Teacher perceptions of understaffed school libraries

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Abstract
The purpose of this mixed methods study is to learn what classroom teachers perceive the effects of improper staffing of school libraries to be. It asks: What do classroom teachers perceive are the effects of improper staffing or the cutting of a school librarian? Through the qualitative analysis of survey responses, the study found that teachers perceived teacher librarians to have a positive impact on student achievement through collaboration and to be a valuable asset in providing resources for staff and students. Qualitatively, results from two school districts, one with and one without a certified librarian staffed in their middle and high school, showed that teachers perceived the role of a certified librarian to be important and supportive to their students’ educational careers.

Teachers perceived the role of a certified librarian to be key in exposing their students to adequate literature and resources, and as a collaborative partner in their own work. Quantitatively, over 90% of teachers in both districts believe students would be impacted positively by having a certified librarian staffed in their school. Additionally, 78% of staff in the district without a full time librarian felt that collaborating with a certified librarian would be valuable to them and their teaching. Overall, regardless of staffing, both districts felt that having a certified teacher librarian present and utilized in their buildings would have a positive impact on student achievement.

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF UNDERSTAFFED SCHOOL LIBRARIES

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Submitted to the
Division of School Library Studies
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
In Partial Fulfillment
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Amanda Bonjour
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has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this mixed methods study is to learn what classroom teachers perceive the effects of improper staffing of school libraries to be. It asks: What do classroom teachers perceive are the effects of improper staffing or the cutting of a school librarian? Through the qualitative analysis of survey responses, the study found that teachers perceived teacher librarians to have a positive impact on student achievement through collaboration and to be a valuable asset in providing resources for staff and students. Qualitatively, results from two school districts, one with and one without a certified librarian staffed in their middle and high school, showed that teachers perceived the role of a certified librarian to be important and supportive to their students’ educational careers. Teachers perceived the role of a certified librarian to be key in exposing their students to adequate literature and resources, and as a collaborative partner in their own work. Quantitatively, over 90% of teachers in both districts believe students would be impacted positively by having a certified librarian staffed in their school. Additionally, 78% of staff in the district without a full time librarian felt that collaborating with a certified librarian would be valuable to them and their teaching. Overall, regardless of staffing, both districts felt that having a certified teacher librarian present and utilized in their buildings would have a positive impact on student achievement.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Oftentimes, having a school librarian is something taken for granted. People assume there will always be someone there to check their books in and out, teach students research skills, and keep the collection updated. But what happens when there isn’t someone there? Not staffing libraries appropriately is detrimental to student accomplishment. As longtime educator, Sharron McElmeel (2016) stated in an article that, “The absence of a professionally staffed library, will contribute to the development of students that will consider unsubstantiated opinion as fact and to a perception that the library is where “Googling” suffices for real research” (para. 13). This contributes to the issue at large that school libraries without trained librarians will provide insufficient information literacy learning opportunities to students.

Problem Statement

School librarians play a vital role in teaching students information literacy (Bleidt, 2011; Bogel, 2006; Kachel & Lance, 2013), providing quality reading materials and instilling a desire for reading, and supporting core curriculum. With some public schools cutting these positions and replacing them with non certified staff, students and teachers lack the literacy support, reading guidance, and digital and information literacy skills from the school library curriculum. Teacher librarians teach toward standards from multiple organizations, one of which is the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). According to this ISTE (2017) states:

During difficult economic times, many school districts chose to cut
non-classroom teaching positions. These cuts run counter to a large body of research that indicates that a strong library program, staffed by certified school librarians, correlates with significantly greater student achievement (para. 2).

Another organization working to support teacher librarians in the classroom is the American Association of School Libraries (AASL). The AASL (2018) position statement and definition of an effective school library program, emphasizes the role of a professional librarian: “[AASL] supports the position that an effective school library program has a certified school librarian at the helm, provides personalized learning environments, and offers equitable access to resources to ensure a well-rounded education for every student” (para. 1). In a study by Udoh-Illomechine (2008), 200 college students were surveyed on the significance of school libraries. The study showed that at a library not properly staffed by a certified teacher librarian, only 14% of respondents get the information they need. This is just one of the many issues students face when entering a school library that is not properly supported.

**Effect on Students**

In addition to not finding appropriate and relevant information, when librarians are taken out of schools, students lose key learning opportunities in digital citizenship, research skills, and information communication skills. According to Achterman (2008) in a review of research about the connection between services provided by teacher librarians and student achievement, “There was a significant positive relationship between a majority of the 21 library services regularly provided and student achievement at all
levels. Total library services were significantly related to student achievement at all levels when controlling for all school and community variables” (para. 3).

