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Mitigating Burnout in Primary School Teachers Since the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Janine Adrian

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

Mitigating Burnout in Primary School Teachers Since the COVID-19 Pandemic

by

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MPA, Metropolitan College of New York, 2004

MA, Marist College, 2003

BA, Mount Saint Mary College, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Educational Psychology

Walden University

May 2024

Abstract

Although teacher burnout has been experienced for decades, teachers were faced with additional stressors with the onset of COVID-19. Teachers faced newfound stressors due to lockdowns and restrictions on gathering face to face and instruction becoming virtual. Even the youngest students (kindergarten to fifth grade) had to be taught according to the virtual learning mandates. As a result, primary school teachers began to experience burnout differently. The purpose of this study was to explore the support primary school teachers needed to help mitigate the burnout they experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study explored what interpersonal, intrapersonal, or educational support helps mitigate burnout feelings. This study used a generic qualitative approach to collect structured interview data from 15 kindergarten to fifth-grade teachers employed in the 2020–2021 school year. When teachers are less stressed, students are better positioned to learn. This study highlights the interpersonal, intrapersonal, and educational resources for teachers used to mitigate burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic and how the experience of burnout has changed due to COVID-19. The social impact of this study includes better support for teachers experiencing burnout.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my children, Oliver, and Elsa. I hope the sacrifices you have endured for me to pursue this dream will be repaid to you with many opportunities for joy and success in your future. Thank you for your understanding when I was distracted or not fully present for you during this project. I believe we have many years ahead of great times together.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Teacher burnout is well documented in relation to teachers' attrition and their students' achievement. However, with the coronavirus that emerged in 2019, also known as the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers experienced a different level of burnout as the United States responded by closing public schools and higher learning institutions. Educators and their students were mandated to isolate within their residences, and school boards moved the classrooms from in-person classes to virtual learning platforms, for which teachers were not prepared (Hart & Nash, 2020). While teacher stress and burnout are not a new topic, there are very few, if any, studies that have explored the unique challenges that teachers of the very youngest students in primary school have faced in the wake of the pandemic. Numerous studies have concluded that teachers facing burnout may negatively influence students' performance, lower scores on standardized tests, and most significantly, hinder students' access to quality education (Dworkin & Tobe, 2014; McCarthy et al., 2016; Worley et al., 2008). Studies that have focused on the unique challenges of the primary school teacher are less common in general and even less common in relation to COVID-19 and teacher burnout. In a study by Lauerman and Konig (2016), all teachers regardless of personal demographics had the likelihood of developing burnout. According to Kim and Asbury (2020), many quantitative studies exist on teacher burnout. In the recent past, qualitative study on teacher-related stress and burnout increased due to COVID-19 (Li et al., 2020). In a study conducted in France, researchers Carton and Fruchart (2014) investigated the ways primary school teachers experienced and responded to stress, which may affect feelings of burnout. Studies

conducted in the United States on teacher stress and burnout date back to the 1980s; for example, a study conducted by Rasche et al. (2020) explored the factors leading to burnout in academic administrators in higher education. That study called for further research on the feelings of burnout of the school-aged teacher. Only a handful of studies have been conducted in the United States that depict the unique challenges of working with young students. Few qualitative studies exist about burnout experiences specific to primary school teachers (Kim & Asburi, 2020; Lambert et al., 2019). Few studies exist on what primary school teachers feel will help lessen and mitigate burnout (Oberle et al., 2020; Orhan & Beyhen, 2020). The literature on primary-school-teacher-specific stress is well represented internationally but not in the United States (Heffernan et al., 2019; Sokal et al., 2020).

One exception is an American-based study by McCarthy et al. (2016), who recommended that future research look towards interviews, observational data, and survey data to increase the understanding of teacher-specific stress. Doyle and Buckley (2017) generalized that little qualitative research on teacher stress and teacher burnout exists internationally. Qualitative research is needed that looks at the individual differences in the stress levels of teachers in different teaching groups such as primary and secondary or new and experienced teachers. In a study by Szigeti et al. (2016), the Maslach Burnout Inventory was utilized to measure the factors that lead to burnout in primary and secondary teachers in Hungary. Their findings concluded that further research is needed to uncover the educational, interpersonal, or intrapersonal factors that minimize burnout and provide appropriate interventions for teachers. In a qualitative

analysis regarding the burnout patterns of primary teachers based upon Maslach's dimensions of burnout, Steiner (2017) concluded that identifying specific resources that could mitigate teacher burnout would be more powerful than general interventions offering a similar solution to all while paying little heed to teachers' unique burnout experience. Through this study, I aimed to consider what teachers consider the most appropriate interventions to mitigate burnout during a pandemic. The social impact of this study will help to better support teachers who are experiencing burnout. When teachers are less stressed, students are in a better position to learn. In Chapter 1, I provide a preview of the study's background, problem statement, purpose, research questions, nature, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance, followed by a summary as well as a transition to the literature review in Chapter 2.

Background

Owing to the rapid proliferation of COVID-19 throughout the world, workplace institutions were forced to adjust to public health programs and measures that required social distance to prevent viral spread, which resulted in a significant transition to videoconferencing by teachers. Teleconferencing teaching was a significant difficulty for some teachers in this environment, as it resulted in a loss of limits on working hours and greater psychological risks linked to stress and work pressure (Garcia-Carmona et al., 2019). The COVID-19 epidemic sparked recent dramatic transformation, which left an aftermath in the field of education (Herwin et al., 2021). In many nations, the crisis was dealt with harshly by closing educational institutions and requiring teachers to quickly adjust to online teaching and learning (Serhan, 2020). This approach attracted many

scholarly studies to evaluate the impact of this kind of learning on teachers (Oberle et al., 2020; Orhan & Beyhen, 2020). However, not many studies conducted since the pandemic have evaluated what teachers believe they need to do to mitigate the risks that are associated with burnout (Walter & Fox, 2021).

For example, an Arab study found that this issue has resulted in teachers experiencing common pandemic-related symptoms such as anxiety, despair, domestic abuse, and separation, all of which impaired their capacity to teach effectively (Al Lily et al., 2020). Since the pandemic, research conducted in three cities in China has investigated the incidence of anxiety amongst teachers and discovered an incidence of 13.67%, with women being more nervous than men and older teachers being much more symptomatic (Li et al., 2020). Another survey done in China found that 9.1% of teachers suffer from stress symptoms, emphasizing the importance of psychological support (Zhou & Yao, 2020). In a research study in Spain, teachers at the onset of the pandemic reported their workloads, psychological issues, and fatigue as some of the issues they were facing due to the demand of carrying out online teaching (Prado-Gascó et al., 2020). Additionally, previous research has shown that working remotely with information and communication technologies (ICT) can result in stress, depression, burnout, and lower job satisfaction (Cuervo et al., 2018), and in the pandemic, such where the only tools teachers could use to facilitate learning.

This research study is unique because little is known about U.S. primary teachers' experience of burnout and what they specifically need to mitigate burnout. One of the most prominent and seminal qualitative studies in burnout research is by Maslach (1982).

According to her, the three dimensions of burnout are exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Maslach constructed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), the most generally utilized survey for estimating burnout today. Maslach's work in the creation of the MBI denotes a defining moment in burnout research. Prior to Maslach's research, researchers were unable to empirically gauge the psychological state as it relates to burnout of various populations and professions, including teachers, military personnel, and police officers. This article is significant to this research study as it provides the theoretical framework and draws upon extensive research around burnout and work-related stress. This qualitative study did not use the MBI; however, this study utilized interview questions based on the MBI.

A sequential experimental study with an in-depth qualitative interview conducted by Richards et al. (2018) was used to develop a better understanding of how teachers perceived their level of burnout. The sample consisted of 28 teachers, 17 females and 11 males, from the Midwestern United States. The interviews were centered on perceptions of role stress and burnout as well as participant resiliency. This research found that the effect of social climate within the schools on teacher experience of burnout was unmistakable. Teachers reported greater burnout when they felt a disconnection not only between their students, but also between their students' parents. All the teachers reported that working with children and being a teacher were paramount for their sense of satisfaction. The authors reported that further in-depth longitudinal qualitative studies are needed to further explore and explain how factors within the school lead to burnout and stress.

Additionally, Brasfield et al. (2019) studied teacher burnout and the effects of wellness to test the research hypothesis that higher reports of wellness lead to lower reports of burnout. In this study, the wellness practices for reducing teacher burnout were tested using three different data collection tools: the MBI—Educator Survey, the Five Factor Wellness Inventory, and a demographic survey that the researchers created. The researchers suggested that further studies are needed to help determine what influences burnout and what the specific factors are that contribute to teacher burnout and attrition. Byrne (2016) conducted a nomological literature review that addressed burnout as both an individual and an organizational issue that affects the overall ability of the teacher to manage their classroom but also manage their stress. Byrne suggested the need for future research on teachers' work life and stated that the effects of stress and burnout need to be explored to provide more evidence of burnout as both an individual and an organizational issue. These findings suggest that interpersonal factors such as gender and race and intrapersonal factors such as marital status and having children play a role in the overall teacher experience of stress and burnout. In a study by Iancu et al. (2018), a random effects model meta-analysis was used to analyze individual studies on interventions to mitigate teacher burnout. The researchers provided a literature review of individual articles, considering the correlations between the studies' characteristics. Some of the findings included current interventions being used to reduce teacher burnout and were based upon a general model of stress that does not necessarily address the specific stressors that teachers face. Iancu et al. suggested that future studies are needed to

investigate a larger collection of well-being variables to provide interventions that truly address the stress and burnout of the American teacher.

As observed above, in-depth research has yet to be conducted so far to propose what teachers can do to mitigate burnout experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even fewer studies have focused on the unique challenges faced by primary school teachers whose instruction is structured around building social skills that need to occur in person rather than virtually. Studies have claimed that all teachers, regardless of personal demographics, can develop teacher burnout. Lauerman and Konig (2016) claimed that burnout does not discriminate based on age, gender, or socioeconomic status. An international study by Okcu and Cetin (2017) found that the burnout levels of primary teachers were higher than those of teachers in higher grades due to increased parental involvement. There is a significant focus on providing structure and socialization in the primary grades (Sparapani et al., 2018).

Teaching on platforms other than in-person instruction is especially challenging in the primary grades. By focusing on the educational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal supports primary school teachers specifically need to mitigate primary teacher burnout since COVID-19. This study aimed to consider the educational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal support primary teachers need to mitigate and change the experience of burnout. This study explored primary teachers' perceptions of the type of support they need to mitigate burnout.

Problem Statement

The COVID-19 epidemic posed significant obstacles to individuals and communities worldwide. Teachers encountered considerable pressures because of this. The epidemic necessitated an abrupt change to virtual learning, and teachers were tasked with supporting students' academic progress and well-being while simultaneously handling personal challenges and stress. Pupils have returned to schools in most countries, and teachers were tasked with ensuring a smooth transition. Recent studies indicate that big social upheavals such as natural disasters and pandemics have a detrimental effect on teachers' well-being (Malinen et al., 2019). It is likely that primary school teachers have experienced increased burnout since COVID-19. In recent times, extensive interruption in education had not occurred, emphasizing the importance of conducting current research on teachers' experiences during COVID-19. Research on teachers' experiences and in particular ways to alleviate the burnout associated with these large-scale social changes is needed. Additionally, given the possibility of future COVID-19 waves in the coming months and years and perhaps other interruptions in the coming years, it is critical to determine if there are factors linked with teachers' level of burnout in these stressful periods.

In many countries, the lived experience of teacher stressors that lead to burnout is a relatively new topic in educational psychology (Brasfield et al., 2019). The literature currently documents interventions that have been utilized to mitigate teacher burnout. These include mindfulness, cognitive behavioral therapy, social emotional skills, social support, and professional development. Iancu et al. (2018) reported that the current

interventions that are in place, however, sometimes fail to address the specific stresses of teachers. They also noted that further research is needed to explain teacher-specific needs vis-à-vis stress and mitigate and identify appropriate resources to mitigate potential burnout. Burnout is a multitiered construct, and the current research did not fully explore teacher-specific stressors. This research may contribute towards positive social change by helping policymakers to come up with a framework that can help teachers deal with burnout during stressful times such as a pandemic.

Purpose

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore the experience of burnout for primary school teachers since COVID-19 and the interpersonal, intrapersonal, and education resources that can be used to help mitigate teacher burnout in future times of stress. Teacher burnout was the phenomenon of interest in this research study.

Research Questions

Central RQ: What is the experience of burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?

Subquestion 1: What educational supports could help mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?

Subquestion 2: What interpersonal supports could help mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?

Subquestion 3: What intrapersonal supports could help mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theory that explains the phenomenon of burnout is Maslach's theoretical framework on burnout. This theory purports that burnout is a solitary disorder characterized by three parts: (a) emotional exhaustion, which shows when people cannot mentally give of themselves to the degree expected of them; along these lines, they are behaviorally unfit at putting resources towards performing; (2) depersonalization, which includes withdrawal, the removal of oneself from partners and students, and falling back on virtual connections and remote contact; and (c) the sentiment of diminished individual achievement, which results from adverse self-assessments and includes a lessening of efficiency and acquiescence to any push to perform. The factor of diminished individual achievement is likewise identified with sentiments of misery and generally leads to disappointment (Maslach et al., 1997). The research questions addressed different support modalities of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and educational supports. These modalities are the categories used to distill the codes and themes around burnout mitigation. This study examines the perspective of what primary school teachers believe is the most beneficial support modality to minimize their experience of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

Nature of the Study

This study was based on a generic qualitative approach and was focused on developing a better understanding of primary school teachers who experience burnout. A generic qualitative approach was selected to fully explore the influence that teacher-specific needs have on teacher burnout (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This study utilized a generic qualitative research design to gather firsthand accounts of what primary school

teachers believed would minimize their burnout. The study utilized a qualitative design in its approach to uncover the teachers' perception of what they felt would best address their burnout.

Up to 20 participants were interviewed. This sample size was selected as the structure of the interview was open ended, so a group of up to 20 participants allowed for a rich understanding of primary school teacher opinions. According to Vasileiou et al. (2018), it is suggested that studies using interviews use no more than 50 participants. A semi-structured interview protocol containing five interview questions was used. I took notes to capture any thoughts during and after each interview. The interviews were recorded electronically using a conference recording service and an Olympus WS-803 Voice Recorder. The interviews began with open-ended questions about the participants' experience of teacher burnout in general. More detailed questions followed, with the intent to gather data with more depth on how burnout had been impacted by COVID-19. All the interviews were done while following ethical guidance strictly on how to protect the confidentiality of the respondent. The data were analyzed by using thematic analysis to derive patterns from the interviews and find themes in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The preliminary steps of thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), included familiarization with the data; assignment of preliminary codes for each of the support modalities, searching for patterns and themes across the different interviews; as well as reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes, and producing the report.

The data gathered were not shared with any third party without the consent of the respondents. In the view of Creswell (2014), the interview allows a researcher to gather

firsthand information from the respondent, and hence data/information quality is not compromised.

Definitions

Burnout: Burnout is defined as a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive prolonged stress (Smith et al., 2020). Burnout occurs when an individual feels overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands.

Teacher: A teacher is a person who provides instruction and education for people; one who teaches and/or instructs (Keengwe, 2020).

Primary school: A school enrolling students in kindergarten to the fifth grade (Merriam Webster, 2020).

Pandemic: A pandemic is an epidemic of an infectious disease that has spread across a large region—for example, across continents or worldwide. A pandemic affects a substantial number of people (Merriam Webster, 2020).

COVID-19: On February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization announced an official name for the disease: Coronavirus disease 2019, abbreviated COVID-19 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020), is caused by a coronavirus called SARS-CoV2. Older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes are at higher risk for developing more significant and severe complications from the virus.

