Factors and Initiatives in Community College Student Attrition: A Qualitative Analysis

Kevin Craner

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Kevin Craner

Approved by:

Dissertation Chair: Richard Herring, Ph.D.

Committee Member: Katia Chamberlain, Ed.D.

Abstract

Community college student attrition has continued to be a problem for multiple stakeholders in the higher education system. Past research on community college student attrition focused on quantitative data or qualitative analysis from the student perspective. This study helped fill the gap by analyzing faculty perspectives on student attrition. Faculty perspectives on community college student attrition were examined through the lenses of servant leadership and Maslow's theory. The theoretical framework views student attrition as due to unmet student needs, aligning with the research discussed in the review of the literature. The purpose of the study was to explore new insight into the reasons behind student attrition and initiatives taken to reduce student attrition. The research involved interviewing 16 part- and full-time faculty at a community college in Pennsylvania in semistructured 30-minute recorded interviews. Data were recorded on the Voice Recorder android application, anonymously labeled, transcribed, and saved to Notepad on a Windows 10 PC, and coded and analyzed using Qualitative Data Analysis Miner Lite. Emerging themes were presented with the intention of providing insight to various community college stakeholders who would benefit from a reduction in student attrition. Key factors in attrition emerged including financial challenges, familial challenges, and support. Initiatives to address student attrition were found to be poorly planned and terminated too early.

Keywords: community college, student attrition, faculty perspectives, attrition factors, attrition initiatives

Dedication

The dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Catherine Randall, who always supported me and pushed me to accomplish and achieve. She has been an unwavering support throughout my educational journey, providing guidance as I navigated each step of the process. Her guidance through education and through life made this possible. Catherine has dedicated her career to helping community college students succeed and overcome the barriers and challenges they face every day in pursuing their dreams.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Community college student attrition has presented an ongoing problem throughout the United States. Extensive prior research and application have helped, but the problem continues to be a concern for administrators (Juszkiewicz, 2017; Snyder & Cudney, 2017). The problem has persisted across the nation and globe (Juszkiewicz, 2017). In the United States, community colleges have seen 39% of students achieve a credential within 3 years and 55% within 6 years (Juszkiewicz, 2017). Further study has had potential to improve understanding of why community college student attrition occurs and what initiatives could be taken to better address the issue. Ultimately, a reduction in student attrition could benefit students, institutions, communities, and other stakeholders. Benefits have been limited to a reduction in student attrition, as eliminating student attrition completely would not make logical sense because there will continue to be unavoidable circumstances resulting in some student attrition (Juszkiewicz, 2017). The problem, background, and purpose of the study are further explored herein. A brief overview of research questions, the theoretical framework through which these questions were developed, and definitions of terms used ensues. The assumptions, scope, and limitations of the study are presented.

Background of the Problem

Attrition rates have been repeatedly demonstrated as a focus of concern for community college administrators (Juszkiewicz, 2017; Snyder & Cudney, 2017). A reduction of student attrition has been correlated with a reduction of expenses related to enrolling new students and a loss of revenue from existing students leaving (Nicholson, 2016). The ongoing pressure for cost savings and efficiency has made the problem a factor for college administrators.

Several initiatives are helpful in reducing student attrition. Faculty advising practice reform has shown promising results (Harrell & Reglin, 2018). Changing how students are placed in courses following admission has led to a reduction in attrition rates (Bahr et al., 2019). Robichaud (2016) demonstrated the positive impact online orientation programs had on reducing student attrition rates.

In addition to the current research, there has been a persistent call for additional research to better understand reasons for student attrition and initiatives to address the problem (Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016). A gap in research of faculty perspectives on student attrition was found. Examination of faculty perspectives on student attrition was conducted to begin to fill the gap in the research and to better understand the reasons student attrition takes place.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is a 39% attrition rate exists at a community college in Pennsylvania. The extent of the problem has persisted nationwide, wherein 39% of community college students achieved a credential within 3 years (Juszkiewicz, 2017). There have been many studied causes for and initiatives attempted to address student attrition (Bahr et al., 2019; Community College Research Center [CCRC], 2015; Harrell & Reglin, 2018; Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016). More has been revealed about reasons for student attrition and how to best reduce student attrition through further study. Deeper understanding was achieved through qualitative study of faculty perspectives on student attrition. Little research was previously conducted to understand the faculty perspective of student attrition.

Addressing the problem is of paramount importance to all college stakeholders, as student attrition represents a significant waste of time, money, and resources (Nicholason, 2016). Ultimately, serving students to achieve a better life through education is one goal of community

colleges (Snyder & Cudney, 2017). Serving students required further evaluation of reasons for and ways to reduce attrition.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore faculty members' lived experiences pertaining to student attrition at a community college in Pennsylvania. Qualitative methodology often uses open-ended questioning in an interview format to explore additional information and insight (Ivey, 2019; Qutoshi, 2018; Yin, 2016). Analyzing these faculty member experiences and perspectives provided additional insight into the reasons behind student attrition and how initiatives could be used to reduce student attrition.

The study involved interviewing 16 faculty members of the community college in Pennsylvania for 30 minutes each. Eight were full-time faculty members, and eight were part-time faculty members. Nonprobability purposive sampling was used. According to Yin (2016), purposive sampling involves collecting data from a source most relevant to the purpose of the study. The design for the study was phenomenology, studying the phenomenon of student attrition through the perspective of the faculty members. Phenomenology uses open-ended questions to discover additional data regarding thoughts and behavior of participants related to the phenomenon (Ivey, 2019).

Participants were selected through email contact inviting participation in the study. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were determined based on employee records as reported by participants. Of the invited part- and full-time faculty members, 16 were selected to participate in the study. Participants were selected using nonprobability purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is not probability sampling; instead, purposive sampling focuses on selecting participants best able to inform the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data were collected using the Android application Voice Recorder running in the background while the password-protected Zoom video interview took place, and participant interviews were stored anonymized on a password-protected Samsung Galaxy S10E. Interviews were saved in .mp3 file format and labeled only with date and time information. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended anonymizing data as a security measure. Data were transcribed and saved on a password-protected Windows 10 PC and saved individually in .docx file format. Data underwent further analysis using Windows application Qualitative Data Analysis Miner Lite. Data were then analyzed to determine presenting themes. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend coding phenomenological study data in a tree diagram format (see Figure 1). Presenting themes are detailed in the findings section of the research, along with reflection and implications related to addressing the student attrition problem.

Figure 1

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid
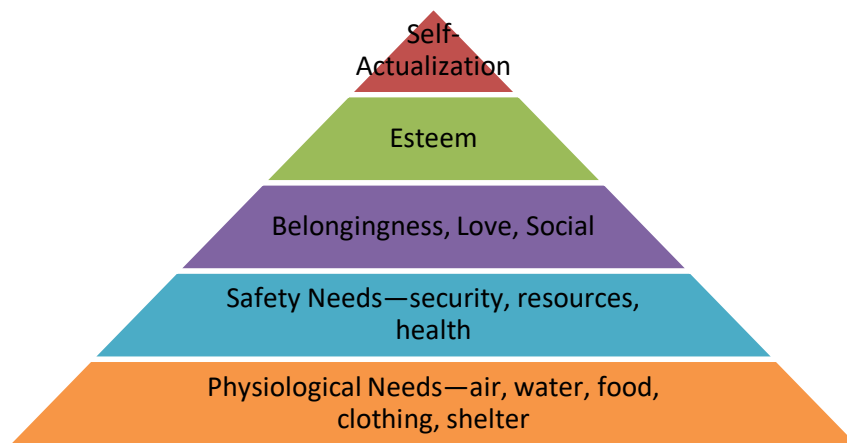
Note. Adapted from "Who Built Maslow's Pyramid" by T. Bridgman, 2019, *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *18*(1), p. 87. Copyright 1960 by Charles McDermid.

Significance of the Study

The study advanced knowledge and understanding regarding reasons for community college student attrition. The study revealed additional insight into what initiatives could be taken to reduce student attrition. Reducing student attrition has had a tremendous positive domino effect impacting multiple stakeholders (Snyder & Cudney, 2017). The beneficiaries of the research may include stakeholders such as community colleges, community college administrators, community college students, college students' families, and society.

The research provided actionable information regarding how institutional initiatives, policies, professional development, and other changes in approach could potentially reduce student attrition. Faculty perspectives on student attrition were a gap in previous research with limited study. The research helped fill the gap and provide information, potentially leading to positive change in reducing student attrition.

Research Questions

The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore faculty members' lived experiences surrounding community college student attrition. Faculty members' experiences were helpful in providing additional data and insight regarding why student attrition occurs. Faculty members provided feedback into initiatives helpful in addressing student attrition. Compelling and carefully crafted questions are crucial to qualitative research (Cristancho et al., 2018), and the following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: What are the lived experiences of faculty members pertaining to student attrition?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of faculty members on initiatives used to reduce student attrition?

Conceptual Framework

Servant leadership conceptualized the idea of seeking first to serve others before one's own needs (Greenleaf, 1970). The servant leadership concept was applied to higher education to improve student satisfaction (Sahawneh & Benuto, 2018). Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory has been interwoven with servant leadership throughout the study and literature review. Maslow's theory stated people are motivated to satisfy needs in order from basic to self-actualization along a continuum; as each need is fulfilled, the individual is motivated to achieve higher-level fulfillment of needs (Bridgman et al., 2019).

The concepts of servant leadership and Maslow's theory grounded the phenomenological study. Reducing the student attrition rate was viewed through the lens of seeking first to serve students, thereby allowing students to attend to higher level needs such as educational needs. Throughout the reviewed literature, initiatives to address student attrition centered around serving students and meeting student needs (Bahr et al., 2019; CCRC, 2015; Harrell & Reglin, 2018; Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016). The research centered on meeting student needs and serving students to prevent attrition by gathering faculty members' perceptions and analyzing the findings.

Definitions of Terms

Community College Student Attrition. Community college student attrition is defined as community college students not achieving a credential within 3 years of enrollment (Juszkiewicz, 2017).

Initiatives. Initiatives are actions taken by institutions to target reducing student attrition (Harrell & Reglin, 2018; McClure, 2017).

Maslow's Theory. Maslow's theory states people are motivated to fulfill needs in order from most basic to highest level, the highest-level need being self-actualization (Bridgman et al., 2019).

Phenomenology. Phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology which uses open-ended questions to uncover additional details or insight regarding the thoughts and behavior of participants experiencing or witnessing the studied phenomenon (Ivey, 2019).

Qualitative. Qualitative methodology often uses open-ended questioning or other practices to uncover additional in-depth information and insight (Ivey, 2019; Qutoshi, 2018; Yin, 2016).

Servant Leadership. Servant leadership requires leaders to put the needs of others before or above their own (Norris et al., 2017).

Assumptions

Presenting assumptions helps reduce potential bias concerns from the reader's perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Assumptions allow the reader to understand the entire research study and be prepared to comprehend the information (Korrapati, 2016). Participants were assumed to give honest answers to questions in the interview process. Interview responses were assumed not to be altered due to the interviewer's persona or presence, to appease the institution, or to further personal bias.

Another primary assumption of the study was the participants were selected and included appropriately and have witnessed similar characteristics of the student attrition phenomenon. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were outlined further in the methodology section. Participants were assumed to have a sincere desire to participate and were not participating simply for the modest reward for participating in the study.

Additional assumptions included objectivity of the study participants and researcher throughout the process. The objectivity concept extended to the researcher's role as an adjunct faculty member and the adjunct faculty member's own perspectives on student attrition from teaching at the community college level. The assumption was study participant responses were not disproportionately based on one extreme experience severely impacting participants' perspectives. In addition, participants' understanding of definitions of the key terms used was assumed. These assumptions were necessary to allow the research to continue to move forward (Korrapati, 2016). Assumptions were important to clarify what was unable to be proven but needed to be assumed for the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Scope and Delimitations

According to Yin (2016), the scope of a study relies heavily on timeframe and resources. Scope includes characteristics controlled by the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Scope played a role in the impact the study can have being transferable. Delimitations involved decisions the researcher made pertaining to questions, format, sampling, and other characteristics of the study (Korrapati, 2016).

Boundaries of the study included limiting perspectives to part- and full-time faculty at a community college in Pennsylvania. Scope was limited to the student attrition phenomenon occurring at this institution. Participants came from a variety of departments in the institution and were selected based on nonprobability purposive sampling methods. Interviews were conducted once for each participant. Research questions guided the interview process and were uniform. Interviews were in open-ended question format allowing the discussion to progress and provide additional insight. Delimitations involved researcher decision making regarding what to include and exclude in the study design (Korrapati, 2016). The focus of the study was on student

attrition at a community college in Pennsylvania. The research comprised the lived experiences

of faculty members witnessing student attrition. Data were gathered using semistructured 30-

minute Zoom video interviews, which were audio recorded using a separate Android application

Voice Recorder, transcribed, coded, and analyzed to present results.

Findings of the study could be transferable to other community college settings and

provided additional insight into what can be done to better address student attrition. The

population was chosen over other populations to home in on reasons for attrition at the

community college level, rather than higher education more broadly. Korrapati (2016) posited

the researcher chooses delimitation by rejecting or excluding other potential areas of study. The

information could be used by college administrators, the government, and community

stakeholders. Practical application based on the ideas of the research could be used in many

different community college settings.

Limitations

The credibility of the study followed a standard phenomenological, qualitative format of

open-ended interviewing to study perspectives based on participant responses. Yin (2016)

expressed the importance of including limitations alongside the conceptual framework of a

study. Korrapati (2016) defined limitations as factors out of the researcher's control presenting

potential weaknesses of the study.

One limitation of credibility was the assumption of honest responses from study

participants. Personal bias due to a participant's background and cumulative experiences could

have contributed to dishonest answers (Yin, 2016). The number of participants in the study was

limited to 16, due to the qualitative methodology and limited resources. Creswell and Poth

(2018) posited a sample size of 5–25 participants consisting of those individuals who have

experienced the phenomenon is appropriate for qualitative study. Additional participants may have led to more credible findings. Findings could be transferable to a similar setting at another community college but were limited in other factors playing a role in significant variance, including the geographic region, demographics of the student population, and program offerings.

The research process was open to scrutiny and dependable, but limitations did exist in the translation of coding data and presenting results, wherein researcher bias could have had an impact. The outcomes of the study were confirmable based on the research process presented and each step detailed. Creswell and Poth (2018) posited objective data are not contaminated by factors including personal bias, political goals, or judgment. A limitation persisted in researcher bias, particularly in the presentation of coded data, wherein decisions were made beyond the uniformity of the rest of the research process.

Chapter Summary

Community college student attrition has continued to be a nationwide problem (Juszkiewicz, 2017; Snyder & Cudney, 2017). The extent of the problem at a community college in Pennsylvania was a 39% attrition rate. A great deal of research has been conducted to understand reasons for student attrition and how initiatives can reduce student attrition (Bahr et al., 2019; CCRC, 2015; Harrell & Reglin, 2018; Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016).

There existed a gap in the literature regarding faculty perspectives of student attrition. The qualitative phenomenological study of faculty perspectives on student attrition helped fill the gap. Sixteen study participants were interviewed in 30-minute Zoom video sessions using an open-ended question format. Participants were selected using nonprobability purposive sampling through emailing invitations to 830 part- and full-time faculty members at a community college in Pennsylvania.