**Teacher Perceptions**

Students are not the only patrons who suffer from an ill-equipped library. Classroom teachers are also impacted by cutting certified librarian positions. When it comes to collaborating to improve student learning, the American Association for School Libraries (2011) shares that “School librarians and teachers make a strong instructional team combining their knowledge of pedagogy, resources, and technology to meet the specific needs of each student” (p. 2). Without this, teachers lose a partner in learning and teaching, and the impact can be significant. Though collaboration with other teachers and staff is valuable, the collaboration with a teacher librarian is especially beneficial to both teachers and students, as is shown in McNee and Radmer (2017):

> working with any other professional strengthened the quality of instruction, but that collaborating with the teacher-librarian provided even more benefits: access to resources, expertise, and connections to the broader school community. The teachers all agreed that collaboration with the teacher-librarian positively impacted student learning (para. 7)

Overall, the importance of a highly qualified teacher librarian is key to well-rounded, high quality education and opportunities for deep learning and collaboration for all library users. McElmeel (2016) states:

> A professional librarian has many other duties that should be accomplished: collaboration with content area professionals, direct instruction to students regarding
research strategies, use of the Internet to locate credible information, selecting and acquisitioning appropriate resources to support the important instruction of the subject department professionals, promoting reading and learning, and developing an overall culture of literacy” (para. 7).

Without a certified professional in this position, instruction in each of these areas is lacking for all patrons.

Summary of Problem Statement

The loss of a teacher librarian in a school setting affects student achievement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed methods study is to learn what classroom teachers perceive the effects of improper staffing of school libraries to be.

Research Question

What do classroom teachers perceive the effects of improper staffing or the cutting of a school librarian to be?

Assumptions and Limitations

This study is limited to teachers in buildings of two public schools in Iowa, one of which provides a certified teacher librarian, and one which does not.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this mixed methods study is to learn what classroom teachers perceive the effects of improper staffing of school libraries to be. Research for this study comprised three subthemes: effects of a library program on students, administrators’ perspectives on libraries, and teacher perceptions of teacher librarians and school library programs. These subthemes will inform the aspects of proper librarian staffing for the current study. Each stakeholder, student, teacher, and principal, are collaborative partners who influence the role of a teacher librarian. Not only that, but a teacher librarian can influence each of these roles in a strong collaborative relationship. By looking at each stakeholder group and the impact that proper staffing can have on them, the validity of proper staffing will emerge. This will support the current work of identifying teacher perceptions of understaffed school library programs at the middle school level.

How Properly Staffed Libraries Affect and Support Students

Collaboration and innovation are skills necessary for students to be successful in this era, and they are also skills taught by teacher librarians. When schools cut teacher librarians from schools, the effect on students achievement can be detrimental. Research compiled by Pennsylvania School Librarians Association (PSLA, 2011) began after 7% of the state’s school librarian positions were cut. This study investigated the questions, "How many schools do not have libraries or librarians?" and "How do school librarians improve student achievement and by how much?" (para. 6). To investigate these questions, 73% of the state’s public schools participated in the survey, and results showed
consistently that reading and writing scores were better in districts that employed full
time librarians. Furthermore Kachel and Lance (2013) shared that, “almost eight percent
more students score "Advanced" in reading where students have a full-time, certified
librarian than where they do not” (para. 28). The evidence from these findings goes on to
share the many advantages that are afforded to students attending schools with a fully
staffed library program. In addition to climbing reading scores, solid school library
programs promote usage of the space and resources available within the library.

Students that utilize the library and work in a space that has proper staffing often
perceive this as supporting them academically. In a study conducted in Texas by Bleidt
(2011) involving 10 rural public schools, the researcher examined students’ perceptions
of the usefulness of their school libraries. Researchers gave 1,509 students an online
survey which consisted of 21 questions or statements, in three question styles: a simple
checklist, 16 statements using a Likert response scale and two open-ended questions. The
survey contained questions that pertained to the three research questions investigated:
How often are middle school students utilizing their school library?; How are middle
school students utilizing their school library?; and, What are middle school students’
perceptions of the usefulness of the school library? (p. 8). From this, the researcher
learned that an overwhelming majority of students also felt that the school library played
a critical role in their learning (p. 16). Over half of the students surveyed, 54%, shared
that the library helped them become better writers, and 65% believed that the library staff
and their own library usage impacted their Texas statewide reading exam results
positively (p. 10). The results of this study and analysis of student perceptions show that
students believed the proper staffing and support of a well rounded school library program were important to their middle school educational experience.