Assumptions

The assumptions in this study were the elements of the study that had no empirical evidence but that I nonetheless deemed to be true. It was assumed that all the information given by the respondents was true and related to the ways teachers can mitigate burnout. The study participants were assumed to be honest and open about their experiences with burnout and how that changed with COVID-19. Additionally, it was assumed that teaching and facilitating a class online led to burnout, which was brought about by COVID-19 pandemic. Another assumption was that teachers were aware of the factors that contribute to burnout and were also aware of the different types of support they would need to mitigate their feelings of burnout. These assumptions were necessary for the study's context and helped in guiding and informing future research on burnout in primary school teachers. Additionally, these assumptions helped to develop a deeper understanding of the problem of teacher burnout in primary school teachers to help in arriving at successful interventions to mitigate burnout in teachers during COVID-19.

Scope and Delimitations

The study's participants focused on teachers who taught primary school grade levels from kindergarten to fifth grade in the United States. This study included teachers from any demographic who had taught within the primary school grade levels in the school year 2020–2021. This study did not include any teacher with whom I had a personal relationship to prevent any preconceived biases. Transferability regarding burnout in other helping professions was increased with explaining the context of the research and the nature of the participants.

Limitations

There were some key limitations to this study. Although this study was conducted within the United States post the public health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, some face-to-face interviews were restricted due to distance. Participants had the option to be interviewed through a phone call (phone interview) or via email. Some teachers reported significant emotions remembering their experience of the COVID-19 pandemic due to losing loved ones and the fear that persisted for many months of gathering in public places. There is less research available on how to mitigate burnout brought about by COVID-19 in primary school teachers than other groups of teachers in secondary schools and higher education.

Barriers included difficulty in recruiting participants. Teachers did not respond to emails and call-in time, hence delaying the research.

Limitations in the reliability and trustworthiness of phone interviews were overcome by using Zoom to conduct interviews. One limitation that was noticed during the data collection phase was that this study did not address the variation of experience of the teachers due to demographic information such as age, years teaching, and geographic location. Another limitation that was addressed was discussing an experience with transitioning teaching styles in the 2020–2021 school year that had now occurred 3 years ago. The memory of COVID-19 may have decreased, or the feelings of burnout may be less intense. A limitation related to lack of research related to burnout during COVID-19 was addressed through triangulation with literature on teacher burnout experience during

natural disasters and pandemics and what it means to today's experience of teacher burnout.

Significance of the Study

Little is known about U.S. primary teachers' experience of burnout and what they specifically need to mitigate burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has caused challenges across many different sectors and nowhere more than the education sector. Teachers have been forced to reorganize their teaching and classroom management strategy due to online teaching. This strategy has led to a new stressor contributing to burnout among teachers. A comprehensive framework is needed to help teachers deal with burnout. Research specifically aimed at understanding the experience of burnout for primary school teachers in the United States is limited. The primary school teacher faces increased challenges in their role due to the youth and ability and mental health of their students. The findings of this research may be applied by policymakers to help teachers navigate through this post pandemic period and to deal with burnout more effectively.

In some countries, the lived experience of teacher stressors that lead to burnout is a relatively new topic in educational psychology, according to Brasfield et al. (2019). The current literature documents interventions that have been utilized to mitigate teacher burnout. These include mindfulness, cognitive behavioral therapy, social emotional skills, social support, and professional development. Iancu et al. (2018) reported that the current interventions that are in place, however, sometimes fail to address the specific stresses of teachers. Further research is needed to explain teacher-specific stress and to identify

appropriate resources to mitigate potential burnout. Therefore, this research contributes to the literature and provides new knowledge on how teachers can mitigate burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic and any other future pandemics. Burnout is a multitiered construct. The current research does not fully explore teacher-specific stressors and the interpersonal, intrapersonal, and educational resources that can be used to mitigate burnout, which increases the significance of my research in addressing burnout that was caused during COVID-19 among teachers.

Summary

The use of qualitative research methods emphasizes the need to explore and describe the different tools and interventions that can be used by teachers to mitigate burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Chapter 1, I outlined how COVID-19 has affected teachers, leading to burnout, and how this research might be instrumental in the education sector in helping teachers deal with burnout since the pandemic period.

Allowing teachers to express what they need to address their specific burnout-related stressors is an area that requires further investigation (Pressley, 2021). The results of this study identify the educational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal support that primary school teachers perceive they need to minimize their burnout. The results of this study may lead to an improved understanding of how primary teachers can identify and take steps to reduce their burnout. In Chapter 2, information is provided on the history of teacher burnout, the three dimensions of teacher burnout for schoolteachers, the three types of support for teachers experiencing burnout, pandemics and teacher burnout,

natural disasters and teacher burnout, and the unique challenges facing primary school teachers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Studies of the effects of teacher burnout on attrition and student achievement have been well documented. Numerous studies have indicated that teachers facing burnout may negatively influence students' performance, with lower scores on standardized tests, and may more significantly hinder their students' access to quality education (Dworkin & Tobe 2014; McCarthy et al., 2016; Worley et al., 2008). Lauerman and Konig (2016) found that teachers are more likely to experience burnout than other professionals. According to McCarthy et al. (2016), many quantitative studies have been conducted on teacher burnout. According to Kim and Rasburry (2020) and Lizana et al. (2021), only a limited number of qualitative studies have been conducted in the United States within the past 5 years on teacher-related stress and burnout, and even fewer studies within the past 15 years have focused on teacher stress and teacher burnout. Others focused on the burnout experience of academic administrators in research universities (Rasche et al., 2020). In a study conducted in France, Carton and Fruchart (2014) investigated the ways primary school teachers experienced and responded to stress, which may determine feelings of burnout. Studies conducted in the United States on teacher stress and burnout date back to the 1980s; for example, Dedrick and Raschke (1988) focused on the factors related to elementary/primary grade level teachers' perception of stress. Only a handful of studies have taken place in the United States that have addressed primary grade-level teacher-specific stress (Collie, 2021; Lizana et al., 2021). There are few qualitative studies about the experiences of primary school teachers and their opinions on the factors

they feel will help lessen burnout (Adnot et al., 2017; Oberle et al. 2020; Orhan & Beyhen, 2020). Even fewer studies are based in the United States. One exception is an older study by Lambert et al. (2019), which recommended that future research look towards interviews, observational data, and survey data to increase the understanding of primary school teacher-specific stress. Doyle and Buckley (2017) generalized that no qualitative research exists internationally that looks at individual differences in teachers' stress levels in different teaching groups such as primary and secondary or new and experienced teachers (Kim & Asbury, 2020). In a study by Szigeti et al. (2017), the MBI was utilized to measure the factors that lead to burnout in primary and secondary teachers in Hungary. They concluded that further research is needed to uncover the factors either educational, interpersonal, or intrapersonal that lead to burnout to provide appropriate interventions for teachers. In a qualitative analysis conducted by Steiner (2017) regarding burnout patterns of primary teachers based upon Maslach's dimensions of burnout, Steiner (2017) concluded that identifying specific resources that could mitigate teacher burnout would be more powerful than general interventions offering a similar solution to all teachers while paying little heed to teachers' unique burnout experience. This study intends to fill this gap.

The onset of the global pandemic in early March 2020 in the United States placed unique challenges on teachers as they were forced to shift from normal teaching platform to virtual teaching platforms (Moser et al., 2021). The purpose of this study was to understand the way that COVID-19 changed how primary school teachers experienced burnout since COVID-19 and what supports help to mitigate burnout.

Burnout in teachers took on an entirely unprecedented turn with the onset of the coronavirus (Malinen et al., 2019). In 2019, a virus that began in Wuhan, China quickly took over the world, bringing countries to their knees, crippling healthcare systems, and negatively affecting the economy worldwide. As of August 21, 2023, COVID-19, according to the World Health Organization (2023), had a worldwide death toll of 6,952,522 and in the United States had infected over 103 million confirmed cases (WHO). Symptoms range from those associated with the common cold to those associated with respiratory distress, the latter of which in many cases can lead to death. When the COVID-19 virus was discovered, the world saw various daily life adjustments, including mask mandates, stay-at-home orders, and public institutions' closure. Even schools changed how instruction was delivered. School systems were forced to begin virtual instruction or those schools that remained opened created a culture of fear of infection and possible death among teachers. Currently, there is a small number of empirically based studies regarding how the pandemic affected teacher burnout in the United States. Studies do exist on natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, which includes pandemics that have made a significant impact on teachers' emotional exhaustion and burnout experience in the event of a catastrophe (O'Toole, 2018).

Holmes et al. (2020) identified that the effect of COVID-19 on the world necessitated that school systems evolve their teaching methods to include remote avenues. Consequently, the educational system adjusted to include pandemic safety procedures catered to students' welfare. A United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report by Sokal et al. (2020) stressed the value of

evaluating the pandemic's psychological impacts on front-line workers such as teachers (Heffernan et al., 2019). Accordingly, the information collected from the research contributed to the development of a blueprint to help mitigate similar psychological effects in future pandemics. This study addressed teacher burnout in the United States by exploring the experience of primary school teachers since the COVID-19 pandemic who experienced burnout, specifically considering what educational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal supports primary school teachers need to mitigate teacher burnout in the context of a pandemic.

To study the phenomenon of COVID-19 and primary school teachers' perception of burnout, an exhaustive literature review was conducted on the history of teacher burnout. Burnout theory is explored as well as life satisfaction and burnout to provide a broad understanding of the experience of burnout to teachers (Al Lily et al., 2020; Herwin et al., 2021). I, as the researcher, investigated how burnout presents in teachers, along with the dimensions of burnout, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, inefficacy, and diminished individual achievement. The current scope of literature on three types of support (interpersonal, intrapersonal, and educational support) was synthesized. I investigated the way COVID-19 brought about burnout among teachers as they shifted to online teaching platforms. In Chapter 2, insight is provided on the literature surrounding the history of teacher burnout; the three dimensions of teacher burnout for primary school teachers; the three types of support, which include educational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal support for teachers experiencing burnout; pandemics and teacher burnout; natural disasters and teacher burnout; and the unique

challenges facing primary school teachers. Lastly, I explore the way in which COVID-19 changed teacher burnout.

Literature Search Strategy

Understanding the effect of the pandemic on teacher burnout helps researchers develop excellent procedures that may help teachers avoid similar instances in the future. The search strategy involved the use of the internet and online media as the primary methods of research. Specifically, the search process keywords included *coronavirus, Wuhan, pandemic, teachers, burnout, stress, work related stress, trauma, schools, education, natural disasters and teaching and global effect, mitigating burnout, elementary school teachers, primary school teachers, teaching through epidemics, and teaching during pandemics*. Synonyms such as *tutors, educators, learners, job stress, employees, mental exhaustion, physical and mental stress, interpersonal supports, intrapersonal supports, professional development, and education* helped in the search process. These keywords focused on the title of articles posted on online web libraries such as PsycInfo, EBSCO, PubMed, SAGE, Wiley, ResearchGate, Science Direct, and so forth. Additionally, online search engines such as Google and Google Scholar helped identify fundamental articles and sources used in the paper.

Owing to the lack of sufficient research focusing on employee burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic, the search strategy focused on identifying other global pandemic effects on the teaching profession. Focusing on the similarities helps in creating a picture of the anticipated effects after the pandemics end.

Overall, the search process took 7 months, employed the above strategies, and was designed to ensure that the articles used were scholarly and contained seminal research. Specifically, the information concerning teachers' psychological states provided current recommendations (Garcia-Carmona et al., 2019). Updated information can provide relevance and reliability for future research, allowing its use in future pandemics as a blueprint. Saturation was achieved once research questions were answered fully.

Theoretical Foundation

This study employed Maslach's (1982) burnout theory as the fundamental theoretical foundation. Maslach's theory was developed to assess the pop culture phenomenon of exhaustion that emerged in the workplace. Notably, work engagement with individuals directly correlated with employee burnout, which used a top-down approach compared to other work-related issues that displayed the opposite (Maslach et al., 2001; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Smith et al., 2020). Accordingly, research on burnout began in 1975, when a psychiatrist named Freudenberger tried to understand the phenomenon of burnout. The following year, Maslach, a social psychologist concerned with workplace emotions, also released a paper on the issue and called the phenomenon burnout. Consequently, burnout research developed in the healthcare sector and grew to encompass other business sectors (Maslach et al., 2001). As a result of the early development of research on the issue, researchers addressed burnout as a comprehensive phenomenon directly related to workplace performance; hence the two items were researched together instead of individually.

Maslach's (1982) theory of burnout has been operationalized along three dimensions: exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy (Maslach, 1982). The theory explains burnout as a solitary disorder characterized by these three dimensions. Globally, Maslach's theory of burnout is widely accepted as the universal theory that explains burnout syndrome. Many researchers and organizations like the theory due to the wide applicability and consistent results from utilizing the MBI system across different service industries (Worley et al., 2008). The theory comprises three primary dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished individual achievement (Vercambre et al., 2009). Burnout was identified as a two-factor theory comprising emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Worley et al., 2008). However, the idea was discarded because it was difficult to assess the phenomenon of burnout using two factors. Consequently, the MBI construct was revised to include three facets.

Emotional Exhaustion

Maslach identifies emotional exhaustion as a construct related to tension, anxiety, insomnia, physical fatigue, and mental fatigue. Specifically, emotional exhaustion was identified to relate to psychological and physiological strain (Worley et al., 2008). Pressley (2021) identified emotional exhaustion as the draining or depletion of emotional resources by interpersonal demands. Consequently, emotional exhaustion is an individual stress component that forms a fundamental part of the burnout experience (Arens & Morin, 2016). The factor was specifically assessed in relation to job satisfaction because emotional exhaustion had an overbearing effect on job satisfaction perception (Pressley, 2021).

Depersonalization/Cynicism

Maslach defined depersonalization as a coping mechanism employed by individuals who wished to dissociate themselves from a particularly stressful situation (Worley et al., 2008). Depersonalization occurred as individuals sought to distance themselves from the items that created stress in their lives. The factor appears as an innovative component of burnout syndrome because, before Maslach's theory, nobody had thought about depersonalization as part of burnout (Pressley, 2021). Emotional exhaustion and personal achievement have remained relatively the same. However, depersonalization has evolved, and researchers have tried to understand whether depersonalization and cynicism are the same (Vercambre et al., 2009). The problem with breaking down depersonalization is that it involves other human beings, thus making it a rigid factor that could not be expounded beyond its social relationships.

Nonetheless, defining depersonalization as a form of "mental distancing" makes it possible to relate depersonalization and cynicism. Notably, cynicism in the workplace deals with four main areas: the individuals at the job, the work organization, organization change, and the work environment (Salanova et al., 2005). The main area of depersonalization provides an overview of the various factors involved in diminished individual achievement among employees such as teachers. Any organizational change, the work environment, interaction with other individuals at the job, and organization of tasks could have an extensive effect on depersonalization burnout. The dimension of depersonalization correlates to the interpersonal supports that are needed to help mitigate the experience of burnout in individuals in times of extreme stress.

Inefficacy/Diminished Individual Achievement

Reduced individual achievement refers to a decrease in personal feelings of accomplishment of work or competence. Arora et al. (2013) identified that poor feelings of personal achievement were closely related to the job description. For instance, poor job experience resulted in reduced individual achievement. Additionally, the lack of proper resources or skills for a specific job description also correlates with reduced personal achievement. Teachers love accomplishing their set tasks without any hindrance or factors that make it hard. Lack of fulfillment of their specific job description makes it hard for individuals to appreciate the task.

Additionally, Maslow's motivational theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory help organizations understand the various utility and satisfaction levels that human beings believe they must achieve to feel accomplishment. The two theories show the specific significance of personal accomplishment in terms of burnout. Teachers love to derive personal achievement from their jobs in terms of their tasks and decision-making (Shapiro et al., 2019). The lack of recognition for the work that teachers perform leads to a poor sense of achievement, increasing burnout chances. Furthermore, achievement acts as a motivating factor, according to the two-factor theory of motivation (Alshmemri et al., 2017). Accordingly, lack of achievement is directly tied to the motivation teachers derive from a specific task; poor motivation leads to reduced performance and ultimately burnout (Margaretha, 2019).

