

Reimagining Teaching Confidence: Administrative Support and Teacher Self-Efficacy in a Remote Learning Context

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Abstract

During the spring of 2020, a South Georgia school implemented distance learning due to COVID-19, with little administrative support for the teachers for online instruction. This quick transition may have impacted teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching online. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs, while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was rooted in Bandura's self-efficacy theory and Venkatesh's Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology. The research questions investigated how administrative support and experience with technology may have impacted teachers' personal self-efficacy beliefs in teaching remotely during the pandemic. Interviews of eleven middle school teachers, who worked in a rural Georgia school, were transcribed and analyzed. Analysis revealed significant themes regarding teacher relationship with technology, lack of student involvement, student accessibility to technology, administrative communication, administrative expectations, and perceptions of administrative efficacy as significant factors impacting the teaching self-efficacy of respondents. A white paper report was developed to present recommendations for addressing the issues. Implications for positive social change include a better understanding of how administrators and district responses to crises impact teacher self-efficacy and the development of an emergency closure plan, including guidelines on supporting teachers as they continue classes remotely.

Keywords: Teaching Confidence, Administrative Support, Teacher Self-Efficacy

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Introduction

In July 2020, the Georgia State government issued a statement addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, granting the State Superintendent authority to suspend all state accountability measures (Georgia Department of Education, 2020). Local districts were permitted to use the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) for teacher evaluations during the pandemic, utilizing results as necessary (PAGE, 2020). TKES, a state-wide evaluation program, assesses teacher effectiveness based on three components: teacher assessments (50%), student growth (30%), and professional development (20%) (GADOE.org). While this system continued to evaluate teachers, many needed more training in remote teaching. Despite school closures, the Georgia Department of Education maintained these evaluations to monitor teacher effectiveness in remote learning.

Minutes from an April 2020 middle school meeting revealed educators' frustrations with teaching challenges during closures. Concerns included internet inequity, inadequate support for special needs students, and unclear expectations for student evaluations. Limited district resources forced students without internet access to rely on work packets without teacher guidance (Grade Level Departmental Meeting, 2020). Such inequities disproportionately impacted "at-risk" students, widening the achievement gap by requiring family support instead of teacher instruction (Goudeau et al., 2021). Teacher confidence, strongly tied to student outcomes, likely declined during remote teaching, potentially affecting their perceived ability to influence student achievement (Poulou et al., 2019).

Problem

This study addressed the problem of middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs during the COVID-19 pandemic. At a South Georgia school, distance learning was implemented with minimal administrative support, which may have affected teachers' confidence in their ability to teach online. The study investigated teachers' recollections of their self-efficacy for online teaching during the pandemic to identify factors that influenced their confidence.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for education. Many transitioned to remote learning as schools closed nationwide by April 2020 to mitigate infection. This sudden shift revealed significant challenges, with teachers expected to conduct online classes despite limited preparation or guidance on engaging students virtually (Martin et al., 2022; Webb et al., 2021). While necessary for public health, school closures may have long-lasting effects on teaching and learning (Wyse et al., 2020).

Teacher self-efficacy refers to educators' belief in their ability to influence student achievement positively (Lazarides et al., 2021). Bandura (1977) identified observation, mastery, positive reinforcement, and physiological responses as critical to developing self-efficacy. Lack of professional development and support for online teaching likely affected teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Negative influences on self-efficacy, such as inadequate administrative support, parental pressures, and teacher anxiety, exacerbated the stress of rapid transitions to remote instruction (Pressley, 2002). These challenges may have diminished teachers' confidence and, in turn, negatively impacted student achievement (Prewett & Whitney, 2021). Understanding how administrative support influenced teachers' self-efficacy during the pandemic can provide insights for improving future distance learning strategies and supporting educators in similar situations.

Purpose

This basic qualitative study aimed to explore middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Initial projections on school closures due to the pandemic indicated a significant negative impact on schools and students (Azevedo et al., 2021). The crisis may have left some educators feeling unconfident in relying solely on technology to instruct students.