In a review of Ross’ study on Ohio schools, Bogel (2006) looked at the connections between student learning outcomes and school libraries. In the state of Ohio, 13,123 students and 879 teachers were surveyed from 39 different schools. Each of these schools had a qualified school librarian running their school library program. Researchers utilized two online surveys, the Impacts on Learning Survey with 48 Likert scale questions for students, and perceptions of learning impact survey which was similar for the faculty members. From this, researchers found that “School libraries and librarians were viewed as having an active role in the learning process. Of the students surveyed, 99.4% believed that school libraries helped them become better learners” (p. 50). This led to the conclusion that properly staffed, high functioning, school libraries are critical components of student learning and achievement (p. 52).

This research portraying the benefits of properly staffed, high functioning libraries helps support the work of identifying teacher perceptions of understaffed school library programs. Collaboration between the teacher librarian and classroom teacher supports students in many ways, and these studies show the advantages properly staffed libraries can have on various student populations. The analysis of survey results collected in these studies, and implementation of a survey to gather teacher perceptions will be employed in this work as well.
Administrators’ perspectives of school library programs

Having the support of and collaborating with the administrators in a school are cornerstones to a successful school library program. To share the value of this, Gavigan and Lance (2015) conducted a study for the South Carolina Association of School Librarians (SCASL) that examined the perception of school librarians’ collaborative and leadership role through both the administrator and teacher lens. Across the state of South Carolina, 273 administrators and 917 teachers were surveyed to gather this information. They were asked to rate the importance of practices in school library programs, what roles they wanted the librarians to play in their schools, and how they most preferred to work with the teacher librarian. Overall, the findings indicated that administrators placed high value on the policies and practices of school library programs. Gavigan and Lance (2015) shared that, “The responding principals and other administrators consistently endorsed instructional collaboration between librarians and teachers” (para. 6). In addition to consistency, support of a program from the school administrators is pivotal.

Supportive and understanding administrators are key to a successful library program. To explore the level of importance this holds, Shannon (2012) conducted a four question study to examine the importance of an administration’s understanding of school library programs. Specifically, Shannon wanted to know how administrators attain their understanding of a school library program, what pieces of a program they deem most important, what recommendations administrators have for librarians looking to gain support from resistant leaders, and what they feel should be included in educational leadership preparation programs to support their learning around school library programs.
To answer these questions, Shannon (2012) surveyed 30 various school leaders including 17 building level principals, 6 superintendents, and 4 district office administrators. The respondents were given a list of possible avenues from which they gained their knowledge of school library programs. After identifying where they learned about library programs, follow up questions asked them to identify which sources were most important, and another asked them to share additional factors that supported their learning around school library programs. Shannon (2012) found that “Twenty-eight of the 30 respondents indicated that working with a school librarian in their role as a school administrator contributed to their knowledge and understanding of school library programs” (para. 13). Shannon (2012) concluded that strong collaborative partnerships are key to the success of a strong school library program. When those collaborative relationships are not understood, it can alter the perceptions of administration on the teacher librarian position.

Given that financial stability is an area of high concern for administrators, this can sometimes play into their perceptions of the teacher librarian position. Lupton (2016) shared that the administration’s perspective on teacher librarians may be negatively impacting the profession in Australia. This study investigated the question, ‘What are principals’ perceptions of the role of the teacher librarian?’ and looked at nine schools in total. The qualitative study collected data from an interview with each of the nine principals. Each principal was asked seven questions about their school library some of which pertained to how the librarian supported their role as principal, and what their ideal librarian would do/library would look like. Each of the nine principals viewed the role of
a teacher librarian quite differently, although the researcher found several themes arising from their responses. One theme that emerged was that many principals wanted the best value for their budgets. Many wanted the teacher librarian to be an expert teacher first, and felt they could hire a library assistant to run the day-to-day functions of the library. Lupton (2016) concluded that, “The findings of this study emphasize how the support provided by the principal impacts upon the role of the teacher-librarian” (para. 52). The perception the administration has is impacted by their knowledge and understanding of the teacher librarian role.