Ultimately, Maslach's theory was chosen by me above others for this theoretical framework as it is a seminal work in the theory of burnout dating back to Maslach's

(1982) research, which first defined burnout as a psychological syndrome that occurred in professionals who worked in the service of others. Maslach's theory of burnout has been normed throughout different industries and continues to provide an analysis of burnout vis-à-vis job demands and attitudes towards work (Alarcon, 2011). Baugh et al. (2020) addressed burnout in the healthcare sector using the Maslach theory of burnout.

Specifically, the researchers sought to establish if burnout experienced by medical professionals originated from workplace factors. Additionally, Nimon and Shuck (2020) effectively used Maslach's burnout inventory as a crucial methodology in assessing work engagement and burnout effects in a practical sense. The researchers wished to test the theoretical effectiveness of the system in today's application. Internationally, Maslach's theory of burnout has been widely utilized to explore teacher burnout. Aboagye et al. (2018) used Maslach's theory of burnout to assess cross-cultural teacher burnout among a sample of Taiwanese and Japanese teachers. Hawrot and Koniewski (2018) used Maslach's burnout theory in a sample of 1,206 primary school teachers in Poland to verify the construct validity of not only the burnout theory, but the validity of the educator's survey as well.

The MBI is the most widely used instrument for measuring burnout. Many researchers have equally found that the MBI is the most useful tool in burnout research. As such, this Maslach theory has been found to be useful in evaluating the burnout among teacher due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Using this theory to analyze burnout among teachers will aid in formulating approaches that can be used to mitigate risks of

burnout among teachers (Walter & Fox, 2021). This is the main reason that Maslach's theory was applied in this research.

Burnout Theory and Theoretical Underpinnings

The theoretical underpinnings of burnout theory, include five dependent variables that cause a ripple effect. These variables are life satisfaction, job satisfaction, personal accomplishment, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion (Li et al., 2020). Each of the variables, is discussed extensively in the literature review and how these variables are connected to the research problem of primary school teachers mitigating burnout during COVID-19. The three dimensions of burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization/cynicism, and inefficacy/diminished individual achievement will be discussed in detail in the literature review.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

Burnout

Burnout began being recognized in employees that provide a service to other people. The client staff relationship led to dissatisfaction, chronic stress, and a reported feeling of emotional exhaustion. According to Ryan (1971) who first identified the condition, often led to negative attitudes and poor treatment towards one's clients. The human service industry works towards solving client's problems; however, client's problems are often pervasive and may not have a simple solution. When someone is in a position that serves another person, this leads to frustration, anger, and resentment (Maslach et al., 1982). Recognition of the existence of burnout evolved from records of emotional exhaustion among people who work within industries serving others (Skaalvik

& Skaalvik, 2015). Along with emotional exhaustion are reports of depersonalization where the worker feels undervalued and unappreciated. The third dimension of reduced personal accomplishment also contributes to burnout syndrome (Maslach et al., 1981). The preliminary research on burnout was conducted on employees in various human service fields that included healthcare, mental health, social services, and education.

History of Teacher Burnout

Hard-working teachers exposed to prolonged stress in schools risk becoming neurologically frenzied, battle fatigued, physically injured, or burned out (Alschuler, 1980). Stress occurs when the individual believes the demands on them are greater than what they can incur (Brasfield et al., 2019). Teachers are especially prone to work-related stress as they have limited access to other adults while teaching and must juggle learning the unique learning styles and personalities of all their students as well as deadlines, policies, documentation, and a lack of resources.

One of the most prominent and seminal qualitative studies in burnout research is by Maslach (1982), one of the pioneers in burnout research. As a social psychologist, Maslach concentrated on the estimation of burnout. According to her, the three dimensions of burnout include exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Maslach (1982) constructed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), the most generally utilized survey for estimating burnout today. Maslach (1982) and her partners' work in creating the MBI was a defining moment in burnout research (Worley et al., 2008). Before Maslach's research, researchers could not empirically gauge the psychological state related to burnout of various populations and professions to include teachers, military personnel, and police

officers. According to Sanford (2017), teacher burnout began to be recognized as a facet of burnout syndrome, a social issue rather than a psychological or medical concern. Burnout has yet to be recognized in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders (DSM-VTR). More than 40 years after the work of Bush et al. (1980) in his initial publication describing burnout, neither employer or mental health professionals have a concise methodology to treat and mitigate the symptoms of burnout in their employees. Both the employer and the mental health professional may recommend lifestyles changes on an individual level however, these changes do not seem to make a significant change in the condition of teacher burnout at large.

Life Satisfaction and Burnout

Park et al. (2010) identified that life meaning is important for both physical and psychological well-being. A sense of meaning and purpose drives individuals to work harder in their occupation and directly translates to better emotional and mental health (Çelik & Kahraman, 2018). However, life's meaning is directly tied to life satisfaction since satisfied individuals often enjoy better financial and physical success (Reizer, 2015). Additionally, Reizer (2015) noted that life satisfaction affected attachment, an interpersonal factor involving relationships with others help to promote workplace engagement or burnout. Attachment theory suggests that individuals with the ability to develop meaningful relationships in any specific field find unique ways of dealing with stress, thus promoting overall life affluence (McLean et al., 2019). Essentially, attachment works as the glue between any task or job and satisfaction. Therefore,

according to attachment theory, life satisfaction develops once an individual creates a meaningful relationship with a specific task.

Sypniewska (2014) identified job contentment as an emotional reaction associated with the feeling of performing specific tasks. Hence, job satisfaction may be regarded as a positive emotional reaction to performing specific work. The author also noted that job satisfaction was a psychological need that many employees needed to fulfill before going to higher ranking items on Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Kamneva et al., 2019).

Additionally, Herzberg's two-factor theory also identifies motivational factors as a critical aspect that many employers must promote among employees to increase overall motivation and engagement in the workplace (Sypniewska, 2014). Rosales et al., (2013) sought to establish whether a correlation existed between job satisfaction and burnout. A study discovered that burnout was directly related to job satisfaction (Cuervo et al., 2018). A decrease in job satisfaction led to increased burnout among the nurses researched. Additionally, Rosales et al., (2013) research discovered that the feelings depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and personal accomplishment significantly impact on the overall level of satisfaction derived from the job. The individual turns to a state of being overworked and underappreciated, over time this leads to burnout.

The Three Types of Support for Teachers Experiencing Burnout

Schnaider-Levi et al. (2020) described burnout as a progressive and chronic state that worsens with time. Individuals find it difficult to cope with job related stressors. Therefore, Schnaider-Levi et al. (2020) explained how various avenues are employed to ensure that teacher burnout is treated from educational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal

avenues. The individual avenues focus on helping teachers develop psychological and behavioral techniques that make it easier to cope with stressful situations. Organizational avenues focus on the environmental, institutional, and social factors that affect teacher burnout.

Educational Support

Education is one of the organizational supports that are available for teachers. Education through professional development and in service hours has been shown to be a unique factor in mitigating burnout among teachers Hartney (2020). Teachers learn stress management techniques that are specific to the unique stressors of teaching (McCarthy et al., 2016).

Education enables teachers to address a lack of knowledge concerning burnout and provides useful tips to participants to help them avoid using their emotions for social support. Teachers often experience burnout when they are emotionally supportive of students in their classrooms. Ruzek et al., (2014) identified that psychoeducation is an excellent method of spreading information about mental health issues including burnout. Garcia-Penalvo et al. (2019) uncovered the importance of providing learning opportunities to teachers experiencing burnout prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although there is ample literature on the benefits of educational support for teachers, the current literature that considers teachers' educational needs during COVID-19 is primarily international. In one study from Indonesia, Rasmitadila et al. (2020), claims teachers reported that they needed continuous support for training on technology

use and how to monitor and design online learning during what was called "school from home" in Indonesia. Another study (Mukhtar, Javed et al., 2020) calls for a systemic shared and collaborative approach to online learning in which teachers coordinate with researchers to learn the strengths and challenges of online teaching.

Interpersonal Support

Aside from teaching, an important element within the self-image of teachers is the perception of teacher student relationships as well as their professional relationships with other teachers and administrators. Fostering relationships is the crux to building self-efficacy and to minimize burnout yet, group relationships and oral communication skills are often overlooked in terms of professional development. In a study conducted in Spain (Gomez-Dominguez et al., 2022) found 75 articles on stress and burnout in teachers since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of those studies none delve into the interpersonal supports' teachers claim is needed to support their feelings of burnout during COVID-19.

Intrapersonal Support

A support for teachers to deal with burnout through intrapersonal support is cognitive behavior therapy (CBT). CBT appears to be a useful approach to dealing with burnout among teachers since emotional exhaustion leads to the development of anxiety and depression (Tran & Beck, 2018). CBT Therapists use to multiple CBT techniques treat their patients. The technique is chosen to help the patient talk more about their thoughts and induce positive behaviour change (Bennett-Levy et al., 2014). The methods aim to inform the victim of their negative thoughts and develop an alternative, positive

behaviour (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Moreover, the methods create a way of calming the patient and reducing stress or worry caused by a particular ordeal or trauma (Iancu et al., 2018). Gomez-Dominguez et al., (2022) discovered one article that supports cognitive behavioral therapies to minimize the effects of burnout during COVID-19. Zadok-Gurman et al., (2021) advocates the use of cognitive behavioral therapies to increase the feeling of self-efficacy that ultimately helps to diminish feelings of burnout.

Pandemics and Teacher Burnout

The World Health Organization defines a pandemic as the worldwide spread of disease. Most pandemics appear in the form of influenzas and viruses that spread at an alarming rate to entire continents. Specifically, the WHO identifies that most pandemics originate from animal influenza viruses. Regardless of the source of the disease, some pandemics cause serious damage to the world's population. As a result, children end up suffering directly and indirectly.

Tuğsal (2020) assessed the impact of various pandemics on teacher burnout. Over the years, multiple pandemics have affected different parts of the world, for example, the Spanish flu, Asian flu, Hong Kong flu, and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). All these pandemics have had devastating effects in China, Hong Kong, and Africa. The impact is felt throughout all systems within a society. Schools and teachers are just some of the people who have been affected by changes brought about through increased regulations, illnesses, and fears. The pandemics caused a shift in the new normal, leading to stress and increased chances of burnout, especially because teachers were forced to change their routine to accommodate new measures that prevent the

spread of diseases. Additionally, change affects the source of social support that individuals receive. Social support serves as a fundamental aspect of dealing with burnout. Additionally, Tugsal (2020), revealed that, teachers deal with some issues such attending to their babies at home thereby accelerating the burnout among teachers. This is different when teachers are at school as they do not deal with their babies at those times.

Natural Disasters and Teacher Burnout

Natural disasters have devastating effects on the school topography and the community surrounding the school. However, although the disasters' impact may sometimes leave the school with destroyed buildings, the psychological effects of living through such situations cause considerable damage to teachers, parents, and children (O'Toole, 2018). Teachers play a vital role when considering the impact of any natural disaster since children are at risk of long-term psychological problems following such situations. Kuntz et al. (2013) noted that school systems play a vital role in assessing children's psychological and mental issues. Additionally, teachers act as a vital resource in initial mental assessment among children. Accordingly, schools play an essential role in post disaster response among children. Notably, most research concerning natural disasters affecting schools focuses on children's psychological health and forgets about the teachers.

However, the teachers' role significance necessitates delving into the research, especially since teaching self-efficacy acts as a measure of the teacher's capacity to impact student performance (Seyle et al., 2013). Specifically, student performance is affected through two primary fonts, the general teaching efficacy, and the personal

teaching efficacy. The general teaching efficacy assesses the overall teaching capacity in the school. Contrary, personal teaching efficacy assesses the personal capacity that the teachers hold when dealing with students' post disaster occurrence (Seyle et al., 2013). Seyle et al. (2013) and Prado-Gascó et al. (2020) noted that the capacity to teach was affected by psychological health and burnout or depression factors. The researchers argued that disaster impact led to decreased teaching performance, especially if the teachers had a traumatic experience. Furthermore, such an effect would also reduce the overall teaching efficacy if the teacher had to support and guide students suffering from a similar ordeal emotionally.

Kuntz et al. (2013) assessed the effects of teachers offering emotional support to students after natural disasters. The researchers discovered that the level of burnout tremendously increased, especially when the teachers were unable to monitor or regulate their emotions. The teachers ended up providing excess emotional support leading to depersonalization as a form of escape. Additionally, O'Toole (2018) also assessed the response teachers provided to students after a natural disaster. Most teachers were inclined to offer emotional support to their students, although some found it difficult to handle the situation. Lack of proper education and training and effective ways of handling stress led to the development of burnout. Consequently, the researchers acknowledged the vital importance of emotional management training among teachers.

Rojas-Flores et al. (2015) assessed the impact of posttraumatic stress disorder on teacher burnout and discovered that posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) tremendously increased burnout. Specifically, teachers found it difficult to cope with students'

emotional requirements after a natural disaster as they had no skills or knowledge needed to deal with students' emotional state. As a result, many teachers suffered from emotional exhaustion, which is a significant indicator of burnout. The findings were backed by Kokai et al. (2004) research that assessed the psychological impact of natural disasters. The authors focused on Asia owing to the high natural disasters' prevalence rate in the continent. The findings proved that children suffer from PTSD after a natural disaster, and naturally, teachers are expected to fill the emotional gap by providing psychological support to the victims while at school (Zhou & Yao, 2020). Teachers who have no knowledge on how to deal with PTSD among students may suffer stress as they try to find for the best way to respond to such students.

According to Collie (2021), teachers play a fundamental role in helping students cope with life after natural disasters. Using Asia's teachers as a perfect blueprint shows the various ways the education sector helps children deal with mental health issues resulting from natural disasters. Additionally, the target population also provides useful information regarding teacher burnout in specific countries. The teachers in the country end up suffering from burnout due to emotional exhaustion and posttraumatic stress.

How Did COVID-19 Change Teacher Burnout?

Sokal et al. (2020) noted that the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to change from in person to remote teaching. The shift from in person to virtual learning gave rise to a whole new outlook on teacher burnout (Hart & Nash, 2020). Incorporating digital systems into teachable lesson plans meant that teachers had to face a new online teaching stress despite teaching already being a stressful profession (Johnson et al., 2005).

Specifically, burnout evolved because other factors apart from the three burnout dimensions affected the stress that teachers faced. The pandemic forced teachers to deal with time management, parental expectations balancing home and work life, some teachers not only teaching their own children but their classes as well (Okcu and Cetin, 2017); Richards et al., 2018). Teachers began relying on a new technology to deliver classroom instruction along with a lack of resources. Therefore, the pandemic developed a situation where burnout resulted from job demands and accomplishment instead of emotional exhaustion (Alarcon, 2011). The job demands vary from one teacher to another, one school to another, and one district to another depending on the job title and method of facilitation.

Nonetheless, their study results showed that each job demands, and availability of resources had a negative correlation with accomplishment and consequently the levels of burnout experienced by teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Sokal et al. (2020) identified that burnout developed from lack of accomplishment, then cynicism, then emotional exhaustion. The change was owing to the lack of personal relationships between the teacher and the student. Teachers perceived the situation as stressful when they could not accomplish set tasks because of technical issues or lack of resources (Al-Fudail, 2008). However, although most participants developed burnout from lack of accomplishment, the authors also noted that a select few developed burnout. Notably, the latter group viewed their relationship with technology as personal, leading to emotional exhaustion when they could not accomplish their set tasks (Sokal et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic also changed the associations that linked teachers to the increased

prevalence of job burnout. In the past, most researchers focused on job satisfaction as the primary predictor of job burnout (Chen et al., 2020). Focus should be on the effect of emotion on job satisfaction and job burnout. Using the five-factor model, the researcher discovered that love and happiness were positive attributes to job satisfaction.

Overall, high job satisfaction resulted in a decreased level of burnout (Maslach et al., 1997). Creating a link between job satisfaction and professional identity creates an opportunity to address the effects of personal identity on job burnout, considering that many teachers lost their professional identity when they were forced to teach online. Research has also been done on the effects of professional identity on job satisfaction and discovered that high burnout positively correlates with poor career commitment and low job satisfaction.