While substantial research exists on how COVID-19 has influenced the integration of online learning environments in schools, little has focused on its effect on teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about remote teaching. A survey conducted by Martinez and Broemmel (2020) revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively

impacted teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Many survey participants noted that limited student-teacher connections and an inability to fully support students significantly affected their self-efficacy, which, in turn, impacted their motivation (Martinez & Broemmel, 2020).

The impact of school closures on teacher self-efficacy is an essential area of study, as teacher self-efficacy is a critical factor in student achievement (Presley & Ha, 2021). Understanding these effects could provide valuable insights into supporting teachers in future remote teaching scenarios.

Theory and Frame of Reference

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to achieve specific outcomes, shaped by experiences, verbal affirmations, and external factors. It is rooted in social cognitive theory, as both external and internal influences significantly impact an individual's self-efficacy beliefs (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). The connection between self-efficacy theory and social cognitive theory highlights how environmental factors and personal beliefs shape human behavior (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura, behaviors can be influenced by arranging environmental factors, setting goals, and evaluating purposes. He emphasized that observational, social, and symbolic learning play a more critical role in shaping behaviors than rewards or consequences (Bandura, 1977)—positive assurances, mastery of experiences, and observing others' successes foster self-efficacy and solid beliefs.

Gibson and Dembo (1984) initially identified teacher self-efficacy, which builds on earlier studies of self-efficacy. They defined teacher self-efficacy as a teacher's personal belief in their ability to help students achieve academically. Like Bandura's theory, teacher self-efficacy develops through prior experiences and successes. Woo et al. (2019) emphasized that observing other teachers' successful practices and seeking support are vital in building teacher self-efficacy, significantly enhancing teaching and learning environments.

This study utilized the theory of teacher self-efficacy to explore factors impacting educators during school closures. Bandura (1977) and Gibson and Dembo (1984) asserted that experience, environment, and observation of success drive educators' confidence and belief in their ability to help students succeed. These elements were considered while investigating how educators' self-efficacy beliefs were affected by teaching remotely during pandemic-related school closures.

Literature Review and Synthesis of the Literature

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

To understand how teachers' self-efficacy in teaching remotely was impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial to examine their efficacy in utilizing technology for teaching. Many theories explain individual technology acceptance, varying by user type, location, and context (Altalhi, 2021). The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), developed by Venkatesh (2003), investigates how attitudes and behaviors influence technology adoption. Rooted in social cognitive theory, the theory of planned behavior, and Bandura's self-efficacy theory, UTAUT integrates eight behavioral models to predict technology acceptance with up to 70% accuracy in user intentions (Mokhtar & Karim, 2021). Though initially applied to e-commerce, UTAUT has been adapted for education. It explores how teacher attitudes influence the adoption of learning technologies and their self-efficacy for remote teaching during the pandemic.

The shift to online learning during COVID-19 presented challenges and opportunities for technology use in education. Video conferencing tools like Google Meet, Zoom, and Skype became essential for instruction (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021; Qiao et al., 2021). Studies applying UTAUT reveal that factors such as performance expectancy, motivation, and habit influenced the acceptance of video conferencing for teaching (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021). Similarly, Dindar et al. (2021) found that teachers with prior experience using learning management systems (LMS) reported higher self-efficacy in instructional strategies and classroom management than those with little experience. These findings highlight the connection between self-efficacy, prior experience, and the intentional use of technology for remote instruction.

Seminal Research in Teaching Self-Efficacy

The first studies on teaching self-efficacy emerged from the RAND studies in the 1970s, linking teacher behavior to student outcomes. Bandura (1977) further connected self-efficacy to expected outcomes,

emphasizing how observation, mastery, and affirmation develop confidence. Despite advances, Corry and Stella (2018) noted that many self-efficacy measurement tools must account for delivery methods, focusing instead on face-to-face instruction. This gap underscores the need for tools tailored to online environments. The authors advocate integrating technology and pedagogy in teacher training to enhance self-efficacy, as traditional methods may need to address the unique demands of online learning.

