant predictor in

the model (Wald = 1.89, *p* = .169, *OR* = 1.20). Therefore, hypothesis 5 was partially

supported. Table 12 presents the findings of the binary logistic regression model.

Table 11

Binary Logistic Regression between Gender, District Description, and Retention

Variable	*B*	*SE*	Wald	*p*	*OR*
Gender	-0.61	0.25	5.84	.016	0.54
District Description	0.18	0.13	1.89	.169	1.20

Note. Overall model: $\chi^2(2, 462) = 7.564$, $p = .023$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .023$

Summary

In this chapter, the research findings are presented in detail. I examined sample characteristics, including preliminary analysis incorporating CFA. The results are then aligned with the research questions and hypotheses. To address the hypotheses, binary logistic regression and a Pearson correlation matrix were employed. Overall organizational commitment, continuance commitment, and gender were found to predict retention independently. Organizational commitment subscales were found to predict retention collectively. The study results did not find any significant contribution of grit in predicting retention for superintendents in the southern region of the United States. The secondary results indicated overall organizational commitment had a strong, positive correlation between AC and NC. The results indicated a strong positive correlation between NC and AC and a moderate positive relation between AC and grit. There was a moderate, negative correlation between CC and AC. There was no correlation found between organizational commitment, grit, and retention.

Chapter V

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter provides a detailed summary of the study's findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations. The chapter begins by summarizing the study's purpose statement, significance, research questions, and hypotheses. The correlational and logistic regression findings and conclusions for RQ1 and RQ2, including their hypotheses, are within the chapter as well. Implications for action and recommendations for further research follow the summary of findings. The chapter ends with a summary of the significant findings and conclusions of the study as a whole.

Summary of the Study

Background Information

Superintendent retention rates in the United States have ranged from 32% to 43% over the past decade (Kowalski et al., 2011; Petersen & Title, 2021). Research on attributes that may have a relationship with organizational commitment and grit is important to the K-12 education system because organizational commitment and grit have been shown to have a relationship and predictability with retention (Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Meyer et al., 1993). Previous research has shown a positive relationship between grit and retention in various settings, such as military cadets, ARSOF, workplaces, students, teachers, and married couples. Studies have found grit to be a predictor of retention in these contexts, according to studies by several researchers (Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014; Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014; Von Culin et al., 2014). Some researchers recommended further research on grit and retention in domains

other than those previously studied (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). This research aims to advance existing knowledge on grit by investigating the attributes of grit and retention, which have not been adequately studied within the population of superintendents in the southern region of the United States. Researchers suggested additional measures should be correlated with the TCM of employee commitment survey to uncover underlying connections to organizational commitment (Meyer et al., 2002). This research aims to enhance understanding of the TCM of employee commitment by examining the relationship between grit and organizational commitment, as well as organizational commitment and retention, among superintendents in the southern region of the United States. It is unknown if and to what extent a relationship and predictability exists among superintendents' self-perceived grit, organizational commitment, retention in the southern region of the United States.

Purpose of the Study

This quantitative correlational and predictive research study examined how grit subscales (perseverance and passion), organizational commitment subscales (AC, NC, and CC), gender, and district description predict retention among superintendents in the southern region of the United States. It also explored the relationships between self-reported attributes of grit, organizational commitment, and superintendents' retention in the southern region of the United States. The theoretical framework is based on Meyer and Allen's TCM of employee commitment, which includes overall organizational commitment, AC, NC, and CC, as well as Angela Duckworth's theory of grit, which is passion and perseverance for a long-term goal. The study included 462 superintendents from the southern region of the United States who were superintendents during the 2022-

23 school year. Participants completed one survey with two valid and reliable

instruments, Grit-S and TCM revised, demographic questions (i.e., age, gender, race,

district description, district enrollment, tenure as a superintendent), and retention (i.e.,

intention to remain in the district). The data collected were the self-reported attributes of

each superintendent.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

I addressed all components of the research questions. A total of five hypotheses

were formulated to investigate the interactions of the second research question. The

questions were the following:

- RQ1: Are there relationships among grit, organizational commitment, and

  retention among superintendents in the southern region of the United States?

- RQ2: What factors (grit, grit subscales [passion and perseverance], organizational

  commitment, organizational commitment subscales [AC, NC, and CC], gender,

  and district description), if any, predict retention among superintendents in the

  southern region of the United States?

  - H1: Passion and perseverance will predict retention.

  - H2: Grit will predict retention.

  - H3: Affective, normative, and continuance commitment will predict

    retention.

  - H4: Organizational commitment will predict retention.

  - H5: Gender and district description will predict retention.

Findings and Conclusions

This study contributes to the existing knowledge by examining how superintendent retention is related to grit and organizational commitment. The study provides practical solutions to school boards, higher education, and superintendent preparation programs employing and educating superintendents on those attributes impacting retention. In the past, research focused on the need for increased superintendent retention and the need to understand the predictive nature or positive correlations of grit and organizational commitment to populations excluding superintendents in the southern region of the United States (Burkhart et al., 2014; Eskreis Winkler et al., 2014; Kamrath, 2015; Kamrath & Brunner, 2014; Marzano & Waters, 2009; O'Connor, 2018; O'Connor & Vaughn, 2018; Simpson, 2013). This study connects two areas – grit and organizational commitment – to advance scientific knowledge in both areas for the benefit of the superintendent preparation programs, higher education, and K-12 education system. The study identifies several major findings organized by research questions and hypotheses.

Descriptive Statistics

According to the descriptive results, 82% of the population in the study was male, confirming the existence of the superintendent gender gap researchers have identified since 1930. The gender disparity observed in this study is similar to the findings of the AASA Decennial Studies and The Broad Center report (Knight et al., 2018; Kowalski et al., 2011; Tienken, 2021). It is not surprising there is an unequal gender representation in the role of superintendents. Gender stereotypes and biases still influence the selection and appointment of superintendents (Robinson et al., 2017; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010;

Weyer, 2007). One of the issues is the preconceived notions about leadership abilities based on gender (Glass, 2000; Robinson et al., 2017).