**Teacher Perceptions of the Effects of School Library Programs**

Collaborating with all stakeholders is crucial to the success of a school library program, including collaboration with classroom teachers. A study conducted by Montiel-Overall and Jones (2011) investigated how frequently teachers collaborated with librarians and how important to student learning teachers perceive this collaboration or partnership in learning to be. This study included 194 elementary teachers from 2 school districts in the Southwestern US. The participants completed a survey that asked them 16 questions regarding collaboration practices between them and their school librarians. While teachers seemed to rate their use of the library minimalistic, they did see the value in student learning. One finding showed that 90% of teachers rated utilizing library resources for instruction as ‘important’ and ‘always important’ (p. 14). While the quantitative study showed that “regardless of the extent or type of collaborative effort between teachers and school librarians, teachers perceive all collaborative practices as
important to student learning” (2011). Positive teacher perceptions of the school librarian’s impact on student achievement are imperative to a successful program.

While utilizing the library and the resources available helps teachers understand the importance of a school library program, this only grows stronger with collaboration between the teacher librarian and classroom teachers. In a study entitled, Secondary teachers and information literacy (IL): Teacher understanding and perceptions of IL in the classroom, Smith (2013) investigated the knowledge classroom teachers have on their own in the area of information literacy. Smith worked to identify this by conducting interviews of eight high school teachers, and asked the following research questions:

1. How do teachers define information literacy? What skills do they believe students need to thrive in today's classroom and/or society? How do these skills vary (if at all) for students pursuing different educational ‘tracks’?

2. What methods (if any) have teachers employed to instruct students in information literacy skills, as delineated by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL, 2000) Competency Standards for Higher Education? How does (or should) IL instruction differ for students in life skill programs, pursuing trades, or pursuing academic education strands?

3. What factors influence teachers' ability to teach information literacy skills in their classrooms? (p. 217)

From these interviews, Smith (2013) identified that teacher librarians have ample information and education around information literacy, while classroom teachers are not privy to these studies in their teacher preparation programs (p. 221). Classroom teachers
perceived information literacy to be very different from what teacher librarians know it to be (p. 220). Utilizing teacher librarians in a collaborative effort to teach this information is in the best interest of students. Smith shares that “Library and information professionals will need to reach out to teachers and the education community to affect change” (p. 221).

Classroom teachers and teacher librarians can collaborate in various ways to support students, but do classroom teachers perceive there to be any benefit to this partnership? In an investigation into the effects of professional development to support teacher and librarian collaboration by Montiel-Overall and Hernandez (2012), they conducted a two year, mixed-methods study that involved six elementary schools. They began the study with a survey, and ended the study with the same survey to identify the changes over time. Their research questions centered around finding out to what extent professional-development intervention workshops change teachers’ and school librarians’ perceptions of how frequently they engage in collaborative activities? (p. 3). In addition to the survey, researchers conducted workshops and implemented Therapeutic Learning Center (TLC) modules in which classroom teachers and librarians together were able to learn, plan, and implement lessons in science instruction (p. 4). Montiel-Overall and Hernandez (2012) also utilized a control group in this study, and found that, “intervention teachers indicated a positive change in perception while teachers in the control group found collaboration less important over time” (p. 16).
Summary

In surveying the research coalescing in these subthemes, several studies identified the importance of a properly staffed school library program to collaboration efforts. Within each stakeholder group—students, teachers, and principals—the idea of having strong collaborative relationships was stressed (Gavigan & Lance, 2015; Kachel & Lance, 2013; Shannon, 2012) and key to the value placed on the school library program within that group.

Additionally, many of the aforementioned studies concluded that student achievement was impacted by a properly staffed school library. Students felt that utilizing their school libraries positively impacted their achievement in reading, writing, and performance on standardized tests overall (Bleidt, 2011; Bogel, 2006; Kachel & Lance, 2013). In the current work, the research sought to uncover teacher perceptions of understaffed school library programs.

Based on the literature available regarding the perceptions of administrators and teachers, as well as the effects of properly staffed libraries on students, this researcher sees the need to identify teacher perceptions of the impact of certified librarian staffing. This study utilized survey models such as those from Montiel-Overall and Jones (2011) and Lupton (2016), in which subjects were asked questions pertaining to the support they received from their school librarians and library programs.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Teacher and teacher librarian collaboration is a powerful partnership that impacts both teachers and learners. The purpose of this mixed methods study is to learn what classroom teachers perceive to be the effects of improper staffing of school libraries. In following research with human subjects protocol, the researcher received approval from the University of Northern Iowa Institutional Review Board before proceeding with this study.

