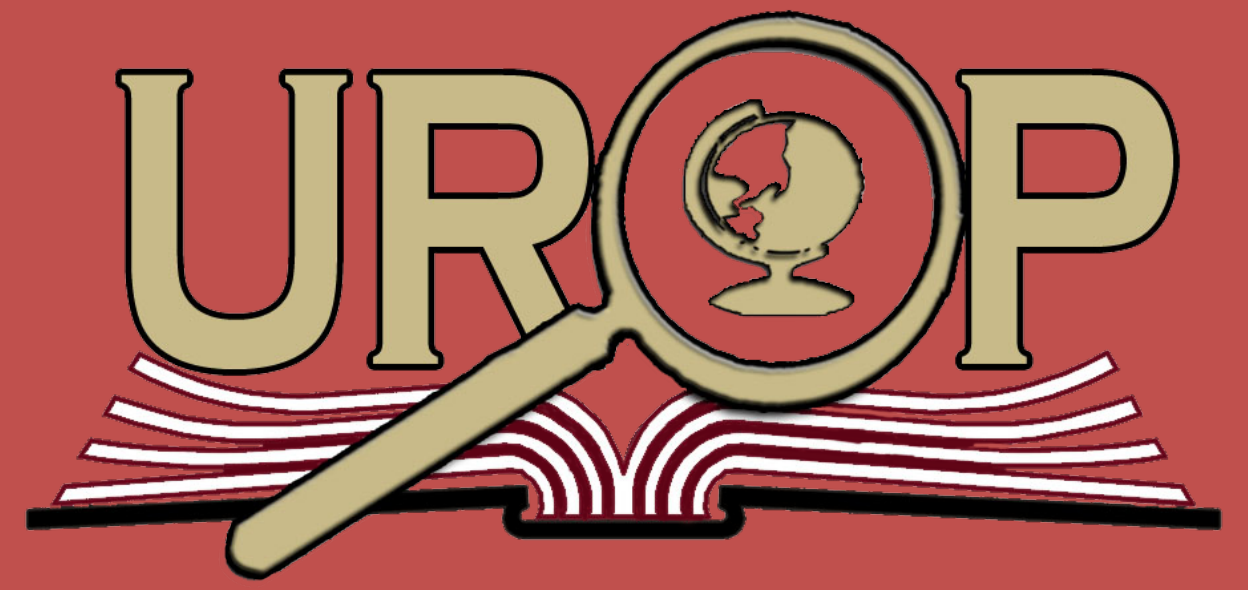




Highly Active Advocates: A Phenomenological Study with School-Based Speech-Language Pathologists