The main focus of this study was on superintendent retention, measured by asking participants whether they planned on staying in their current district as a superintendent in the next three to five years. Approximately 72% of the respondents indicated their intent to remain in their current positions. The retention rates reported in this study do not align with historical trends. According to previous research, superintendent retention rates in the United States have remained below approximately 45% since 2010 (Kowalski et al., 2011; Petersen & Title, 2021). Given the study's sample was drawn from superintendents in the southern region of the country, a subsample of the 2010 and 2020 American School Superintendent Decennial Studies, it was unexpected to find a different retention rate among this population as compared to previous studies by other researchers (Kowalski et al., 2011; Tienken, 2021).

The average scores for overall grit and its subscales were higher than the midpoint of 2.5. Moreover, the average scores ranged from 3.31 to 3.98, indicating superintendents had high grit, passion, and perseverance levels. The standard deviation was between 0.51 and 0.67, reflecting less variation or dispersion of grit and its subscale scores among superintendents. The average scores for overall organizational commitment and its subscales were higher than the midpoint of 3.0 and 3.5. The average scores ranged from 4.11 to 4.64, indicating superintendents had moderate organizational commitment, AC, NC, and CC levels. The standard deviation was from 0.61 to 1.04, signifying less variation or dispersion of organizational commitment and its subscale scores. The normality tests revealed the superintendent scores on overall grit, perseverance, and CC

were negatively skewed, suggesting most superintendents reported high levels of each variable. Conversely, overall organizational commitment, passion, AC, and NC were positively skewed, due to relatively few superintendents reporting high levels of each variable.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 aimed to investigate whether there was a connection between grit, organizational commitment, and retention among superintendents in the southern region of the United States. The results of the study indicate several strong to moderate positive correlations with significant findings. The study found strong and significant correlations with a strength greater than 0.75 and $p < .001$ with both overall grit and grit subscales – passion and perseverance. These findings support Angela Duckworth's previous studies, signifying passion correlates with grit as it plays a crucial role in developing an individual's overall grit (Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth et al., 2011). In Duckworth's previous studies, these findings indicate individuals who are passionate about their goals are more likely to stay committed and persevere when faced with hardships (Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth et al., 2011). Therefore, the findings of this study align with previous studies by suggesting as a superintendent's passion and perseverance increase, their grit level also increases positively.

According to the findings of this study, there is a significant ($p < .001$), moderate (greater than .31) positive correlation between overall grit and AC. These results are consistent with previous research, which suggests people with higher levels of grit tend to have a stronger emotional connection to their organization, specifically with AC (King, 2017; Naz et al., 2020). This study determined that superintendents in the southern region

of the United States with higher levels of grit also tended to have higher levels of emotional connection with their school districts. This is an important finding because it means superintendents with higher levels of grit are more likely to develop a deeper emotional connection with their school districts, which can result in better job performance, greater job satisfaction, and possibly retention.

In this study, there were weak, positive correlations between overall grit and retention ($r = .01$, $p < .001$) and perseverance and retention ($r = .02$, $p < .001$). Despite earlier research indicating grit either had a relationship or acted as a predictor of retention, the current study found no significant connection between grit and retention or grit subscales and retention. This study defined retention as the superintendent's intention to remain in the current school system for the next three to five years. Earlier studies with military cadets, ARSOF, workplaces, students, teachers, and married couples suggested a connection between grit and retention (Burkhart et al., 2014; Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014), which was previously discussed in Chapter II. Based on the findings of this study, however, there was no relationship between grit and retention. This finding does not necessarily imply grit has no relationship with retention in all superintendent contexts. Instead, it suggests various factors, such as the specific domain or area of expertise examined, may influence the relationship between grit and retention. I encourage further research to determine the specific circumstances under which grit is related to retention regarding superintendents in the southern region of the United States.

Research Question 2

Furthermore, I employed a series of binary logistic regression models to explore the predictive relationships among the variables of interest and retention to test the hypotheses independently.

H1: Passion and perseverance will predict retention.

H1 investigated whether passion and perseverance could predict retention. The results of this study showed passion and perseverance, taken together, do not predict retention. These factors can explain less than 1% of the variation in retention. Neither passion nor perseverance alone can predict retention. Therefore, the results did not support H1. Earlier research suggested perseverance was a predictor of retention, defined as the ability to persist in achieving success over a long period (Duckworth & Gross, 2014). In this context, sustained, deliberate practice is a form of retention requiring perseverance and not giving up on challenging activities. For example, a study of Scripps National Spelling Bee finalists found consistent and thoughtful practice, also known as grit (perseverance and passion), was necessary to win spelling bees (Duckworth et al., 2011). In the case of superintendents in the southern region of the United States, the lack of passion and perseverance as predictors of retention was on an individual level, and their likelihood to stay within an organization was non-existent. Furthermore, passion and perseverance had no significant relationship with an individual's decision to stay or leave the organization.

Passion is a strong feeling of enthusiasm or excitement that motivates an individual toward their goals, hobbies, or achievements (Duckworth et al., 2007; Kelly et al., 2014). Perseverance refers to the ability to work towards a higher goal over an

extended period without giving up despite challenges or setbacks (Duckworth et al., 2007; Kelly et al., 2014). Passion and perseverance are essential traits for a superintendent. However, their impact on retention depends on how well the superintendent's skills, interests, passion, and career goals align with their current district assignment. A superintendent's lack of passion and perseverance may be due to a misalignment with their job assignment, which could affect their retention rate. For example, a superintendent passionate about teaching and learning in urban systems may not be a good fit for a role as a chief executive officer in a rural school district. This disconnect between what they are passionate about and the nature of their work may be a significant factor in their decision to stay. Furthermore, a lack of support from the school board, employees, and community or a perceived lack of recognition for their efforts can reduce the superintendent's level of perseverance and negatively impact retention. In this population, other factors such as organizational commitment and subscales are more dominant indicators influencing the retention of superintendents.

H2: Grit will predict retention.

H2 investigated whether grit could predict retention. According to the results, grit did not predict retention. The overall grit could only explain less than 1% of the variation in retention. The results did not support this hypothesis. This study revealed the presence or absence of grit does not provide meaningful information about superintendent retention in a school district. The finding of this study contradicts earlier research suggesting a link between grit and retention, with some studies even proposing grit could predict retention (Burkhart et al., 2014; Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). Grit is defined by perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth, 2016). However, a

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superintendent's motivation to stay in a job may be influenced by a combination of short-term and long-term factors. Grit may be more relevant where the nature of the work aligns closely with an individual's long-term goals. Another possible reason for these results could be other organizational factors, such as job fit, organizational support, and work environment, which may play a more significant role in the superintendent's retention in relation to grit. In this population, other factors, such as organizational commitment, are more dominant indicators influencing the retention of superintendents, as stated in hypothesis one.