Unique Challenges Facing Primary School Teachers During COVID-19

Primary school is where children first learn to interact with the world. The ages of children in primary school average from about 4 at the very youngest to 10 at the point of rising from 5th grade on to middle/secondary school. After parents, children will first learn from their primary school teachers. Effective teachers need to address the different needs that result from different home environments, different languages, and different capabilities and perspectives. In primary grades learning focuses on social interaction, circle time and small group learning at tables (Sparapani et al., 2018). The introduction of social distancing and minimal interactions during COVID-19 disrupted the social learning process. Prior to the onset of COVID-19, primary school teachers already faced challenges beyond their peers in upper grades. A Taiwanese researcher (Kyriacou et al.,

2004) studied the importance of professional dialogue when teachers have the ability to discuss with other teachers and administrators their experience it helps to mitigate the teachers' level of stress and increases job satisfaction. These teachers reported that managing student behaviors is a common challenge. The 18 new teachers that were interviewed report a wide range of professional support to include, administrators, grade level peers and specialists were needed to help overcome the challenges of behaviors and meeting individual needs of the diverse socioeconomic status of their students and help maintain classroom management.

Among the current literature on primary school teachers and their response to stressors during the COVID-19 pandemic international studies abound. While the pandemic continues to cause illness and absences for both teachers and students, there is long lasting task stress and role ambiguity in elementary school teachers. The workload is increased when teachers face both parent and student lack of understanding and misuse the technology needed for distance learning. The emotional labor and emotional intelligence in teachers are reflective of the school leadership understanding the struggles of teachers. Since COVID-19 disrupted normal learning teachers felt required to be immediately capable of using online learning tools during the abrupt transition to virtual classrooms (Zhang et al., 2020). Unfortunately, teachers pointed out the lack of knowledge and abilities regarding the conversion of analog (hardcopy) resources to digital (softcopy) resources and their sharing on digital platforms. Due to insufficient knowledge about digital learning, teachers lacked online teaching abilities (Serhan, 2020). As a result, they encountered difficulties developing educational materials that

catered to students of various grades, devising methods that were appropriate for all learners, and organizing concurrent sessions. Technology in accessibility seems to be the most frequently mentioned impediment to the smooth running of virtual teaching and learning classes. Limited internet connectivity owing to an unreliable connection to the internet, inconsistent broadband speed, and insufficient bandwidth for those who use mobile data are only some of the challenges that have arisen.

As teachers who had never sought to incorporate internet platforms into their virtual teaching and learning were suddenly obliged to acquire new skills, most of them wasted considerable time fumbling in the unknown world of digital learning. Indeed, even teachers with previous experience utilizing online learning technologies for collaborative learning expressed concern about the time required to prepare online lessons (Akbulut et al., 2020). This issue came about because of instructors' unfamiliarity with the adopted e-learning platforms (Zhang et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2020) and methods for locating materials that align with the national curriculum. Additionally, instructing from home during school and nursery closures increased some instructors' family responsibilities, as time management was a significant difficulty for them. All these factors contributed to teacher burnout. Martin et al. (2019) state that an effective online teaching and learning session happens when the teacher can communicate with students and perform the online activity. These factors of utilizing unfamiliar platforms and instructing from home all significantly contributed to teachers in the primary grade levels feeling increased stress which created the feelings of burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Summary

Burnout is a significant issue that affects individuals in many organizations, especially when the top management fails to facilitate an environment and culture that motivates and supports its employees to work harder. In the teaching profession, teachers suffer from burnout when they are forced to offer emotional support to students after pandemics and natural disasters (Baker, 2020). Although there is insufficient research on the effects of pandemics on teacher burnout, the COVID-19 pandemic provides an excellent blueprint for assessing burnout among teachers. Employing Maslach's theory of burnout highlights the various ways in which COVID-19 affects teacher burnout with specific emphasis on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and sense of achievement as the primary burnout dimensions. The emergence of a global pandemic caused a drastic change in the way teachers viewed their profession. Remote teaching was introduced as the primary mode of teaching, creating several problems such as technology use and lack of personal achievement, increasing burnout levels among teachers.

For the teacher who works with the youngest of school children, the primary school teacher teaching in a virtual platform faced an increased challenge. Only a limited amount of research exists that speaks to the unique challenges faced in teaching the primary grades through a pandemic. Even less research exists that utilizes primary school teachers self-report regarding the type of support they need to mitigate their feelings of burnout (Vasileiou et al., 2018). In this chapter, the literature review was presented, including the history of teacher burnout, an overview of dimensions of burnout and the types of support needed to mitigate burnout, as well as a review of past studies related to

teaching in the time of pandemics and natural disasters. In Chapter 3, the methodology and research design that have been applied to explore the perceptions of participants were described. Descriptions include the data collection, analysis, and coding procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to evaluate what primary school teachers needed to mitigate burnout during COVID-19 pandemic. I, as the researcher, detail the overview of the research design, which is limited to the rationale for choosing this type of an approach for the research. In addition, the chapter captures the role of the researcher. Furthermore, I discuss the methodology and how the participants were recruited. The research ethical issues are also highlighted in this chapter, together with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

In this research, the generic qualitative research philosophy was used to address the following research questions.

Central RQ: What is the experience of burnout in primary school teachers during COVID-19?

Subquestion 1: What educational supports could help mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?

Subquestion 2: What interpersonal supports could help mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?

Subquestion 3: What intrapersonal supports could help mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?

The research questions were developed to (a) discuss the experience of burnout for primary school teachers since COVID-19; (b) explore how primary school teachers describe their specific educational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal needs to mitigate

burnout since COVID-19; and (c) explore how COVID-19 changed the burnout experience.

Through the application of a generic qualitative research philosophy, this study helped to increase the understanding of the psychological effects of the pandemic and ways of reducing burnout among teachers in the United States (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Furthermore, I considered a constructivist point of view as it corresponds with the philosophy of generic qualitative design, the data collection methods of which present patterns and themes through interview, observation, and archival data (Ahmed, 2017).

Qualitative research was utilized as previous research in burnout had included a naturalistic approach to uncovering the phenomenon of burnout among teachers and provided teachers' insights in the context of these situations. The qualitative research design also considered the aspect of "objective reality" in very different contexts and resulted in numerous paradigms that were opened for further research on the topic.

In comparison, quantitative approaches such as structured questionnaires, social surveys, and official statistics were ruled out as this study did not utilize any of these methods. These methods would not have allowed for open-ended answers. Another approach was considered, objective positivism. Because burnout can be considered as a function of society, positive or negative societal facts that shape individual actions. This philosophy emphasizes the importance of performing quantitative research using large-scale surveys for obtaining an impression of society, which was not considered for this research.

For this research, the qualitative research design's overall method was applied because it allows for the merging the various aspects of the research coherently and logically for addressing the primary research question. It comprises a set of methods and techniques implemented in the study for evaluating and gathering the data pertaining to the teachers' experiences in the study for addressing the developed research questions (Ulmer, 2017). The research design incorporates the overall manner that has been chosen by collecting and evaluating data concerning the research variables to address the formulated hypothesis or questions of tests. In the context of the study, I used a generic qualitative design, which elaborates descriptively on the burnout effects of the pandemic and the teacher by relying on interviews with teachers as the primary source of information. This exploratory design allowed me to understand any complex phenomenon using a thorough contextual evaluation of patterns and themes between them (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). By applying this design, I focused on the causes, particularly resulting in the increased burnout rates among teachers due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, this design can also help the researcher to extend the existing knowledge base by addressing a previous literature gap as suggested in Chapter 2.

The research strategy is encapsulated, so that the study can be performed by addressing the formulated research questions, thereby offering a new paradigm to the research topic. This research is associated with the generic qualitative method of analysis and collection of required data (Basias & Pollalis, 2018). The strategy used conforms to the rationale for why the generic qualitative research was selected as it permits the topic in hand to be illustrated in a setting of real life. The deductive approach was discarded

because this approach, when used in hypothesis and experimental testing research, may result in major themes being reframed, obscured, or ignored as the preconceptions related to data analysis and data collection procedures are imposed by researchers.

Generic Qualitative Research

The generic qualitative research methodology was utilized when the five subjective methodologies were not lined up with the research study (Kostere & Kostere, 2021). Conventional qualitative investigation approaches can be utilized from the participants' perspective, just as the expert or official point of view (Kennedy, 2016). For instance, there has been a significant measure of examination teacher burnout; in any case, there is an absence of exploration on the primary school teacher's perspective.

Generic qualitative approach pioneers include Percy et al. (2013). Certain psychological phenomena cannot be estimated in a measurable methodology. Generic qualitative approaches to research can create the specific assessments, encounters, perspectives, or sensations to study a psychological phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Percy et al., 2015). This information strategy required meetings through composed or oral reviews, eye-to-eye strategies, or question-and-answer structures and surveys, which are concentrated through a blended technique approach (Creswell, 2013; Percy et al., 2015). If the subject requires a lived encounter, a generic qualitative research methodology is utilized to accumulate those encounters and involve social change. Generic qualitative research requires a small sample; nonetheless, numerous analysts utilize bigger samples than those normally utilized in other subjective ways to acquire a straightforward and unprejudiced outcome (Creswell, 2013; Percy et al., 2015).

Role of the Researcher

I intended to bring to light the experience of primary school teachers who had been facing burnout and how COVID-19 changed the way mitigating burnout is necessary. I was a doctoral candidate in educational psychology and was trained in the skills necessary to carry out the design of the study. The researchers' skills included active listening and interviewing as part of a qualitative research course for Walden University.

As per Molden (2011), a lack of understanding and mutual trust might cause participants in a study to be suspicious and doubtful. Having worked within the public school system as a school counselor, I needed to be able to recognize professional boundaries and not look to using colleagues as participants. I took time to develop cordial relationships with the participants in the study and clarify the study's aims and goals. I was aware that participants in the study would be reluctant to discuss their true sentiments and experiences during an interaction if they perceived me as a stranger. To respect this reluctance, I introduced the purpose of the study and the social implications of the study. The findings may help inform and educate teachers on how to manage feelings of burnout during the pandemic. Also, this study highlighted that participation in the research only began after the participants had agreed and consented and that all information they share would be confidential. According to Silverman (2017), developing a professional relationship with participants in a study in this way, notifying them that their participation in the research is totally anonymous and voluntary and acquiring uncodified explicit consent, are all resourceful strategies for overcoming the obstacles

inherent in using interviews as a method of collecting data. The participants were informed about the study's aims and limitations, as well as individual rights. The research was conducted independently. Additionally, the privacy of participants in the study was protected by prohibiting intrusive observations, provocative questions, unwelcome solicitations, and intrusions. Additionally, consent was secured from all participants in the study prior to conducting interviews, and all audio and written materials have been stored in a secure file folder.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The purpose of this study was to explore the type of support primary school teachers need to mitigate the burnout they were experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the main participants for this study were teachers. The participants were contacted through emails. The teachers must have taught in the primary school grade levels of kindergarten through fifth grade during the 2020–2021 school year while living in the United States. Purposive or subjective sampling was used to select 20 teachers from current K–5 teachers. In general, in qualitative studies, 15 is the smallest acceptable sample size (Bertaux, 1981, as cited in Guest et al., 2013, p. 61). Fifteen were selected for this study in attempts to gain representation of participants throughout the United States (see Appendix A for recruitment flyer). In this research, the intent was that snowball sampling (Parker, 2019) would allow for data saturation. According to Ness and Fusch (2015), saturation is a point where no new pattern of information is obtained after interviewing a substantive number of the sample.

Instead, a range of 12 to 15 participants was selected due to restrictions and hence a huge number of people could not be recruited to participate. According to Saunders et al. (2012), purposive sampling is favorable when a limited number of primary data sources are available to participate in a study. Using this sampling method, I assumed that by using sound judgement, a sample could be derived from the population. Additionally, purposive sampling was cost and time effective.

This study utilized an interviewing method where both the interviewer and the interview questions were the instrumentation used. Notes were taken to capture any research thoughts during and after each interview. The interviews began with open-ended questions about the participants' experience of teacher burnout in general. More intensive questions followed, with the intent to gather data with more depth on how burnout had been impacted by COVID-19 (Charmaz, 2006). The interview was concluded with more open-ended questions, framed to invite more depth regarding what the primary school teachers believed that they needed to mitigate the effects of burnout. Interviews were conducted over the telephone only. The interviews were recorded electronically using a conference recording service or an Olympus WS-803 Voice 51 Recorder. No interview was conducted without confirming the written and verbal informed consent of the participants. Each participant interview took place in a single interview session. Each interview was transcribed by me.

Instrumentation

Although the theoretical foundation of this study was Maslach's theory on burnout, the MBI was not used. This study used an interview method; the interview guide

is found in Appendix B, where both the interviewer and the interview questions and the instrumentation were used. Semistructured interviews and all notes compiled during the research were used to gather data for the study (Silverman & Spirduso, 2010). In order to select the participants who met the criteria, the participants were first asked if they were teachers and if they self-reported feelings of burnout. The remaining six open-ended questions pertained directly to the research questions and asked the participants to discuss their experience as primary school teachers and what interpersonal, intrapersonal, and educational needs that they reported were needed to help mitigate their feelings of burnout. The interview was used to capture all these experiences, which were used to arrive at the conclusion of the study (Vasileiou et al., 2018). To support the study's literature review during the data collection, UNESCO reports and others were reviewed. These reports provided information on how COVID-19 had continued to impact primary teachers as they continued to teach online. Specifically, reports that relate to burnout of teachers and COVID-19 have been sourced. In the view of Silverman and Spirduso (2010), reports provide relevant information critical to research questions and of the research. Kallio et al. (2016) believed that semistructured interviews are the most common data-collection method for qualitative studies. Interviewers must provide the participants with leading questions that require the participant to respond with detailed answers (Kallio et al., 2016). The form of the interviews allowed participants to share their experiences and perceptions of the subject matter while I gathered data relevant to the research study (Kallio et al., 2016). In the first three questions of the interview, the primary school teachers interviewed were asked to confirm their status as teachers and to

confirm that they had experienced burnout. Open-ended questions followed regarding the central research question and sub questions pertaining to educational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal needs that primary school teachers faced since COVID-19. The interview guide is located in Appendix B. The interview data collection method allowed the participants in the study to answer in their own words on their experience with teacher burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Researcher-Developed Instruments

The interview that this study utilized was developed by me in order to address the primary research question and the four sub questions. The entire interview was comprised of five open-ended questions that were developed to gain understanding on teachers' experience of burnout since COVID-19.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The three criteria for participants were that they had taught within in the primary school grades of kindergarten to fifth grade in the school year 2020–2021. The teachers self-identified that they had experienced burnout prior to the pandemic. The sample was drawn from teachers currently educating in the United States. Snowball sampling was used for the selected teachers to recruit their own colleagues and coworkers through a digital flier on Facebook. I emailed participants who responded to the recruitment flier, using the email to potential participants in the appendices. I asked for their assistance in finding one to two colleagues who might also be interested in responding to the interview. I used memos to capture any research thoughts during and after each interview. The interviews could either be recorded electronically using a conference

recording device service, Olympus WS-803 Voice Recorder TM. For the convenience of teachers, an email interview was also an option to maximize participation of teachers in other time zones or with limited scheduling options. In cases when the email interview provided brief information or responses, I followed up with the interview participant for additional information. The interviews began with open-ended questions about the participants' experience with teacher burnout in general. More intensive questions followed to gather data with more depth on the impact of COVID-19 and teaching at the primary school level.

No interview was conducted without confirming the written and verbal informed consent of the participants. Each participant interview took place in a single interview session. Each interview was transcribed by me. Debriefing procedures included providing the number for the National Crisis Hotline (844-549-4266) if participants felt that they became emotionally distressed as a result of their participation in the study.

Data Analysis Plan

According to Flick (2014), data analysis involves classifying data and interpreting of raw data to make them meaningful. For the data collection, the participants were briefed on the study's goals, purposes, and outcomes. Alphanumeric characters were assigned to each participant to maintain confidentiality. Each participant received an explanation of how vital this study was for positive social change purposes, as it could help increase the understanding of how COVID-19 changed teacher burnout. Handwritten notes were taken to document the participants' answers, and a digital

recorder was used to record the interview. Manual hand-coding was used to analyze data to demonstrate rigor and implement the trustworthiness of the study.