Purposive sampling could be used to best inform a study by selecting data sources most relevant to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2016). Participants were invited to participate through email invitation including basic information about the study process and expectations. Following the 14-day response period, 16 participants were selected based on researcher perception of relevance to the study and in accordance with purposive sampling strategy. Eight part-time faculty members and eight full-time faculty members were selected as participants.

Assumptions of the study included participants giving honest answers during the interview process, participants being appropriately selected through the nonprobability and the purposive sampling method would provide consistent findings. In addition, participant interest was assumed, meaning the participants were motivated by a desire to participate in the study, not solely due to a reward incentive. Korrapati (2016) posited transferability relates to how research can be applied to other settings. Findings could be transferred to other community college settings but are limited in application wherein significant differences in geographical area, demographics of the student population or program offerings existed.

In the subsequent literature review, student attrition is analyzed through the conceptual framework of servant leadership and Maslow's theory. Servant leadership has been correlated with higher student satisfaction, and servant leadership focuses on meeting others' needs before one's own (Sahawneh & Benuto, 2018). Maslow's theory closely relates to servant leadership, as Maslow's theory designated a hierarchy of needs. Maslow's theory dictated individuals are motivated to satisfy basic needs first, and once the initial need is satisfied, individuals move onto higher level needs and eventually self-actualization (Bridgman et al., 2019). Through Maslow's theory lens, institutions meeting students' basic needs could help reduce student attrition.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Attrition among community colleges has been extensively studied. Prior research has encompassed a variety of perspectives on factors impacting student attrition rates. The problem was a 39% student attrition rate existed at a community college in Pennsylvania. The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore faculty members' lived experiences relating to student attrition at the community college level. Much has been studied regarding community college student attrition, and several reasons for attrition have been acknowledged in prior research. Familial relationship challenges and one's inability to take responsibility and have an internal locus of control have been linked with student attrition (Edwards et al., 2016).

An analysis of the literature revealed many factors contribute to student attrition and aid in resilience, and certain initiatives could reduce attrition (Edwards et al., 2016). Using the theoretical framework of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970) and Maslow's theory (Bridgman et al., 2019), prior research was examined. Major sections of the literature review include synthesis of prior literature on community college attrition.

Prior literature is presented regarding attrition resilience. Attrition factors and how institutions have addressed attrition factors are previewed, including registration, advising, and orientation programs. Population- and institution-specific attrition factors and initiatives are examined. Substance abuse and mental health issues and services are addressed. The role of professional development is explored. The counterargument to studying faculty perspectives focuses on studying student perspectives to better understand reasons for attrition. Lee (2017) posited studying student perspectives went directly to the source of the student attrition problem.

Literature Search Strategy

Relevant theoretical and empirical articles and other sources were found primarily

through searching EBSCO Discovery Service through the American College of Education library

website. Additional resources were uncovered using Google Scholar and ERIC. Search terms

focused on *community college attrition*, *retention*, and *resilience*. Additional searches were

conducted for specific attrition factors including *substance abuse*, *mental health*, *registration*,

advising, *orientation*, and *professional development*. Combinations of terms were used, including

college, *community college*, *higher education* coupled with *attrition*, *retention*, *resilience*, and

one of the attrition factor terms listed herein. Research for the theoretical framework focused on

keywords *Maslow's theory* and *servant leadership*. Resources were uncovered through an

investigation of references used in articles brought forth from these keyword searches to expand

the perspective and ensure a comprehensive review of the literature.

Theoretical Framework

Student attrition can be viewed through the lens of servant leadership theory as developed

by Greenleaf (1970). Servant leadership theory could be applied to student attrition by seeking to

best serve students through understanding and acting on reasons for student attrition at the

community college level. Sahawneh and Benuto (2018) demonstrated how servant leadership at

the instructor level improves student satisfaction. Servant leadership theory focuses the effort of

leaders on serving others (Gandolfi et al., 2017). Depending on a leader's position in an

organization or society, servant leadership theory could mean putting students, employees, or

society in general before self-interests (Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018).

Maslow's theory was applied to student attrition research by providing understanding of

how institutions can meet basic needs such as physiological, safety, and belongingness,

providing the foundation for students to gain esteem and self-actualize in the institutional

environment. Maslow's theory stated people were motivated to satisfy certain needs in

succession and the fulfillment of basic needs leads to higher striving, eventually resulting in self-actualization (Bridgman et al., 2019). According to Acevedo (2018), Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory was one of the most influential theories explaining human motivation in organizations.

Background of Servant Leadership

Servant leadership, at its core concept, requires leaders to place the needs of followers before the needs of leaders (Norris et al., 2017). Greenleaf (1970), considered the father of servant leadership, outlined 10 characteristics as the foundation of the servant leadership concept: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth of people, and building community. The servant leadership concept demonstrates a catering-to-needs approach to improving student outcomes in the higher education environment. Focusing on how to serve students allowed instructors and administration alike to act and make changes in an institution. Servant leadership has received increased attention from researchers in an ever more competitive environment where competition for teacher effectiveness has grown (Haider & Mushtaq, 2017). Implementing servant leadership has become a primary concern. Moll and Kretzschmar (2017) emphasized the importance of implementing servant leadership practices in the higher education environment. Central to the benefits of servant leadership implementation was the empowering of followers to take responsibility for success (Norris et al., 2017).

Researchers have analyzed the impact of servant leadership practices at various levels of the higher education employment chain. Qualitative study has demonstrated positive viewpoints of servant leadership by department chairs (Gonaim, 2019). Moll and Kretzschmar (2017) posited servant leadership helps professors to effectively lead in an academic environment.

Additionally, freshmen students have been found to positively view servant leadership as a concept among instructors and personal mentors (Norris et al., 2017).

Popularity as a leadership theory has continued to increase over time for servant leadership (Gonaim, 2019; Moll & Kretzschmar, 2017). Leadership theory adaptation and implementation have played a significant role in how a department functions (Gonaim, 2019). In the case of servant leadership, the focus on facilitating academic excellence, creativity, and innovation has placed the leadership style as a preference among progressives seeking to improve an institution's leadership practices (Moll & Kretzschmar, 2017). Adding to the case for servant leadership's use in higher education is the principle of maintaining trust-based associations with followers, encouraging collaborative performance (Haider & Mushtaq, 2017).

Servant leadership has been demonstrated to correlate with knowledge-sharing behavior among staff (Amin et al., 2019). The correlation was a powerful example of the benefits of servant leadership implementation and its impact on an institution overall. Knowledge-sharing behavior included sharing resources, methodologies, and approaches to problem solving among peers (Amin et al., 2019). Inherently, servant leadership focuses on placing the needs of followers above the leader (Norris et al., 2017). When the servant leadership principle is spread to students at the higher education institution and applied to knowledge-sharing behavior among staff, benefits can be exponential. The merging of servant leadership and teamwork through the lens of serving others is paramount in fully realizing the benefits of servant leadership practice.

Background of Maslow's Theory

Maslow's theory focused on needs being satisfied in succession, with most basic needs being met before an individual can address or achieve higher needs. Maslow's theory has been heralded as one of the most prominent motivation theories (Kovach, 2018). Among applications

of Maslow's theory, management training has repeatedly used its concepts to express the importance of meeting employee needs to help increase achievement (Bridgman et al., 2019). Similarly, taking care of student and staff needs in the higher education environment has fostered success (Peacock & Cowan, 2019).

Among the needs included in Maslow's theory, sense of belonging was placed directly above safety needs. The close relation demonstrates social sense of belonging, friendship, and related concepts are critical to student achievement (Levin et al., 2019; Peacock & Cowan, 2019). Meeting social needs helped students succeed and play an important role in staving off student attrition. These concepts intertwine and have been regularly considered in teaching strategy (Levin et al., 2019).

Consideration of social needs was especially important in an online platform, which was devoid of more typical social interaction. Social needs could be harder to achieve in an online classroom environment (Peacock & Cowan, 2019). Social needs being met created the opportunity for higher achievement and the lack of social needs being met created an environment prone to lessened achievement (Kovach, 2018).

Maslow's theory posited physiological needs be met first, then safety needs, then social needs, before additional needs of esteem and self-actualization can be accomplished. In the realm of esteem and self-actualization existed higher performance levels, particularly a desire of individuals to grow and become the best individuals possible (Evans et al., 2017). Performing at a higher level has remained a primary emphasis among management and leadership training (Bridgman et al., 2019). Application of Maslow's theory to higher education has been prevalent in administration considering how to best meet staff and student needs. Focus on meeting student needs has persisted at the instructor level and could inform teaching strategy (Levin et al., 2019).

Theoretical Framework Summary

Application of the dimensions of the servant leadership theory and dimensions of Maslow's theory supported the purpose of the study to better understand how student needs can be met to reduce the student attrition rate. Support-service initiatives focusing on belongingness have given students the best opportunity to achieve educational goals and reach self-actualization (Levin et al., 2019). Through the lens of Maslow's theory and servant leadership, the study took place evaluating faculty perspectives on how the institution met or did not meet student needs and what can be done to reduce student attrition.

Serving the needs of students through the lens of the merging of these two theories was the foundation for the study. Research questions developed targeted faculty perspectives on what factors led to student attrition and what initiatives could reduce student attrition. Focusing on serving the needs of students, servant leadership theory was central to the conceptual framework herein, studied through evaluating faculty perspectives on student attrition. Meeting student needs was the foundation from which further student development and learning occurred, in line with Maslow's theory. Predicted outcomes of the study included perspectives on how staff and the institution could better meet student needs to reduce attrition.

The major sections of the literature review include syntheses of prior literature on community college attrition. Prior literature is presented regarding attrition resilience, or a student's ability to succeed despite challenges (Edwards et al., 2016). Attrition factors and how institutions had addressed attrition factors are previewed, including registration, advising, orientation, and course delivery practices. Population-, program-, and institution-specific attrition factors and initiatives are examined. The roles of mental health and substance abuse in student attrition are presented. Professional development, its practice in higher education, and ultimately

its impact on student attrition are previewed. Qualitative faculty perspectives on student attrition are examined, but quite limited in a review of the literature. Little prior research focused on the faculty perspective, reiterating the need for additional study. The counterargument to studying faculty perspectives focuses on studying student perspectives to better understand reasons for attrition.

Research Literature Review

Student attrition has been researched from many different perspectives. Researchers have often related the study to how institutions meet student needs and the impact on student attrition. One framework heralded in research was data-driven decision making (DDDM; Dejear et al., 2018). Using DDDM in deciding what initiatives to take to reduce attrition was demonstrated throughout the research and elicited the need for faculty perspectives to be evaluated (Dejear et al., 2018). Serving students needs to be aligned with the concepts of Maslow's theory and servant leadership theory. One example indicated altering faculty advising practices to be more responsive in nursing programming leads to a reduction in community college nursing student attrition (Harrell & Reglin, 2018). Focusing on serving or meeting students' more basic needs to allow students to achieve higher educational goals persisted through the literature.

Faculty perspectives were studied for many important purposes but there was a gap in faculty perspective evaluation of student attrition and initiatives. Lei and Lei (2019a) emphasized the importance of faculty perspective in evaluating the efficacy of hybrid courses and better understanding faculty experiences. Mansbach and Austin (2018) interviewed 19 faculty members and found teaching online frustrated and enabled essential elements of balance, flexibility, freedom, and autonomy. Terosky (2018) studied reciprocity, finding community-engaged work positively impacted faculty member vitality and perseverance. All these studies contributed to

the knowledge base and focused on the faculty perspective. Yet, when the focus was placed on community college student attrition, the faculty perspective had not been researched.

Resilience

The concept of resilience clarified why student attrition has occurred and what created perseverance. Edwards et al. (2016) posited lack of adversity with parents and a student's ability to take responsibility for outcomes were strong predictors of resilience to attrition. Researchers studying resilience pointed to internal locus of control, taking responsibility, and positive familial relationships as predictors of resilience (Edwards et al., 2016; Hawkins et al., 2009; Windle, 2011). Strong interpersonal relationships meeting students social support needs persisted as a key factor in resilience throughout the literature.

Resilience literature focused on locus of control, or a student's ability to control the outcomes of the education journey and use the available resources presented. Students being able to access necessary resources and having the wherewithal to access resources routinely was critical to student success (Nicholson, 2016). Providing resources was only helpful to student resilience if those resources were clarified and readily available to students. The Community College Research Center (CCRC, 2015) found providing clear resources and clear degree pathways to be essential to student success. Access to resources was a key part of serving students and meeting student needs.

Resilience referred to how well a student weathered challenges in their educational journey (Edwards et al., 2016). Factors contributing to resilience were many. Environmental, familial, and institutional factors were examined. Weissberg et al. (1991) pointed to non-diagnosed mental health disorders in 22% of the population studied as a barrier to resilience. Student needs were not met when mental health diagnoses went unnoticed and unaddressed and

could further the barrier to success in the sense of weakened psychological strength heralded as a

resilience trait (Reynoso, 2017). Once again, strong interpersonal relationships were a key factor

in student resilience (Edwards et al., 2016).

Resilience refers to the ability to overcome challenges (Ko & Chang, 2019). Challenges

were particularly extensive for special populations including undocumented immigrants (Salinas

et al., 2019). Language barriers, separation from family members, and financial challenges were

prevalent among immigrant students (Reynoso, 2017). Herein demonstrated was the importance

of interpersonal relationships and access to resources in determining a student's level of

resilience.

Resilience methods and factors often included strong familial relationships, psychological

strength, and other community supportive factors (Reynoso, 2017). The ability to bounce back

from adversity or negative experiences was cited as a primary resilience factor and was

considered perseverance through struggle or challenge (Ko & Chang, 2019). One of the

questions pertaining to resilience and its application toward reducing student attrition was how

resilience could be taught.

Luechtefeld et al. (2019) examined teaching resilience and a method to reframe how

students viewed challenges psychologically. The strategy included changing the perspective of

the student in the face of challenge. Causal processes found to be helpful in the reframing

process taught to students included providing and receiving feedback from the instructor and

peers, seeking the attention of respected classmates and external persons, and growing steadily in

one's ability to overcome difficult challenges throughout the educational journey (Luechtefeld et

al., 2019). These concepts aligned with the concept of psychological strength found to be

paramount in overcoming adversity (Reynoso, 2017).

Qualitative analysis of resilience turned up multiple perspectives on factors of resilience or preventing student attrition. Special populations were highlighted including homeless students, students of different cultures, and students with different immigration backgrounds. Analysis revealed homeless students could realize some of the same benefits as traditional students, and resilience in other areas can roll over into community college perseverance (Gupton, 2017). Recent immigrants, whether undocumented or documented, experienced language barriers and cultural challenges, discrimination, and other factors contributing to student attrition (Reynoso, 2017; Salinas et al., 2019).

Qualitative studies determined common resilience factors for resisting attrition included familial support, psychological strength, peer and instructor feedback, strong interpersonal relationships, access to resources, and an internal locus of control (Edwards et al., 2016; Luechtefeld et al., 2019; Salinas et al., 2019). The role of the institution became how to best meet these student challenges and needs in line with servant leadership theory to allow students to accomplish higher level needs as outlined in Maslow's theory.

Registration

Preventing student attrition starts before admission to an institution. As such, much emphasis was focused on seeking to reduce student attrition from the first contact with an institution. Recruitment practices and outreach were a primary concern for administrators of higher education institutions (Butler et al., 2018). Personal outreach was shown to have a positive effect on reducing student attrition in regression analysis (McClure, 2017). Literature affirmed the need to address student attrition from all angles, and continually expanded research criteria to better understand the student attrition phenomenon. Additional understanding was

garnered from further evaluation of faculty perspectives on community college student attrition.