Factors Impacting Teacher Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Teaching self-efficacy reflects educators' confidence in their ability to teach effectively, shaped by factors like classroom environment, preparation, and support (Clark & Raker, 2021). Smothers et al. (2020) found that the rapid shift to online education exposed gaps in teacher preparation, particularly for inclusive classrooms. While some states reduced teacher certification requirements during the pandemic (Hill, 2020), this often left new teachers unprepared for remote instruction. These findings align with Bandura's assertion that self-efficacy develops through structured preparation and support. Without sufficient professional development, teachers' confidence and effectiveness in online settings may suffer (Smothers et al., 2020). Discrepancies in work demands and job satisfaction also influenced teacher self-efficacy during the pandemic. High workloads and low competency in using remote platforms negatively affected educators' confidence (Chou & Chou, 2021). Addressing these discrepancies is essential for improving instructional practices and fostering teacher well-being.

Teacher Experiences with Remote Teaching

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional teaching methods, forcing educators to adapt quickly to online instruction. Pflieger and Cunningham (2021) examined the role of self-control and emotional intelligence in shaping teacher self-efficacy during this crisis. Teachers with high crisis efficacy—flexibility and resilience during challenging situations—demonstrated greater confidence in their ability to teach remotely. Similarly, Scocini et al. (2021) found that teachers with solid digital competencies viewed the transition as an opportunity to innovate, while others struggled due to limited preparation and support.

Fackler et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of considering broad factors, including school environment, leadership, and personal beliefs, when evaluating teacher self-efficacy. This aligns with findings from Ladendorf et al. (2021), who reported that teachers' satisfaction with remote teaching depended on their content knowledge and support systems. Professional development tailored to online instruction is essential for building teacher self-efficacy, particularly in times of crisis (Dolighan & Owen, 2021).

Professional Development and School Preparedness

Professional development plays a pivotal role in enhancing teacher self-efficacy. Baez-Hernandez (2019) noted that quality training in lesson planning and technology integration improves teacher confidence and instructional performance. However, the pandemic highlighted gaps in preparedness, with many educators needing more training in remote teaching methods (Haverback, 2020). Research shows that professional development in blended learning and digital competency can significantly boost self-efficacy, mainly when teachers can practice and master new technologies before implementation (Cooper et al., 2020).

School preparedness for crises is critical for maintaining instructional continuity. However, studies reveal significant areas for improvement in this area. Gerber (2020) found that 85% of sampled school districts lacked plans for remote teaching during closures. Infrastructure limitations, inequitable access to technology, and inadequate administrative support further exacerbated challenges (Hodges et al., 2020; Gross & Opalka, 2020). Teachers reported frustration with unrealistic expectations to deliver engaging lessons using unfamiliar platforms without sufficient training or resources (Caglayan, 2020).

Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs in Using Technology

Teacher self-efficacy in technology integration significantly influences classroom implementation. Kwon et al. (2019) highlighted how personal beliefs, environmental factors, and professional development impact teachers' confidence in using technology. Despite increased access to technology in schools, many educators need more training to integrate it effectively (Cooper et al., 2020). Hartman et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of infrastructure, technical support, and teacher perceptions in shaping technology use.

Professional development programs incorporating elements of self-efficacy theory, such as mastery experiences and vicarious learning, are essential for fostering confidence in technology use (Barton & Dexter, 2019). These findings are particularly relevant for understanding how limited preparation during the pandemic affected teachers' ability to teach remotely.

Implications for Learning Outcomes

The pandemic widened existing learning gaps, particularly among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Ogodo et al., 2021). Limited access to digital resources and inequities in instructional delivery disproportionately affected vulnerable populations. Anderson (2020) linked these issues to Moore's (1993) theory of transactional distance, which emphasizes the importance of interaction in distance learning. The lack of teacher-student engagement in some communities likely contributed to learning loss and impacted teacher self-efficacy.