H3: Affective, normative, and continuance commitment will predict retention.

H3 investigated whether AC, CC, and NC, collectively and independently, predicted retention. I found that the organizational commitment subscales collectively predicted retention. The study corroborates earlier findings suggesting a strong link between organizational commitment subscales and retention (Anitha & Begum, 2016). Researchers Anitha and Begum (2016) analyzed employee retention levels and organizational commitment subscales of automobile manufacturing employees. Their findings indicated organizational commitment subscales and organizational culture influenced automobile manufacturing employee retention by approximately 66%. In this study, AC, CC, and NC could explain between 28% and 40% of the variation in retention. Anitha and Begum's (2016) variance findings were approximately 20% higher than the variance in this study. However, the researcher included organizational culture in the variance calculation. Several researchers have found workers with a stronger sense of loyalty to their organization are likelier to remain in their jobs (Becker, 1960; Meyer et

al., 2002; Porter et al., 1974). Therefore, it is essential to consider organizational commitment subscales when attempting to retain superintendents.

The study revealed CC was a significant predictor of retention. As CC scores increased by one unit, the chances of superintendent retention increased by approximately 45%. Superintendents with a higher level of CC are likelier to remain in an organization. CC is the degree to which an employee decides whether the potential loss of leaving outweighs the benefits, such as prestigious title, benefits, decreased salary, vacation time, personal relationships, and other advantages (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 1993). Several studies have demonstrated CC is significant for employee retention (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer & Allen, 1984, 1991, 1997). Anitha and Begum (2016) also found a positive relationship between CC and retention. This study's finding substantiates earlier research suggesting a link between CC and retention. It is essential to consider CC when trying to retain superintendents. For example, school boards could consider different strategies, such as ensuring employees are appropriately compensated for their work, providing competitive benefits packages, offering flexible work schedules or remote work, emphasizing job security and stability, and offering retention bonuses for superintendents who stay within the school system for a certain period. However, this study's population did not show a predictive relationship between AC and NC regarding retention, indicating emotional and obligatory connections with organizations may not be critical for retention in this population despite a correlation. Therefore, the results partially supported H3.

H4: Organizational commitment will predict retention.

The fourth hypothesis investigated whether the overall organizational commitment could predict retention. The overall findings of the model were statistically significant, indicating overall organizational commitment does predict retention. The findings supported H4. AC, CC, and NC could explain between 23% and 33% of the variation in retention. Results showed an increase in overall organizational commitment scores by one unit, resulting in an approximately 76% increase in the odds of retention. The study supports earlier research findings suggesting a strong link between organizational commitment and retention (Cohen, 2007; Kaur & Sharma, 2015; Maqsood et al., 2012; Meyer & Allen, 1984, 1991,1997, 2004; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Porter et al., 1974; Somers 2009). As discussed in the Literature Review chapter, there is a predictive relationship between organizational commitment and retention in different types of workplaces, such as nursing, social work, automotive, government, high-potential roles, restaurants, education, pharmacy, and military personnel across various geographical locations, such as India, Alexandria, New Zealand, France, America, Pakistan, Taiwan, and Korea (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Chang et al., 2015). This study supports this finding. In order to increase superintendent retention and ensure the stability of the school division, it is imperative to consider various factors that contribute to the superintendent's organizational commitment.

Based on this study, I found superintendents who have a higher level of organizational commitment were more likely to stay in their school district. Therefore, school boards must adopt different strategies to enhance the organizational commitment levels of superintendents, as it is a predictor of retention. To cultivate a sense of

connection between superintendents and the school district, school boards must create a positive environment that fosters a shared belief in the district's values. By doing so, the school district can promote a culture of commitment among superintendents, which leads to improved organizational performance and outcomes (Yates & De Jong, 2018). There are several strategies school boards can use to improve organizational commitment, including promoting a positive organizational culture, creating opportunities for career development outside of the superintendency, rewarding and recognizing superintendents, and promoting effective and impactful leadership.

H5: Gender and district description will predict retention.

The fifth hypothesis aimed to investigate gender and district predict retention of superintendents. The overall findings were statistically significant, indicating gender and district description collectively predict retention. Gender was a significant predictor of retention, independently.

Male superintendents have been known to have longer retention rates compared to their female colleagues (Kowalski et al., 2011; Petersen & Title, 2021). However, female superintendents have seen a substantial increase in longevity over time (Kowalski et al., 2011). Previous studies have indicated female superintendents tend to have shorter tenures than their male counterparts (Rogers et al., 2021; Rogers & McCord, 2020; Thomas et al., 2022; Thomas et al., 2023). According to the Broad Center report, female superintendents in one school system have an average tenure of 5.18 years, while male superintendents stay for approximately 6.42 years (Knight et al., 2018). There are several possible reasons for the difference, such as the retention of female and male superintendents. One such factor is the phenomenon known as the glass cliff, which is a

common challenge faced by female leaders (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). The "glass cliff" refers to the tendency for women to be appointed to leadership positions during times of crisis or difficulty, which can lead to them facing greater challenges and expectations than their male counterparts, making their roles more precarious and having a negative impact on their job retention rates (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). According to Ryan and Haslam (2007), there is a tendency for women to be favored over men for top leadership roles when companies are performing poorly. Another explanation could be due to unconscious biases and stereotype threats female superintendents may face from their school board, employees, and community (Glass, 2000). These biases and threats can increase scrutiny and bias evaluations, affecting retention (Glass, 2000). An alternative explanation for this result could be work-life balance challenges. The role of a superintendent is demanding, involving long hours, extensive responsibilities, and high stress levels (Glass, 2000). Balancing these demands with family responsibilities may be more challenging for female superintendents, impacting retention decisions (Glass, 2000). School boards should take into account the obstacles discussed earlier in order to deliberately maintain female superintendents.