The CCRC (2015) cited unclear program registration practices as a reason for student attrition and clarifying pathways as a partial solution to the attrition problem. Addressing attrition factors began prior to admission to an institution. Some research focused on determining how registration practices can be altered to best serve incoming students and meet student needs. McClure (2017) found personal outreach had a positive impact on registration and ultimately student retention. Implementing personal outreach and clarity principles during the registration process helped to meet student needs. Connecting with students early on and addressing registration needs right away was of paramount importance. As exemplified in one study on first-day attendance, students who attend the first day of class were more likely to persist and succeed (Mancini, 2017).

Registration challenges continued throughout the college process. Transfer students had the challenge of navigating a new system in the middle of the educational journey (Walker & Okpala, 2017). Regular students faced registration challenges at consistent intervals throughout the college process. Walker and Okpala (2017) called for administration to be aware of differences among student populations in registration practices. Focus was placed on changing practices to align with the concepts of clarity and personal communication, facilitating positive registration experiences (CCRC, 2015; McClure, 2017).

Registration requirements impacted the attrition rate for an institution. Student success courses in a variety of forms were found to be helpful in reducing student attrition (Lei & Lei, 2019b). Unclear registration and navigation of the institution's systems led to frustration and ultimately became a factor contributing to student attrition (CCRC, 2015). Administration took on the role of addressing these concerns and altered registration practices to best meet student

needs through the lens of servant leadership. When student registration needs were met, students could accomplish higher tasks, as outlined in Maslow's theory. Administrative factors capable of reducing student attrition included personal outreach during registration, registration requirements for student success courses, and addressing the needs of transfer students and specific populations (Lei & Lei, 2019a; McClure, 2017; Walker & Okpala, 2017).

Advising

Faculty advising played an important role in student experiences at an institution. Relationships between students and advisors contributed to student success or contributed to student attrition depending on how faculty responded to needs (Harrell & Reglin, 2018). Advising relationships were particularly important for minority students searching for a sense of belonging to foster student success (Banks & Dohy, 2019). Advising helped create a sense of belonging, which has been repeatedly demonstrated as a positive correlate of reducing student attrition (Brooms, 2018; Peacock & Cowan, 2019).

Harrell and Reglin (2018) demonstrated how changing faculty advising practices reduced student attrition. Faculty advising and overall advising practices had been a consistent target of research to determine alterations beneficial to reducing student attrition (Xu, 2017). Study had persisted through many different demographic groups including student-athletes, rural students, and STEM students, all pointing to focus on advising practices and the role advising practices played in preventing student attrition (Brecht & Burnett, 2019; Hlinka, 2017; Snyder & Cudney, 2017).

Advising had been determined to be a primary source of frustration and challenge for students (Sanders & Killion, 2017). Students had basic advising needs regarding the courses required for the intended program of study, what courses could be taken when, and ultimately the

best course of action to complete the degree or program. Satisfying these needs allowed the student the opportunity to succeed in the actual coursework. Administration placing focus on best serving students with advising practices opens the door to reduced student attrition. Harrell and Reglin (2018) demonstrated advising practices played an important role in reducing student attrition among nursing students. In comparison, Harris (2018) found no significant difference in student preference existed between different methods of advising.

Many different approaches to advising have been implemented and studied. Initiatives to improve advising have included providing incentives and training (Fussy, 2018). Different methods of advising have been used and the difference between prescriptive versus developmental academic advising studied (Harris, 2018). Peer-training programs have shown some benefit in advising practices as well (Howard, 2019). Shaping advising practices has been an institution specific, assessment-based process including feedback from student and faculty perspectives on the current advising process at an institution and what changes could be made to improve the advising process (Yonker et al., 2019). Ongoing development of advising practices and changes in accordance with student need have fostered an environment of student success and could help reduce student attrition (Howard, 2019).

Academic advising has continued to be a target of study to reduce attrition rates. Harrell and Reglin (2018) studied 210 nursing students regarding student perspectives on advising practices. The study revealed how advisors responded to nursing student needs was cited as the most important advising factor reported by study participants. The CCRC (2015) studied 9,000 students and determined unclear advising was a primary factor contributing to student attrition. Additionally, lack of clarity in program offerings and pathways to degree completion were identified as having played a role in student attrition. Clarity could be enhanced through an

increase in personal outreach (McClure, 2017). In a qualitative study, Zhang (2018) interviewed 20 academic advisors and 15 international students to determine how international students' advising experiences impacted students' college success.

Advising practices encompassed a plethora of staff and institutional policies. Pathways to degree completion were often listed on an institution's website or registration paperwork. From the initial registration course offerings, options could be determined based on which degree program the student was pursuing. McClure (2017) posited personal outreach was essential at the registration stage to provide clarity and aid in reducing student attrition.

Faculty and peer advisors could both play a part in a student's advising experience. Ultimately, lack of clarity at the advising stage of the process was shown to contribute to student attrition (Harrell & Reglin, 2018). Expectation versus reality of college coursework had an impact on student attrition (Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016). As previously mentioned, increased clarity often had to do with personal outreach (McClure, 2017) and personal responsiveness of advisors to student needs (Harrell & Reglin, 2018). Another critical aspect to advising meeting students' needs pertaining to the understanding of financial aid and scholarships. Millea et al. (2018) analyzed student data over a 6-year period and found finding assistance navigating financial aid and scholarships was a predictor of higher graduation rates.

Through the lens of servant leadership, meeting students' advising needs allowed students to succeed in coursework and ultimately assist in the achievement of educational goals. Initiatives to reduce student attrition often included consideration of advising practices and student perception of advising practices (Sanders & Killion, 2017). To meet the needs of students, academic advising practices needed to be evaluated and changed over time to ensure

efficacy and reduce student attrition (Yonker et al., 2019).

Orientation

Orientation programs were often seen as one method to introduce students to campus, college programming, rules, and culture, and ultimately help students be more comfortable and create a sense of belonging to alleviate potential problems (Levin et al., 2019). Robichaud (2016) made the case for student orientation programs reducing student attrition at the community college level through synthesizing prior findings. Online orientation program initiatives served to meet students' basic needs for students to persist in coursework and reduced attrition, coinciding with the conceptual framework presented in Maslow's theory and servant leadership theory (Robichaud, 2016).

Orientation practices were of paramount importance in higher education. Orientation could help foster a sense of belonging heralded as critical by proponents of Maslow's theory's application to the higher education institution (Peacock & Cowan, 2019). Orientation allowed for clarity in coursework, processes, registration, and advising. Clarity in these areas has been cited as a cause for a reduction in student attrition (CCRC, 2015; Harrell & Reglin, 2018).

Specific population needs should be considered in the orientation design framework (Davari et al., 2017). Orientation programs could get creative and include less common methods such as outdoor orientation programs (Gonsalves, 2017). Peer-based, same-race mentorship programs were useful and effective in helping minority students acclimate to the institution (Brooms, 2018).

Certain types of orientation programming were more beneficial to subsets of the student population and considering the unique needs of certain populations of students was important for developing an effective orientation process. Sithole et al. (2017) suggested STEM-specific

orientation program changes should include math review sessions, student learning communities, and collaborative outreach programs. Similarly, online students had specific orientation needs. Online students suffered from a lessened sense of community and could easily isolate themselves from the course, instructor, and fellow students (Peacock & Cowan, 2019). Arhin and Wang'eri (2018) studied 625 distance education students and found an orientation program helped prevent student attrition.

Customization of orientation programs could help to better address student populations. Minhas-Taneja (2017) studied distance education students over 2 years and found students responded significantly better to gamified orientation modules as part of an overall orientation program. Petrilli (2019) demonstrated the benefit of a math orientation seminar to student success and confirmed results through both student data and faculty perspectives in a mixed methods approach study. These customizations of orientation approaches to best serve students through meeting student needs persisted in the literature, calling for specialized orientation for various student populations.

Another theme of prior research was the concept of institution-specific orientation approaches and ongoing assessment. Xu (2017) posited orientation programs should rely on data gathered in the institution. Institutional characteristics and populations varied from one institution to the next, and an approach matching the variation made sense for additional study. Research called for institutions to implement ongoing assessment loop processes to best address the student population's specific orientation needs (Chan, 2017).

Overall, effective orientation correlated with student success and reduction in student attrition (Chan, 2017; Davis, 2018; Xu, 2017). Chan (2017) studied over 100 community colleges and determined multiple factors influence whether an orientation program is successful,

but the central theme was to consider student needs in the ongoing development and editing of

orientation programs. Serving students through meeting orientation needs to be aligned with the

theory of servant leadership (Moll & Kretzschmar, 2017). Additionally, meeting the orientation

needs of students allowed students to succeed in higher-level needs according to Maslow's

theory (Bridgman et al., 2019).

Course Delivery

Community college course delivery typically took on one of three formats—online,

hybrid, or face-to-face. Differences in course delivery methods correlated with attrition,

particularly in online-only courses (James et al., 2016). Additionally, higher-level courses taken

online consistently demonstrated a larger gap between successful students and students

withdrawing or failing the course (Wladis et al., 2017). Nicholson (2016) pointed out the

importance of curricula deliverance methods, integration, connecting students with employers,

and addressing community needs as a framework for attrition reduction.

Course delivery factors had an impact on course outcomes (Wladis et al., 2017). Design

of courses could serve students' needs and reduce attrition. Ongoing evaluation of course

delivery and alterations based on additional methods of delivery outside the norm could be used

to produce improved outcomes (Kosiewicz et al., 2016; Suh et al., 2019). Continued revision of

course delivery methods could have been adopted as practice in an institution to create an

ongoing environment of improvement.

Certain courses tended to produce poorer outcomes than others. Poor outcomes in courses

could have been related to the likelihood of complete student attrition for an individual (James et

al., 2016; Mkhatshwa & Hoffman, 2019). Online courses tended to have higher rates of attrition

(James et al., 2016). Higher-level online courses tended to surpass lower-level online courses in

rates of student attrition (Wladis et al., 2017).

Many different approaches have been taken to alter course delivery to better address student attrition concerns. Kosiewicz et al. (2016) explored different models of delivering developmental math courses, ultimately finding a return to traditional methods was most commonly helpful. Ahadi et al. (2019) found implementing a first-year experience curriculum was beneficial in orienting students and reducing attrition. Too much focus on a first-year experience curriculum could lead to oversimplification of course concepts aimed at achieving completion rather than learning, sacrificing some level of course integrity.

Much effort and research have centered on gateway courses. Bloemer et al. (2018) defined gateway courses as foundational or general education courses wherein a significant number of students tend to withdraw or fail, often beginning an attrition process. Gateway courses were of interest due to the requirement for gateway courses to be taken to complete most programs. Often, gateway courses were the initial courses students took. Success in gateway courses was often a determinant of ongoing success in the education pathway chosen. Failure in gateway courses was often a predictor of student attrition (Bloemer et al., 2018). Several studies found orientation programming can help address some of the failures and withdrawal problems in gateway or introductory courses (Arhin & Wang'eri, 2018; Davari et al., 2017; Gonsalves, 2017; Petrilli, 2019).

Unique Population Attrition

Countless unique populations have been studied to better understand student attrition at the community college level. Studies encompassed ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, geographical location, program of study, and more (Harrell & Reglin, 2018; Harris, 2018; Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016). Overall, a population-specific study was a response to the call of many

researchers for attrition research to focus on specific populations, and not treat all populations as equal in terms of student needs and how to best serve students (Brecht & Burnett, 2019; Snyder & Cudney, 2017).

Minority populations further discussed in a later section continued to be a focus of additional study pertaining to student attrition. Study persisted through the lens of better serving students and meeting student needs to prevent attrition. Graduation rates among minorities were significantly lower than Whites, with African Americans graduating at a 45.9% rate and Hispanics at a 55% rate, whereas White students graduate at a 67.2% rate (Shapiro et al., 2017).

Lee (2017) studied part-time student perspectives to better understand the reasons part-time student attrition occurs, finding flexibility, availability, student choice, courses, services, and social events aimed at part-time students could reduce attrition. In another specific population of students, Jacoby (2015) presented the need for better understanding challenges commuter students faced in addressing student attrition. Maslow's theory posited meeting basic needs led to the ability of individuals to achieve educational goals and higher-level needs (Bridgman et al., 2019). Servant leadership theory focused on putting others' needs before one's own (Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018).

Much had been learned about student attrition in specific populations through studying specific populations. Harrell and Reglin (2018) were able to identify advising practices for nursing students as a key factor in student attrition, reporting advisors being responsive to student needs was essential from the 210 students surveyed. Robichaud (2016) provided an overview of the positive impact orientation programs had on the online student population. Snyder and Cudney (2017) called for additional research studying nontraditional community college students and the reasons for attrition in the nontraditional student population. Hlinka

(2017) found rural Appalachian community college students often had to overcome the pull of

family obligations and struggles to make the cognitive jump to college-level coursework

following previous education. Even specific needs of honor students have been studied,

including how advising could have a positive impact on reducing honor student attrition (Clark et

al., 2018). Racial differences have been studied extensively. Harris (2018) found developmental

academic advising methods were predominantly used at an HBCU in South Carolina and no

preference between advising methods was correlated with reduced student attrition there.

Overall, a tremendous amount of data exists on specific populations. Considering data

from multiple sources, faculty perspectives on student attrition at the community college level

have been beneficial to the institution's administration. Faculty perspectives were helpful for

additional study ideas and application to regional community colleges. The philosophies

uncovered provided a foundation for additional study. The focus on specific populations in the

aforementioned studies demonstrates the tremendous effort to serve students through servant

leadership theory and Maslow's theory pointing to meetings student needs.

Program- and Institution-Specific Attrition

Mertes and Jankoviak (2016) demonstrated the need for geographically specific research

to understand reasons for attrition through finding variance from normal attrition factors in

studying a midwestern community college. Similarly, Snyder and Cudney (2017) called for

studying specific institutions to better determine needs to be addressed through initiatives to

reduce attrition. Focusing on specific institutions or regions to reduce student attrition was a

common theme presented throughout the literature. Reyes et al. (2019) demonstrated the

importance of geographic-specific study of student attrition trends in using ArcGIS mapping.

Bahr et al. (2019) found, specifically in California Community Colleges, GPA was a better

predictor of student success than placement testing.

Outreach programs have been found helpful in reducing student attrition at open-access institutions. Open-access institutions have had the additional burden of serving a higher proportion of low-income, first-generation, and overall at-risk students (Mathuews & Lewis, 2017). Nontraditional, online, commuter, STEM, and other specific student populations experienced specific needs administration can seek to serve to reduce student attrition (Jacoby, 2015; Lee, 2017; Snyder & Cudney, 2017). Faculty perspective studies remained the minority in evaluating student attrition.

Student Affairs

Central to the evaluation of student affairs programs were graduation and attrition rates (Millea et al., 2018). Student affairs played a major role in addressing student attrition, particularly in vulnerable populations (Voth Schrag & Edmond, 2018). Vulnerable populations were more likely to need and use student services (Locke & Trolian, 2018). Protecting and providing service to vulnerable populations was an essential function of the student affairs department.