Teachers' acknowledgment of these inequities further influenced their confidence as they struggled to provide equitable learning opportunities. Addressing these challenges requires investments in infrastructure, professional development, and equitable access to technology.

Implications for Future Practice

Understanding how administrative support influenced teacher self-efficacy during the pandemic can inform strategies for improving remote instruction. This study's insights highlight the importance of collaboration between administrators and teachers to address instructional challenges. Professional development workshops focused on technology integration and crisis management can help educators build confidence and resilience, ensuring they are better prepared for future disruptions.

Conclusion

This literature review explored teacher acceptance of technology, factors impacting self-efficacy beliefs, and experiences during remote teaching. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for improved teacher training, administrative support, and infrastructure to support online learning. By addressing these areas, educators can enhance their self-efficacy, ultimately improving instructional quality and student outcomes. Further research is needed to fully understand the long-term implications of the pandemic on teacher self-efficacy and learning equity.

Methodology

Participants

This section outlines the study's research method, including the research design, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, assumptions, limitations, scope and delimitations, and ethical considerations. Additionally, the methodology discusses research findings and the overall study objectives.

Data for the study was collected through semistructured interviews with middle school teachers who provided instruction during pandemic-related school closures. Open-ended questions allowed participants to share their experiences and perspectives while reflecting on teaching remotely. The central focus was the development of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs during remote teaching and the role administrative support played in shaping these beliefs.

The research questions guiding this study were:

- **RQ1:** What are middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- **RQ2:** How do middle school teachers perceive how administrative support affected their self-efficacy beliefs during the COVID-19 pandemic?

An **interview protocol** was developed to maintain consistency and focus during the interviews. The protocol was field-tested by three Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to ensure validity. The SMEs were selected based on their expertise in education, specifically in curriculum and technology. Each SME met the following criteria: over ten years of experience as an educator, completed scholarly research in education, and currently held a supervisory role in a school or district.

To field-test the protocol, the SMEs received a copy of the research protocol and a study description for review. Their feedback and correspondence are included in Appendix C. The SMEs provided critical suggestions, such as reordering questions for clarity, adding questions on accountability measures, and addressing district support

for families without technology. These recommendations were incorporated into the interview protocol to ensure alignment, clarity, and relevance.

Instrumentation

To ensure a robust interview process, three Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) developed and field-tested an interview protocol. A formal letter was sent to the SMEs requesting their assistance validating the interview questions. The SMEs were selected based on their extensive qualifications: over ten years of experience in education technology and curriculum, expertise in providing professional development for technology integration, and experience conducting formative assessments for teachers. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), interviews should optimize engagement, with questions designed to elicit participants' experiences and perceptions. The interviews in this study focused on teachers' experiences teaching remotely during pandemic-induced school closures and their subsequent perceptions of remote teaching. The interview protocol (Figure 1) is shown below:

Figure 1, Interview protocol

Name of interviewer: _____
Interview Date: _____ Interview Location: _____
Interview Start Time: _____ Interview Stop Time: _____
Interviewee's Name _____ Years with District _____ Grade
level(s) _____ Content Area(s) _____

RQ1: What are middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Describe how technology was used in your classroom before the pandemic? How effectively do you think your work in utilizing this technology??
- How effective did you believe your teaching with technology was during the pandemic? Give examples.
- What challenges have you faced when using technology during remote learning?
- Describe how you implemented technology in the classroom during the pandemic. Do you think these implementations were effective in helping your students? What did you like/dislike?
- How has the experience of teaching remotely during the pandemic impacted you as a teacher? Did you believe you were effective? How has your effectiveness of a teacher changed since this experience?