Previous research indicated that district description as a predictor for superintendent retention (CGCS, 2014; Chingos et al., 2014; Grissom & Andersen, 2012). Urban. The findings of this research do not support previous findings as district description was not found to be a predictor of retention. Factors impacting superintendent retention include district description challenges (Chingos et al., 2014; Grissom & Andersen, 2012). Urban school district superintendents typically have a much shorter tenure than their counterparts in non-urban districts, lasting for three to four years on

average (Chingos et al., 2014; CGCS, 2014; Grissom & Andersen, 2012). Their retention rate is two years shorter than non-urban colleagues (CGCS, 2014; Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Urban school district superintendents typically have a much shorter tenure than their counterparts in non-urban districts, lasting for three to four years on average (Chingos et al., 2014; CGCS, 2014; Grissom & Andersen, 2012). Their retention rate is two years shorter than non-urban colleagues (CGCS, 2014; Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Urban school districts encounter unique challenges different from suburban and rural districts, as their students mostly come from low-income families, are English language learners, and identify as students of color (CGCS, 2014). According to the 2014 CGCS report, about 89% of the CGCS superintendents have served in their current positions for less than five years (CGCS, 2014). School boards should consider the challenges in an urban school system to retain superintendents in the urban setting.

Suburban and rural districts experience higher retention levels than their urban colleagues due to various reasons (CGCS, 2014; Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Superintendents working in suburban and rural districts tend to have a more stable work environment than their urban counterparts (Kamrath & Brunner, 2014). This stability is primarily due to the higher socioeconomic status of suburban areas and the strong community support in rural areas (Kamrath & Brunner, 2014). In suburban districts, the higher income levels of the residents generally translate to better-funded schools, competitive salaries, and more resources. In rural districts, the close-knit communities often lead to greater involvement from parents and community members, creating a supportive environment for the superintendent (Kamrath & Brunner, 2014). According to a study conducted by Pijanowski et al. (2009), rural school districts received only 7

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applications per available job opening, compared to larger districts which received 15 applications per opening. This limited number of applicants tends to lower the quality of the pool of candidates, thus putting pressure on rural districts to make concessions larger districts may not have to make (Pijanowski et al., 2009). It is worth noting each district has its unique challenges and opportunities, and superintendents must adapt their leadership style to suit the needs of their specific community to remain in the school system (Kowalski, 2003).

Implications for Policy and Practice

School boards, higher education, and superintendent preparation programs should be aware of overall organizational commitment, CC, gender, and district description to predict retention. Additionally, they should consider the impact of grit on organizational commitment since grit is highly correlated to organizational commitment. As the chief executive officer of a school system, superintendents set the expectations and pathways to improve countless lives. The potential implications of the results of the present study are related to creating fair policies and practices to enhance the retention, recruitment, and selection of superintendents. There is further elaboration about their training and leadership development.

Retention Practices

This study offers valuable insights to school boards seeking to improve the retention rates of their superintendents. It is important to note no definitive approach can accomplish this goal. As detailed in the discussion section of H3, school boards can consider adopting various strategies to support CC. For instance, some strategies can be employed by offering competitive compensation and benefits, providing flexible work

schedules or remote work options, emphasizing job security and stability, and granting

retention bonuses to superintendents who remain in the school system for a specific

duration.

Recruitment and Selection Practices

School boards must assess and evaluate technical competencies and personality

traits related to organizational commitment and grit during the recruiting and hiring

processes. While there is no single measure for hiring decisions, using grit and

organizational commitment through questionnaires can help predict success and retention

in the superintendency. Superintendents with high levels of grit have a stronger emotional

connection to their organization, as per the findings of RQ1 regarding the significant

relationship between grit and AC. Therefore, it is reasonable for school boards to explore

using Grit-S and TCM revised questionnaires to quantify grit and organizational

commitment levels of prospective candidates and to recruit superintendents through

search professional firms. School boards should exercise caution when screening

candidates and consider various hiring variables, including recommendations, past

experiences, and past successes.

Superintendent Development

Superintendent preparation programs are essential for several reasons. Developing

effective superintendents is a complex process requiring the involvement of

superintendent preparation programs, higher education institutions, and school boards.

These entities play a crucial role in providing aspiring and current superintendents with

the knowledge, skills, and support they need to succeed in their roles. Superintendent

preparation programs can invest in instructional strategies (i.e., grit strategies and

organizational commitment strategies) to help superintendents build stronger connections with their respective school districts. This recommendation, in turn, may lead to retention because superintendents are likelier to stay engaged and invested in their work. Traditionally, superintendent leadership programs focused on organizational management, educational policy knowledge, fiscal management, and instructional leadership. This study revealed a positive moderate correlation between an individual's level of grit and their AC, as well as a predictive relationship between organizational commitment and retention. Leaders can use this information in superintendent preparation programs and higher education programs to emphasize how the importance of grit as a valuable attribute can significantly increase organizational commitment, which impacts retention. Programs can include workshops and courses covering a wide range of grit and organizational commitment topics, from growth mindset integration to equity and inclusion. By investing in targeted professional development, superintendents can continue to develop their skills throughout their careers.

School Board and Superintendent Association Policies

School boards and superintendent preparation programs should create policies to improve superintendents' recruitment, selection, training, and leadership development. One practical approach is to design school board policies and administrative regulations in alignment with factors promoting loyalty. Some of these factors may include offering competitive salaries and benefits packages, providing opportunities for professional growth and development, and fostering positive workplace cultures. These strategies can help increase organizational commitment, leading to a more motivated superintendent and a higher retention rate.

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Limitations

Mills and Gay (2019) stated limitations could negatively influence study results. This particular study had limitations, which may reduce the generalizability of the results. The study only describes the characteristics of grit and organizational commitment related to retaining superintendents in the southern region of the United States. Therefore, this study does not cover superintendents from northern or western states. It should be noted the participants in the study were not randomly selected from the same region of the United States. The convenience sampling may have resulted in a participant pool representing only a specific region's retention, gender, and district description. Therefore, the study's findings may not be generalizable to other regions.

The data collection method is limited to the self-reported response of grit and commitment through an electronic survey. Self-report data is subject to various biases and cannot be independently varied. Superintendents may not respond with frankness. For example, superintendents may overestimate or underestimate their responses to retention, grit, and organizational commitment, affecting the outcome of the study and skewing data results.

Recommendations

I have some recommendations for expanding research and practice on grit, organizational commitment, and retention in the context of the superintendency. Firstly, this study needs to be replicated with superintendents from the northern and western regions of the United States. This recommendation will help determine if these different populations' grit and organizational commitment levels will result in similar findings. It

will also help to explore the role of grit, organizational commitment, gender, and district description in retaining superintendents in other regions of the United States.