Student affairs held a tremendous amount of responsibility for attrition statistics. Many reasons for attrition trace back to initiatives student affairs departments were or could oversee (Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016). Outreach and engagement often fell under the student affairs department and was a key factor in recruitment and preventing attrition (Butler et al., 2018). Student affairs responsibilities extended to providing services to students for mental health and substance abuse needs in the modern higher education atmosphere (Satinsky et al., 2017). Kuran (2019) posited the socioeconomic approach to management, a methodology for student affairs focused on a holistic view and improving performance, was the best approach to providing

student services. Conceptually, socioeconomic approach to management focuses on helping the

full student in all aspects, closely connecting with servant leadership theory and Maslow's theory

pertaining to meeting student needs.

Student affairs faced many challenges in providing services and making positive changes.

One of those challenges was staff turnover. One study of student affairs professionals found 60%

of new student affairs professionals left the job in the first 5 years. Addressing burnout among

staff was a critical factor in helping reduce turnover in a student affairs department (Dinise-

Halter, 2017). Martinez (2018) explored the challenges involved in making positive changes in a

student affairs department, including resistance from multiple stakeholders and a push to

continue the status quo. The ability to make positive changes in student affairs was critical to

adapting to new data-driven initiatives to reduce student attrition. DDDM was essential to

addressing the attrition problem (Kinzie & Hurtado, 2017).

Minority Student Attrition

Certain populations attended community college in higher proportions than others,

particularly Asian Americans (Park & Assalone, 2019). For minority populations, discrimination

barriers persisted to prevent minority populations from completing a degree program. Often,

microaggressions or acts of discrimination and racism contributed to minority population student

attrition (Locke & Trolian, 2018).

Discrimination and needs of minority students encompassed many reasons for student

attrition (Banks & Dohy, 2019). Significant differences persisted between graduation rates

among minorities when compared with each other and White students (Shapiro et al., 2017).

These discrepancies represented a multitude of factors contributing to minority student attrition.

Helping to address these discrepancies remained a primary function of student affairs. Student

affairs sought to serve students through meeting student needs to foster degree completion

(Banks & Dohy, 2019).

Research showed African American students were least likely to graduate, with 45.9%

graduating in 6 years. Other notable graduation rates included Hispanic students (55%), White

students (67.2%), and Asian students (71.7%; Shapiro et al., 2017). Statistics painted a

staggering picture of disparity. Many factors contributed to student attrition including familial

participation in education, socioeconomic status, single parenthood, mental health, substance

abuse, and others (Banks & Dohy, 2019). Discrepancies based on race persisted in many of the

aforementioned areas as well, and a call on student affairs to better address these disparities

continued.

One acclaimed method to assist students of color was to provide same-race mentorship

programs. Same-race mentorship programs have proven successful in reducing student attrition

(Brooms, 2018; Dulabaum, 2016; Strayhorn, 2017). Student affairs collaborating with other staff

to meet minority student needs and better serve minority students was an essential approach to

addressing student attrition. Providing racial peer mentorship programs was a catalyst to

addressing the need and fostering a sense of belonging among minority students. A sense of

belonging was heralded as a positive predictor of student success (Brooms, 2018).

In addition, sense of belonging impacted students' decisions to abuse substances. Fish et

al. (2017) found lower retention rates among Native American students due to racism and

structural barriers. Separation from the general student population played an important role in the

disparity. High risk drinking behavior was linked with a lack of a sense of belonging (Satinsky et

al., 2017). Marijuana use followed suit in prevailing as a coping skill for students feeling apart

from the student community (Blavos et al., 2017).

Fostering a sense of belonging among minority students was especially important at historically White institutions. Student affairs providing mental health services not just to minority students, but all students, reduced microaggressions on campus (Moragne-Patterson & Barnett, 2017). Additionally, addressing physical and emotional needs reduced the pattern of microaggressions typically experienced by minority groups on campus (Locke & Trolian, 2018).

Sense of belonging was repeatedly posited as an essential need for student success across all ethnic groups and is an essential component of Maslow's pyramid (Levin et al., 2019; Peacock & Cowan, 2019). Student services addressed the need through an initiative by implementing mentoring programs (Brooms, 2018). Meeting the need was essential to allowing students to address higher-level needs according to Maslow's theory (Levin et al., 2019).

Student affairs departments sought to best serve students for whom student affairs departments are responsible (Banks & Dohy, 2019). Servant leadership theory played an important role in reducing student attrition through seeking to best serve student needs (Haider & Mushtaq, 2017). One clear need for minority students was to experience a sense of belonging at the institution the minority students attend, especially if the institution is a historically White institution. Racial peer mentoring had consistently been demonstrated to be an effective method of achieving the goal of increasing minority students' sense of belonging (Brooms, 2018; Dulabaum, 2016; Strayhorn, 2017). To have peer mentors of the same race, diversity among staff members was critical. Staff member investment in mentoring students of the same racial group was essential (Banks & Dohy, 2019).

Department Collaboration

Collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs was heralded as critical in serving students and meeting student needs to reduce attrition (Brown et al., 2018). Working

together, the departments sought to serve students in a collaborative method, reducing confusion

and student attrition. O'Halloran (2019) conducted a national survey of chief student affairs

officers, finding reduction of silos and an increase in cooperation between departments were

critical to student success.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Substance abuse, mental health, and medical issues all contributed to increased stress and

student attrition. In a study evaluating 113 students who received mental health services, medical

services, and attended a college, 100 students receiving these services scored significantly higher

on the college student stress scale. Additionally, nearly three-quarters of those studied reported a

delayed graduation date, beyond what was initially expected (Kleinpeter et al., 2018). Stress as a

factor in student attrition permeated substance abuse research as well. Satinsky et al. (2017)

found a correlation between stress and high-risk drinking behavior.

Substance abuse and mental health issues came from a variety of circumstances. One way

for institutions to target a reduction in student attrition is to evaluate how students dealing with

mental health and substance abuse issues are treated and what support services are available to

students. Sontag-Padilla et al. (2018) demonstrated the benefit of using Active Minds, a peer

organization for mental health services, in reducing stigma, increasing awareness, and impacting

attitudes and behavior. Students suffering from mental illness or substance abuse disorders had a

need for understanding by peers and a fellowship with others. Serving students and meeting

student needs have been demonstrated to be essential for reducing student attrition (Fish et al.,

2017).

Cultural and social norms established on college campuses can play an important role in

substance abuse culture (Blavos et al., 2017). One of three U.S. college campuses had more than

half of its students consistently consuming multiple alcoholic beverages in a row and engaging in a party lifestyle (Dutmers, 2017). A great need persisted for student services addressing these challenges to reduce student attrition. A call for youth-friendly mental health and substance abuse services permeated recent literature on the matter (Hawke et al., 2019). Serving the student population through addressing student needs has been shown to be essential to allow students to achieve academically and prevent delays in graduation (Kleinpeter et al., 2018).

Collaboration among multiple stakeholders was critical to student success. Students dealing with consequences from substance abuse could benefit from collaboration between drug courts, colleges, and treatment providers (Dutmers, 2017). Implementing systematic strategies for handling student substance abuse, mental health concerns, medical withdrawals, and other potential problems reduced delay, helped ensure graduation, and was an essential part of serving students and meeting student needs. Essential service options included peer support groups as well to be effective (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2018). Services being youth friendly was shown to be more beneficial to students in need (Hawke et al., 2019).

Professional Development

Ongoing professional development to address emerging student needs and better serve students was an essential practice in higher education (Awang-Hashim et al., 2019). Professional development efforts indirectly targeted student attrition, and additional understanding from the faculty perspective was important to better understand the correlation (Roberts, 2018). One study demonstrated faculty members perceived dispelling attrition myths as important. Dispelling common myths about reasons for student attrition allowed instructors to be more open to individual student needs and how to best serve individual students (Miller et al., 2019).

Many methods existed for maintaining professional development programs at institutions.

Collaboration among colleagues to maintain and foster an environment of ongoing professional development was found to be essential across four separate professional development programs analyzed. Peer support and motivation were cited as crucial factors in professional development programs (Meyer et al., 2018). Engagement and participation among faculty members in professional development programs varied by institution and how professional development programs were implemented and maintained. In a mixed methods study, researchers discovered intrinsic motivation was a primary factor for faculty member participation and engagement in professional development programs (Botham, 2018). Professional development of librarians was studied over the course of 6 years to determine 97% of librarians expressed interest in further professional development (Lauseng et al., 2019). Multiple types of institutional staff needed ongoing professional development and training to best serve students and meet student needs to reduce student attrition (Roberts, 2018).

Counterargument

Student perspectives provided a foundation for understanding reasons for student attrition (Harrell & Reglin, 2018). By studying student perspectives, one went directly to the source to understand student attrition factors (Lee, 2017). Some argued the direct resource for student attrition factors comes from student feedback. Dean (2019) used qualitative student feedback to identify themes aiding in preventing student attrition, including approachability of faculty and motivation of students. Chelberg and Bosman (2019) interviewed students about the impact of faculty mentoring on reducing student attrition and found students benefitted from faculty mentoring and such mentoring helped students continue the educational journey.

Feedback from studying the student perspective provided the groundwork for useful initiatives such as improving orientation programming (Robichaud, 2016). Student perspective

study was used to reduce attrition through altering advising practices (Harrell & Reglin, 2018).

Mertes and Jankoviak (2016) used student perspectives to demonstrate primary reasons for

attrition among midwestern community college students.

Multiple Perspectives on Student Attrition and Initiatives

Many different perspectives were studied pertaining to student attrition and initiatives

targeting a reduction in attrition. Faculty perspectives were qualitatively studied to evaluate the

efficacy of mathematics orientation seminar programs on reducing student attrition (Petrilli,

2019). Faculty perspectives were studied to determine the efficacy of program-specific learning

modules in an online student success course (McLeod, 2019). Administrator perspectives were

studied, including a study evaluating the efficacy of community college programming on

meeting community needs (Gauthier, 2019). Student perspectives were studied qualitatively

numerous times relating to student attrition and initiative (Harrell & Reglin, 2018; Lee, 2017;

Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016). Overall, there persisted a gap in the need for faculty perspective to

further understand student attrition and initiatives to reduce student attrition. Much of the prior

study in the area of student attrition had focused on student perspectives.

Gap in Literature: Faculty Perspectives

Faculty perspectives were determined to provide helpful feedback in many research

studies (Gauthier, 2019; Ghaffar & Khan, 2017; Mansbach & Austin, 2018; McLeod, 2019;

Sutherland, 2017; Terosky, 2018). Faculty perspectives provided unique insight into student

attrition causes and solutions. Few qualitative studies evaluated student attrition from the faculty

perspective, yet the community college student attrition rate has persisted nationally at 61%

(Juszkiewicz, 2017). While there will continue to be some student attrition, reducing the rate of

student attrition has been a key target for community college administrators (Harrell & Reglin,

2018). Multiple studies called for additional research to better understand and address student

attrition with initiatives (Nicholson, 2016; Robichaud, 2016; Snyder & Cudney, 2017). The call

for additional study reaffirmed the gap in literature the study aimed to target. Examining faculty

perspectives on community college student attrition through the lens of servant leadership theory

and Maslow's theory focused on meeting student needs and provided a framework to address the

gap.

Chapter Summary

The major sections of the literature review included syntheses of prior literature on

community college attrition. Prior literature was presented regarding attrition resilience. Attrition

factors and how institutions addressed attrition factors were previewed, including registration,

advising, orientation, and course delivery practices. Population-, program-, and institution-

specific attrition factors and initiatives were examined. The role of mental health and substance

abuse in student attrition was presented. Professional development, its practice in higher

education, and ultimately its impact on student attrition were previewed. Qualitative faculty

perspectives on student attrition were examined, but quite limited in a review of the literature.

Lack of faculty perspectives clarified the need for additional study. The counterargument to

studying faculty perspectives focused on studying student perspectives to better understand

reasons for attrition.

The concept of resilience clarified why student attrition has occurred and what creates

perseverance. Edwards et al. (2016) posited lack of adversity with parents and a student's ability

to take responsibility for personal outcomes were strong predictors of resilience to attrition.

Researchers studying resilience pointed to an internal locus of control, taking responsibility, and

positive familial relationships as predictors of resilience (Edwards et al., 2016; Hawkins et al.,

2009; Windle, 2011).

Preventing student attrition started before admission to an institution, as much emphasis was focused on starting attrition considerations before admission. Recruitment practices and outreach were a primary concern for administrators of higher education institutions (Butler et al., 2018). Faculty advising played an important role in student experiences at an institution. Relationships between students and advisors contributed to student success or student attrition depending on how faculty responded to student needs (Harrell & Reglin, 2018). Advising relationships were particularly important for minority students searching for a sense of belonging to foster student success (Banks & Dohy, 2019).

Orientation programs were often seen as a method to introduce students to campus, college programming, rules, and culture, and ultimately help students to be more comfortable and have a sense of belonging, alleviating potential problems (Levin et al., 2019). Community college course delivery typically took on one of three formats—online, hybrid, or face to face. Nicholson (2016) pointed out the importance of curricula deliverance methods, integration, connecting students with employers, and addressing community needs as a framework for attrition reduction.

Countless unique populations were studied to better understand student attrition at the community college level. Studies encompassed ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, geographical location, program of study, and more (Harrell & Reglin, 2018; Harris, 2018; Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016). Overall, the population-specific studies were a response to the call of researchers for attrition research to focus on specific populations and not treat all populations as equal in terms of student needs and how to best serve students (Brecht & Burnett, 2019; Snyder

& Cudney, 2017).

Central to the evaluation of student affairs programs were graduation and attrition rates (Millea et al., 2018). Substance abuse, mental health, and medical issues all contributed to increased stress and student attrition. Ongoing professional development to address emerging student needs and better serve students was an essential practice in higher education (Awang-Hashim et al., 2019).

Professional development efforts indirectly targeted student attrition, and additional understanding from the faculty perspective was important to better understand the correlation (Roberts, 2018). One study of 32 faculty perspectives found dispelling myths about student attrition crucial. Dispelling common myths about reasons for student attrition allowed instructors to be more open to individual student needs and how to best serve individual students (Miller et al., 2019).

Despite numerous studies conducted to better understand why student attrition has continued to be a major problem for institutions, the problem has persisted. With a student attrition rate of 39%, the institution analyzed had a great deal to be gained from better understanding reasons behind student attrition. While studying student perspectives on attrition presented diverse needs to be met through college initiatives, additional study and understanding was needed (Nicholson, 2016). The problem was further addressed by evaluating faculty perspectives on community college student attrition, including the reasons for attrition, what initiatives were effective at reducing attrition, and what initiatives were ineffective at reducing attrition. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the qualitative phenomenological methodology used to examine faculty perspectives on community college student attrition at an institution in Pennsylvania.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The existing 39% attrition rate at a community college in Pennsylvania at the time of the study presented a problem. Student attrition has resulted in wasted resources for community colleges, students, and society at large (Morison & Cowley, 2017). Despite extensive prior research on the subject, the problem has persisted, with only 39% of full-time community college students nationwide graduating with a credential within 3 years (Juszkiewicz, 2017). The background of the problem was there have been many reasons for student attrition, for which different initiatives were studied and implemented to reduce attrition (Bahr et al., 2019; CCRC, 2015; Harrell & Reglin, 2018; Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016).

The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore faculty members' lived experiences relating to student attrition at the community college level. Exploring faculty members' experiences was beneficial by providing additional insight into why student attrition has occurred. Faculty members provided insight into initiatives used to address student attrition. According to Cristancho et al. (2018), carefully crafted and compelling questions were critical to meaningful qualitative research.