Research Design

This researcher employed a mixed methods approach using a quantitative survey comprised of closed ended questions and qualitative methods for analysis of responses to the open ended questions. The mixed methods design is appropriate for this study because it includes two types of data in the survey of teachers. This section explains the four dimensions of the mixed methods research design as described in Wildemuth (2017). The first dimension concerns the emphasis on qualitative or quantitative data; the priority in this study is the qualitative analysis of the open ended survey questions, as they provide a rich context from the teacher responses within which the closed ended survey questions may be interpreted. The second dimension of mixed methods is about the sequence of data collection, and this study is designed to collect all open and closed ended survey responses simultaneously in order to be efficient for the participants. Third, the process of mixing the two data sets will occur during data analysis; the data will not be analyzed one after other but rather will be directly compared. Fourth, the scope of the
research is a single study. Therefore the family of mixed methods design most closely aligned to this study is the convergent design. This is fitting for the study because the qualitative and quantitative data are collected “in the same general time frame and are focused on the same set of variables or phenomena of interest” (Wildemuth, 2017, p. 117). Other characteristics of survey research as provided Wildemuth (2009) made this an appropriate method. It is a very straightforward design, and a combination of both open and close-ended questions were employed to gather various types of feedback. A strength of survey research is that “the data may be analyzed for both descriptive and comparative purposes” (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 261).

Participants

This population of convenience consisted of two groups of classroom teachers. The first group of 47 middle school and high school teachers came from a 3A size school district, without a certified teacher librarian, in a rural community of Eastern Iowa. The second group of approximately 30 middle school and high school teachers came from a school district of slightly larger size, staffed with a full time certified teacher librarian, in a rural community of Eastern Iowa.

Procedures

Data Collection

This researcher utilized a survey research method. A survey containing both closed and open-ended questions was given to the research population (see Appendix A). A survey has been chosen for this research because “a good survey is appropriately brief and simple to complete, both in terms of wording and organization, so as not to demand
too much effort on part of respondents” (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 257). This method is beneficial to this study in order to generate responses based on perceptions from teachers. One limitation may be the number of respondents, and in order to address this Wildemuth suggests that “One way to increase the response rate is to contact potential respondents multiple times” (p. 261).

Data Analysis

Because of the design of the qualitative portion of the survey, the study used “analytic induction” (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 329) for qualitative data analysis. The participants’ responses were used to draw conclusions that responded to the research question. The phenomena the researcher explained looks at how teachers perceive the lack of a teacher librarian. A strength of analytic induction is that “the researcher analyzes all cases in great depth” (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 333). An issue that arises with this analysis method is the “issue of when to stop examining more cases in a rigorous application of analytical induction” (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 333).

Limitations

The limitations of this survey research include the scope of participants. The participants are from two school districts in Eastern Iowa. This study is also limited by it being a one time survey. There is potential for researcher bias, as the researcher is an administrator in a school building with no certified teacher librarian.
In this study, the researcher utilized a survey research method. A survey was given to two school districts in rural Iowa, one with one certified teacher librarian working full time in each school building, the other without a certified teacher librarian working in the middle or high school building. Teacher perceptions were collected to identify the perceived effects on student learning with or without the staffing of a teacher librarian present. This survey was given through email distribution, and responses were collected through a Google form. Overall, 77 teachers responded to the survey, and data collected is representative of each group.

**Perceived Importance**

Survey responses revealed teacher feelings towards having or not having a certified librarian. When asking teachers in a school district that does employ certified librarians in each building, and will henceforth be labeled District 1, 70% of respondents were positive when asked “How important to you is it to be able to work with someone in this capacity?” (48% of respondents replied they believed it was “Extremely Important” while another 22% felt it was “Very Important.”) In the district that does not employ a full time certified librarian in their high school or middle school, and will henceforth be labeled District 2, 62% were positive (37% of respondents felt it would be “Extremely Important” to work with someone in this role, and another 25% felt it would be “Very Important”). While District 1 responded higher in the extremely important category, over
60% of respondents in both districts felt that staffing a school library with a certified teacher librarian was very important and want to work with someone in this capacity.

Figure 1. Teacher perception of collaboration importance in district 1 shows how respondents in district 1 answered question one of the survey based on importance of working with a certified teacher librarian.
Figure 2: Teacher perception of collaboration importance in district 2 shows how respondents in district 2 answered question two of the survey based on importance of working with a certified teacher librarian.