Secondly, it is worth noting most studies examining grit, organizational commitment, and retention have utilized quantitative research methods. This particular study employed a quantitative approach due to the use of specific research instruments. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to individuals' grit and organizational commitment levels, it would be beneficial to conduct qualitative research alongside the Grit-S, TCM revised, and retention questionnaires. Including a qualitative component would help reveal the underlying reasons for individuals' high or low scores in these areas and identify possible reasons for retention or attrition.

Thirdly, I recommend a longitudinal study with first-year superintendents throughout their tenure. This study will measure their grit and organizational commitment yearly and follow them throughout their career as a superintendent. The focus will be on whether their grit and organizational commitment change over time and if this impacts their retention. This recommendation will help further explore and understand the character traits of grit and organizational commitment and their role in perspective and longevity as a superintendent.

Summary

Superintendents face many challenges as the highest-ranking individuals in school districts. Retaining superintendents has been a longstanding issue, and it is important to understand the factors to promote retention. This study explored the relationship between overall grit and its subscales, overall organizational commitment and its subscale, gender, district description, and their role in predicting the retention of superintendents in the

southern region of the United States. This study is the first to investigate the predictability of these constructs and their relationship with the superintendents specifically in the southern region of the United States.

According to the results of the study, CC and organizational commitment predict retention. The findings indicate that the combination of gender and district description is a significant predictor of retention. The study results indicated there was no significant contribution of grit in predicting retention for superintendents in the southern region of the United States. The results showed grit had a positive strong correlation with AC, but no correlation was found between grit, retention and organizational commitment. The findings have practical applications for school boards regarding retention practices. Providing flexible work schedules or remote work options can make the position more attractive for superintendents with family or personal commitments, which can lead to greater job satisfaction and retention rates. Another important factor to consider is emphasizing job security and stability by offering long-term contracts with clear job expectations. This level of transparent communication can help to reduce the uncertainty and stress often associated with leadership positions, leading to higher job satisfaction and retention rates. School boards may want to consider offering retention bonuses to superintendents who remain in the school system for a specific duration. This incentive can encourage superintendents to remain in their positions and help to build a stable and experienced leadership team. By incorporating these strategies, the climate and culture can be improved, leading to greater performance from the superintendent and a more positive experience for students and staff. In the interests of optimizing superintendents' recruitment, selection, training, and leadership development, it is incumbent upon school

boards, higher education, and superintendent preparation programs to establish policies specifically addressing these areas.

Another practical approach is to develop school board policies and administrative regulations aligning with factors promoting superintendents' loyalty. Loyalty – organizational commitment – can be obtained by ensuring the alignment of competitive salaries and benefits packages commensurate with job requirements and expectations (i.e., in a turnaround school division, the pay is increased due to the workload). Higher education and superintendent preparation programs can train aspiring and sitting superintendents on negotiating an appropriate salary aligned with the job requirements and expectations. A positive workplace culture emphasizing collaboration, respect, and open communication is equally important. School boards can create this environment by promoting a culture of trust, transparency, and accountability, where all superintendents are encouraged to contribute to the school district's success. Preparatory programs and higher education institutions can offer executive coaching to aspiring and sitting superintendents to cultivate a culture of collaboration and teamwork that will transfer to the school division.

According to this study, approximately 72% of superintendents employed in the southern region of the United States plan to stay in their current school system for the next three to five years. The study provides valuable insight into the retention rate of superintendents in the southern region of the United States, indicating most of them intend to remain in their current positions for at least a few more years. This information could be helpful for school districts in the southern region looking to plan and ensure adequate staffing and leadership. Several studies have found a significant correlation

between a superintendent's tenure and students' academic performance (Chingos et al., 2014; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Simpson, 2013). The longer a superintendent serves in a school system, the more positive impact on student achievement. In their research, Yates and De Jong (2018) found a correlation between superintendent retention, staff policies, and student achievement. Specifically, they discovered school districts with stable superintendent leadership and consistent staff policies tended to have higher student achievement levels than districts with high turnover rates and inconsistent policies. In other words, retaining experienced leaders and implementing well-defined policies can contribute significantly to student success. This correlation could be attributed to the superintendent's in-depth knowledge of the school district, ability to build strong relationships with staff and students, and experience implementing effective educational policies from onset to completion. In conclusion, the implementation of practical strategies for school boards, higher education institutions, and superintendent preparation programs can foster organizational commitment, leading to more motivated superintendents and higher retention rates.

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Appendix A:

Image Permission

Image Permission

Re: Thank you for your Insider permission request

Takiwi Milton
To: Amy Sun <amy.sun@parsintl.com>

Thank you! I meet the three requirements. This is so exciting!! I will keep this permission email and include it in the appendix of my dissertation.

Warmest regards,

From: Amy Sun <amy.sun@parsintl.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 12, 2023 9:46 AM
To: Takiwi Milton <tmilton@valdosta.edu>
Subject: Thank you for your Insider permission request

Delivered From External Sender

Hello Takiwi Milton-Babalola,
Thank you for contacting PARS International, the reprint and Licensing Agency which represents Insider.

Please be advised that the publisher will allow the use of this content without having to obtain the proper permission and licensing and without a fee if the following apply:

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3. It will not be resold or used for any commercial gain.

Any use other than specified requires clearance by PARS International Corp. Inc., in which copyright fees will apply. Please let me know if you meet the three requirements, or if you don't and would like to pursue seeking permission.

Thank you for your consideration,

Amy Sun

amy.sun@parsintl.com

For ease of reference, please keep this e-mail trail intact with your response.

PARS REFERENCE ONLY
Takiwi Milton-Babalola
Valdosta State University
tmilton@valdosta.edu
Insider
00Q5b000011LYT2

Appendix B:

IRB Approval

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
For the Protection of Human Research Participants

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

Protocol Number: 04369-2022   **Responsible Researcher(s):** Takiwi Milton-Babalola

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Michael Bochenko

Project Title: *Superintendents in the South: An Examination of Grit, Commitment, and Retention.*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations, **category 2**. If the nature of the research changes such that exemption criteria no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research study.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- *Upon completion of the research study, all collected data (e.g. transcripts, data set, name/email lists, etc.) must be securely maintained and accessible only by the researcher(s) for a minimum of 3 years. At the end of the required time, collected data must be permanently destroyed.*

     ☒ *If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.*

Elizabeth Ann Olphie   11.28.2022

Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-253-2947.