The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: What were the lived experiences of faculty members pertaining to student attrition?

Research Question 2: What were the perceptions of faculty members on initiatives used to reduce student attrition?

Chapter 3 presents the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, research procedures, data analysis, reliability and validity, and ethical procedures. Each section elaborates

on how the research was conducted. Additional details on why the research was conducted and its rationale ensue.

Research Methodology, Design, and Rationale

Faculty members of a community college in Pennsylvania were interviewed using qualitative methodology. Prior research demonstrated the benefit of faculty perspectives in evaluating student needs and initiatives (De Los Santos & Maxwell, 2018; Snyder & Cudney, 2017). Qualitative methodology often uses open-ended questioning in interview format to uncover additional information and insight (Ivey, 2019; Qutoshi, 2018; Yin, 2016). The design for the study was phenomenology. Webb and Welsh (2019) defined phenomenology as a qualitative research method which can present common themes of several participants' lived experience about a specific phenomenon. The phenomenon examined was student attrition.

Methodology

Phenomenology uses open-ended questioning to uncover details regarding thoughts and behavior of participants pertaining to the studied phenomenon (Ivey, 2019). Understanding the interpretations and perspectives of individuals' lived experiences going, beyond simple knowledge, was the purpose of the phenomenological method of inquiry (Qutoshi, 2018). The phenomenological qualitative methodology was appropriate for answering the research questions because the design provided a format to explore perspectives of faculty members teaching at the community college.

Design

The design fit the student attrition research context because the design provided a framework for further exploration of what caused students to attrite. Open-ended interviewing and analysis examined what initiatives could be helpful in reducing student attrition. The

advantage of phenomenological qualitative design was the design can produce additional knowledge and ideas for administrators to use in creating initiatives to reduce student attrition rates.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role was as participant observer. In qualitative study, the participant observer is the research instrument, as the participant observer is responsible for measuring data (Yin, 2016). Participants were recruited, provided informed consent, and interviewed by Zoom video session. Data were compiled, coded, and analyzed. Common themes and findings were presented. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a complete participant is a researcher fully engaged in the process and the participants are fully aware of his presence.

Yin (2016) cautions the researcher should be aware of how the researcher's role can influence a study, referred to as reflexivity. The researcher was a peer to the participants yet held limited contact or affiliation with participants outside of being a coworker and fellow part-time faculty member. Though a limited role, being a peer exemplified the dual role of the researcher and potential conflict therein.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the researcher ideally focuses on the experience of the participants, not themselves, in the study. To avoid the potential conflict of interest, reflexivity and bracketing were used. Yin (2016) defined reflexivity as the researcher being aware of how the researcher's role can influence the study. Creswell and Poth (2018) defined bracketing as the researcher discussing lived experiences with the phenomenon to set the lived experiences aside and disclose the lived experiences to the reader.

An incentive of a $30 Amazon gift card was provided to participants at the conclusion of the interview by email. Creswell and Poth (2018) cautioned against taking advantage of

participants and recommend addressing the concern by rewarding participants. Conversely, participants may be influenced to participate in the study merely to obtain the award, rather than due to a true desire to participate in accordance with the purpose of the study. Interviews were recorded to ensure data collection reliability. Data were then transcribed, coded, and analyzed.

Research Procedures

Research procedures are described herein in detail. The study targeted part-time and full-time faculty members at a community college in Pennsylvania. Purposive sampling was used to ensure reliability. The primary instrument used were audio recorded, Zoom video interviews.

Population and Sample Selection

The population targeted for the study included part-time and full-time faculty members at a community college in Pennsylvania. The target population included 830 full-time and part-time faculty. Inclusion criteria for full-time faculty included being employed at the time of the study, not being on leave, and having held the position for at least 2 years. Inclusion and exclusion criteria limited the scope of participants to those able to provide rich data. In qualitative research, the rationale for inclusion and exclusion criteria should be provided (Korstjens & Moser, 2018a).

Inclusion criteria for part-time faculty included having taught at least one course in the most recent spring or fall semester and having been employed at the institution for at least 2 years. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), inclusion and exclusion criteria should be defined based on the purpose of data. Exclusion criteria for full-time faculty included faculty teaching fewer than 10 courses per year for the previous 2 years. Exclusion criteria for part-time faculty included individuals holding a full-time faculty position at another institution.

To select study participants, nonprobability purposive sampling was used. Yin (2016) posited purposive sampling focuses on collecting data from a site to which the purpose of the

study is most relevant. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated purposive sampling is not probability

sampling, rather purposive sampling is based on selecting a group of people who can best inform

the study. Participants selected for the study were faculty members at a community college in

Pennsylvania. Part-time and full-time faculty members were contacted via email inviting the

faculty members to participate in the study (see Appendix A). Details included requirements of

participants. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for participation were determined based on

employment status and history as reported by participants. Of the individuals interested in

participating in the 14-day response period, 16 participants were selected using nonprobability

purposive sampling.

Of the responses of interested participants, eight full-time and eight part-time faculty

members were selected to participate. The ideal sample size for the qualitative study was a

balance between the in-depth potential of smaller samples and the benefit of a broader, more

applicable larger sample. No specific sample was required for qualitative study, and the study

purpose dictated the sample size (Yin, 2016). Creswell and Poth (2018) confirmed a sample size

of 5–25 participants consisting of those individuals who have experienced the phenomenon is

ideal. Participants were then sent the informed consent form (see Appendix B) and signed

consent was received prior to scheduling interviews.

Consent was obtained from participants through signing an informed consent form. In

addition, consent was obtained using clear and concise language prior to the interview starting.

The informed consent form was sent by email prior to the interview taking place. Participants

were given a verbal walkthrough of the informed consent and provided an opportunity to ask

questions about the use of the information obtained. The participant was informed of their rights

at this time. Participants were then asked to sign and date the informed consent form, scan the

informed consent form to the computer they had access to, and email the signed informed

consent form back to the researcher. Informed consent needed to include clear, understandable,

and detailed language to help participants understand to what the participants were agreeing

(Clark, 2019).

Participant confidentiality measures included anonymization of the data by leaving out

names and positions, assigning a participant number, and whether the participants are part-time

or full-time faculty members to the recorded data. Lancaster (2017) stated care needed to be

taken to preserve participant confidentiality in presenting data while maintaining accuracy of the

study. Recordings of the interviews were kept on a password-protected device without name

identification of the data. Confidentiality measures needed to be explained during the informed

consent process (Clark, 2019).

Instrumentation

Qualitative studies can be based on open-ended questions in an interview format (Yin,

2016). Open-ended questions were the foundation for the interviews conducted. Interviews were

the sole data collection instrument in the study.

Data Instrument

Interviews were at least 30 minutes in duration and included open-ended questions (see

Appendix C). Interviews were conducted by Zoom video session in one-on-one format to

increase participants' comfort in answering the interview questions. According to Creswell and

Poth (2018), interviews are best conducted in a distraction-free place.

Interview questions were not presented to participants until the interview when

questioned. Creswell and Poth (2018) identified the importance of defining interview protocol as

a foundation for interview consistency. A hard copy of the interview questions was sent by email

at the time of the interview for reference.

Instrument Validation

Interview questions developed for the study focused on asking faculty members about personal experience with student attrition and initiatives targeting student attrition. An appropriate existing instrument was not available to align with the study, creating the need to create an instrument. Creswell and Poth (2018) described one method of achieving validity is to have peer review of the research process. Subject matter experts (SMEs) consisted of part-time and full-time faculty at external institutions, as peers of the participants and the researcher. Five SMEs provided helpful feedback including narrowing the study focus to specifically the community college student population at one institution. Additional feedback was implemented to ask faculty members about their lived experience pertaining to student attrition. Additionally, feedback was implemented to ask participants about one significant student or experience pertaining to student attrition. SME feedback also helped correlate interview questions directly to the research questions. Pilot testing was not used for interviews, as interview question validity was addressed by SMEs (see Appendix D).

Data Collection

Interviews took place using Zoom video software. Zoom video interviews were private and secured with a unique password shared only with an individual participant at the time of the scheduled interview. Each interview had a unique Zoom session ID and password, preventing potential security issues. Scheduling was determined based on email communication with participants prior to interviews taking place. Interviewees were part-time and full-time faculty members of the community college being studied in Pennsylvania. Site approval for research at the community college was granted (see Appendix E). Data were collected by a part-time faculty

member of the same community college in Pennsylvania.

Data were collected in audio recordings of entire interviews using the Android application Voice Recorder. The Android device used for recording was a password-protected Samsung Galaxy S10E. Yin (2016) voiced the importance of securing interview recordings to avoid unauthorized disclosure. The Android device was placed on airplane mode by opening the settings application, connections submenu, and turning airplane mode on to avoid notifications interrupting the interview recording.

Prior to each interview, the Android device was powered on, Voice Recorder application opened, and the record button was pressed. Upon completion of the interview, the recording was saved in .mp3 file format labeled using date and time information only for reference, keeping the data anonymous. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended anonymizing data as a security measure. The anonymous audio recordings saved on the password-protected device remained in place until the time the study had been fully completed and there was no longer any need for the audio recordings. After 3 years, the audio recordings will be deleted in accordance with policy 45 CFR 46. Participants exited the study following completion of the member check form (see Appendix F), taken immediately after the interview concluded.

Data Preparation

Recordings of the interviews were transcribed and saved to the Notepad application on a password-protected Windows 10 PC and saved individually in .txt file format. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended focus be placed on securing qualitative data collected from interviews. Scrutiny was essential in data preparation and involved carefully examining data collected for any mistakes needing to be corrected. Text was reviewed and edited for errors to avoid distortion

in analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transcriptions were then loaded to Qualitative Data

Analysis (QDA) Miner Lite software for further processing as described in the following section.

Data Analysis

Data were coded in QDA Miner Lite. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended

phenomenological study coding taking on a tree diagram format with the top level being the

essence of the phenomenon (see Figure 2). The phenomenon being addressed was community

college student attrition. Recommended categories for phenomenological coding included

personal bracketing, significant statements, meaning units, textural description, and structural

description (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Coding categories included personal bracketing, significant

experiences, factors contributing to attrition, factors preventing attrition, initiatives reducing

attrition, ineffective initiatives, suggested initiatives, and the role of the faculty member.

Figure 2

Classification Tree of Coding
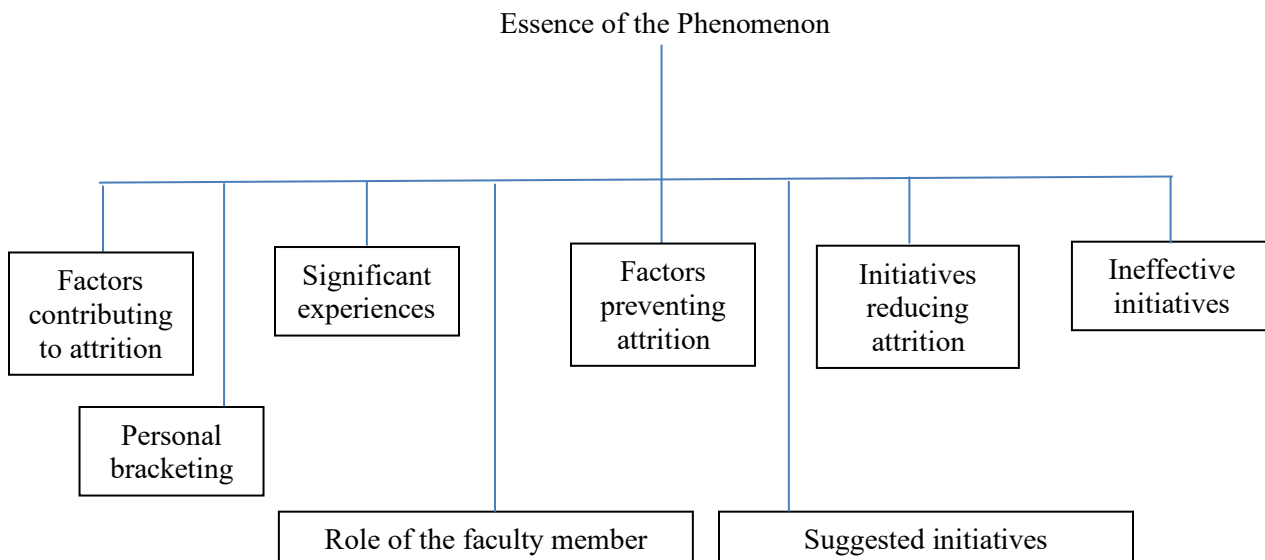
Coding categories were added to a new project in QDA Miner Lite. Transcripts of

interviews were uploaded to QDA Miner Lite. Content of the transcripts were coded into

relevant categories. The coding frequency tool was used to understand frequency of themes. Data were viewed by code category to present results in alignment with the proposed classification tree (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The proposed classification tree was modified to meet the needs of the study, including replacing original classification categories with appropriate replacements relevant to the study purpose and findings.

Searching for emerging themes was executed using a combination of queries and the coding frequency function in QDA Miner Lite. Emerging themes were then identified and extracted to a text document. Emerging themes were prepared for the presentation of the findings. Creswell and Poth (2018) posited phenomenological findings should be presented by category and present textural, structural, and overall essence descriptions in memo format. Yin (2016) pointed out phenomenological findings focus on the lived experiences of the participants being studied.

Reliability and Validity

Credibility of the data and analysis was based on best practices dictated by research experts. Yin (2016) defined credibility as providing assurance research was properly conducted, and findings were accurately presented. Best practices included accurate transcription and coding of data using a recommended category system (Cresswell and Poth, 2018). Audio recordings were verified accurate after initial transcription. Personal bracketing was utilized to limit researcher bias in data analysis and presentation.

Creswell and Poth (2018) posited the importance of peer review of the research process as a validation strategy in qualitative research. Peer review of the interview questions and validity in addressing the research questions was acquired from five SMEs. SMEs were part-time and full-time community college faculty members teaching at a different institution than the

institution from which participants were recruited. Five SMEs were contacted during the

proposal phase, prior to submission of the dissertation proposal to the Internal Review Board

(see Appendix D).

The purposive, site-based sampling method used provided a foundation for transferability

of findings to other community colleges. Yin (2016) posited transferability involves taking the

same concepts and applying the concepts elsewhere. Creswell and Poth (2018) referred to

transferring learned generalizations to other similar populations or contexts. Findings at the

community college studied could be relevant to other community colleges.

Member checking was used to ensure dependability. According to Korstjens and Moser

(2018b), dependability referred to the stability of findings over time and was reliant on

participants' feedback on the research conducted. Member checking was performed by surveying

participant feedback at the conclusion of each interview by having participants complete the

member-check survey (see Appendix F). Creswell and Poth (2018) cited member checking as a

way of verifying reliability through feedback from study participants.

Confirmability was achieved using reflexivity and bracketing. The concept of reflexivity

refers to the researcher being aware of how the researcher's role could influence a study (Yin,

2016). Reflexivity was achieved through research awareness and disclosure, both to participants

prior to the interview and in the presentation of findings, by disclosing the researcher was a

coworker and part-time faculty member at the institution from which participants were recruited.