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Introduction

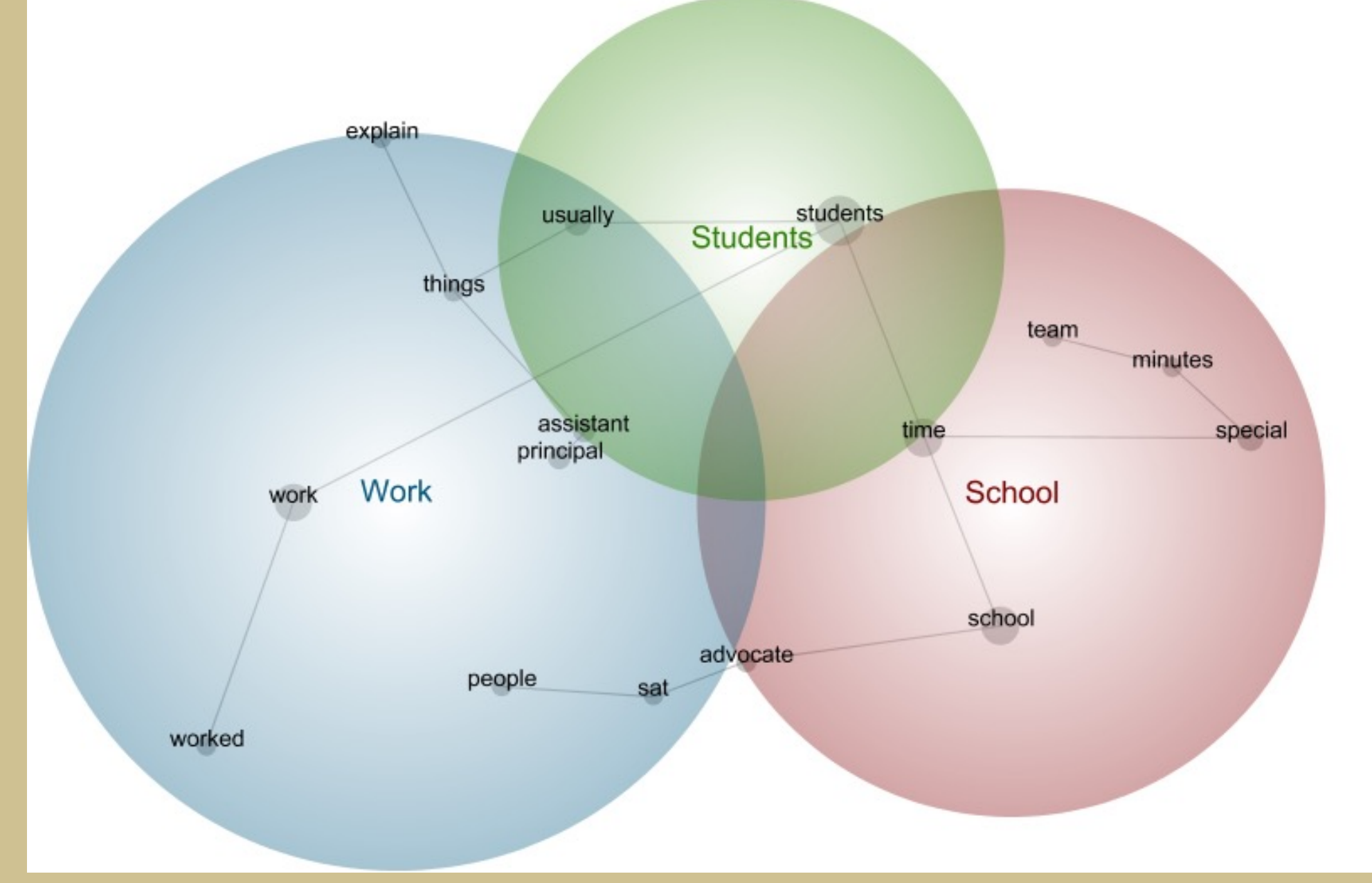
School-based speech language pathologists (SLP) carry a plethora of responsibilities, one of many being to effectively advocate for or against issues pertaining to themselves and their students. Currently, in the state of Florida, SLP's face heavy caseloads and a lack of cooperation from other levels of leadership and policy-making in public education. Challenges in effective advocacy and self-efficacy have been shown to be an issue for both experienced and inexperienced SLP's alike. With adequate professional training, mentorship, and administrative cooperation and transparency can school-based SLP's and beyond properly facilitate their services to their students. Deciphering which methods work best to implement advocacy skills to current and prospective SLP's in order to overcome challenges effectively.

Methods

A large online study on advocacy engagement and self-efficacy of speech-language pathologists was broadly distributed across school districts in the state of Florida and was used as the first primary source of data for this study. The 75-item survey focused on advocacy related experiences of 194 school-based SLP's that included open-ended questions and sections pertaining to experience in training and advocacy engagement.