Each of the transcripts of the participants' interviews were coded and completed a preliminary coding to identify first cycle codes, second cycle codes, categories, and emerging themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) six thematic analysis steps were utilized to identify the codes, categories, and emerging themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) indicated the six thematic analysis steps as,

- I have familiarized myself with the data, which includes reviewing the data several times to search for meanings and patterns that are familiar
2. I generated initial codes by creating a word document analysis table to organize codes and the coding features of the same context and collecting the data pertinent to each code.
3. I searched for themes by sorting the codes and combining each code to determine similarities that form into themes.
4. I reviewed themes, which ensured that there is enough data to support each of the themes.
5. I defined and named each theme, within the word document to include generated definitions and names for each theme.
6. I produced a report, to entail providing an analysis of the data collection.

Issues of Trustworthiness

A study's trustworthiness reflects the degree of confidence in its data, interpretations, and the methods used to enhance the study's quality. This necessitates that

researcher assume role in developing the processes and protocols necessary for a study to be considered trustworthy by readers (Amankwaa, 2016). Leung (2015) acknowledged that while researchers agree on the importance of trustworthiness, the definition of trustworthiness remains contentious. To promote trustworthiness no participant had a direct relationship with the researcher that represented a conflict of interest, such as a reporting relationship, contract, or any relationship with the researcher that may have imparted bias on the research study. Participants may not have reported honestly to the interviewing process. The goal of this research was to achieve truth by finding approaches that can be used to mitigate burnout among teachers during COVID-19 pandemic. This study used the criteria adopted by Guba and Lincoln (1994) for assessing the trustworthiness of a research study. This criterion includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility according to Polit and Beck (2014) is the key criterion of all as it builds confidence in the study by ensuring truthful data. To promote the credibility of this study, data was collected by carrying out a detailed personal interview with teachers to understand how they have been dealing with burnout since COVID-19 and what can be improved. A standard interview method was utilized to collect data that is central to inform the research and answer the research questions. For the literature review, scholarly articles were used to satisfactorily inform the research in matters burnout among teachers.

Transferability

Transferability is a term that refers to the capacity for generalization. It is predicated on the premise that results can be extrapolated or applied to different contexts or populations (Patton, 2015). Transferability is a key feature of qualitative study that ensures that similar findings can be obtained in different context while using similar parameters. In this research, this was achieved by collecting comprehensive data from a wide sample of teachers in the USA primary schools who have been teaching through virtual platforms. According to Creswell (2013), peer-reviewed articles are best used in a research study to enhance transferability of data. I relied on the use peer-reviewed articles for this research.

Dependability

In raising the point of dependability, the positivist makes use of tools to demonstrate that comparable results are produced if the research were performed in a similar environment, using the same procedures, with same participants (Biber et al.,2006). To enhance dependability, the researcher developed themes and codes that are aligned to the study and used computer applications to ensure consistency of the data in every facet of the study. All the recorded interview and all the materials used in this research are maintained in locked file cabinets to promote dependability of the research. To handle the problem of dependability very explicitly, the research methodology was detailed, allowing a future study to replicate the research. The participant population adhered to very specific demographics to ensure dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability is a term that relates to the objectivity with which research is conducted throughout data collecting and analysis. Two or more separate individuals must agree on the relevance and accuracy or interpretation of the data (Polit & Beck, 2012). Additionally, conformability demonstrates quality of the research and correctness of the data. To achieve conformity in this research, a systematic collection of data and analysis was employed and used recorded data to ensure there is no bias hence replicability of the study results. I checked and rechecked data during and after interview to ensure that they conform. Any discrepancy was be handled accordingly through a collaboration with the researcher throughout the process.

Ethical Procedures

Agreement to Gain Access

An agreement was obtained to gain access to participants from institutional Review Board. Some of the issues to gain access for included maintenance of private data and protection the participant confidential information. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was issued by Walden University before starting the process of data collection.

Consent

An informed consent form was emailed and read to each participant prior to the interview. The letter of Informed Consent follows U.S. federal guidelines, as outlined by Nachmias and Nachmias (2008) including, “a reasonable explanation of the processes, a description of the dangers that may be reasonably anticipated, a description of the

advantages that can reasonably be anticipated, an invitation to inquire about the processes, and instructions that an individual is free to cancel" (p. 75). I obtained consent from the participants to record the interviews. The risks to human subjects associated with this study were minimal. All participants had to be over 18 years of age, and could not demonstrate any impaired mental capacity, as determined by their ability to perform the positions that they hold in the workplace. The participants were also informed that the information gathered is solely used for the purpose of this research.

Data Storage

All recorded materials will be erased after 5 years, following final approval by the research committee, minimizing any future risks related to confidentiality. Throughout this period, the data will be stored electronically in audio recording device. All materials related to this research will be stored safely in storage cabinet.

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to outline the research method used to answer the research questions. A discussion of the methodology, data collection and interviewing methods have been outlined in the specifics of how the study was collected, and who the participants are in the study. A generic qualitative approach was used to gather information on the experiences of primary school teachers not only experiencing burnout but also experiencing burnout during the pandemic of COVID-19. The next chapter reports the analyses of the findings.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This generic qualitative study was intended to contribute to a better understanding of primary school teachers' burnout experience since the COVID-19 pandemic by documenting their experience of the 2020–2021 school year and how they experience burnout today. Their stories provide a firsthand account of what it was like to teach the youngest students through an abrupt change from in-person teaching to virtual learning platforms. Their firsthand accounts span from the experience of burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic, also providing a look at what teachers believed were the supports that could help to mitigate burnout.

Each interview lasted approximately between 30 minutes and 1 hour. Participants were consulted after preliminary data collection to verify data and to provide the participants an opportunity to add any additional thoughts or details on their personal experience. The central research question used in this study was the following: What is the experience of burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19? There were three research sub questions:

Sub question 1: What educational supports could help mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?

Sub question 2: What interpersonal supports could mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?

Sub question 3: What intrapersonal supports could mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?

The setting of the research study is followed by a description of the demographics, data collection methods, and analysis methods and data analysis. The final sections include the results of the study and are organized by the overall experience of burnout and the educational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal supports used to mitigate burnout since COVID-19, followed by a summary of the findings.

Setting

This study took place approximately 2 months from the 3-year announcement on March 15, 2020, when the U.S. government announced the plan to implement shutdowns to reduce the transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first of the large metropolitan area school systems to shut down was the New York City public school system. The New York City public school system in the United States, with 1.1 million students, shut down, followed by much of the rest of the nation (Senser, CDC, 2023).

When this study occurred, the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were no longer in place. The research and the phone interviews took place within the safety and privacy of the participants' homes while away from their workplaces and schools. I anticipated feelings of grief and trauma due to reliving the experience of burnout during the pandemic. All participants were provided with the number to a mental health crisis hotline. Each participant, however, was enthusiastic; they were appreciative that they were finally to be asked about their experience during a very challenging time in education. The generic qualitative design was used to create specific assessments, encounters such as interviews and perspectives, or sensations to study a psychological phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Percy et al., 2015). This information strategy requires

interviews through composed or oral reviews, question-and-answer structures, and surveys, which are concentrated through a blended interview approach (Creswell, 2013; Percy et al., 2015). Considerable attention was paid to the teacher's emotional response of revisiting challenging experiences and grief since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Demographics

Fifteen individuals met the criteria of being 18 or older, being a teacher in the United States in the 2020–2021 school year, and teaching kindergarten to fifth grade. The teachers provided demographic information during the study, most specifically in the preliminary study question. Some of the demographic information obtained during the interviews is presented in Table 1. All participants were residents of the United States. Of the 15 participants, one was from Illinois; one was from Florida; one was from Washington, DC; one was from Pennsylvania; four were from New York; and seven were from Virginia. The grade level taught during the 2020–2021 school year and if the participant self-identified that burnout was experienced were categorized.

Table 1*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Participant	SY 20–21	SY 23–24	Interview Question 1: Location	Interview Question 1: Codes 1–2 1—taught in Grades K–2 2—taught in Grades 3–5	Experienced burnout since COVID
P1	Y	Y	Illinois	1, 2	Y
P2	Y	Y	Florida	1, 2	Y
P3	Y	Y	Virginia	1, 2	Y
P4	Y	Y	Virginia	1, 3	Y
P5	Y	Y	Virginia	1, 2	Y
P6	Y	Y	Pennsylvania	1, 3	Y
P7	Y	Y	Virginia	1, 3	Y
P8	Y	Y	Virginia	1, 3	Y
P9	Y	Y	New York	1, 2	Y
P10	Y	Y	Virginia	1, 2	Y
P11	Y	N	Virginia	1, 2	Y
P12	Y	Y	New York	1, 2	Y
P13	Y	Y	Washington DC	1, 2, 3	Y
P14	Y	Y	New York	1, 3	Y
P15	Y	Y	New York	1, 2	Y

Data Collection

After IRB approval was obtained on December 7, 2023 (approval number 12-07-23-0474104), participants ($n = 15$) were recruited to participate in this study through Facebook with a posting of the recruitment flyer (Appendix A) along with direct emails (Appendix B) to individuals who had taught in kindergarten through fifth grade in the 2020–2021 school year and self-identified as experiencing burnout during that time. Interviews were scheduled after individuals who responded to the initial posting were determined to meet the inclusion criteria.

Each interview took place through a scheduled phone call or by email. Handwritten notes were taken to document the participants' answers, and a digital recorder was used to record the interview. Manual hand-coding was also used to analyze data to demonstrate rigor and implement the study's trustworthiness.

I reviewed each transcript and completed preliminary coding to identify first-cycle codes, second-cycle categories, and emerging themes. All participants were provided an opportunity for follow-up to verify the transcribed information and add any other information they felt might help describe their burnout experience. Posting to the Walden Participant Pool was unnecessary, as recruiting through Facebook proved successful. I received three inquiries immediately after posting the recruitment flyer on Facebook, followed by individual emails with the email invitation and consent form. The emails were followed up with an invitation for a phone interview with three different dates and times. Those who were unable to find time to schedule a call were invited to write out their responses. Due to the winter holiday in December 2023, many teachers

had time off and could schedule phone interviews. Additional participants were needed to achieve sample size and saturation as the holidays ended. Recruiting the additional participants took a short time, and the additional participants were willing to share their experiences. Data collection met saturation within 6 to 7 weeks of earning IRB approval.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to determine the method of coding style best described as a priori analysis, inferred through themes from Maslach's (1987) theory of burnout. Participants were identified alphanumerically as P1–P15 to ensure confidentiality. The research data were organized and interpreted according to the three dimensions of burnout and the three types of support that could be used to help mitigate the dimensions of burnout (educational, interpersonal, intrapersonal). Additional thematic analysis was used in Braun and Clarke's (2006) six thematic analysis steps to identify the codes, categories, and emerging themes. These steps are becoming familiar with the data, which includes reviewing the data several times to search for familiar meanings and patterns. Handwritten notes were taken to document the participants' answers; a digital recorder was used to record the interview. Manual hand-coding was utilized to analyze data to demonstrate rigor and implement the study's trustworthiness. I highlighted, underlined, and wrote notes within the margins of transcribed interviews. Initial codes were generated by creating a Word document analysis table to organize codes and the coding features of the same context and collecting the data pertinent to each code; categories were gathered by sorting the codes and combining each code into categories to determine similarities that form into themes. Each theme was named and defined within a

Word document to include definitions and names for each theme and subtheme. A report was produced that described an analysis of the data. I explained to each participant how vital this study is for positive social change, as it could help increase the understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic changed teacher burnout.

Discrepant Cases

This study demonstrated a certain level of consistency in people's burnout experiences despite their various locations, grade levels, and self-reported years of teaching. Only one discrepant case was found regarding teacher burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic. The discrepant experience of interpersonal support was found in one case in which a participant reported that she did not get along with nor work well with her grade-level team. These experiences led to greater burnout because they did not feel the support the other participants discussed during their interview. This discrepant case was factored into the analysis as it contrasted with the experience of those teachers who worked well within their peer groups. This participant reported that since the COVID-19 pandemic, they had decided not to continue to work in the teaching profession.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Internal credibility and validity were established through post interview data checking or member checking. No participants requested changes to the transcription, and the data collected accurately described their experience of teacher burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic. During the interviews, I ensured that participants understood the

research and informed consent processes while responding to their questions. Since the experience of burnout is personal to everyone, each participant was offered a moment to share any final thoughts about their experience with burnout.

Transferability

The data collected through the participant interviews enhanced this study's external validity and transferability. Each participant met the criterion of being a teacher in the primary school grade level in the United States during the 2020–2021 school year. I utilized probing questions to gather information that best described each participant's experience of burnout. Although the experience of burnout can be very personal, the findings from this study may help provide additional evidence to help provide the support that teachers feel is beneficial to mitigating burnout. Further details appear in the results section of this chapter, and the study's limitations and recommendations are discussed in Chapter 5.

Dependability and Conformability

Dependability and conformability were achieved using a blend of open-ended questions, note-taking, transcribing the interview, and post interview participant checking. Additionally, I took the time to ensure that each participant understood the questions. Transcriptions were read and reread to ensure the accuracy of the statements. The data collected were gathered in a binder, scanned, and uploaded. The participant's confidentiality was ensured using alphanumeric coding, so no apparent details of the participant's identities were available.

Results

The results of this study are presented by listing the central research question first, followed by all the supporting data around the themes derived from the participants' explanation of their personal experiences with teacher burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic. Five themes were found, and two subthemes emerged. Some additional themes were maintained separately due to their more complex role in the participants' description of their experience of teacher burnout. A discussion about the themes will be provided after the results and the sub questions. Significant quotes from participants' interviews about their experience of teacher burnout are presented with their associated structure themes, and a discussion of how the themes from participants' experiences overlap with the forms of support that can be used to mitigate teacher burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic is also presented. Due to the highly personal nature of teacher burnout, a final section includes a brief synopsis of the experience of teacher burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic that each teacher wanted to share. All efforts were made to provide accurate representations of the teachers' experience. Figure 1 presents the results.

Central Research Question

The central research question was the following: What is the experience of burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?

This study considered primary school teachers' experience of burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic; participants were enthusiastic about sharing details of their experience and about discussing the supports they utilized and felt made the most significant difference in mitigating their burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic. Thirteen

out of the total of 15 participants reported feeling overwhelmed and underprepared.

Participants revealed several themes also consistent with their subthemes.

(Displayed in Figure 1):

Theme 1: Overwhelmed/underprepared

Theme 2: Increased responsibility

Subtheme: Home visits/delivering materials

Theme 3: Virtual learning vs. in person

Subtheme: Addressing learning loss when schools reopened

Theme 4: Required medication due to stress

Theme 5: Work–life balance

Theme 1: Overwhelmed/Underprepared

All except one participant (P4) out of 15 participants reported that they faced an extreme amount of difficulty with changes in their teaching experience and that their teaching methods had to adjust rapidly. Teachers found themselves obligated to comply with a new system. P15 reported that the need to teach children in person, virtually, and in hybrid settings for school year 2020–2021 was exhausting and required a level of planning that was extensive. P3 shared, “we had to spend an enormous amount of time creating grade-level-appropriate materials across all subject areas.” P10 also shared that still today, “I find as an elementary school teacher that there is not enough time in the day or week to get everything done.”

Theme 2: Increased Responsibility

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic thirteen teacher participants reported they were given more responsibilities and tasks that were outside of their regular routine for example staying online in the evening to meet with students and parents virtually. Some teachers reported they were making home visits and dropping off materials to their student's homes which they had never done prior.