Credibility was addressed using bracketing to account for researcher bias. Bracketing could

account for researcher bias and allow the reader to decide whether researcher bias influenced

findings. Bracketing was defined as the researcher disclosing personal lived experiences with the

phenomenon to the reader (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ethical Procedures

Human participants were responding to emails, signing informed consent, answering interview questions, and providing feedback. The Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research [NCPHSBBR], 1978) touched on three primary principles to guide research involving human participants including respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Korstjens and Moser (2018b) emphasized the accounting of these ethical principles in qualitative research. The informed consent form (see Appendix B) provided thorough details of participant responsibility and risk to ensure ethical procedure. Full disclosure included stating the interviewer was a part-time faculty member and coworker of the participants of the study.

The Belmont Report (NCPHSBBR, 1978) defined respect for persons as allowing participants to maintain autonomy throughout the research. Respect for persons concerned not only treatment of participants but the handling of participant data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During the research process, participants could decide to discontinue participation in the study at any time. No penalty or loss of the $30 participation Amazon gift card reward was assessed for discontinuation of participation.

According to the Belmont Report (NCPHSBBR, 1978), beneficence refers to doing no harm to participants, minimizing risk, and maximizing benefits. Beneficence is the requirement of agents to provide benefits to others (Rubinstein & Bentwich, 2017). Participants were protected in line with the principle of beneficence by anonymizing and password protecting interview recordings and ensuing transcripts. Interview recordings and transcripts were never linked to personally identifying information and file names were date and time only. Confidentiality was ensured through anonymization of data, leaving out any participant and

name data, assigning only a participant number, and designating whether that interview involved

a full- or part-time faculty member. Recordings were stored on a password-protected Android

device. Taking care of participant data was essential to presenting the data and maintaining

accuracy (Lancaster, 2017).

Justice refers to equal selection and treatment of populations selected for a study and for

the benefits of the study, according to the Belmont Report (NCPHSBBR, 1978). Justice was

applied to participant selection by neither collecting data nor making decisions based on any

additional criteria outside of those outlined for inclusion and exclusion. Korstjens and Moser

(2017) posited precautions should be taken to treat subjects fairly and equitably. Justice was

further applied by treating each participant equally throughout the process and thereafter.

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018b), ethically conducted qualitative research

considers and protects participant privacy and confidentiality. Anonymized audio recording data

collected will be stored for 3 years on a password-protected Android device. Transcripts of the

data will remain anonymous and stored on a password-protected Windows 10 personal computer

for 3 years. All data will be fully deleted after 3 years in accordance with Federal Regulation 45

CFR 46.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the methodology, design, and rationale for the chosen

approach. Research procedures were discussed, including how participants were recruited (see

Appendix A). Informed consent procedure and format were described (see Appendix B). Data

collection and analysis procedures were presented. Coding format and categorization were

presented in tree form (see Figure 2). Ethical considerations were demonstrated throughout, in

addition to steps taken to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Member checking format was discussed (see Appendix F). Subject matter expert (SME) review

was presented (see Appendix D). Chapter 4 presents research findings and data analysis results.

Chapter 4: Research Findings and Data Analysis Results

The background of the study was community college student attrition has continued to be a problem plaguing community colleges throughout the United States (Juszkiewicz, 2017). For the study, student attrition at a community college in Pennsylvania was analyzed. Reducing student attrition has been targeted by institutions to reduce enrollment expenses and the loss of revenue due to student attrition (Nicholson, 2016). Much has been studied regarding student attrition from the student perspective, however, little study has been conducted analyzing faculty perspectives on student attrition.

The problem was an existing 39% attrition rate at a community college in Pennsylvania. The extent of the problem was mirrored nationwide with a 39% student attrition rate for community college students who did not receive a credential within 3 years (Juszkiewicz, 2017). The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore faculty members' lived experiences regarding student attrition at a community college in Pennsylvania. The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: What are the lived experiences of faculty members pertaining to student attrition?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of faculty members on initiatives used to reduce student attrition?

Data Collection

Informed consent for participation in the study was collected via email. The informed consent form (see Appendix B) was emailed to study participants before the scheduled Zoom interview. Informed consent forms were received and verified prior to the beginning of each participant's Zoom interview. Korstjens and Moser (2018b) demonstrated the importance of

adhering to ethical principles including informed consent practices in research. The study

included 16 participants. Of 16 participants, eight were part-time faculty members and eight

were full-time faculty members. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated a sample size of 5–25 is ideal

for a phenomenological qualitative study.

Each of the 16 study participants were interviewed on a password-protected Zoom video

session. Lancaster (2017) posited security measures to ensure participant confidentiality is

essential in obtaining and presenting data. Each session was audio recorded using the Voice

Recorder application on a password-protected Android Samsung Galaxy S20 Ultra. Audio

recordings were later transcribed and saved using Microsoft Word on a password-protected

Windows 10 PC. The Zoom interviews were conducted consistently in the same office setting for

the researcher, with each participant joining the zoom interview from wherever the participant

chose. Creswell and Poth (2018) pointed out the importance of consistency in interview protocol.

Common background settings for study participants included home offices, bedrooms, kitchens,

and living rooms.

No significant deviations from the data collection plan presented in the Research

Methodology chapter occurred. Some minor deviations did occur, however. The Voice Recorder

application was used on a password protected Samsung S20 Ultra instead of a password

protected Samsung S10E. Transcriptions on the password-protected Windows 10 PC were saved

using Microsoft Word in .docx format, rather than the previously stated Notepad Application

using .txt format.

The primary unusual circumstance during data collection was the presence of the

COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic was the reason interviews were conducted by

password-protected Zoom sessions rather than in person. Online zoom interviews were necessary

due to federal and state social distancing requirements at the time of the study. College campuses were closed during the study preventing the ability to conduct interviews on campus. In addition, the pandemic created an environment in which potential study participants had additional challenges in daily life and work.

Data Analysis and Results

The data analysis model used for the phenomenological qualitative study was presenting emerging themes through coding transcriptions of the interviews conducted. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended using a coding tree diagram format with the essence of the phenomenon at the top level. Categories for coding were dictated based on the purpose of the study (Yin, 2016). Categories included personal bracketing, significant experiences, factors contributing to attrition, factors preventing attrition, initiatives reducing attrition, ineffective initiatives, suggested initiatives, and the role of the faculty member. Figure 2 provided a graphical representation of the coding categories used in the suggested tree diagram format. Themes were further identified under each research question.

Emerging themes were identified regarding Research Question 2 on faculty perspectives on initiatives used to reduce student attrition (see Table 1). Two overarching themes persisted. Better evaluation of initiatives before implementation was repeatedly mentioned. Sticking with initiatives and not switching constantly was also repeatedly posited by study participants.

Table 1

Emerging Themes

Research Question One: Lived Experience
Financial Challenges
Familial Challenges
Support
Research Question Two: Perspective on Initiatives
Researching Initiatives

Sticking with Initiatives

Significant Experiences

Several significant lived experiences stood out in the data. Participants repeatedly cited changing over time, becoming more flexible and compassionate as they better understood students' life situations. One participant stated, "I've gotten to be much more empathetic an instructor just because of the life circumstances that people have." Other participants mentioned becoming less strict with students over time, more flexible with due dates, and softer on grading over time as they encountered various challenges students' life circumstances presented.

Life circumstance challenges for students were a common theme in the lived experiences of participants. Participants mentioned students had to choose between attending work and class, ensuring younger siblings were fed, and a plethora of other home circumstances creating significant challenges for students to succeed and remain in college. Family issues persisted as a factor contributing to student attrition.

Several participants voiced the importance of building a supportive relationship and rapport with students through significant lived experiences. One participant recalled an experience with a student just out of jail, wherein developing a relationship with the student and showing the student respect helped the student succeed. Other participants confirmed the importance of developing a relationship with students, showing students respect, and genuinely caring. Another participant recalled a significant experience wherein a student told the participant, "You were the first teacher to ever show me respect." Participants commented on the importance of disclosing some personal information to build a relationship with students to allow students to feel more comfortable. Table 2 outlines a sampling of significant experience quotes from the interviews.

Table 2

Significant Experiences

Common Theme	Specific Significant Lived Experience
Financial Issues	"Often their lives were in a state of crisis I was totally blind to, and that obviously made me change my orientation and made me sort of approach it with a more compassionate stance."
Family Issues	"I don't know how much longer I can do this. I have to take care of my little sister and my little brother. I have to make sure that they have food to eat, and they're off to school."
Support	"I had this guy actually who had been in jail. He showed up in class, and he had tattoos, including gang tattoos on his neck, tears tattoos on his eye. You figure, my goodness. I was almost a little scared. I remember that I made a point of trying to give him a little respect and a little space in class. He became a really good student. He finally became a nurse. Almost every year, he comes back and visits me and says, professor, I really appreciate what you've done. I didn't really do anything. I think, to have a little closer relationship with them, it goes a long way."

Attrition Factors From Lived Experience

Several factors contributing to and preventing the attrition phenomenon were mentioned by the participants interviewed. The primary factors from the faculty perspective included financial challenges, family challenges, and support as key factors in contributing to or preventing student attrition. A few minor mentions that did not emerge as consistent themes were factors such as transportation, English as a second language, and community colleges serving primarily nontraditional students.

Financial Issues

From the faculty perspective, the most consistent theme in the collected data was financial challenges leading to student attrition. Every study participant mentioned financial challenges in one form or another. One participant summed it up nicely, stating, "Finances, always." Another elaborated further, stating, "I think that the nonacademic responsibilities of students, it's almost that Maslow's theory. If they can't meet their needs of having a house, paying their rent, providing food, they have to work, they have no choice." Financial aid mixups and issues were a common theme. One participant voiced how out of touch faculty members can be when it comes to the daily financial challenges of students: "The attrition rate is directly related to some of these really, really difficult situations that maybe you and I in our situations or socioeconomic, we can't imagine what it would be like." Overall, finances in several forms were the most frequent reason for attrition referenced by study participants.

Family Issues

Family issues and responsibilities permeated the interview discussions surrounding factors contributing to student attrition. Participants all viewed family issues as a primary factor in one form or another. Some common family issues mentioned included taking care of children or an elderly family member, working extra to pay bills to support one's family, making up for the substance abuse or mental illness of another family member, taking care of younger siblings, and finally, a lack of support from family members so severe in some cases family members discouraged education and doubted students' abilities to succeed in the college environment.

One participant stated, "My classes, in particular, I don't really think it's inability. It's rarely inability to perform. It is almost always life getting in the way of things that we can't help them with." Another mentioned, "Yeah, for me, I mean, I think, a lot of it is sort of life crisis

type events that are, that start off campus." Family issues, stressors, and responsibilities outside of the classroom persisted as common themes participants perceived contributing to student attrition.

When referring to family support, another participant stated, "I think the key to everything is just that stable home life." Each participant had a slightly different perspective on what family support entailed. Participants consistently indicated supportive families helped prevent student attrition and family issues contributed to student attrition. Family issues continued to be present in various forms throughout the interview process.

Support

Advising issues were referenced several times as a factor contributing to student attrition. One participant pointed out inconsistencies in advising throughout the degree program: "So many aren't notified either. They just suddenly have a different advisor, and then they feel like they've just had the rug ripped out from underneath them." Caring advisors and instructors were frequently mentioned by study participants. One participant went so far as to suggest borderline invasive advising, meaning really digging into a student's personal life and time management together. Participants referenced consistent advisors as being preferable to advisors changing every semester. Additionally, having a relevant advisor in the same field of study as the advisee was cited as a factor which prevents attrition.

Faculty support was a common theme presented in the interview process. Several participants mentioned issues with faculty members contributing to student attrition. One participant identified adjuncts can be part of the problem and stated, "Some adjuncts are unable to be there for students because it's just a secondary side job for them." Another mentioned

faculty members' unrealistic expectations of students. Participants also reported perceiving prior bad experiences with faculty could contribute to attrition.

Several times participants mentioned the positive impact a caring instructor can have in preventing attrition. One participant voiced, "I think that as an instructor, it's good to keep an eye on it and support the student as they're seeking those services." Another added, "I think we care a lot. That's why we're really involved in finding out what issues they're having." The emerging theme was caring faculty members are a major factor preventing attrition, and all participants agreed faculty members should be caring, considerate, and supportive of students in class and outside of class matters to the extent possible.

Most participants were pleased with the student support services offered. One participant stated, "I am really impressed with the services that we do offer students. When you think of the career counseling center. They have some pretty amazing services." Another added, "I think the college has been doing a better job with things like food support, textbooks, even things like emergency housing." In addition, to support from faculty members and the institution, faculty members perceived supportive family and peers as factors preventing student attrition. Students having supportive family members and peers was repeatedly mentioned by study participants as factors preventing student attrition. One participant summed it up nicely, "I think that, if you could boil it down to one thing, it's having someone in your life who is supportive." Peers and a sense of belonging were mentioned by several participants as preventing student attrition. One participant voiced, "I would say the students that stick in class are the most sociable ones. The ones that seem to view the class as your two times a week when you get to hang out with your friends." Ultimately, consensus among participants concluded peer support and a sense of belonging helped prevent student attrition.

Summary of Attrition Factors

Participants shared perceiving many factors contributed to and prevented the student

attrition phenomenon. The top factors mentioned included Financial Issues, Family Issues, and

Support. Overall, Financial Issues were mentioned more than any other issue as the primary

emerging theme from the interview data. Family Issues closely followed as the second most

frequently cited factor contributing to the student attrition phenomenon. In addition to factors

perceived to contribute to attrition, the same factors were perceived to help prevent attrition

when financial issues were absent, families were supportive, and proper support from faculty,

advisors, and the institution were provided.

Initiatives

Several emerging themes were presented by participants when discussing initiatives that

have reduced the student attrition phenomenon. Faculty perspectives on initiatives used to reduce

student attrition were analyzed. Individual program initiatives mentioned included Starfish,

Think 30, the Academy for College Excellence (ACE) Program, and the Accelerated Learning

Program (ALP). Also mentioned were several financial support-related programs including

laptop assistance, food assistance, and social services. Professional development was cited as an

important initiative. Finally, orientation, tutoring, and success planning initiatives were perceived

as helpful initiatives reducing the student attrition phenomenon.

Themes were further collapsed to identify two primary overarching themes pertaining to

faculty perspectives on initiatives used to reduce student attrition. The result was properly

researching initiatives before they were implemented and sticking with initiatives were the two

most important factors in making initiatives effective at reducing the frequency of student

attrition. Study participants continued to reference these themes through the interview process.

Study participants attributed much of the problem to frequent administrative staff turnover.

Researching Initiatives

Faculty participants agreed initiatives often failed for a lack of research before

implementation. Execution of initiatives was also poor when proper planning was not in place.

For instance, the Starfish early alert system was not discussed with faculty or the union prior to

implementation, resulting in faculty not being required to participate in the initiative. Starfish

was one primary example of a lack of planning leading to ineffective initiative implementation.

The most mentioned ineffective initiative at reducing the frequency of student attrition

was Starfish, the early alert system to flag or give kudos to students or instigate counselor or

other outreach. Participants had a wide range of concerns about the Starfish early alert system.

One participant voiced,

I sometimes think that the Starfish initiative is a little overwhelming and it's a lot

of work. I'm sure that it does help, but personally, I'd rather tell my students face

to face that they're doing ok, or not doing ok, or what can we do to help you?

Another pointed out the issue with Starfish not being required to be used, "The issue we have

with the college is that the full-time faculty, it's not in their contract that they're mandated to do

Starfish, so they don't." The poor planning and research summed it up as the primary reason

faculty participants perceived Starfish as ineffective.