Revised: 06.02.16

Appendix C:

Grit-S Scale

GRIT-S Scale

Section 2:

Directions for taking the Grit Scale: Please respond to the following 8 items. Be honest – there are no right or wrong answers!

1. New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.*
   - ☐ Very much like me
   - ☐ Mostly like me
   - ☐ Somewhat like me
   - ☐ Not much like me
   - ☐ Not like me at all

2. Setbacks don't discourage me.
   - ☐ Very much like me
   - ☐ Mostly like me
   - ☐ Somewhat like me
   - ☐ Not much like me
   - ☐ Not like me at all

3. I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.*
   - ☐ Very much like me
   - ☐ Mostly like me
   - ☐ Somewhat like me
   - ☐ Not much like me
   - ☐ Not like me at all

4. I am a hard worker.
   - ☐ Very much like me
   - ☐ Mostly like me
   - ☐ Somewhat like me
   - ☐ Not much like me
   - ☐ Not like me at all

5. I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.*
   - ☐ Very much like me
   - ☐ Mostly like me
   - ☐ Somewhat like me
   - ☐ Not much like me
   - ☐ Not like me at all

6. I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.*
   - ☐ Very much like me
   - ☐ Mostly like me
   - ☐ Somewhat like me
   - ☐ Not much like me
   - ☐ Not like me at all

7. I finish whatever I begin.
   - ☐ Very much like me
   - ☐ Mostly like me
   - ☐ Somewhat like me
   - ☐ Not much like me

    ☐ Not like me at all

8. I am diligent.
    ☐ Very much like me
    ☐ Mostly like me
    ☐ Somewhat like me
    ☐ Not much like me
    ☐ Not like me at all

Scoring:
1. For questions 2, 4, 7 and 8 assign the following points:
  5 = Very much like me
  4 = Mostly like me
  3 = Somewhat like me
  2 = Not much like me
  1 = Not like me at all

2. For questions 1, 3, 5 and 6 assign the following points:
  1 = Very much like me
  2 = Mostly like me
  3 = Somewhat like me
  4 = Not much like me
  5 = Not like me at all

Add up all the points and divide by 8. The maximum score on this scale is 5 (extremely gritty), and the lowest score on this scale is 1 (not at all gritty).

Duckworth, A.L, & Quinn, P.D. (2009). Development and validation of the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S). *Journal of Personality Assessment, 91,* 166-174. http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/Duckworth%20and%20Quinn.pdf

Duckworth, A.L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M.D., & Kelly, D.R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 9*, 1087-1101. http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/Grit%20JPSP.pdf

Appendix D:

Three-Component Model of Employee Commitment Scale

Three-Component Model of Employee Commitment Scale

Section 2:

Please respond to the following by indicating the choice that most closely describes your agreement/disagreement as a superintendent.

Three-Component Model (TCM) of Employee Commitment Survey
Revised Version (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993)

Affective Commitment Scale
1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
2. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
3. I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization. (R)
4. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization. (R)
5. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization. (R)
6. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.

Continuance Commitment Scale
1. Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.
2. It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to.
3. Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now.
4. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.
5. If I had not already put so much of myself into this organization, I might consider working elsewhere.
6. One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives.

Normative Commitment Scale
1. I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer. (R)
2. Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organization now.
3. I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.
4. This organization deserves my loyalty.
5. I would not leave my organization right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.
6. I owe a great deal to my organization.

Scoring:
7 = Strongly agree
6 = Agree
5 = Slightly agree
4 = Undecided
3 = Slightly disagree
2 = Disagree
1 = Strongly disagree

Note. (R) indicates a reverse-keyed item. Scores on these items should be reflected (i.e., 1 =7, 2 = 6, 3 = 5, 4 = 4, 5 = 3, 6 = 2, 7 = 1) before computing scale scores.

Appendix E:

Demographic Questions

Demographic Questions

Section 3:

1. State

- Alabama
- Arkansas
- Delaware
- District of Columbia
- Florida
- Georgia

- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Maryland
- Mississippi
- North Carolina
- Oklahoma

- Tennessee
- Texas
- Virginia
- West Virginia
- South Carolina

2. Gender
   - Male
   - Female

3. Age
   - 25 – 34
   - 35 – 44
   - 45 – 54
   - 55 – 64
   - 65+

4. Racial/Cultural Group
   - America Indian or Alaska Native
   - Asian
   - Black or African American
   - Hispanic or Latino
   - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   - White (non-Hispanic)
   - Other

5. District Description
   - Suburban
   - Urban
   - Rural

6. District Enrollment
   - Less Than 300
   - 300 to 2,499
   - 2,500 to 9,999
   - 10,000 to 24,999
   - 25,000 or more

7. Tenure as Superintendent
     o 1 year or less
     o 1-5 years
     o 6-10 years
     o 11-15 years
     o 16 or more years

8. In next three to five years from now, do you plan to stay in your current district?
     o Yes
     o No

Appendix F:

Pre-Introductory Email

Subject: Are Superintendents in the South Grittier and More Committed?

Greetings, President of the Superintendent Association,

As the lead learner in your organization, you have the influence to share important information with your members. I am a Valdosta State University doctoral candidate examining 3,546 superintendents in the South Region states to determine the relationship and predictability of grit and organizational commitment onto retention.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Valdosta State University. Furthermore, this research study is focused on public school superintendents in South Region States (i.e., Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas) active during the 2022-23 school year.
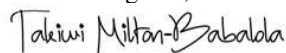
My research project is titled "Superintendents in the South: An Examination of Grit, Commitment, and Retention." I am asking you to share the following email blurb with your Chief Executive Officers.

- Takiwi Milton-Babalola, a doctoral candidate in the Curriculum, Technology, and Leadership Department at Valdosta State University will send active superintendents an email between January 17, 2023 – February 14, 2023 with details regarding participation in her research project entitled "Superintendents in the South: An Examination of Grit, Commitment, and Retention." The study includes completing a brief survey involving grit, organizational commitment, and retention. The survey is a combination of Angela Duckworth's grit survey and organizational commitment as developed by John P. Meyer and Natalie J. Allen. Permission to use both surveys has been granted. Her email address is tmilton@valdosta.edu. The time required to complete the study is approximately 15 minutes. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Be on the lookout for her email. Thank YOU!