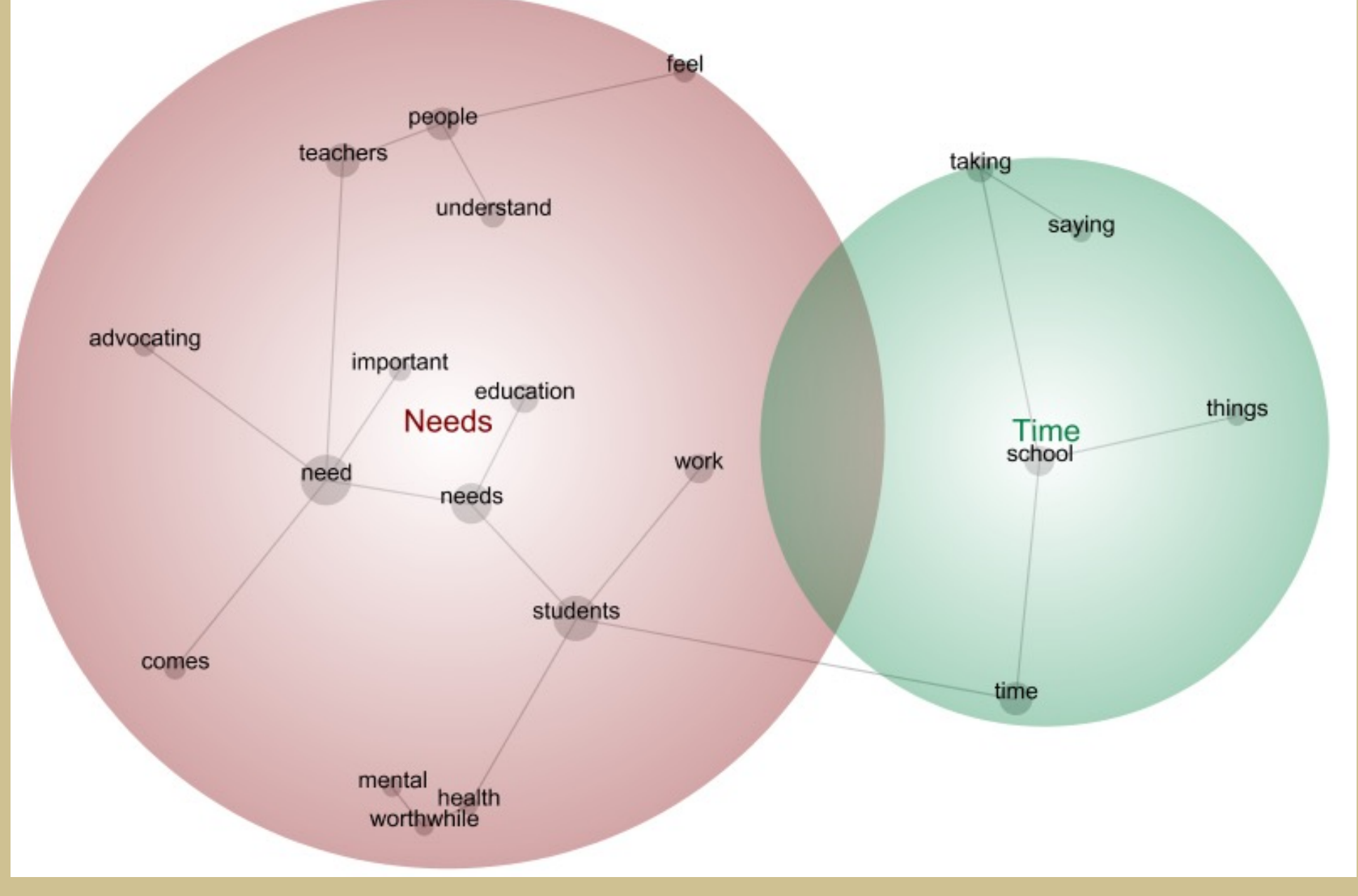
From those who answered the survey, the SLP's with the highest level of advocacy related experience were chosen for the interview section of the study. Advocacy was measured by personal experiences and advocacy training attendance. Then, a 10-question interview was conducted for each SLP ($n = 4$) in order to solicit the most information and insight. Questions included, "What are some challenges you have faced in advocating for issues you are passionate about in education?" and "Are there certain types of advocacy you excel in more than others? How so?"