Subtheme: Home Visits/Delivering Materials. Several participants (P1, P3, P8) reported that they were tasked with responsibilities they had never been tasked with before. They began to recognize the disparities between their students and the needs schools meet for children while in person. Participants who reported increased responsibilities also mentioned they spent hours providing home visits and or delivering materials to ensure their students could continue their learning. P1 reported,

My staff and I were able to make three home visits over the course of the pandemic to each students' home (maintaining social distance by staying outside). We delivered educational materials, resources, and supplies in the Spring of 2020 to ensure our students had the necessary items to be successful. We would deliver additional materials that following fall and then during Christmas we delivered presents. It was difficult knowing that some students did not have all of support/materials while unable to attend school in person (there was a nagging guilt associated with remaining out).

Participants who reported increased responsibility expressed that they had to be creative to make sure their students' needs could be met regardless of their setting. P2 shared,

The burnout I felt was caused by several factors one of which was delivering materials and school supplies to students' homes. For example, when we did the unit on how to use the dictionary, I drove to each of my students houses and delivered dictionaries to them, so they could follow along.

The participants who reported increased responsibilities found themselves in situations they had never imagined. Participants also acknowledge that this was a part of their work that could be emotionally taxing when they witnessed firsthand how their students were learning at home.

Theme 3: Virtual Learning Versus in Person

Participants discussed the complexities of virtual learning with young students as opposed to traditional in person classrooms as an arduous task. The use of technology was new not only for the students but also for the parents. Teachers found themselves working long hours answering emails and providing extra technical support outside of school hours. Many of the social skills K-5 students taught during traditional in person classes were lost in the 2020-2021 school year creating deficits when school reopened. Nine participants, (P1, P3, P6, P7, P8, P12, P13, P14, P15) all noted that virtual learning left their young students with limitations and deficiencies that would normally have been addressed.

Subtheme: Addressing Learning Loss When Schools Reopened. Teachers noted that since their students had been tasked with learning online. Students returned to in person school without a plan to integrate the material that was not covered. Their school systems did not address the missed opportunities for social and emotional growth.

Five of the fifteen teacher participants (P11, P12, P13, P14, P15) reported they began to experience more burnout when they returned to school. P11 said,

As we went back into the classroom, teachers were expected to carry on as if these students did not miss nearly a half a school year of direct/in person instruction, Students were extremely behind grade level expectations. It was so stressful feeling that we had one school year to catch students up to grade level. It felt impossible to reteach content from the previous year while adding on the demands of learning new content that was built upon knowing the previous. I was in a constant state of feeling behind in teaching, not having enough time to meet the expectations of the state and county as well as having the brunt of watching students fail that would have normally done well in a traditional classroom setting.

Participants reported feeling drained by the initial push to implement technology during the COVID-19 pandemic and then returning to their schools and noticing behavioral changes in their students P10 states,

There was a large push to implement technology during COVID which means we had to relearn our entire way of teaching in a span of a couple of weeks. I am one of the lucky few who enjoy technology, so this part was not daunting for me. I will say that my teacher burnout did not occur until after the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 brought to the surface the major issue that is our educational system, you see school is much more than just a place for kids to learn. We found that during COVID school systems were responsible for feeding

the hungry and being a safe place for the abused. When school was taken away and we were virtual, a larger social issue was brought to light. Now that we have been back in school for a few years post COVID, the behavior implications that have impacted our students has become more prevalent. That being said, I find that my personal burnout has been the exhaustion of student apathy, defiance, and behavior. We can't teach students to care about their work. They are uninterested in following directions let alone listen to them.

Theme 4: Required Medication Due to Stress

One of the more surprising themes that came up was the teachers who reported use of medication (P1, P5, P8) to help mitigate their feelings of burnout. This is a notable occurrence because this theme appears again in one of the research sub-questions. Among all the literature used to prepare for this study there was little to no mention of the use of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), antidepressants or anti-anxiety meds among teachers experiencing burnout. Yet, several participants reported their feelings of burnout were so intense that they were left with few options other than to seek medication and counseling P6 reported, "Burnout looks like dealing with headaches/migraines daily, insomnia, sleeplessness on Sundays worrying about the work week, and frequent call outs". Another participant recalled their own personal struggle with burnout as stated by P5, "At one point my blood pressure was so high (both numbers) that I was put on a heavy dose of blood pressure medication and Xanax. I have increased anxiety and depression; I have recently had to start counseling and to receive

additional medication”. The participants attribute much of their stress to the 2020-2021 school year and the challenges they experienced P8 reported,

I am only 6 years in as an educator, and I take it all year by year. If I think about how much longer I have until retirement it feels overwhelming and impossible. In 2020-2021, this was the year that I finally talked to my primary care physician and started anti-depressants. I felt so sad because my students weren't, getting the best version of me. But eventually I realized that if I didn't take care of myself, I would be of no use to my students. I wouldn't be able to teach anything effectively if I didn't make sure I was ok first.

Theme 5: Work–Life Balance

Another consistent theme in the participants discussion of their experience of burnout is that they struggled to maintain a positive work life balance during the 2020-2021 school year. This school year continues to contribute to the experience of burnout in the years since the pandemic. Of the fifteen participants 14 reported that they had struggled with finding the work life balance (P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, P8, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15). P7 shared, “I was sending multiple parent emails a night trying to get students to catch up on work. There was no differentiation between work hours and a home life, it all blended together. I look back now, and I wonder how we made through that year”.

P8 stated,

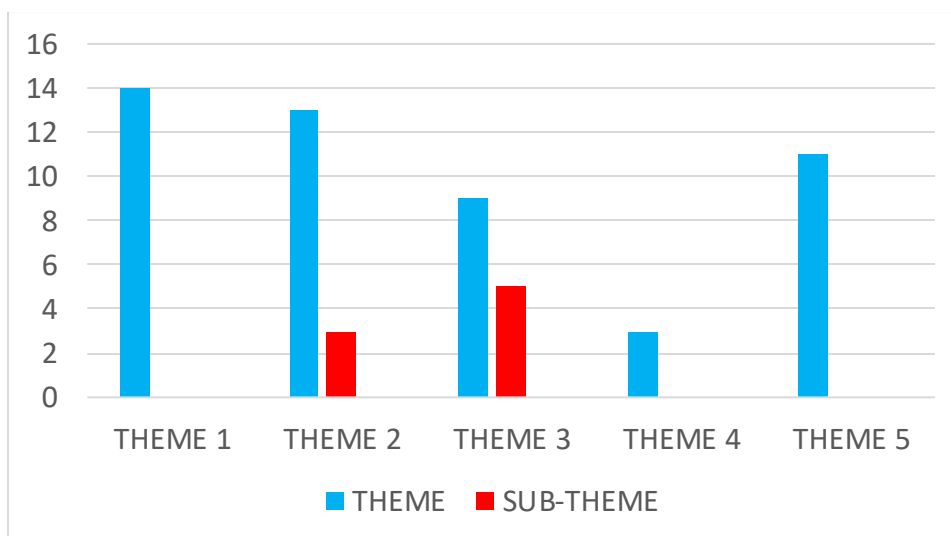
I was fielding questions from parents on Classdojo (a communication platform and tool) at all hours because I wanted my students to feel supported and that I was there for them. Once students received devices, we still were not fully ready

to get Google Classroom going, but teachers were asked to have certain hours that we were available during the school day for students to reach us. I went beyond that and would meet with students on video chat well into the evening, because I knew I had students who were not home during the school day. Some students had to go to work with family members or babysitters' homes, because parents were struggling figuring out what to do when there was no school. I was meeting with students at 7:00, 8:00 at night.

Figure 1 provides an overview of themes collected in the participants recollection of their experience of burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1

Central Research Question



Note. Theme 1: Overwhelmed/underprepared. Theme 2: Increased responsibility. Subtheme: Home visits/delivering materials. Theme 3: Virtual learning vs. in person. Subtheme: Addressing learning loss when schools reopened. Theme 4: Required medication due to stress. Theme 5: Work–life balance.

Research Subquestion 1

Research Subquestion 1 was as follows: What educational supports could help mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?

To address the research sub-question 1 (What educational supports help mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?), the interview questions asked participants “Can you describe what is your experience of educational needs (i.e., professional development, training) in primary school teachers to mitigate burnout during COVID-19? Many participants reported that the professional development they were offered was not put into practice. Even the participants who reported they were provided with increased planning time reported that the planning time they were given was later taken away or used to fill in and cover for other teachers who were out sick.

Theme 1: Self-Care/Wellness

Participants reported that within their districts they were encouraged to practice self-care. Ten participants reported that they were given some guidance of self or wellness (P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12). Others reported that they knew they need to manage their stress and emotion. For example, P12 stated,

Educators are given professional development for “mindfulness” and wellness” strategies to help us cope and manage our stress. Honestly, these development trainings often cause feelings of resentment. Educators really need a system change in structure, curriculum, and academic support.

There were also cases in which participants reported there were no discussions of wellness nor any type of formalized professional development P14 reported, “Most of the

professional developments and training during the COVID-19 pandemic has been focused on learning new programs and focused on increasing test scores”.

P15 reported,

There was very little professional development to mitigate burnout. I was left feeling that my performance was lacking, and I was not doing enough even though there was little support for teachers.

Subtheme: Disregard to Guidance

Educational supports were perhaps regarded as the least effective means of support that the teachers that participated in the study. Ten out of 15 participants (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12) reported they felt none of the professional development they receive have helped to mitigate their feelings of burnout P7 stated,

I feel like their talk of “wellness” and how important it is, but it seems to take a backseat to actual curriculum and professional development. Whenever we do things for wellness, it almost seems like one more thing to do instead of it taking place of another obligation. While I feel like everyone knows burnout is real and teachers are struggling, no one really knows how to make it better.

P8 states,

There was a small attempt at helping teachers, but I don’t feel it was truly effective. I can remember a PD or two about “self-care” or “work life balance” but if these were even a couple of hours each that would have been a lot, and it was stuff like “get outside” “eat healthfully”, “socialize safely”. Nothing groundbreaking, the same stuff that we might have seen in the news. If anything, I

felt that while my district preached self-care, we were expected to work harder than ever. Most of our professional development was to teach us how to use the various Google tools in order to teach online “effectively”. Our workload was not made any smaller to help us have time for ourselves, if anything it felt like we were doing more and more every day.

Theme 2: Increased Planning Time

Participants reported that their districts provided additional planning time during the 2020-2021 pandemic school year (P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12). This increased planning time did not remain in effect once schools fully reopened although the need for planning remained. There has been little to nothing provided to help resolve the learning gap since the COVID-19 pandemic. Other teachers shared how much they appreciated the increased planning time they were provided with by their school districts P10 stated,

I find that our county did a great job of giving us one day out of the week to designate towards planning and learning how to implement technology. I honestly wish this was a norm today because I find as an elementary school teacher there is not enough time in the day nor in the week to get it all done. We did not receive a lot of professional development because this was a new development for teaching as a whole. There was not a lot of information to teach others, or to learn from.

Subtheme: Working Harder Than Ever Before

Three participants shared that they felt they have been working harder than ever before in the years since the COVID-19 pandemic and the use of professional

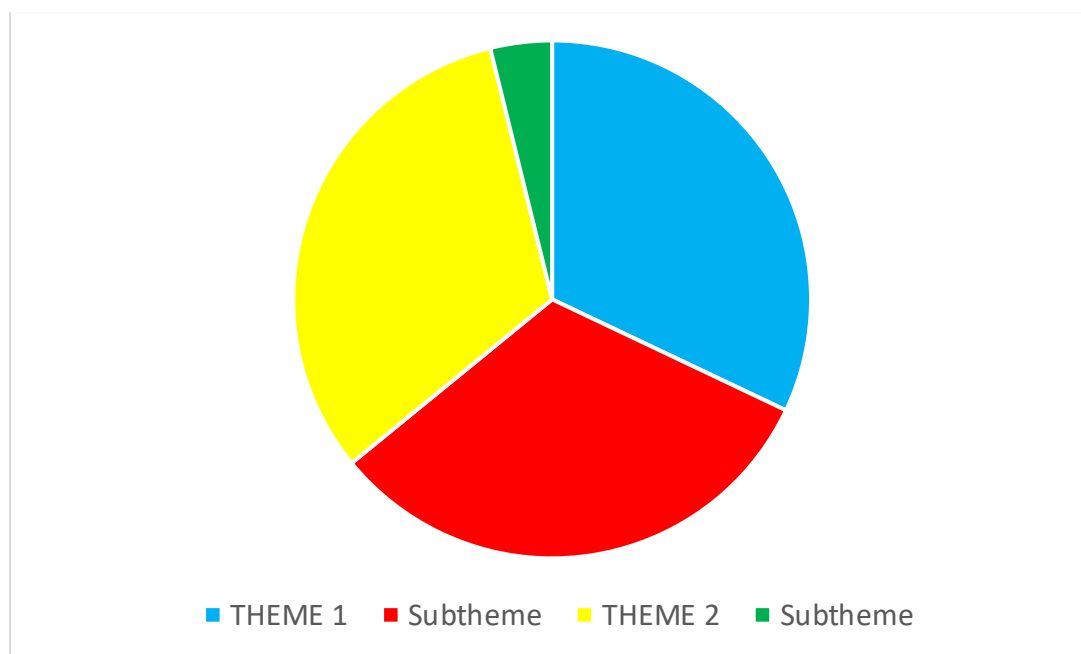
development has been less than helpful in mitigating their feelings of burnout P15 states, ‘There was very little professional development to mitigate burnout. I was left feeling that my performance was lacking, I was not doing enough though there was little support for teachers.’”

The following figure highlights the relationship between educational supports such as professional development and mitigating burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2 provides a graph that shows the participants responses when what type of educational support they felt would help to mitigate their feelings of burnout.

Figure 2

Research Subquestion 1



Note. Theme 1: Self-care/wellness (blue). Subtheme: Disregard to guidance (red). Theme 2: Increased planning time (yellow). Subtheme: Working harder than ever before (green).

Research Subquestion 2

Research Subquestion 2 was as follows: What interpersonal supports could mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?

To address the research sub-question the interview question asked participants *Can you describe your experience of interpersonal needs (i.e., relationships, communication between people) in primary school teachers to mitigate burnout since COVID-19?* All participants discussed the importance of having positive and supportive relationships within their schools and their community. Those who did not report having supportive relationships also reported that this lack contributed to their feelings of burnout. Ten participants (P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P14) felt that the school-based support within their buildings from other teachers and or administrators provided them with the intrapersonal support to help reduce some of the stressors since the COVID-19 pandemic. A lesson that the pandemic taught is the importance of human connection and that we are more capable of survival when people work together rather than when we work individually.

Theme 1: School-Based Support (Peers/Administration)

The participants who reported positive peer interactions report that it significantly improved their experience and lessened some of the work-related stress they had been experiencing P7 states,

Thankfully, I have a very close 4th grade team that I work with, we all banded together at that time to work together. We look back on those years and laugh and reminisce about how crazy it all was. I cannot imagine doing it alone or not

having anyone to look back with, the fact that we went through this situation together has given me an outlet to process the stress we were under.

Similarly, P8 reported,

I am fortunate to work with one of my best friends. We didn't know each other before we started working for our district, but we were hired at the same time and quickly clicked. She was one of my main sources of a feeling of normalcy during the pandemic. We would sit in on each other's classroom video calls, so that if no students bothered to show up, we would be able to chat and hangout. Teachers often looked forward to video chats so that we could see colleagues and talk. Eventually when my district brought teachers back into schools to teach virtually from there, we definitely had some hesitation to be physically close to others. On the other hand, there were some that were very excited to be able to have something as simple as lunch together again. Most successful methods of mitigating burnout were initiated by teachers not by administration.

P10 states,

I found that my team worked really well together. I have always considered my team as a strong unit. We carried each other through COVID and helped each other learn, grow, and complete lessons. We would meet together on the designated day and social distance as well as complete the needed tasks. I could always count on the, to help be a listening ear when things were tough or confusing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In another interview a participant shared that her intrapersonal needs were met by engaging in preferred activities with others P1 states,

My teaching situation was probably vastly different from most general education teachers as I had two special education teachers and a teacher mentee during remote learning. As a result, I always had professional supports and daily adult communication and stimulation during the day. My staff made it possible to create break-out rooms where we could place the students in small-leveled groups and provide the intensive and differentiated supports that each student requires.