Teachers in both districts were asked the following question in the research survey: “Do you believe student achievement is/would be impacted positively from having a certified teacher librarian in the building?” In District 1, 100% of respondents replied, “Yes,” as can be seen in figure 3. While in District 2, 90.2% replied “Yes,” as pictured in figure 4, and 9.8% replied “No.” When asked the opposing question, “Do you believe students achievement is/would be impacted negatively from having a certified teacher librarian in the building?” only 92.6% of respondents replied “No,” and 7.4% replied, “Yes,” they believed it would negatively impact student achievement in District 1. In District 2, 96.1% of respondents believed student achievement would not be impacted negatively from having a certified teacher librarian.
Figure 3. Teacher Perception of Positive Impact in District 1 shows the response from District 1 when asked, “Do you believe student achievement is/would be impacted positively from having a certified teacher librarian in the building?”

Figure 4: Teacher Perception of Positive Impact in District 2 shows the response from District 1 when asked, “Do you believe students achievement is/would be impacted positively from having a certified teacher librarian in the building?”
Qualitative Analysis of Perceived Effects of Proper Staffing in District 1

Amongst the responses from teachers in District 1 to the question, “In what ways do you believe students are affected by having a certified teacher librarian in the school?” a few themes emerged. Throughout their responses, the word resource or source appeared 12 times, many referred to the teacher librarian’s expertise as being valuable to them and students, with one respondent sharing that, “They are a human resource, not every answer should [be] or is found online.”

One teacher shared that, “Students have written in their reflections about their enhanced research skills and about their enhanced awareness of source evaluation techniques. The students know that having a certified teacher librarian aids their learning.” These responses show that teachers and students alike feel that there are benefits they reap for having and working with a certified librarian in their schools.

Qualitative Analysis of Perceived Effects of Improper Staffing in District 2

On the opposite side of the spectrum, when asked, “In what ways do you believe students are affected by not having a certified teacher librarian in the school?” teachers in District 2 also resonated themes amongst their responses. Several respondents addressed the passion for reading dwindling in their buildings, with one teacher sharing, “Less books are being read in school. Less books are being checked out. The love for reading just for reading is lost.” Without having a certified librarian in the physical space, teachers shared that, “They (students) don’t get to the library because no one is in there. They don’t read or get to check out as many books.” They also noted that students at every level are impacted by not employing this position, “It affects all students-those who
need enrichment opportunities, those on grade-level, and those who need interventions. Teacher librarians can supplement classroom content in so many ways and at so many levels.”

Words that popped up often in responses were, less and lack of for example, “lack of knowledge and literacy foundation,” or “Less assistance with checking out just right books. Less exposure to literacy. Less understanding of the 21st century skills,” “Less opportunities for library exposure, less knowledge at their disposal,” and “Lack of direction in regards to resources available.” Without a certified librarian present, teachers are perceiving there are less opportunities for their students, which in turn impacts them negatively. With the limited staffing available, the respondents perceive that this is not enough for students and share that, “Teachers and paras always do their best to help students. But when a person is not trained in the field they are working in, their knowledge is so inferior to those trained and the ones affected the most are the students. We need to stop allowing our students to be inferior to those that have had the opportunity to always have a certified teacher throughout their school career.”

Additionally, teachers perceive that they are missing out by not having this certified professional member in their libraries. When asked, “In what way do you believe you as a teacher are affected by not having a certified teacher librarian in the school?” one educator stated, “Teachers do not have enough time to help students meet their library and research needs. Librarians are equipped with the skills needed to meet the many demands of the library and teachers need the help and advice desperately!” Thematically, the issue of not having enough time appeared in their responses. These included: “I
myself am not qualified to provide students with the skills a librarian has nor do I have the time to gather information that a librarian already knows.” and “It is a time factor. Classroom teachers do not have the time to find the little things that support projects and other classroom activities. Classroom projects are not as complete without the school librarian.” One respondent even shared that they often have to change their lesson plans because they do not have a certified professional teacher librarian to assist them in their own research: , “I have multiple questions each week that I want/need answered and I need to change my plans because there is not a full-time certified librarian in the building.” Overall, one response encompasses what many teachers shared in stating, “It would help if the teacher librarian worked with classroom teachers to assist students with research papers, incorporate more technology into the classroom, and the librarian could even teach in the regular classrooms as well.”

Along with time, collaboration is a missing piece to the puzzle, and many teachers felt they would benefit from collaborating with a certified librarian to better support their students needs. Some sentiments in regards to collaboration shared by the respondents include, “Librarians help provide resources that teachers may not be aware of. It's one more way we can collaborate to provide the best education possible for students.” They felt a teacher librarian would, “Help me think outside the box for curriculum and general classroom activities.”