Concept Maps



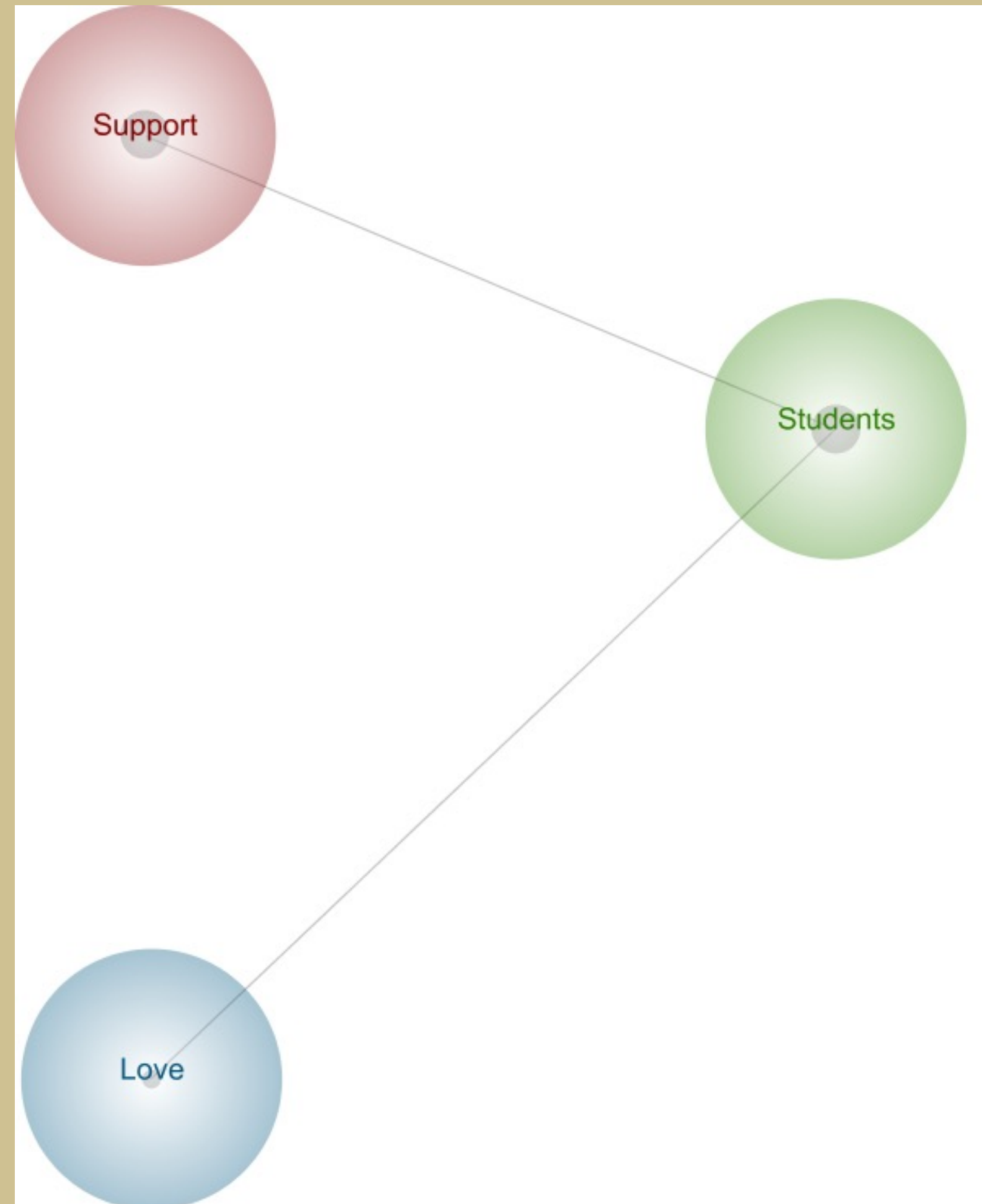
Advocacy Successes

1. Students (26 hits)
Concepts: students, usually, assistant
2. School (20 hits)
Concepts: school, time, special, advocated, minutes, team
3. Work (18 hits)
Concepts: work, principal, people, things, explained, worked