Theme 2: Community Support (Families/Faith)

A couple of participants (P3, P4) reported that their main sources of support were their families or their faith. P4 stated, “In my experience, my faith in God proved to be my source during the pandemic. Through daily meditation, prayer, and fellowship. God provided peace and the necessary tools for me to let go of events that were out of my control. Through this, God carried me through the pandemic unscathed”.

Another participant recalls their family as being their source of strength during the pandemic P3 stated, “I mainly focused on the well-being of my own family, my students, and their families. I stayed connected to the community by helping at the soup kitchen and delivering to-go menus to those in need, making masks and baking cookies for hospital staff”.

Theme 3: No Interpersonal Support Reported

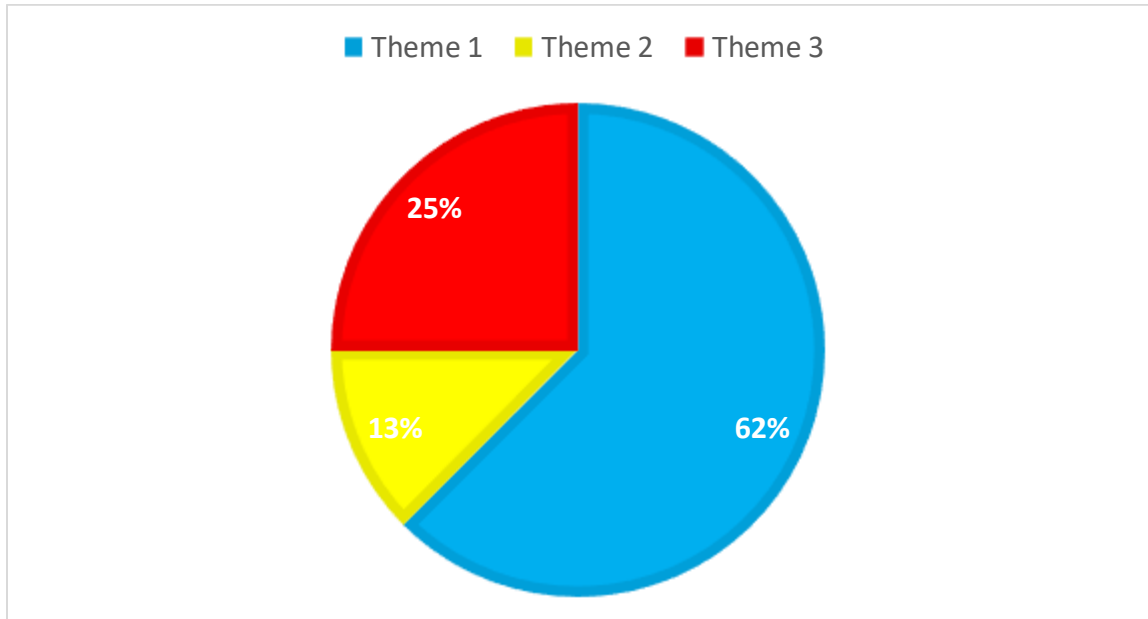
Several teachers (P5, P11, P13, P15) reported they had no interpersonal support to help mitigate their feelings of burnout. One participant who did not have positive peer support reported an increased feeling burnout P11 stated,

My experience of interpersonal need that lead to burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic were being forced to work with my grade level team on instruction timing and lesson plans. My team and I did not get along well and did not work well together, this aided in burnout because creating grade level lesson plans became a chore where we all had to teach the same way instead of meeting the needs of our own teaching styles as well as the learning styles of our students.

Figure 3 displays the major themes that emerged when participants were asked what interpersonal supports they feel helped to mitigate their experience of burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 3

Research Subquestion 2



Note. Theme 1: School-based support (peers/administration; blue). Theme 2: Community support (families/faith; red). Theme 3: No interpersonal support reported (yellow).

Research Subquestion 3

Research Subquestion 3 was the following: What intrapersonal supports could mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?

In consideration of research sub-question 3 (What intrapersonal supports could mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?) participants were asked to share their experience through the following interview question. *Can you describe your experience of intrapersonal needs (i.e., occurring with the individual or mind, counseling) in primary school teachers to mitigate burnout since COVID-19?* The meaning of the word intrapersonal is existing or occurring within the self or within one's

mind. Participants felt compelled that their intrapersonal needs are the use personal time used for planning, and behavioral support in the classroom therefore, the theme of personal time is included in the analysis of this response. We learned previously when asking the participants about their experience of burnout since COVID-19 that several the teachers reported the use of prescription anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medications to ease their feelings burnout. In addition to mental health supports some teachers also reported that their physical health required declined since COVID-19.

Theme 1: Health Support

Participants reported that they found themselves requiring managed medications to help address the effects of anxiety and stress. Many of the participants reported that they either started using medication in 2020-2021 or they had to increase the dosage of medications they were previously on to help meet their needs and provide them with the ability to manage their emotions throughout the day. Others reported that if they maintained their activity level and physical health, they felt more capable of handling the frustrations and stressors involved with teaching since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Subtheme A: Mental Health (Counseling, Antidepressants). Many participants reported that counseling and anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medication were central supports in mitigating their experience of burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic (P2, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10, P11, P13, P14). Much like in the participants recollection of their overall experience of, the participants report they had to turn to alternatives to help ease the significant feelings of burnout they have experienced P13 stated,

Mental health concerns among teachers and staff have been at its all-time high. Me, personally, I've seen a decline in my mental health, so much so I had to seek counseling both during and after the pandemic. I have bigger issues with anxiety, and I have noticed an incline in my ADHD, now I am currently on medication for both. Also, teachers are having more mental health call outs and concerns. In our district we are advising teachers more to COPE, a hotline for educational staff then we have had to do in previous years.

Similarly, P8 stated,

As I mentioned in a previous question, I started taking antidepressants during the 2020-2021 school year, and found myself slowly working to regain some hope. I tried to play down how depressed I was feeling because I thought "everyone is going through this" "everyone must feel lousy" etc. Even while in therapy I struggled to balance my work and personal needs, because who knew what we were supposed to be doing or feeling? Was I a good teacher for being available at all hours? For stretching myself so thin?

Subtheme B: Physical Health (Exercise, Medical, Nutritional). A couple of participants (P7, P15) that regarded taking care of their own physical health either through exercise, medication, or nutrition that they were able to help manage and mitigate their experience of burnout. One participant touts the importance of fitness for her physical and emotional health, P7 states,

Personally, I use running and exercise to cope with my anxiety as it relates to school and life. I know when I have been unable to work out, my patience level

has been lower, my frustration level has been higher, and I have felt the effects of burnout more.

Additionally, P15 recounted their own struggle with the long-term effects of COVID and having to use medical and nutritional support to help ease her symptoms.

I had a very bad case of COVID that required several trips to the hospital, monoclonal antibodies, long COVID, and hair loss for COVID. It took a toll on my health and spirit. I have been under the treatment of a nutritionist to help restore my health from my first bout of COVID and subsequent reactions to the vaccine and second COVID infection.

Theme 2: Personal Time

A theme that presented throughout the interview relating to the teacher participants intrapersonal needs was the need for time. What they described as time to catch up, plan and create materials for their classrooms but also time for themselves that is honored and upheld as a fundamental standard and right.

Subtheme: Uninterrupted Time, Behavioral Support in the Classroom.

Several of the participants (P1, P3, P4, P5, P12) responded that they wished they had more time. Participants answered they wanted uninterrupted time to meet their needs. They wanted to be able to teach their classes without frequent interruptions caused by unruly students. What the teacher participants were looking for to address their mental and physical health needs is time, most specifically personal time P12 states,

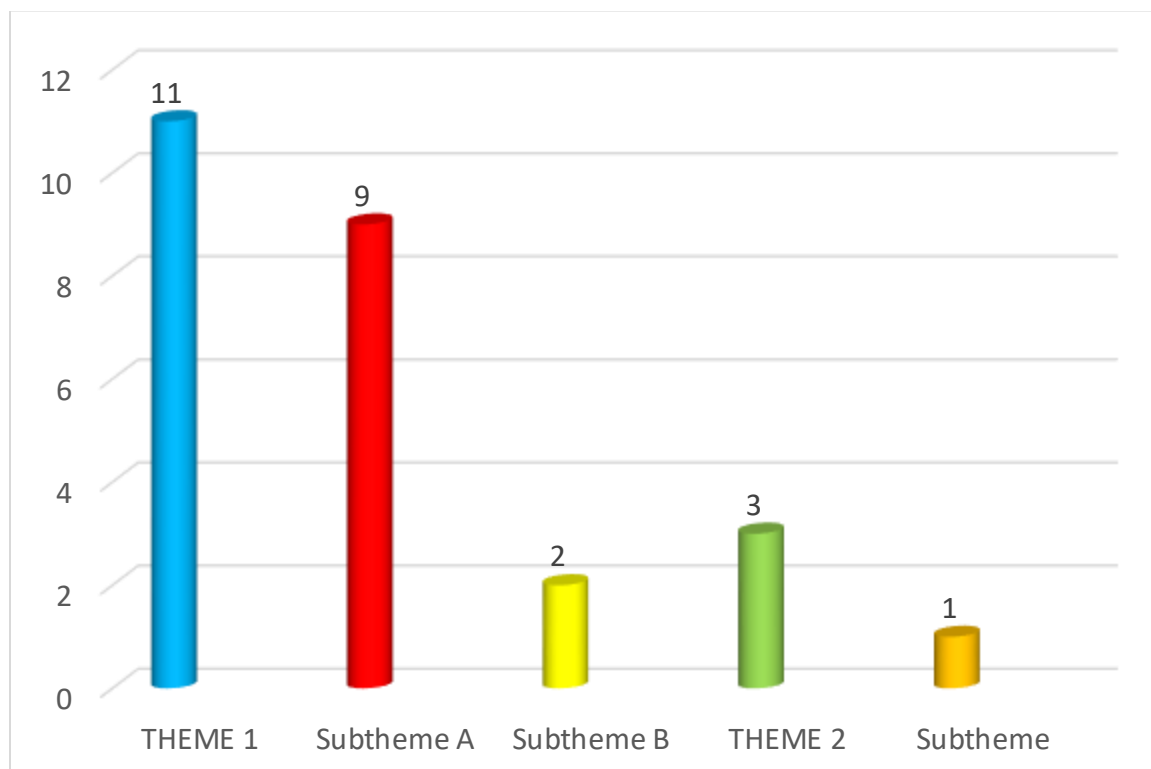
I feel that I know how to take care of my interpersonal needs. I need to have time during my day to address my physical and emotional needs with an uninterrupted

lunch and prep period; having the support staff available to provide assistance to a child having a meltdown so that I can fully teach lessons and conduct teacher/student coaching consistently with the class; and finding solutions for teacher/staff/substitute shortage to ensure that at risk students get the consistent support they need and deserve.

Figure 4 displays the responses to the central research question that asks what intrapersonal supports could help mitigate burnout since COVID-19. The predominant themes are displayed in the figure.

Figure 4

Research Subquestion 3



Note. Theme 1: Health support (blue). Subtheme A: Mental health (red). Subtheme B: Physical health (yellow). Theme 2: Personal time (green). Subtheme: Behavioral support in the classroom (orange).

Shared Themes

The central research question which asks, “*What is the experience of burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19?*” Participants reported the experience of burnout was so intense that they were left with few options other than to seek medication and counseling to help with the intensity of the burnout. In their own words when asked about their experience of burnout since COVID-19 P5 states, “At one point my blood pressure was so high (both numbers) that I was put on a heavy dose of blood pressure medication and Xanax. I have increased anxiety and depression; I have recently had to start counseling and to receive additional medication”.

The theme of the use of medication, anti-depressants, anti-anxiety medication and SSRIs appeared once again in the research sub question of *Can you describe your experience of interpersonal needs (i.e., occurring with the individual or min, counseling) in primary school teachers to mitigate burnout since COVID-19?* A theme appeared of health care, the primary sub theme being mental health/counseling. In the quest to mitigate feelings of burnout teachers once again shared their need to seek medication to help them function in their day to day lives. In a poignant statement by P13,

As I mentioned in a previous question, I started taking antidepressants during the 2020-2021 school year, and found myself slowly working to regain some hope. I tried to play down how depressed I was feeling because I thought “everyone is going through this” “everyone must feel lousy” etc. Even while in therapy I struggled to balance my work and personal needs, because who knew what we

were supposed to be doing or feeling? Was I a good teacher for being available at all hours? For stretching myself so thin?

The theme of the use of medication to mitigate burnout appeared in this study more than once and helps us better understand the severity of teacher burnout that has been experienced to the point some feel no other alternative than to seek medication to be able to perform their jobs and function in their daily lives.

Summary

In this chapter, the findings regarding each participant's individual experience of teacher burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that participants struggled with learning new technology in a very short time. 15 participants reported feeling overworked and overwhelmed not only in the 2020-2021 school year but each school year since the; the enormity of the shift in teaching style continues to create a ripple effect not only in students learning and education but also on a social, emotional, and behavioral level in which teachers are reporting they felt underprepared for the task they are now faced with. Nine out of the fifteen teachers interviewed reported addressing the learning loss in students as a primary cause of their experience of burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the three areas of support to help mitigate burnout, the teachers reported that educational support and/or professional development were the least effective in helping to mitigate burnout. Although administrators and school districts promote self-care and wellness, they do not provide adequate means for teachers to have time for themselves. When the pandemic caused social distancing regulations, the world noticed the essential human need for belonging. Ten of the fifteen participants reported

that their interactions, shared planning time, and personal relationships within their schools among their peers and administrators were essential in helping to mitigate their experience of burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic. Nine participants reported that their experience of burnout was so intense that they were left with no other resources than to speak to mental health and medical professionals for counseling and using anti-depressant, anti-anxiety and SSRI, medications to improve their ability to function daily. The use of medicines and the experience of burnout was a consistent theme in the central research question regarding the primary school teacher's experience of burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic and as a subtheme in the research question concerning interpersonal support for mitigating the experience of burnout.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the demographics, research setting, data analysis, data collection, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and summary. Chapter 5 consists of the interpretation of findings, study limitations, recommendations, implications, and a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendation

Introduction

I conducted this generic qualitative study to contribute to the understanding of the experience of burnout in primary school teachers since the COVID-19 pandemic and determine what teachers believe would help mitigate their feelings of burnout. Although teacher burnout is not a new concept, there has been little research on the experience of burnout in teachers who taught at primary school grade levels within the United States (Caron & Fruchart, 2014; Kim & Asbury, 2020), and even less has been written about what supports that the teachers feel have helped to mitigate their feelings of burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic (Gomez-Dominguez et al., 2022; Herwin, 2021). In this study, I focused on three types of support that could mitigate burnout: educational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal support. These supports align with Maslach's (1982) three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment. I reached data saturation after conducting semistructured interviews over the phone or through email with 15 participants, who were all U.S. primary school teachers teaching in grade levels kindergarten to fifth grade in the 2020–2021 school year and self-identified feelings of burnout.

The results of the participant interviews indicated that the teachers' feelings of burnout did not end after COVID-19 lockdowns lifted and students returned to their brick-and-mortar schools. The feelings of burnout continued with what teachers described as unrealistic expectations that failed to address the loss of learning that their students faced during the 2020–2021 school year coupled with testing that did not

account for the time lost. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers faced increased social, emotional, and behavioral deficits in their students. In the remaining sections of Chapter 5, I present the study's findings alongside supporting evidence from the literature review in Chapter 2, the study's limitations, my recommendations, and implications for social change before ending the study with a conclusion.

Central Research Question

The central research question that guided this study was the following: What is the experience of burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19? Based on this research question, I developed an interview guide that was used to collect data from 15 primary school teachers who taught kindergarten through fifth grade in the 2020–2021 school year. The data collected included the individual experiences of each teacher in the form of interview responses. The interviews included a question on the overall experience of the primary school teacher since the COVID-19 pandemic. The research sub questions pertained to three methods of support to mitigate burnout: educational support, intrapersonal support, and interpersonal support. Themes emerged from the participants' interview responses. In the following subsections, I discuss the study findings by theme.