RQ2: How has administrative support impacted teacher self-efficacy in remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Describe the expectations your administrators had for you as a teacher using remote teaching...How were these expectations communicated? How did this communication impact your self-efficacy?
- What resources and tools did your administrators provide to assist you with remote learning? Did these tools and reported your teaching self-efficacy positively or negatively?
- Explain how your administrators assisted you when facing challenges while teaching remotely. Do you believe this assistance impacted your effectiveness in teaching? Why or Why not?
- Overall, how supportive do you feel your administrative team was in your implementation of remote learning?
- How did this support impact your perceived effectiveness in teaching remotely

AFTER the Interview

Thank you for allowing me to interview you. You will be contacted via email or phone if I need to do a follow-up interview. Do you have any questions or concerns?

Interviews were conducted via Zoom and recorded for transcription. Field notes and recorded interviews provided rich data for later analysis (Creswell, 2013). Confidentiality was prioritized by ensuring interviews took place in secure, private locations, such as locked offices or classrooms. Only one participant was interviewed at a time, and screen recording and other video-conferencing functions were turned off to prevent breaches of confidentiality. Participants were informed of privacy policies and their rights in a signed consent form.

During the interviews, observations of participants' verbal and non-verbal cues were carefully documented to capture a comprehensive understanding of their perceptions. The interview data were transcribed using Turboscribe and analyzed for themes with NVivo 14. Follow-up correspondence was conducted to clarify any ambiguities during transcription and coding. The member-checking process ensured the validity of interpretations (Burkholder et al., 2020).

Ethical Considerations

Protecting participants' identities and rights is a top priority in any research. To ensure compliance with ethical standards, this study underwent review by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to identify and address any potential violations of ethical research practices in educational studies. One possible issue was obtaining consent to conduct interviews while maintaining participant anonymity. To mitigate this, consent forms were provided to all participants before the interviews, and each participant was assigned a pseudonym. Once consent forms were signed and submitted, participants were coded for anonymity, such as "P1" for Participant 1, and so on.

All identifying information was printed and securely stored in a physical file at my home. According to Walden University's IRB policy, all research data will be retained for five years. No digital copies of this information will be stored on my computer to ensure data security.

Additionally, I completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) certification program to ensure adherence to research ethics and compliance standards. Before the study commenced, the IRB reviewed my methodology and data analysis plan for any potential ethics violations, and no violations were identified. This rigorous process ensured the integrity and ethical compliance of the research.

Assessment

Initial contact was made with the designated point of contact to obtain access to the research site. A recruitment flyer was distributed to all school staff, providing pertinent details about the study and potential participation risks. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to screen participants who had exclusively taught remotely at the designated school during pandemic-related closures. Purposive sampling was utilized to identify and recruit participants who met the criteria and aligned with the study's focus.

Before scheduling interviews, eligible participants signed a consent form acknowledging their rights as study participants. Before the interviews, I provided my contact information for any questions or concerns; however, participants have yet to reach me with additional inquiries. Interviews were scheduled based on participants' availability and conducted virtually via Zoom. During the interviews, I maintained field notes and reflective journals. Follow-up meetings were planned if clarification of any quotes or comments was required. After the study, each participant received a \$10 Starbucks gift card as a token of appreciation.

The interviews were transcribed using Turboscribe and coded with NVIVO14. The codes were organized into a spreadsheet for analysis, identifying axial codes, related themes, potential discrepancies, and connections to conceptual frameworks. Data collection and coding continued until no new themes emerged, ensuring data saturation. Triangulation was employed to verify trustworthiness by cross-checking overlapping language and themes among participants.

This chapter details the measures taken to ensure credibility, validity, and confirmability of the study's findings while adhering to ethical research standards. The findings of this study may provide valuable insights into the impact of administrative support during the COVID-19 pandemic on teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Additionally,

the results could offer administrators guidance on improving school preparedness for closures and effectively implementing distance learning strategies.