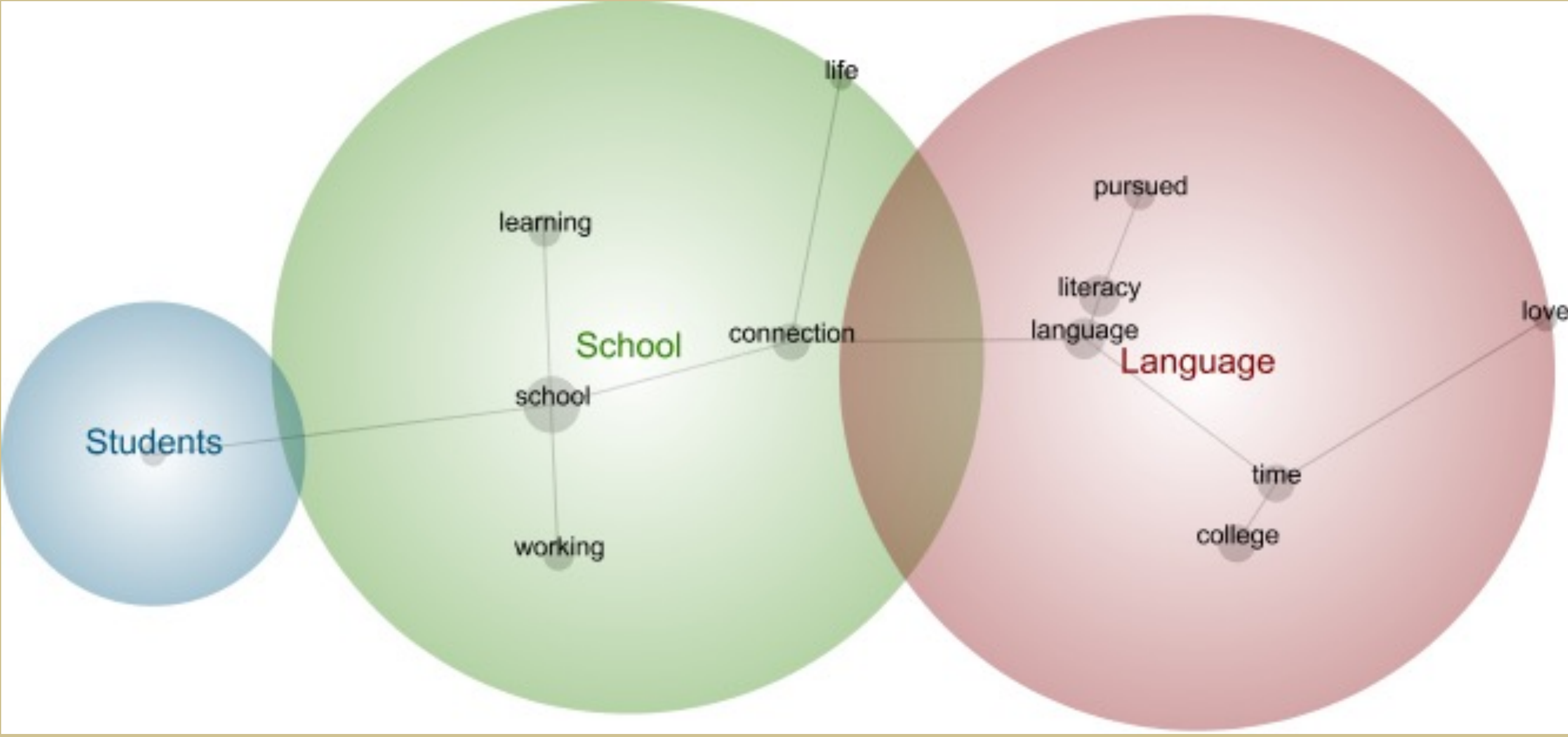
Challenges to Advocacy

1. Needs (26 hits)
Concepts: need, students, needs, teachers, people, work, education, understand
2. Time (19 hits)
Concepts: time, school, taking



Motivation to Advocate

1. Students (6 hits)
2. Support (6 hits)
3. Love (5 hits)



Advocate History

1. School (13 hits)
Concepts: school, connections, learning, working, life
2. Language (9 hits)
Concepts: language, literacy, time, college, pursued, love
3. Students (4 hits)
Concepts: students

Note. Thematic analysis of free-text responses. The circles depict themes in responses related to advantages and barriers to team-based research. Each word, depicted alongside a shaded circle, indicates a word that frequently occurred in free-text responses. The size of the circle reflects the frequency of occurrence with larger circles indicating more frequently occurring words or concepts than smaller circles.

Results

The major overarching themes of the study, *Teachers, Rights, Education, and Health*, revealed multifaceted and interconnected challenges to teacher success and efforts in and outside the classroom. For example, the challenges to advocacy concept map focused on themes of needs with 26 hits and time with 19 hits. The main concepts for the 'needs' theme were students, needs, teachers, people, work, education, understand. Although, the themes in motivation indicate that active advocates in schools will continue to advocate because of their love and support of their students.

Discussion

Even frequent advocates faced challenges in time restraints and expanded support, more research and resources would be needed to find solutions for school-based SLPs. Furthermore, based on the findings in the challenges concept map, the responsibilities and duties of school-based SLP's are not completely understood by people like administrators and teachers. With that misunderstanding of responsibilities, the allocation of SLP time is spread thin.

References

Lugo, V. A., Wood, C., & Farquharson, K. (2022). Advocacy engagement and self-efficacy of school-based speech-language pathologists. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1044/2021_LSHSS-21-00137

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