Theme 1: Overworked and Overwhelmed

The most consistent participant response was Theme 1, the feeling of being overworked and overwhelmed, which was a shared experience of 14 of the 15 participants. This response relates directly to the experience of burnout that was reported across the helping professions. The burnout dimension of emotional exhaustion is

characterized by a sustained feeling of exhaustion and being overwhelmed (Lee, 1996). According to Al-Fudail (2008), teachers perceived the situation as stressful when they could not accomplish set tasks because of technical issues or lack of resources; however, although most participants developed burnout from lack of accomplishment, the authors also noted that a select few developed burnout. Notably, the latter group viewed their relationship with technology as personal, leading to emotional exhaustion when they could not accomplish their set tasks (Sokal et al., 2020).

Theme 2: Increased Responsibility

Theme 2 was increased responsibility, which included home visits and delivering materials that were not seen in the years before the COVID-19 pandemic for primary school teachers. This theme is consistent with the burnout dimension of emotional exhaustion, once again as stated by Pressley (2021), who identified emotional exhaustion as the draining or depletion of emotional resources by interpersonal demands. Consequently, emotional exhaustion is an individual stress component that forms a fundamental part of the burnout experience (Arens & Morin, 2016).

The subtheme of having to perform home visits and delivering materials was a new responsibility and function that teachers were tasked with during the COVID-19 pandemic. This subtheme directly builds upon findings from previous pandemics in which the pandemic developed a situation where burnout resulted from job demands and accomplishment instead of emotional exhaustion (see Alarcon, 2011). The job demands vary from one teacher to another, one school to another, and one district to another depending on the job title and method of facilitation.

Theme 3: Virtual Learning Versus In Person

Theme 3 was virtual learning versus in-person; this theme had the subtheme of addressing learning loss since COVID-19 for primary school teachers. Much of early learning in the primary school grades is centered around establishing social norms. When schools reopened following the COVID-19 shutdowns, teachers returned to in-person school without a plan to integrate the material that was not covered, and their school systems did not address the students' missed opportunities for social and emotional growth. The theme of virtual learning versus in-person learning is in alignment with the burnout dimension of inefficacy/diminished personal achievement.

The subtheme of addressing the learning loss when schools reopened considers reduced individual student achievement. This subtheme referred to the teachers' decrease in personal feelings of accomplishment of work or competence. Arora et al. (2013) identified that poor feelings of personal achievement were closely related to the job description. For instance, a poor job experience resulted in reduced individual achievement. Additionally, the lack of proper resources or skills for a specific job description also correlates with reduced personal achievement.

Theme 4: Required Medication Due to Stress

Theme 4 was required medication due to stress, which was an unexpected response. The literature spoke very little of teachers turning to prescription medication to abate their experience of burnout. Although the literature does not specifically address the use of medication, this theme is indicative of the emotional exhaustion dimension of burnout. Maslach (1982) identified emotional exhaustion as a construct related to tension,

anxiety, insomnia, physical fatigue, and mental fatigue. Specifically, emotional exhaustion is identified to relate to psychological and physiological strain (Worley et al., 2008).

Theme 5: Work–Life Balance

Theme 5, work–life balance, emerged due to the onset of COVID-19 lockdowns and virtual learning. It became apparent as teachers who had children of their own were working around meeting the needs of their students along with meeting the learning needs of their children at home. The long hours online helping both students and parents dissolved the boundaries between home, school, and work. This theme is also related to life satisfaction. Life’s meaning is directly tied to life satisfaction because satisfied individuals often enjoy better financial and physical success (Reizer, 2015). Additionally, Reizer (2015) noted that life satisfaction affected attachment, an interpersonal factor involving relationships with others that help to promote workplace engagement or burnout. Similarly, Tugsal (2020) revealed that teachers deal with some issues, such as attending to their babies at home, thereby accelerating feelings of burnout. This is different when teachers are at school, as they do not deal with their babies at those times.

Research Subquestion 1

Research Subquestion 1 was the following: What educational supports could help mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19? I discuss the themes that correspond to this sub question in the following subsections:

Theme 1: Self-Care/Wellness

Overwhelmingly, teachers reported that Theme 1, self-care/wellness, was encouraged, yet the subtheme of disregard to guidance was apparent as many administrators and school districts promoted what was considered as self-care and wellness but did nothing to allow for the teachers to achieve the balance they had been guided and recommended to utilize. According to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, education enables teachers to address a lack of knowledge concerning burnout and provides useful tips to participants to help them avoid using their emotions for social support. Teachers often experience burnout when they are emotionally supportive of students in their classrooms (Ruzek et al., 2014).

The subtheme of disregard to guidance is aligned with the burnout dimension of depersonalization. According to Salanova et al. (2005), the main area of depersonalization provides an overview of the various factors involved in diminished individual achievement among employees such as teachers. Factors, such as any organizational change, the work environment, interaction with other individuals at the job, and organization of tasks, could have an extensive effect on depersonalization burnout. The dimension of depersonalization correlates to the interpersonal supports that are needed to help mitigate the experience of burnout in individuals in times of extreme stress. The current study participants reported that the education was indeed provided but never put into practice. Therefore, this subtheme does not align with the previous literature because the training or education was not being upheld, so it does not effectively reduce the experience of burnout.

Theme 2: Increased Planning Time

Theme 2, increased planning time, had the subtheme of working harder than ever before. Participants not only reported that increased planning time was helpful in the 2020–2021 school year; several participants (i.e., P1, P2, and P10) also paradoxically reported that since the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the increased planning time was taken away, and they were not only left teaching the materials that were not covered in previous years, but also tasked with teaching the on-grade-level material, which had created more work than ever before. Teachers began relying on a new technology to deliver classroom instruction along with a lack of resources. Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a situation where burnout resulted from job demands and accomplishment instead of emotional exhaustion (see Alarcon, 2011). The findings related to this theme build upon the previous research and demonstrate the level of emotional exhaustion that is created for teachers in the event of a pandemic.

The subtheme of working harder than ever before is another reflection of the burnout dimension of emotional exhaustion because Pressley (2021) identified emotional exhaustion as the draining or depletion of emotional resources by interpersonal demands. In addition, similar to Theme 1 of the central research question, overworked and overwhelmed, according to Al-Fudail (2008), teachers perceived the situation as stressful when they could not accomplish set tasks because of technical issues or lack of resources.

Research Subquestion 2

Research Subquestion 2 was the following: What interpersonal supports could mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19? Three themes emerged in relation to this question:

Theme 1: School-Based Support (Peers/Administrators)

Teachers reported in great numbers that their peer groups (i.e., same-grade-level teachers) provide an enormous sense of support. Teachers stated that they had a team that they could go to for help with lesson plans, learning the technology, and sharing their experiences. Of the 15 participants, 10 reported that they felt that they had a support system within their school. Their fellow teachers or administrators provided the participants with emotional support and belonging that helped to minimize the experience of burnout. Professional relationships with other teachers and administrators fostering relationships is the crux to building self-efficacy and minimizing burnout, yet group relationships and oral communication skills are often overlooked in terms of professional development. The findings related to this theme support the results of Mukhtar et al. (2020), who called for a systemic, shared, and collaborative approach to online learning in which teachers coordinate with researchers to learn the strengths and challenges of online teaching. In a Taiwanese study, Kyriacou et al. (2004) highlighted the importance of professional dialogue, stating that such dialogue provides teachers with an opportunity to discuss their experiences with other teachers and administrators, which helps to mitigate the teachers' level of stress and increases their job satisfaction.

Theme 2: Community Support (Faith-Based/Families)

Two of the 15 teachers reported that their sense of community within their families, volunteering in the community, or their faith-based communities was their greatest interpersonal support since the COVID-19 pandemic. The theme of community support disagrees with the findings of Gomez-Dominguez et al. (2022), who conducted a study in Spain and found that among 75 articles on stress and burnout in teachers since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, not even one of the articles paid attention to the factor of interpersonal support. Few studies have been devoted to the interpersonal support that teachers claim is needed to support their feelings of burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theme 3: No Interpersonal Support

One participant did not have any interpersonal support and in contrast reported that they neither got along with nor worked well with their grade-level teaching team, which contributed to greater feelings of burnout. This theme is included because it directly relates to the discrepant case discussed in Chapter 4. The teacher participant who reported no interpersonal support additionally reported increased feelings of burnout that resulted in leaving the teaching profession altogether. Sokal et al. (2020) identified that burnout developed from a lack of accomplishment, then cynicism, and then emotional exhaustion. In the case of this participant, there was a lack of personal relationships between teacher and their peer as well as with the students. Teachers perceived the situation as stressful when they could not accomplish set tasks because of technical issues or lack of resources (Al-Fudail, 2008). The findings related to this theme, and the

subsequent case in particular, are reflective of increased feelings of burnout so much so that this participant not only reported the use of medications to ease their feelings of burnout, but also left the teaching profession altogether.

Research Subquestion 3

Research Subquestion 3 was the following: What intrapersonal supports could mitigate burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19? Two direct themes emerged from the participants' responses regarding this sub question.

Theme 1: Health Support

I separated Theme 1, health support, into two subthemes: Subtheme A—Mental health/counseling and Subtheme B—Physical health (i.e., exercise, medication, nutrition). The rationale for separating the theme into distinct subthemes was to highlight the shared theme of turning to medication—specifically, antidepressants, anti-anxiety medication, and SSRIs—to address mental health issues, and then again, in response to the question probed for intrapersonal supports, even more teachers reported that they had either begun or had to increase their use of either antidepressants, anti-anxiety medications, or SSRIs. According to the literature, the most common mental health modality used to help teachers address burnout is cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT appears to be a useful approach to dealing with burnout among teachers because emotional exhaustion leads to the development of anxiety and depression (Tran & Beck, 2018). This finding does not align with of CBT/talk therapy approaches and suggested that teachers are seeking medication in addition to common therapeutic approaches to address their mental health concerns.

Although medication is discussed as a part of Subtheme B) it was related to physical symptoms in the body as one teacher explained was due to COVID-19 and not directly related to their stress or level of burnout. The literature did not discuss the link between the use of medications by teachers to reduce the feeling of burnout but rather focused on therapeutic modalities instead. Gomez-Dominguez et al., (2022) discovered one article that supported the use of CBTs to minimize the effects of burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic. Zadok-Gurman et al., (2021) advocated for the use of CBTs to increase the feeling of self-efficacy that ultimately helps to diminish feelings of burnout. The finding of teachers using medication to relieve their feelings of burnout is a relative discovery in this field that has yet to be closely studied either quantitatively or qualitatively.

Theme 2: Personal Time

Theme 2, personal time, addressed the teachers who reported that they simply do not have enough time to get everything done. The subtheme of having behavioral support in the classroom to address meltdowns and distractions is also considered in Theme 2. In primary grades, learning focuses on social interaction, circle time, and small group learning at tables (Sparapani et al., 2018). The current study findings build upon the previous research that concluded that the introduction of social distancing and minimal interactions during COVID-19 disrupted the social learning process.

Limitations of the Study

The study provides an in-depth glance at primary school teachers' experience of burnout since the COVID-19 pandemic. This study's limitations could include issues of

trustworthiness as the teachers were asked to provide a personal account of their experience. The truthfulness of their responses is unable to be tested for accuracy. As the researcher, I performed each interview, expecting all participants to be honest and truthful in their responses. Additionally, I acquired participants from across the United States in different years of teaching and at different ages without gathering specific demographic information other than the participant's self-reports.

Future research should consider the variation of teachers' experience due to other demographic qualifiers such as age, years of teaching, and geographic location as identified other than the apparent occupation. In addition, a limitation of transferability is that the teachers are discussing an experience that occurred close to three years ago; the memory of the COVID-19 pandemic may have decreased and been met with less intensity.

Recommendations

This study was conducted to understand the experience of burnout in primary school teachers since COVID-19. Current research on this topic needs to be more extensive and directly address the concerns of teachers in the primary grade levels who structure their lessons around socialization and norms. Further qualitative studies that include demographic information of teachers, such as age, years of teaching, and geographic location, could further develop an understanding of primary school teachers' experience of burnout since COVID-19. Furthermore, recommendations for future studies would focus on teachers' use of medication to reduce their feelings of stress. It is recommended that this focus be explored further in smaller focus groups, in further

qualitative and quantitative studies. New studies could also explore ways to improve educational support and professional development for teachers that would be more effective and beneficial in mitigating burnout.

Implications

Teacher burnout is not a new subject; burnout in the helping professions is not a new phenomenon yet; it continues to this day at a magnitude that continues to increase. Despite all of the research and studies that prove the existence of burnout, only some straightforward approaches to the modalities of support to diminish and mitigate the feelings of burnout still need to be discovered. This study provides an opportunity for those teachers who have experienced burnout to discuss their experience and what has worked to help them decrease their feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished self-accomplishment.

The COVID-19 pandemic created a new level of responsibility, tasks, and teaching styles, including new technologies teachers had to learn quickly. Teachers are expected to love their work and not to feel overwhelmed by their work. However, they cannot be expected to continue to add to their responsibilities without providing suitable means to address their experience of burnout.

Conclusion

Using the generic qualitative approach, I gained an understanding of the experience of burnout in fifteen teachers in the primary grades of kindergarten through fifth grade who taught in the 2020-2021 school year and who self-reported feelings of burnout since COVID-19. The participants discussed their experiences, the support that

helped to diminish their feelings of burnout, and how teaching has changed for them since the 2020-2021 school year. The study's findings revealed that teachers mostly felt overworked and overwhelmed, and the current use of professional development and educational support generally lacks efforts to help teachers manage their workplace frustrations. Teachers who have positive relationships with members of their school building, from their peers to their administrators, feel more capable of managing their feelings of burnout. When burnout became too prevalent in their daily lives, teachers turned to anti-depressants, anti-anxiety medications, and SSRIs to support their daily functioning.

As a scholar-practitioner of social change, the relationship between teacher burnout and stress directly relates to their students and their ability to learn and perform at their optimal level. The participants were able to provide a unique glance into their individual experience of burnout since COVID-19. They provided insight into the tangible supports that effectively changed and mitigated the negative feelings of burnout. The study determined that teacher burnout can have very debilitating effects on the daily functioning of teachers to the point where they are left without resources other than medications to ease their feelings of burnout. Additionally, this study confirmed that since COVID-19, teaching in the primary school grade levels has changed and that schools provide much more than a learning experience for children. Schools provide a safe place, nutritional support, and community.

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Appendix A: Flier


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ARE YOU A TEACHER IN GRADES K-5?

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: If you teach in primary grades in the United States and have experienced burnout since COVID-19 you meet criteria to participate in a confidential research study that will interview you on your experience and what strategies do you believe will help to mitigate burnout. If you meet the criteria, please contact the researcher either by phone or email below.



Must live and teach in the United States



Must have taught in SY 2019-2020

914-474-8047

JANINE.GAVIN@WALDENU.EDU

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Thank you for your participation in this interview. As a teacher, sharing your experience of burnout and your perception of what strategies would help to mitigate burnout throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Please note that all your information will remain confidential, and the responses you provide will only be used for the purpose of this research study. Thank you for your participation in this study.

1. Can you please tell me what grade level do you teach?

2. Can you please tell me if you experienced burnout within the past 3 years since March 2020?

3. Can you please describe your experience of burnout as a primary school teacher during COVID-19?

4. Can you please describe what is your experience of educational needs (i.e., Professional development, training) in primary school teachers to mitigate burnout during COVID-19?

5. Can you please describe what is your experience of interpersonal needs (i.e., relationships, communication between people) in primary school teachers to mitigate burnout during COVID-19?

6. Can you please describe what is your experience of intrapersonal needs (i.e., occurring within the individual or mind, counseling) in primary school teachers to mitigate burnout during COVID-19?

Thank you for completing this interview. If you have experienced an emotional distress due to the personal nature of the questions, please call the national mental health crisis line at #844-549-4266