Thank you in advance for reading this email and sharing with your members. Thank you in advance for your time.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Takiwi Milton-Babalola at tmilton@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Warmest regards,

Takiwi Milton-Babalola

Takiwi Milton-Babalola
Doctoral Candidate, Valdosta State University

Appendix G:

Introductory Email

<center>Introductory Email</center>

Subject: Are Superintendents in the South Grittier and More Committed?

Greetings Superintendent,

You are being asked to participate in a survey research project entitled "Superintendents in the South: An Examination of Grit, Commitment, and Retention" which is being conducted by Takiwi Milton-Babalola a doctoral candidate at Valdosta State University. The purpose of this research is to explore relationships between self-reported attributes of grit, organizational commitment, and retention of superintendents in southern states and examine how perseverance, passion, affective commitment, normative commitment, continuance commitment, and district description predict retention among superintendents in southern states.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Valdosta State University. Furthermore, this research study is focused on public school superintendents in South Region States (i.e., Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas) active during the 2022-23 school year.

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about factors related to superintendent retention. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The brief survey brief survey involving grit, organizational commitment, and retention is anonymous. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity.
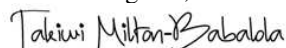
Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. Participants must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your completion of the survey serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 or older. You may print a copy of this statement for your records.

Participants will complete the survey between January 17, 2023 – February 14, 2023

If you are interested in participating in the study, please review the informed consent and survey hyperlinked here. Thank you in advance for your time.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Takiwi Milton-Babalola at tmilton@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Warmest regards,

Takiwi Milton-Babalola
Takiwi Milton-Babalola
Doctoral Candidate, Valdosta State University

Appendix H:

Informed Consent

<center>Informed Consent</center>

Section 1:
Thank you for your interest in participating in this research project.

Before proceeding, it must be ensured that participants have a full understanding of the study's content and the rights of the participant. Please read the information below.

You are being asked to participate in a survey research project entitled "Superintendents in the South: An Examination of Grit, Commitment, and Retention" which is being conducted by Takiwi Milton-Babalola a doctoral candidate at Valdosta State University. The purpose of this research is to explore relationships between self-reported attributes of grit, organizational commitment, and retention of superintendents in southern states and examine how perseverance, passion, affective commitment, normative commitment, continuance commitment, and district description predict retention among superintendents in southern states. <u>Your participation is entirely voluntary.</u>

As described in more detail below, we will ask you to complete a brief electronic survey which includes the Grit-S and Three Component Model (TCM) instruments. Someone in your position might be interested in participating because you are an active superintendent during the 2022-23 school year and will help us learn more about factors related to superintendent retention. Although there are no known risks associated with these research procedures, it is not always possible to identify all potential risks of participating in a research study. However, the University has taken reasonable safeguards to minimize potential but unknown risks. It is important for you to know that you can stop your participation at any time. More information about all aspects of this study is provided below.

This form includes detailed information to help you decide whether to participate in this study. Please read it carefully and ask any questions that you have before you agree to participate. Please be sure to retain a copy of this form for your records.

Procedures: Your participation will involve completing a three-part survey. The survey will have three sections:

- section one is consent including final qualifying question (i.e., current superintendent status),
- section two is combined Grit-S and TCM instruments, and
- section three is the superintendent profile including demographic data and intention to remain a superintendent.

The time required to complete the study is approximately 15 minutes. If you agree to participate, the researchers will also collect superintendent profile data (state, gender, age, racial/cultural group, district type, district size, tenure as superintendent, and intention to remain a superintendent).

Possible Risks or Discomfort: Although there are no known risks or discomfort associated with these research procedures, it is not always possible to identify all potential risks of participating in a research study. However, the University has taken reasonable safeguards to minimize potential but unknown risks. By agreeing to participate in this research project, you are not waiving any rights that you may have against Valdosta State University for injury resulting from negligence of the University or its researchers.

Potential Benefits: Although you may not benefit directly from this research, your participation will help the researcher gain additional understanding of retention factors of superintendents. Knowledge gained may contribute to addressing retention strategies at the university, superintendent association and school board levels.

<center>157</center>

Costs and Compensation: There are no costs to you and there is no compensation (no money, gifts, or services) for your participation in this research project.

Assurance of Confidentiality: Valdosta State University and the researcher will keep your information confidential to the extent allowed by law. Members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), a university committee charged with reviewing research to ensure the rights and welfare of research participants, may be given access to your confidential information.

Voluntary Participation: Your decision to participate in this research project is entirely voluntary. If you agree now to participate and change your mind later, you are free to leave the study. Your decision not to participate at all or to stop participating at any time in the future will not have any effect on any rights you have or any services you are otherwise entitled to from Valdosta State University.

Information Contacts:
Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Takiwi Milton-Babalola at tmilton@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Agreement to Participate: The research project and my role in it have been explained to me, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. By clicking the "agree" button, I am indicating that I am 18 years of age or older and I agree to participate in this study.

1. Do you agree to participate in this study? *required question*
   o   Agree
   o   Disagree

2. During the 2022-23 school year, are you currently serving as the superintendent of schools? *required question*
   o   Yes
   o   No

If the participant does not acknowledge consent or answers "no" to the qualifying question, they will not participate in the study.

Appendix I:

First Follow-Up Email

First Follow-Up Email

Subject: Superintendents: There is still time to share your expertise!

Greetings Superintendent,

As a friendly reminder, you are being asked to participate in a survey research project entitled "Superintendents in the South: An Examination of Grit, Commitment, and Retention" which is being conducted by Takiwi Milton-Babalola a doctoral candidate at Valdosta State University. The purpose of this research is to explore relationships between self-reported attributes of grit, organizational commitment, and retention of superintendents in southern states and examine how perseverance, passion, affective commitment, normative commitment, continuance commitment, and district description predict retention among superintendents in southern states.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Valdosta State University. Furthermore, this research study is focused on public school superintendents in South Region States (i.e., Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas) active during the 2022-23 school year.

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about factors related to superintendent retention. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The brief survey brief survey involving grit, organizational commitment, and retention is anonymous. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity.
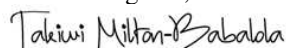
Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. Participants must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your completion of the survey serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 or older. You may print a copy of this statement for your records.