Another example of poor decision making involved advising practices and outreach

efforts, cited by participants as being either too invasive or downright contrary to the mission to

serve students. One participant voiced, "There was one semester when they tried to make us do a

phone bank and call all students, just a random list of students who hadn't enrolled for the spring

who were enrolled for the fall." Another participant cited an issue with advising practices, "They did invasive advising tracking systems that we were confused about as faculty, and then telling them to take more classes, which I thought was the biggest mistake." Participants voiced a lack of careful planning and research led to the failure of certain initiatives.

Sticking With Initiatives

Multiple participants voiced concern initiatives were often discontinued prior to real impact being achievable. One participant voiced,

> "I think the problem with most of these programs that are brought in to help with
> developmental students or help retain students is that they get a lot of buy in for a
> semester and then the enthusiasm goes away."

Another participant stated, "The next big thing comes along and then we go for that rather than sticking with one program that clearly works, or that shows signs of working and trying to extend it." Not sticking with initiatives was a repeated theme among participant perspectives on ineffective initiatives.

Summary of Initiatives

Table 3 outlines effective, ineffective, and suggested initiatives from the faculty perspective cited by participants in the study. The common presented themes included not properly researching and planning initiatives and not sticking with initiatives as the major issues preventing initiatives from being successful in reducing the student attrition phenomenon. A wide range of suggested initiatives were presented, including bringing some old initiatives back, such as the ACE and ALP programs, teaching students noncognitive skills, setting expectations at admissions, and better marketing of program offerings and scholarship opportunities, among others. Overall, a great deal was gleaned regarding faculty perspectives on initiatives used to

reduce student attrition, with the primary concerns being carefully researching, planning, and

implementing initiatives, as well as sticking with initiatives for the long term.

Table 3

Effective, Ineffective, and Suggested Initiatives

Effective Initiatives	Ineffective Initiatives	Suggested Initiatives
ACE Program	Invasive Advising	Bring Back the ACE Program
ALP Program	Not Sticking with Initiatives	Bring Back the ALP Program
Financial Support Programs	Starfish	Admissions Expectations
Orientation	Questionable Advising	Daycare on Campus
Starfish	Random Nonpersonal Outreach	Marketing Campus Programs
Professional Development		Marketing Scholarships
Think 30		Orientation Noncognitive
Tutoring		Skills
		Peer Support and Fellowship
		Breaking Courses into Single
		Credit Parts
		Reducing Number of Tests
		Counselors for Each Program
		Mandatory Advising
		Personal Outreach

Discrepant Cases and Non-confirming Data

Instances of discrepant cases and non-confirming data arose. One participant expressed

perceiving no faculty role in preventing student attrition. Another participant responded

defensively to questions pertaining to the faculty role in student attrition, citing faculty members

do everything they can, but a lot of times it is presented as if it is the faculty member's fault

student attrition occurs. Three participants voiced positive perspectives on the Starfish early alert

system, whereas most participants voiced negative perspectives. Other outliers were discussed in

the respective sections prior.

Personal Bracketing

The researcher had an extensive background in substance abuse and mental health treatment, acknowledging the possibility of too much focus on substance abuse and mental health as factors contributing to student attrition. Caution was also taken as a peer adjunct faculty member, having lived one's own experiences with the student attrition phenomenon. Extensive experience with online learning and instruction was also considered. Having a technical background and technical skills leading to the possibility of downplaying the impact of technical complexity creating a barrier for faculty member participation in initiatives was considered, along with the potential to downplay student difficulties in accessing online learning resources.

Reliability and Validity

Credibility of the instrument was bolstered by peer review. Credibility provides assurance research was properly conducted and accurately presented (Yin, 2016). Peer review of the interview questions and validity of the interview questions addressing the intended research questions were acquired from five SMEs. SMEs selected were part- and full-time faculty members at other institutions not involved in the study. SME responses can be seen in Appendix D. Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasized the benefit of peer review of the research process as a measure of validity verification.

The purposive, site-based sampling used for the study supports transferability to other community colleges in similar geographic regions. Transferability involves the applicability of the same concepts in other environments (Yin, 2016). Learned generalizations being able to be applied to other populations or contexts of a similar nature is transferability (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Dependability was verified using member checking. Member checking was performed to elicit participant feedback to confirm the dependability of the study. Member checking responses universally confirmed the study dependable with "yes" responses to both member check questions. Feedback included the study questions and format were an effective way to gather faculty perspectives on student attrition. Dependability is the stability of findings over time based on the feedback of study participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018b). Creswell and Poth (2018) posited member checking is one method to verify the dependability of a study.

Reflexivity and bracketing were used to achieve confirmability. Reflexivity refers to an awareness of how the researcher's role can impact the study (Yin, 2016). Reflexivity in the study included the researcher disclosing to participants prior to the interview and in the presentation of findings the researcher was a coworker and part-time faculty member at the institution from which participants were recruited. Bracketing researcher experience and thus potential biases were documented, ensuring credibility. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), bracketing refers to disclosing personal bias and lived experiences of the phenomenon to the reader.

Chapter Summary

Examining the lived experiences of faculty members pertaining to student attrition included analyzing factors presented by faculty member participants contributing to or helping prevent student attrition. The perception of faculty members on initiatives used to reduce student attrition included faculty perspectives on effective, ineffective, and suggested initiatives to reduce the frequency of the student attrition phenomenon. Faculty members' lived experiences with the student attrition phenomenon exemplified key factors of the student attrition phenomenon, including financial issues, family issues, and support.

Study participants pointed out careful planning, research, and implementation of initiatives as essential. Additionally, faculty participants posited sticking with initiatives for the long term can increase effectiveness. Faculty participants provided a wealth of perspectives and suggestions beneficial to the study and the community college field. The data presented translate to additional understanding and a call for action in Chapter 5 for institutions and faculty members to better address the student attrition phenomenon.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Faculty member interviews pertaining to lived experiences with the student attrition phenomenon yielded emerging themes. In response to Research Question 1, Financial Challenges, Familial Challenges, and Support were key emerging themes. Research Question 2 responses from faculty participants regarding perspectives on initiatives used to reduce student attrition were analyzed. Two primary themes emerged, including the importance of Researching and Planning Initiatives before implementation and Sticking With Initiatives for the long term.

The problem was an existing 39% attrition rate at a community college in Pennsylvania. The significance of the study was addressing a gap in the literature evaluating faculty perspectives on the student attrition phenomenon. The literature review highlighted several topics related to the student attrition phenomenon. The less often presented perspectives from the faculty's point of view were examined.

Many factors which contributed to the frequency of the student attrition phenomenon were discussed in the literature review. Factors included financial challenges, lack of supportive relationships with advisors, faculty, family members, peers, and many others. Banks and Dohy (2019) posited poor advising relationships increased attrition in the minority student population. Financial challenges were consistently cited as a factor contributing to student attrition (Harrell & Reglin, 2018; Harris, 2018; Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016). Financial support services addressing a range of student needs were helpful in preventing student attrition (Millea et al., 2018). The literature review aligns with findings in the study on the impact of financial challenges on student attrition.

Familial relationships were repeatedly posited as a factor preventing student attrition (Edwards et al., 2016; Hawkins et al., 2009; Windle, 2011). Recruitment practices, outreach, and

marketing initiatives were areas previously modified by institutions to reduce student attrition

(Butler et al., 2018). Faculty advising and relationships between students and advisors were

important factors preventing student attrition (Harrell & Reglin, 2018). Orientation programs and

initiatives were heralded as beneficial and modifications of such programs as a target to reduce

student attrition (Levin et al., 2019). The literature review aligns with the findings in the study on

familial challenges being a primary factor in student attrition.

The role of faculty in reducing student attrition was also discussed in the literature

review. Professional development efforts to address student attrition were found to be beneficial

in reducing student attrition through empowering faculty to embrace their role (Roberts, 2018).

Additionally, professional development efforts dispelling common myths surrounding student

attrition were helpful to faculty members to better understand the role faculty play in impacting

the student attrition phenomenon (Miller et al., 2019). Supportive faculty, advisors, family

members, and peers were consistently perceived by study participants as factors helpful in

reducing student attrition.

The analysis of the qualitative data collected uncovered insightful perspectives on factors

and initiatives surrounding the student attrition phenomenon. Faculty participants also provided a

viewpoint on the faculty member's role and limitations in addressing student attrition. Suggested

initiatives were discovered. Findings, interpretations, and conclusions allow for further

understanding of the data collected. Limitations of the study are analyzed. Recommendations and

implications for leadership are detailed to put the data into action.

Findings, Interpretations, Conclusions

In many ways, the findings confirmed the knowledge in the discipline and the

information found in the literature review in Chapter 2. Findings confirmed Family Issues were a

top factor contributing to or preventing student attrition (Edwards et al., 2016; Hawkins et al., 2009; Windle, 2011). Financial Challenges persisted as a top factor in student attrition (Butler et al., 2018). Support from faculty, advisors, peers, and the institution were consistently posited as key factors in student attrition (Harrell & Reglin, 2018).

Findings disconfirmed a few parts of the literature review. Of significant note, participants voiced perceiving the biggest issue with initiatives is the institution not sticking with them. Extending the knowledge on why initiatives are ineffective, participants also mentioned initiative execution lacking, or lack of participation by staff based on it not being required as rendering initiatives ineffective. Little was found in the literature review on the lack of execution by administration and lack of follow-through playing a significant role in initiatives being ineffective.

Findings extended the knowledge in the discipline by highlighting the tremendous impact of financial issues on community college student attrition. The stories and specific examples faculty participants provided were enlightening. Participant consensus was students often had to choose between work and school, and between providing food for themselves and family versus attending school. Participants voiced stories of student attrition occurring for students to take care of family members, including making sure younger siblings were fed. Other participants reported feeling the time for students to succeed just was not there, citing students doing schoolwork in the middle of the night between working multiple jobs to pay expenses and caring for children. The severity of the situation extended beyond previous knowledge uncovered in the literature review—knowledge only available through qualitative analysis of faculty perspectives on the student attrition phenomenon. The lived experiences uncovered a new depth to reasons behind student attrition and a foundation for ideas to address it.

Faculty participants had many suggested initiatives, extending the knowledge in the discipline and providing recommendations to administrators for future initiatives to address student attrition. Faculty member participants perceived bringing back programs which had limited success due to abandonment as a step forward. Programs including the ACE and ALP programs. Participants pointed out following through with initiatives would better address student attrition. Participants suggested Starfish be mandatory, increasing participation and effectiveness of the initiative. Participants outlined several financial support initiatives to implement to help students meet their needs and reduce student attrition, including food assistance, daycare on campus, laptop assistance, and textbook assistance.

Consensus persisted seeking to serve students by meeting their needs outside of the classroom and inside the classroom allowed students to succeed and reduced student attrition. Servant leadership theory focuses on best serving others before the needs of oneself (Sahawneh & Benuto, 2018). When applied to the student attrition phenomenon, serving the needs of the students was consistently mentioned by study participants. Meeting the basic needs of students, including financial assistance, family support, and support from faculty, advisors, and the institution allows students to succeed in community college. Meeting basic needs to allow for achievement of higher needs is the foundational principal in Maslow's theory (Acevedo, 2018).

Serving students by helping them meet basic needs to succeed in education aligns with the theoretical framework of servant leadership and Maslow's theory. Participants consistently perceived financial needs including housing, food, electronics, and books as factors contributing to student attrition. Participants also mentioned the tradeoff students consistently had to make to work to pay bills rather than attend class or have sufficient time to study. Any initiatives targeting basic student needs were found helpful by participants in the study.

Servant leadership theory and Maslow's theory provide a theoretical framework for understanding the student attrition phenomenon. Participant interviews uncovered several factors contributing to and preventing student attrition focusing on students' basic needs being met for students to focus on success in community college. The study revealed the key factors in student attrition were Financial Challenges, Familial Challenges, and Support. To address factors at the institution level, initiatives can be taken by institutions to fulfill the basic needs of students. Support service initiatives were found to be beneficial to students achieving educational goals (Levin et al., 2019). Participants in the study focused responses surrounding factors and initiatives used to address the student attrition phenomenon. The primary issues leading to ineffective initiatives from faculty members' perspectives were poor planning and research prior to implementation, as well as not sticking with initiatives after implementation.

Interpretations, inferences, and conclusions did not exceed the data, findings, and scope of the study. Findings and conclusions in some respects mirrored previous research while extending knowledge in understanding why initiatives are most commonly ineffective from the faculty perspective. Supportive relationships in the family and college community were found to reduce student attrition by increasing a student's resilience (Edwards et al., 2016). Both participant interviews and the literature review point to the theoretical framework of merging concepts of servant leadership and Maslow's theory to conclude meeting students' basic needs allows students to achieve in community college and helps reduce the frequency of student attrition.

The study allowed a deeper understanding of what contributes to and prevents student attrition. The severity of the financial and familial challenges went beyond anything uncovered in the literature review. Extreme challenges such as food insecurity and having to make difficult

choices between attending school and feeding one's siblings were found. The financial reality of students struggling to pay rent and electricity was presented. Deciding between attending school and working to pay rent was identified by a study participant. Some financial challenges were expected, but the extreme financial challenges the community college student population faces were undocumented in existing research.

Family challenges discovered were also quite extreme. Participants reported students caring for aging family members and children getting in the way of studying. Participants mentioned family members who went out of their way to discourage school attendance. In addition, students having to deal with family members with substance abuse and mental health issues was uncovered. Familial challenges are often combined with financial challenges. When a substance-abusing parent was present in the home, students had to work extra, take care of siblings, and take on other responsibilities normally held by a parent in the home. Some familial challenges were expected, but the extent of the familial challenges presented by study participants was alarming. Support could be a positive factor for students as well.

Faculty participants perceived supportive families, peers, faculty members, advisors, and support services as helpful in preventing student attrition. Having some support was repeatedly cited as a key factor in student success. One participant summed it up perfectly, "I think that, if you could boil it down to one thing, it's having someone in your life who is supportive." Student support services were repeatedly posited as impactful, especially the food and laptop programs. Daycare on campus was suggested by multiple participants and should be investigated by the institution.

A call to action resulted from the study. Faculty members have a role in addressing student attrition. It starts with understanding the severity and depth of financial and familial

challenges community college students face. Flexibility stemming from this understanding can benefit students and help foster empathetic relationships between faculty members and students.

Creating a supportive environment and fostering peer and faculty relationships must be a top priority for faculty members and community colleges. Initiatives to foster these relationships should be top priority. Addressing financial insecurity through student support initiatives must be continually presented with novel and creative ways to help better serve students. Overall, better support of students fosters student success.

Care must be taken when administration develops, researches, plans, and implements initiatives to address or reduce student attrition. Proper buy-in from faculty, the union, and other stakeholders is essential to creating effective initiatives. The union plays an important part in deciding what instructors will and will not be required to do as part of their job and contract. Initiatives should be stuck with and not continually interchanged for the "next big thing." Turnover in administration should not consistently yield new initiatives when old initiatives were not given sufficient support and longevity to determine effectiveness.

Faculty members and institutions have a duty to serve students enrolled in the institution and in class. The call to serve must guide decision making and the day-to-day operations of any community college. Seeking to better serve students and meet student needs is a foundational reference point for initiatives and services proposed. A consideration which should be consistently deliberated is how the institution can better serve students and help students succeed.