Results

First Cycle Coding

Clean transcripts were uploaded to NVivo 14 and coded to identify data relevant to the study's objectives and research questions. Transcripts were reviewed to highlight data addressing **RQ1**: *What are middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic?* **RQ2**: *How did school administrators impact these self-efficacy beliefs?* Concepts related to teacher-oriented experiences and administrative support were deciphered, helping to aggregate information across the research questions.

Codes were created to represent recurring ideas and concepts within the transcripts. Each theme was assigned a specific highlighter color, and relevant codes were categorized in NVivo 14 as texts were reviewed. By the end of this first coding cycle, **24 distinct codes** were developed, providing a foundation for further analysis.

Second Cycle Coding

The second cycle focused on identifying relationships within the data and organizing the codes into smaller, cohesive categories. This process, known as **axial coding** (Saldaña, 2021), connected the identified codes to reveal overarching themes. Six themes emerged, organized into seven subthemes using a matrix for clarity.

The themes for RQ1 centered on inadequacies in technology infrastructure and the socioeconomic disparities affecting equitable teaching. These themes illustrated the challenges teachers faced in effectively teaching all students remotely.

Themes for RQ2 highlighted perceptions of administrative support and its impact on teaching efficacy. Four key themes emerged: communication, expectations, perceptions of mutual trust, and provided support. Data for these themes were drawn from teachers' reflections on interactions with administrators, including meetings, emails, and other problem-solving exchanges.

Themes for Research Question 1

RQ1 focused on middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first three themes identified were:

Teacher Relationship with Technology

Teachers' perceptions of technology use before the pandemic shaped their effectiveness in remote teaching. Participants who regularly used technology in the classroom felt more comfortable transitioning to remote instruction. However, disparities in access to reliable technology and internet connectivity created significant barriers for teachers and students, ultimately impacting self-efficacy.

Lack of Student Involvement

Teachers reported a notable decline in student engagement and participation during remote learning. This disengagement and students' reluctance to complete assignments negatively affected teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness.

Student Accessibility to Technology

The inequity in access to technology and reliable internet, particularly for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, was a recurring theme. Teachers expressed frustration over their inability to address these disparities, undermining their teaching efforts and widening learning gaps.

Themes for Research Question 2

RQ2 examined how administrative support affected teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Four themes emerged:

Administrative Communication

While most teachers communicated regularly with administrators, the quality and effectiveness of these interactions varied. Some participants felt supported through consistent updates, while others described the communication as unclear or unsympathetic.

Administrative Expectations

Clear guidelines and expectations from administrators were crucial in helping teachers navigate remote teaching. However, inconsistent directives and unclear accountability measures for students led to frustration among teachers.

Perceptions of Administrative Efficacy

Teachers' trust in their administrators significantly influenced their perceptions of support. Micromanagement tactics were often viewed negatively, whereas active encouragement and guidance boosted teachers' confidence.

Provided Support from the Administration

Access to resources, professional development, and collaborative opportunities positively impacted teachers' self-efficacy. Teachers highlighted the importance of autonomy in choosing tools and felt more effective when administrators offered flexible support tailored to their needs.

This essential qualitative study explored middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and administrative support's role during the COVID-19 pandemic. Semistructured interviews with 11 middle school teachers were conducted via Zoom, transcribed using Turboscribe and coded for themes using NVivo 14. Member checking ensured the accuracy and validity of the findings.

The study revealed significant insights into the factors influencing teacher self-efficacy during emergency remote teaching. Themes such as technology access, student engagement, and administrative communication highlighted the challenges teachers faced and the critical role of administrative support in fostering confidence and effectiveness.

The findings underscore the need for school districts to prioritize emergency preparedness and support systems, ensuring smooth transitions to alternative learning modalities. The research yielded from this study provides actionable recommendations for school and district stakeholders to address these challenges, aiming to improve teacher efficacy and student outcomes in future emergencies.