Participants will complete the survey between January 17, 2023 – February 14, 2023. You have three weeks left to participate in this study!

If you are interested in participating in the study, please review the informed consent and survey hyperlinked here. If you've completed the survey already, THANK YOU! Thank you in advance for your time.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Takiwi Milton-Babalola at tmilton@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Warmest regards,

Takiwi Milton-Babalola
Doctoral Candidate, Valdosta State University

Appendix J:

Second Follow-Up Email

Second Follow-Up Email

Subject: Superintendents: 2 More Weeks!

Greetings Superintendent,

Two weeks ago, you received an email requesting your participation in a study about superintendents. Your expertise is extremely valuable in learning more about superintendent retention, commitment, and grit. You are being asked to participate in a survey research project entitled "Superintendents in the South: An Examination of Grit, Commitment, and Retention" which is being conducted by Takiwi Milton-Babalola a doctoral candidate at Valdosta State University. The purpose of this research is to explore relationships between self-reported attributes of grit, organizational commitment, and retention of superintendents in southern states and examine how perseverance, passion, affective commitment, normative commitment, continuance commitment, and district description predict retention among superintendents in southern states.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Valdosta State University. Furthermore, this research study is focused on public school superintendents in South Region States (i.e., Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas) active during the 2022-23 school year.

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about factors related to superintendent retention. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The brief survey brief survey involving grit, organizational commitment, and retention is anonymous. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity.
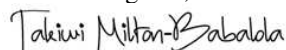
Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. Participants must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your completion of the survey serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 or older. You may print a copy of this statement for your records.

Participants will complete the survey between January 17, 2023 – February 14, 2023. You have two weeks left to participate in this study!

If you are interested in participating in the study, please review the informed consent and survey hyperlinked here. If you've completed the survey already, THANK YOU! Thank you in advance for your time.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Takiwi Milton-Babalola at tmilton@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Warmest regards,

Takiwi Milton-Babalola

Takiwi Milton-Babalola
Doctoral Candidate, Valdosta State University

Appendix K:

Third Follow-Up Email

Third Follow-Up Email

Subject: Last chance to share your expertise!

Greetings Superintendent,

This is the last chance to participation in a study about superintendents. Your expertise is extremely valuable in learning more about superintendent retention, commitment, and grit. You are being asked to participate in a survey research project entitled "Superintendents in the South: An Examination of Grit, Commitment, and Retention" which is being conducted by Takiwi Milton-Babalola a doctoral candidate at Valdosta State University. The purpose of this research is to explore relationships between self-reported attributes of grit, organizational commitment, and retention of superintendents in southern states and examine how perseverance, passion, affective commitment, normative commitment, continuance commitment, and district description predict retention among superintendents in southern states.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Valdosta State University. Furthermore, this research study is focused on public school superintendents in South Region States (i.e., Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas) active during the 2022-23 school year.

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about factors related to superintendent retention. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The brief survey brief survey involving grit, organizational commitment, and retention is anonymous. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. Participants must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your completion of the survey serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 or older. You may print a copy of this statement for your records.
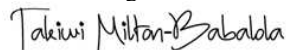
Participants will complete the survey between January 17, 2023 – February 14, 2023. You have one week left to participate in this study!

If you are interested in participating in the study, please review the informed consent and survey hyperlinked here. If you've completed the survey already, THANK YOU! Thank you in advance for your time.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Takiwi Milton-Babalola at tmilton@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Warmest regards,

Takiwi Milton-Babalola
Takiwi Milton-Babalola
Doctoral Candidate, Valdosta State University

Appendix L:

Instrument Permissions

Instrument Permissions

Grit-S: From Angela Duckworth's website at www.angeladuckworth.com/research/

Angela Duckworth
THE BOOK   FAQ   RESEARCH   ABOUT   CHARACTER LAB

Research

My research focuses on two traits that predict achievement: grit and self-control. Grit is the tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). Self-control is the voluntary regulation of impulses in the presence of momentarily gratifying temptations (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Duckworth & Steinberg, 2015). On average, individuals who are gritty are more self-controlled, but the correlation between these two traits is not perfect: Some individuals are paragons of grit but not self-control, and some exceptionally well-regulated individuals are not especially gritty (Duckworth & Gross, 2014).

Measures

Researchers and educators are welcome to use the scales I have developed for non-commercial purposes.

On a cautionary note, these scales were originally designed to assess individual differences rather than subtle within-individual changes in behavior over time. Thus, it's uncertain whether they are valid indicators of pre- to post-change as a consequence of interventions. I also discourage the use of these scales in high-stakes settings where faking is a concern (e.g., admissions or hiring decisions). Please see the article Measurement Matters for more information.

If you are interested in grit in particular, I encourage you to use the 12-item Grit Scale since the 8-item questionnaire omits items that, in my current view, are important in underscoring goal pursuit over extended time frames.

These scales are copyrighted. They cannot be published or used for commercial purposes or wide public distribution. Therefore, journalists and book authors should not reproduce these scales nor any part of them.

Grit	Other
12-Item Grit Scale	Measures from Gates College Persistence Study
8-Item Grit Scale	Self-Control Scale (For Children)
Biodata Grit Activities Grid	

Three Component Model (TCM) Employee of Commitment
From TCM Employee Commitment Survey Academic Users Guide: Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (2004). TCM employee commitment survey academic users guide 2004. London, Ontario, Canada: The University of Western Ontario, Department of Psychology

TCM Employee Commitment Survey
Academic Users Guide

Based on the Three-Component Model (TCM) of commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991; 1997), the *TCM Employee Commitment Survey* measures three forms of employee commitment to an organization: desire-based (affective commitment), obligation-based (normative commitment) and cost-based (continuance commitment). The survey includes three well-validated scales, the Affective Commitment Scale (ACS), the Normative Commitment Scale (NCS) and the Continuance Commitment Scale (CCS). Each is scored separately and can be used to identify the "commitment profile" of employees within an organization.

This academic version of the TCM Employee Commitment Survey was prepared for those who intend to use the commitment scales for academic research purposes. Original and revised versions of the scales are provided in Appendix A. This guide provides background information on the development of the commitment scales and addresses general issues pertaining to their use. Appendix B provides a list of references that you can consult for more information.