Based on the responses from these certified classroom teachers, it is evident that they seek the support of a certified teacher librarian in their buildings. They feel that both they and students alike would benefit greatly from the expertise of a teacher librarian not only
in seeking resources, but in collaborating with an expert, learning about new resources, and having additional support to encourage the love of literacy in their students. Over 90% of respondents felt students would be positively impacted by employing a certified teacher librarian, and stated directly that they feel they would be positively impacted as well. The expertise of a certified teacher librarian would support student research, provide exposure to credible resources, and offer an additional staff member to collaborate with and enrich student learning.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this mixed methods research study is to learn what classroom teachers perceive are the effects of improper staffing of school libraries using the following research question: What do classroom teachers perceive are the effects of improper staffing or the cutting of a school librarians? Through the distribution and qualitative analysis of survey responses, the study found that teachers perceived teacher librarians to have a positive impact on student achievement through collaboration and to be a valuable asset in providing resources for staff and students. Qualitatively, results from both school districts, one with and one without a certified librarian staffed in their middle and high school, showed that teachers perceived the role of a certified librarian to be important and supportive to their student’s educational careers. Teachers perceived the certified librarian to be key to exposing their students to adequate literature and resources, and to be a collaborative partner in their own work. Quantitatively, over 90% of teachers in both districts believed students would be impacted positively by having a certified librarian staffed in their school. Additionally, 78% of staff in the district without a full time librarian felt that collaborating with a certified librarian would be valuable to them and their teaching. Overall, qualitative data showed both districts, regardless of staffing, felt that having a certified teacher librarian present and utilized in their buildings would have a positive impact on student achievement.
Conclusions

When analyzing the survey results, three themes presented themselves from the data teachers provided. Teachers’ perceived importance and beliefs about the impact of staffing a library with a certified teacher librarian were very clear, and their impressions connected with research found in the literature review. In District 1, where a certified librarian is present and utilized by staff and students, teachers perceived a positive correlation to this and student achievement. In District 2, themes arose around the perception that hiring and utilizing a teacher librarian would in turn have positive effects on student achievement. This perception also correlated with research from the literature review and is noted as such.

Perceived Importance and Impact Belief

Based on the teacher responses to the first, fourth, and fifth survey questions, findings indicate that both districts perceive the employment of a certified teacher librarian to be very important overall, and as having a positive impact on student achievement in their schools. Supporting our stakeholders with certified teacher librarians correlates to a positive impact on student achievement. In connection to the study of schools in Ohio, Bogel (2006) found that “School libraries and librarians were viewed as having an active role in the learning process. Of the students surveyed, 99.4% believed that school libraries helped them become better learners” (p. 50). While in this survey, 100% of teachers in District 1 and 90.2% of teachers in District 2 believed that having certified staff in the library would impact student achievement positively.
Perceived Effects of Proper Staffing in District 1

In District 1, teachers feel the benefits of staffing the library with a certified teacher librarian is an advantage to both staff and students. Many spoke to utilizing them as a valuable collaborative partner, and a resource for both their needs and students’. Figure 1 shows that they believe this role is pertinent to their student’s achievement.

Perceived Effects of Improper Staffing in District 2

In District 2, where they do not have a certified teacher librarian in their middle or high school building, staff feel this is a detriment to their students. Based on their responses, they are missing out on a highly qualified expert in the areas of digital citizenship, research, and much more. Over 84% of the respondents feel that they would benefit from collaborating and working with a certified librarian, and that this would support student achievement in the schools. Based on these findings, we are doing a detriment to the students by not employing this position in our middle and high schools.

In a study conducted by Kachel and Lance (2013), they identified that, “almost eight percent more students score "Advanced" in reading where students have a full-time, certified librarian than where they do not” (para. 28). This correlation furthermore supports the necessity of employing librarians fully if positive student achievement is the desired state of the schools.

Recommendations

Future researchers may decide to expand upon this research by surveying a larger sample population. The limitation of two respondent pools in rural Iowa gives us a
snapshot of this area, but to dig deeper into the study, a larger, more diverse population of teachers could be questioned. Additionally, the survey could be expanded to include students to identify their perceptions of staffing school libraries with full-time certified teacher librarians. Future studies could also investigate the correlation between staffing libraries with certified staff versus staffing libraries with paraprofessionals with more direct questions regarding the pros and cons with these forms of staffing. Based upon the findings in this research, it is recommended that school districts staff school libraries with full time, certified, teacher librarians. Based upon the data presented, teachers in both districts feel that both staff members and students would benefit from a highly qualified librarian within their building. Administration need to hear that this person would support collaboration amongst all stakeholders, and enrich the love of literacy within their schools.
REFERENCES


Wildemuth, B.M. (2017). A conversation on mixed methods research, with a focus on why and how. The University of British Columbia.
Good afternoon,

My name is Amanda Bonjour, and I am a graduate student at the University of Northern Iowa. As a part of my master’s program in School Library Studies, I am conducting a research study to learn more about the impact of employing a certified teacher librarian in schools. You are being asked to complete this research study survey because you are a certified teacher in a school district with certified teacher librarians employed.