Data Analysis

Exploring middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs regarding online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed themes shaped by various factors, including access to technology, student involvement, and teachers' relationships with technology. Teachers' confidence in navigating virtual classrooms was heavily influenced by disparities in technological resources, with digital infrastructure challenges significantly affecting instructional effectiveness. Furthermore, student engagement emerged as a critical factor, with teachers highlighting the difficulties in maintaining active participation and educational quality in a remote learning environment. Teachers' attitudes toward technology and their proficiency in its use also played a pivotal role in shaping their adaptability and effectiveness in online teaching.

Middle school teachers' perceptions of administrative support during the pandemic highlighted the complex interplay of factors affecting their self-efficacy beliefs. Effective administrative communication provided clarity and direction amidst uncertainty, providing a foundation for teacher confidence. The support provided to teachers in leveraging digital tools emphasized the importance of competency in integrating technology for remote instruction. Clear administrative expectations offered teachers a framework to navigate the challenges of remote

teaching, bolstering their confidence in adapting instructional practices. Adequate administrative support was critical in shaping teachers' self-efficacy and enabling them to meet the evolving demands of remote education. These insights underscore the significant impact of administrative support on teachers' self-efficacy during the pandemic, with broader implications for educational leadership and support strategies in times of crisis. These themes provide valuable perspectives for informing future educational practices and support mechanisms.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 11 middle school teachers who taught remotely during the pandemic at the designated site. These interviews were conducted via Zoom, transcribed using Turboscribe and coded for themes using NVIVO 14. Each participant's coded transcription was shared with them to verify the accuracy of the information through member checks.

The data collected in this study informed further research designed to guide the site's administrators and stakeholders on how administrative support influenced teachers' self-efficacy during emergency school closures. This study emphasizes that school and teacher emergency preparedness must be a top priority for school districts. Understanding how to prepare and assist teachers during crises effectively is essential to establishing future safeguards for seamless transitions between learning modalities. This research encourages school and district stakeholders to evaluate current emergency preparedness plans and implement new strategies to address the identified challenges, ensuring better support for teachers and students in similar future scenarios.

Discussion

Teacher self-efficacy beliefs are critical to study due to their profound implications for student outcomes and learning. This basic qualitative study explored middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs regarding online instruction and the influence of administrative support on these beliefs during remote teaching necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Guided by Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory and Venkatesh's (2003) Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, two research questions framed this study:

RQ1: What are middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ 2: How do middle school teachers perceive how administrative support affected their self-efficacy beliefs during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Teachers' self-efficacy is shaped by a complex interplay of personal factors, experiences, and external influences, including their beliefs about teaching, technology, administration, students, and the unique challenges posed by COVID-19. While this study begins to explore these dynamics, it represents only a starting point in understanding this multifaceted topic. It offers valuable insights into the conditions that shaped teachers' abilities to adapt and succeed during the pandemic. Although the pandemic's immediate impact has waned, the risk of future school closures underscores the importance of the lessons learned.

The study emphasizes how preparedness, communication, and equity influence teacher self-efficacy regardless of prior experience. Schools and districts can leverage the findings to address teachers' primary concerns through targeted recommendations presented in the white paper report.

This qualitative study employed semi-structured interviews, open coding, and thematic analysis to investigate teachers' self-efficacy beliefs during the pandemic. Significant findings emerged based on interviews with 11 middle school teachers at the local school site and a review of relevant scholarly literature. Teachers' self-efficacy was notably affected by student access to technology, their relationship with technology, and their interactions with administrators.

From these findings, five actionable recommendations were developed and detailed in a white paper report:

1. Ensure equitable access to technology for all students.

2. Provide diverse training opportunities for teachers on digital resources.
3. Establish clear accountability measures for student academic progress.
4. Engage administrators in digital leadership training.
5. Update emergency closure plans to include comprehensive distance learning procedures.

These recommendations have significant implications for the district and beyond. The study provides a local site with scholarly insights into the pandemic's effects on their teachers and schools, offering actionable solutions to address teachers' concerns. It also contributes to the broader discourse on the pandemic's impact on education, offering a perspective from a rural community in South Georgia.