Limitations

Limitations of the findings included transferability to other institutions. Transferability to other community college settings in similar geographical and socioeconomic areas may be made,

though external factors may limit the transferability of the findings of the study. Credibility and validity were assured based on the peer review by five SMEs. A limitation of the credibility was the limited number of SMEs reviewing the interview questions. Member checking was used to confirm dependability. Only study participants were provided member check forms and only participant feedback was used to confirm dependability. Feedback from the study participants was universally positive, including verifying the dependability of the study and effectiveness of the format to gather faculty perspectives on student attrition. No changes were made as a result of the member checking responses. Reflexivity and bracketing were used for confirmability. The researcher's ability to acknowledge, understand, and present his own biases is limited by nature. The results of the study can be applied in other community college settings with care taken to account for variables such as socioeconomic differences in the target geographical region.

Recommendations

Focus should be placed on serving students by meeting students' basic needs to allow them space and ability to achieve educational goals. Addressing student basic needs involves providing several financial support resources at the institutional level. Initiatives should be followed through on for a greater period to be effective. Greater care must be taken before implementing initiatives and greater analysis before discontinuing initiatives targeting the student attrition phenomenon. Initiatives should not be undertaken without sufficient buy-in from faculty and administration alike. Half measures lead to poor results, waste of effort, and diminishing faculty motivation to implement and make future initiatives effective.

Further research on specific financial support initiatives should be undertaken. Additional research should include results from the length of initiative execution to demonstrate the differences between initiatives only executed for a short time and those maintained for a longer

time. Research evaluating the differences between the length of time initiatives are maintained could further the knowledge in the field and could be a way to further confirm the perspectives of faculty member participants discussed in the findings of the study.

Institutions addressing the student attrition phenomenon should regularly gather faculty member feedback. Faculty members' buy-in and participation can make or break the success of initiatives. Greater care should be taken to avoid rapid swapping of initiatives without giving each initiative a chance to be effective. Institutions should seek to serve students by meeting students' basic needs allowing space for them to achieve.

Implications for Leadership

Potential impact and positive social change at the institutional and community level are possible through implementing the findings of the study. Stakeholders and leadership can use the findings of the study to better design initiatives to meet student needs. The faculty members' perspectives studied provide a framework for better understanding the student attrition phenomenon, initiatives taken to reduce student attrition, and how to achieve better buy-in from faculty members through sticking with well-designed initiatives. Leadership can implement change in how initiatives are designed, implemented, and followed through with to effect meaningful change on the student attrition problem.

Student attrition impacts many institutions and communities in the country and around the world (Juszkiewicz, 2017). Significant loss of resources at the personal, familial, and societal levels occurs when student attrition occurs (Nicholson, 2016; Snyder & Cudney, 2017). The global impact of reducing student attrition holds great potential. Although student attrition will continue to occur in many cases, action must be taken to minimize its frequency and impact.

Conclusion

The study uncovered new knowledge surrounding the factors and initiatives faculty members perceived as effective and ineffective in addressing the student attrition problem. Key factors related to student attrition included financial challenges, familial challenges, and support. Faculty member participants also provided new insight into why initiatives fail and suggested changes to initiative implementation. Initiatives should be more carefully designed and implemented, and care should be taken to follow through with initiatives. In addition, caution should be taken before discontinuing initiatives. Initiatives should focus on better serving students through meeting students' basic needs and allowing students to achieve educational goals at the community college level.

The study highlighted the importance of viewing student attrition through the theoretical framework of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970) and Maslow's theory (Bridgman et al., 2019). Administration and faculty must seek to serve students and meet their needs to help them succeed. Care must be taken when implementing change at the institutional level. Sticking with well-designed initiatives is perceived as key by faculty participants to making an impact on student attrition.

The student, family, peers, faculty members, advisors, financial aid counselors, admissions personnel, and enrollment counselors have a role in student attrition. Each department and individual staff member at the institution can play a part in effecting positive change on the student attrition phenomenon. The study presented a deeper understanding for all involved based on faculty member perspectives highlighting the severity of the challenges faced by students.

The findings of the study imply faculty members and college administrators need to take responsibility to understand what students go through and the challenges they face and each person's role in impacting the student attrition phenomenon. Community colleges have a duty to educate each staff member and each department on the realities of challenges facing students which contribute to attrition. Each individual plays a role in serving students and helping students succeed.

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Appendix A

Participant Invitation

Dear ▮▮▮▮ Faculty and Adjunct Faculty,

I would like to invite you to participate in a qualitative study for my dissertation. I will be

interviewing part-time and full-time faculty members here at the college by zoom for 30 minutes

regarding their perspectives on student attrition and greatly appreciate your help. The focus of

the study will be on faculty member perspectives of student attrition, what impact faculty

perceive initiatives to address student attrition have had at the college, and what additional

initiatives faculty perceive would be useful in reducing student attrition in the future.

If interested, please respond with upcoming dates and times that would work for a 30-minute

zoom interview that will be audio-recorded. Please allow for roughly 10 minutes prior to settle

in. Please note all interviews will be audio recorded on a password protected android device.

Data will be saved anonymously without name identifiers. Please reach out with any questions.

Study participation will be limited to eight full-time faculty and eight part-time faculty

(adjuncts).

Sincerely,
Kevin Craner
▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Prospective Research Participant: Read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

Project Information

Project Title: Factors and Initiatives in Community College Student Attrition: A Qualitative Analysis

Researcher: Kevin Craner
Organization: American College of Education
Email: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮   **Telephone:** ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Researcher's Faculty Member:
Organization and Position: American College of Education
Email:

Introduction
I am Kevin Craner, and I am a doctoral candidate student at the American College of Education. I am doing research under the guidance and supervision of my Chair, Dr. Herring. I will give you some information about the project and invite you to be part of this research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research. This consent form may contain words you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information, and I will explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them then.

Purpose of the Research
You are being asked to participate in a research study which will assist with understanding community college student attrition and initiatives to address student attrition. This qualitative study will examine faculty members' perspectives on student attrition and initiatives to address student attrition. Through the investigation of faculty perspectives, emerging themes may present to assist institutions in addressing student attrition.

Research Design and Procedures
The study will use a qualitative methodology and phenomenological research design. The researcher will interview participants and interviews will be audio recorded. The study will comprise 16 participants, purposively selected, who will participate in the interviews. The study will involve one 30-minute interview to be conducted via Zoom session.

Participant selection
You are being invited to take part in this research because of your experience as a part-time or full-time faculty member who can contribute much to the perspective, which meets the criteria for this study. Participant selection criteria: Inclusion criteria for full-time faculty: being

employed at the time of study, not on leave, and have held their position for at least 2 years. Inclusion criteria for part-time faculty: having taught at least one course in the most recent spring or fall semester and been employed at the institution for at least 2 years.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate. If you choose not to participate, there will be no punitive repercussions and you do not have to participate. If you select to participate in this study, you may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

Procedures

We are inviting you to participate in this research study. If you agree, you will be asked to answer questions in a 30-minute Zoom interview format. The type of questions asked will focus on your perspective of student attrition, and your perspective of initiatives that have been or can be taken to address student attrition.

Duration

The interview portion of the research study will require approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Risks

The researcher will ask you to share personal and confidential information, and you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion if you don't wish to do so. You do not have to give any reason for not responding to any question.

Benefits

The financial benefit to you for participating in the study is a $30 Amazon e-gift card. Your participation is likely to help us find out more about student attrition and initiatives targeting student attrition. The potential benefits of this study will aid the higher education field and its students in better understanding student attrition.

Reimbursement

A $30 Amazon e-gift card will be provided to participants in this study.

Confidentiality

I will not share information about you or anything you say to anyone outside of the researcher. During the defense of the doctoral dissertation, data collected will be presented to the dissertation committee. The data collected will be kept in a locked file cabinet or encrypted computer file. Any information about you will be coded and will not have a direct correlation, which directly identifies you as the participant. Only I will know what your number is, and I will secure your information.

Sharing the Results

At the end of the research study, the results will be available for each participant. It is anticipated to publish the results so other interested people may learn from the research.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw
Participation is voluntary. At any time, you wish to end your participation in the research study, you may do so without repercussions.

Questions About the Study
If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact Kevin Craner. This research plan has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of American College of Education. This is a committee whose role is to make sure research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to ask questions of this group, email IRB@ace.edu.

Certificate of Consent
I have read the information about this study, or it has been read to me. I acknowledge why I have been asked to be a participant in the research study. I have been provided the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I certify I am at least 18 years of age. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print or Type Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily. A copy of this Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print or type name of lead researcher: _____

Signature of lead researcher: _____

I have accurately read or witnessed the accurate reading of the assent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm the individual has freely given assent.

Print or type name of lead researcher: _____

Signature of lead researcher: _____

Date: _____

Signature of faculty member: _____

Date: _____

PLEASE KEEP THIS INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR YOUR RECORDS.

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. What experience have you had with student attrition?

2. What is one specific experience that stands out regarding student attrition? Was there a specific student attrition instance that made an impact on you?

3. Based on your professional experience as a faculty member, what is your perspective on factors that contribute to student attrition at this institution?

4. Based on your professional experience as a faculty member, what is your perspective on factors that prevent student attrition at this institution?

5. Based on your professional experience as a faculty member, what is your perspective on initiatives that have reduced student attrition at this institution?

6. Based on your professional experience as a faculty member, what is your perspective on initiatives that have not been effective in reducing student attrition at this institution?

7. Based on your professional experience as a faculty member, what initiatives, if implemented, do you believe would reduce student attrition at this institution?

Appendix D

Subject Matter Experts

to me

Hello Kevin,

Here are a few thoughts I have with what you shared:

- What specific schools are you targeting? Community Colleges, Universities, professional school?
- Is there an age group you are specifically targeting? Answers to your questions will be varied pending the age group or generation you might be focusing on
- Full time or adjunct faculty? I would assume full time staff will have more knowledge on strategic activities implemented
- Are you narrowing this down to gen ed students? Or specific degree focused students?
- Another question could be focused on if the professor speaks to their students about attrition

Hope this helps. If you need anything further or have questions, I am more than happy to help.

Thank you and congratulations!

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Confidentiality Notice: This message is strictly confidential. If you are not the intended recipient, please reply with such information, then permanently delete this messa
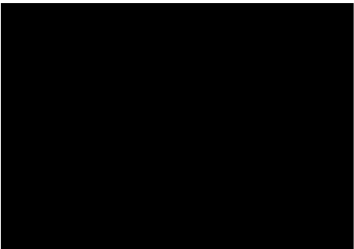
Kevin Craner <kevcraner@gmail.com>

to me

Hello Kevin,

I hope you are doing well. First, congratulations on such a fantastic job with your questions and the selection for your research topic. This was such a brilliant idea from your part. My main feedback is going to be to try to interview non-teaching faculty members. At least, in the community college that I work, the counselors and librarians are non-teaching faculty. They can be a crucial component for this research. I was going to suggest to add Academic Deans or Assistant Deans as part of the selection for interviewees. I used to be mostly in the classroom, and now I am a counselor (non-teaching faculty). So, you can get such a different perspective and possible amazing results in your research.

Do not hesitate to contact me again if you have any questions or concerns. You can also reach me at (813)732-6876. Have a great weekend!

Warmly,

Aug 12, 2019, 9:49 PM

Kevin,

It appears from these interview questions that you will gather data from the perspective of your participants concerning their beliefs about student attrition at their respective universities and not so much about their "lived experience" concerning attrition at their universities.

Do you want to gain insight into what your participants have done to contribute to or counteract student attrition at their university, in their classrooms, around the campus, or in their communities? Or what is their perspective on how has student attrition affected them (or not affected them) as a faculty member? Do you want to gain insight into whether your participants believe that student attrition is their concern as a faculty member, or student concern, or the concern of parents, or a university concern, or a community concern? It sounds like you will want to ask more questions about your participant perspectives concerning what each has done, or been affected by, in a more personal way.

I think the interview questions you are asking are a good start, maybe incorporating more questions about the "lived experience" of the faculty member concerning student attrition. It appears that the interview questions as they are here are investigating: "What do you think about student attrition, how have the strategies in place been working, and what are your suggestions for future success?" These questions seem to fit best with your Research Question #2. This does not appear to get to the heart of your research question #1 concerning the "lived experience" of faculty members regarding student attrition.

Also, I think that an interview will need to last about an hour or so in an exhaustive effort to explore your phenomena from the perspective of the participant in more depth. This will allow you more time to uncover participant perspectives and ask more questions where the participant might lead you in order to increase your insight concerning the phenomena.

These are my opinions and I hope they are in some way useful.

Good luck moving forward,

Mon, Aug 12, 2019, 1:45 PM

Kevin

I think these questions are straight forward and to the point which will provide you with the needed information to complete your research. Questions 2 & 3 are somewhat similar - possible alternatives could be about internal workings of college's and universities (bureaucracy vs agile models), ease of acceptance vs academic rigor (expectation), generational, etc. I know that question 2 could lead into these types of answers, and depending on how you will run your analysis these may not factor, but think it is pertinent to today's struggles in higher ed. Otherwise I think you are definitely on the right track

Have a great day

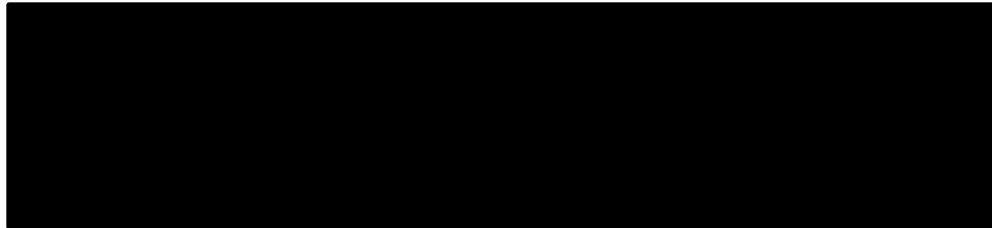Kevin Craner <kevcraner@gmail.com>   Mon, Aug 12, 2019, 6:58 PM

Thanks John I really appreciate you taking the time to do this! I'm glad you pointed that out I will have to better familiarize myself with those models.

Thanks again!

Kevin Craner, MHA, CIP, CFRS, CRS
610-952-9506
kevcraner@gmail.com

Appendix E

Site Approval

May 6, 2020.

To whom it may concern:

After reviewing the proposed study, "Factors and Initiatives in Community College Student Attrition: A Qualitative Analysis" presented by Kevin Craner, we hereby grant tentative permission for the study to be conducted at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Community College.

Prior to the commencement of this study, Kevin will submit an approved IRB (including a Federal-wide Assurance number) from his graduate institution. Any data collected by Kevin will be kept confidential within the dissertation and subsequent publications.

If you have any questions or concerns about this permission, please contact me at the phone number or email address provided below.

Sincerely,

Appendix F
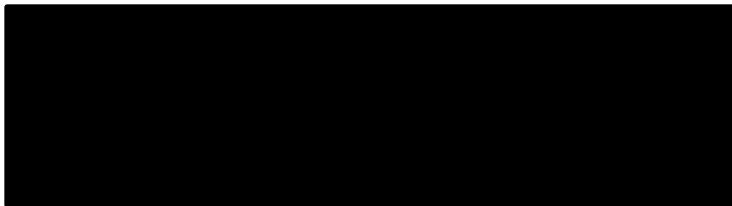
Member Check

1. Did the interview provide a dependable format for evaluating faculty perspectives on

    student attrition?

2. Did the interview provide a dependable format for evaluating faculty perspectives on

    initiatives to address student attrition?