Participation in this study is voluntary. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes or less to complete. Participants may discontinue participation at anytime during the survey. This study involved no foreseeable risks. I ask that you try to answer all questions; however if there are any items that make you uncomfortable or that you would prefer to skip, please leave the answer blank. Your responses are anonymous; no personal information will be collected as a part of this survey. In addition, any and all identifying information supplied will be removed and replaced with codes or pseudonyms. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the internet by any third parties.

This study involved no direct benefits to participants, but may help to inform educators and educator training programs about the perceptions of employing certified teacher librarians.

If you have questions or concerns, feel free to contact my faculty advisor or myself:

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You can also contact the office of the IRB Administrator, University of Northern Iowa at (319) 273-6148 for answers to questions about rights of research participants and the participant review process.

If you consent to participate, please complete the survey within the next two weeks using the link below:

Follow this link to the survey or copy and paste it into your internet browser:
Good afternoon,

My name is Amanda Bonjour, and I am a graduate student at the University of Northern Iowa. As a part of my master’s program in School Library Studies, I am conducting a research study to learn more about the impact of employing a certified teacher librarian in schools. You are being asked to complete this research study survey because you are a certified teacher in a school district that does not employ certified teacher librarians in your building.

Participation in this study is voluntary. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes or less to complete. Participants may discontinue participation at anytime during the survey.

This study involved no foreseeable risks. I ask that you try to answer all questions; however if there are any items that make you uncomfortable or that you would prefer to skip, please leave the answer blank. Your responses are anonymous; no personal information will be collected as a part of this survey. In addition, any and all identifying information supplied will be removed and replaced with codes or pseudonyms. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the internet by any third parties.

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APPENDIX C

TEACHER PERCEPTION SURVEY

(For School District with Certified Teacher Librarian)

Note at the top: Change for each district with what professionals they do have.

1. According to the Iowa School Library Survey, it appears that your building has a professional (holding endorsement) teacher librarian available in your building. How important to you is it to be able to work with someone in this capacity? (Answer this from the perspective of what you do, or what you would do.)

5 - Extremely Important
4 - Very Important
3 - Important
2 - Not Very Important
1 - Not Important at all
N/A - Do not have teacher librarian/Have not experienced this

2. How valuable do you feel it is for you as the classroom teacher to collaborate with a certified teacher librarian?

5 - Extremely valuable
4 - Very Valuable
3 - Valuable
2 - Not Very Valuable
1 - No value added

3. What types of things do you or have you collaborated on with the teacher librarian?

4. Do you believe student achievement is/would be impacted positively from having a certified teacher librarian in the building?
a. Yes

b. No

5. Do you believe students achievement is/would be impacted negatively from having a certified teacher librarian in the building?

c. Yes

d. No

6. In what ways do you believe students are affected by having a certified teacher librarian in the school?

7. In what way do you believe you as a teacher are affected by having a certified teacher librarian in the school?
APPENDIX D

TEACHER PERCEPTION SURVEY

(For school district without certified teacher librarian)

Note at the top: Change for each district with what professionals they do have.

1. According to School Library Survey, it appears that your building does not have a professional (holding endorsement) teacher librarian available in your building. How important to you is it to be able to work with someone in this capacity? (Answer this from the perspective of what you would do if this position were filled.)

5 - Extremely Important
4 - Very Important
3 - Important
2 - Not Very Important
1 - Not Important at all
N/A - Do not have teacher librarian/Have not experienced this

2. How valuable do you feel it is for you as the classroom teacher to collaborate with a certified teacher librarian?

5 - Extremely valuable
4 - Very Valuable
3 - Valuable
2 - Not Very Valuable
1 - No value added

3. What types of things would you like to collaborated on with a teacher librarian?

4. Do you believe student achievement is/would be impacted positively from having a certified teacher librarian in the building?
e. Yes

f. No

5. Do you believe students achievement is/would be impacted negatively from having a certified teacher librarian in the building?

   g. Yes

   h. No

6. In what ways do you believe students are affected by not having a certified teacher librarian in the school?

7. In what way do you believe you as a teacher are affected by not having a certified teacher librarian in the school?