Future research could include comparative studies examining factors such as content area or teaching experience and their influence on self-efficacy beliefs. Another avenue of inquiry could explore administrators' self-efficacy during the pandemic, enabling a cross-comparison of teacher and administrator experiences and perceptions during this unprecedented time.

Limitations

While another pandemic forcing school closures is unlikely, ongoing professional development in learning management systems (LMS) and digital resources remains critical. Such training can positively impact teachers' self-efficacy regarding technology use in distance learning. Moreover, distance learning is not exclusive to emergencies—it can also be leveraged for homework assignments, extended student absences, and course recovery. The recommendations outlined in this research aim to enhance technology use for teaching and learning while guiding the district toward equitable technological outcomes.

Eleven middle school teachers from the study site participated in semi-structured interviews guided by an interview protocol vetted by three subject matter experts. The responses were analyzed to identify themes related to the research problem. These themes and an in-depth review of relevant literature informed recommendations to address the issues identified.

This study investigated factors that influenced teachers' self-efficacy beliefs during remote teaching. The emerging themes provided actionable insights for improving teacher confidence and effectiveness in distance learning. The five recommendations are as follows:

Providing Students with Technology Access: Ensuring all students have access to technology at home creates equity in learning opportunities and supports instructional continuity.

Training Teachers for Engaging Remote Instruction: Equipping teachers with strategies to deliver engaging and meaningful lessons, both in the classroom and remotely, ensures quality instruction across modalities.

Building Teacher Confidence in LMS and Digital Resources: Offering targeted training on LMS and other digital tools empowers teachers to integrate technology into their instruction confidently.

Administrative Training in Digital Leadership: Supporting principals and assistant principals with digital leadership training enables them to model innovative technology use and effectively support their staff.

Emergency School Closure Planning: Developing comprehensive plans for prolonged emergency school closures, including clear expectations for teachers and families, ensures preparedness and minimizes disruptions to learning.

The initial purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs regarding online instruction and the role of administrative support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data revealed that teachers' student engagement, inequitable access to technology, and inconsistent administrative communication and expectations significantly affected teachers' beliefs. While many participants had prior experience using technology in the classroom, the district's lack of preparedness for a sudden shift to remote

learning exacerbated challenges. Teachers reported that limited administrative guidance and disparities in students' access to technology made it difficult to navigate the transition effectively.

Teacher self-efficacy is shaped by practice, training, successes, and positive reinforcement; however, external stressors can negatively impact it. Addressing these stressors through preparedness—such as training and proactive planning—can mitigate adverse effects and improve teacher confidence (Bandura, 1997). The study's recommendations address these factors, emphasizing preparedness through professional development for teachers and administrators.

One challenge faced during the study was participant recruitment. Using a mediator for recruitment and offering financial incentives for participants helped mitigate this issue (Patel et al., 2003). However, scheduling interviews proved difficult due to participants' busy schedules, particularly during school breaks when teachers often do not check work emails. These factors led to delays in data collection. Future studies could expand the scope to include other regional or state schools for comparative analysis.

Another potential avenue for further research is to examine teachers who are also parents, investigating how their dual roles impacted their ability to navigate digital learning at home and their organizational strategies (Kristen & Ravn, 2015). This approach would provide additional insights into the multifaceted challenges faced by educators during remote teaching scenarios.

Conclusion

My exploration of teacher self-efficacy, particularly in remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighted the critical role of educators' confidence in shaping their effectiveness and resilience. The study emphasized the importance of administrative support and resource access in strengthening teachers' self-efficacy. This experience has demonstrated that when teachers feel capable and supported, their confidence positively impacts their ability to engage students and deliver effective instruction. Similarly, students' success is closely tied to their educators' belief in their abilities. Creating a supportive, resource-rich environment for teachers is vital for their professional growth and essential for fostering student achievement and overall well-being. This interconnected relationship underscores the need for targeted strategies that empower educators and, by extension, benefit the students they serve.

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