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Elementary School Teachers' Lived Experience Teaching Remotely During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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EdS, Florida International University, 2010

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

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Abstract

Teaching experiences changed during COVID-19 from face-to-face to online, and teachers encountered numerous challenges. Considerable research has been conducted on many of the issues that teachers at different grade levels faced in this transition. The experiences of elementary school teachers, however, have not received much attention. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of elementary school teachers who taught remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding their challenges may lead to the development of appropriate resources and specific training for teachers in these early grades. The theoretical foundation that grounded this study was Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which proposed that learning occurred during social interaction and that an individual's environment consisted of multiple levels that influence their development. Data were collected from third to fifth grade elementary school teachers through semistructured interviews with six teachers and were understood through a thematic analysis. The results of these analyses indicated that teacher's experienced mental health issues, technological issues, limited resources and limited support from administration. This study may contribute to positive social change by providing insights for educational psychologists, school administrators and staff, and school board members by suggesting supportive measures and trainings for teachers who teach remotely during school closures.

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Dedication

This research was dedicated to my beautiful, and smart daughter, Veronica, mother, Maureen Budraj and my late father, Premnauth Budraj. Veronica has been my inspiration for pursuing my doctorate degree. I would like for her to believe in herself and fulfil her dreams in life. The opportunity for growth is endless. My parents have given me the confidence and drive to fulfil my dreams and believe in myself. They have always been supportive and involved in my education.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In December of 2019, a novel form of Coronavirus was identified and named the COVID-19 virus, and by March 2020, the number of COVID-19 cases began to increase throughout the world (Coronavirus Disease Pandemic, 2020). Closures of schools and businesses varied in length between countries with averages around 79 days, with schools reopening more readily in higher income countries than in countries of middle and lower income (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2021). In the United States, teachers were faced with suddenly learning how to teach remotely and teaching experiences changed as a result of COVID-19 (Chen et al., 2022). During spring 2020, schools throughout the United States went from face-to-face instruction to remote learning (Brigandi et al., 2022). Over 124,000 schools in the United States were closed, affecting at least 55 million students (Education Week, 2020), which impacted school-age children and families to varying degrees. In addition, teachers faced numerous challenges, and recent studies have shown that the pandemic created psychological stressors as a result of school lockdowns (Naiara Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Rey et al., 2020).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of elementary school teachers who taught remotely between January and May of 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Learning about their experiences can provide insights for school administrators, teachers, staff, school board members, and educational psychologists so that supportive measures and training for teachers who teach remotely

during similar situations can be developed. Supportive programs may lead to stronger

remote learning policies, which in turn can create positive social change.

The following chapter provides background related to the topic, the problem and

purpose statements, and the research questions, and includes discussion of the theoretical

framework for this study. It then covers the nature of the study, definitions, assumptions,

scope of delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study.

Background

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted every sector of the world,

with its effects being felt in political, social, and economic realms and by individuals

(Rahmadi, 2021). Numerous studies related to COVID-19 have shown the impact of

COVID-19 and the challenges of teaching during the pandemic (Soncini et al., 2021).

Philippakos et al. (2022) described how COVID-19 changed the way instruction was

being delivered across Kindergarten to 12th grade classrooms. Rahmadi (2021) focused

on the effects experienced in the educational sector and noted that as the other sectors of

the economy continued to regenerate, the lockdown policies in various countries have

negatively impacted the education system.

In the United States, COVID-19 created specific challenges for teachers who

provided online learning to students during the pandemic. The work environment of

teachers was significantly impacted (Soncini et al., 2021). Teachers were faced with an

increase in workload and instructional difficulties (Carver-Thomas et al., 2021; Klapproth

et al., 2020). Research has indicated that teachers encountered difficulty with online

learning, such as internet issues, uncooperative learners, low attendance of learners, teachers' technology confidence, and lack of educational resources (Noor et al., 2020).

Habaragoda (2020) explored challenges with online teaching during COVID-19, including computers, internet access, high cost of internet, learners attitude and motivation, and undependable power supply can impact learning (Noor et al., 2020). These challenges effected a teacher's ability to plan, establish, delineate, and adapt and can impact the degree of emotional exhaustion, according to Dolighan and Owen (2021). Kainama and Hendriks (2021) found that teachers encountered difficulties in using the online teaching model.

In addition, students' ability to use computers effectively also has an impact on the teaching process (Soncini et al., 2021). Rahmadi (2021) also found that the effectiveness of the online delivery system was still a matter of great concern, especially with the accompanying constraints. Isa and Mazhar (2020) reported that during COVID-19, teachers encountered difficulty tracking students who did not show up online for classes and some teachers were also homeschooling their own children, which impacted their involvement in their student's learning. Students' predictable routine and safe space were changed due to COVID-19, which has also caused teachers to stress (Isa and Mazhar, 2020).

In the United States, teachers endured additional stress due to challenges with teaching students online with limited technological experiences (Nagasawa & Tarrant, 2020; Tarrant & Nagasawa, 2020). As a result of COVID-19, social interactions decreased among teachers and students (Larivi`ere-Bastien et al., 2022; Wut & Xu,

2021). Teachers and students encountered video technology that they were not familiar with, which impacted communication (Hodges et al., 2020). Some students chose to close their cameras and mute their microphones for various reasons, which also impacted learning (McGrane, 2022).

Additionally, researchers found that those who experienced job-related threats due to school closures experienced increased stressors (Chen, 2022). Roman (2020) indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic can be viewed as trauma for students and educators. According to Soncini et al. (2021), teachers experienced emotional exhaustion teaching online during this period. Social isolation was felt by both teachers and students (Gordon & Presseau, 2022). Teachers used their homes to provide lessons, which exposed details of their lives and, in addition, parents were able to view the lessons and criticize the teaching quality, which impacted a teacher's privacy and self-efficacy (Majeed et al., 2022; Picciano, 2018).

A teacher's sense of self-efficacy can impact how they implement their instruction (Poulou et al., 2019). Teachers tend to feel confident and deliver good quality instruction when they feel as though they have enough control of their instruction (Herman et al., 2018). Teacher's sense of self-efficacy can also impact student's academic and social-emotional being, according to Herman et al. (2018). Meisner and McKenzie (2023) found that teachers reported that during the beginning of the pandemic, parents were not as supportive of their efforts, which can impact students' success and increase teachers' frustration.

Chan et al. (2021) used a mixed method approach to understand teacher well-being during COVID-19 with a sample of 151 elementary school teachers in the United States in summer, 2020. It was revealed that the majority of teachers reported being emotionally exhausted and had increased levels of task stress and experienced job ambiguity. A thematic analysis of responses to open-ended questions indicated the need for resources in relation to being competent when teaching students online (Chan et al., 2021).

While there have been a number of studies on various aspects of teacher experiences, Chan et al. (2021) indicated that additional studies are needed across the United States to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of teachers during the pandemic. Many recent studies on the impact of COVID-19 on the educational system focused on upper grades, so little was known about the experiences of elementary school teachers who taught remotely during the pandemic (Chen, 2022). There are limited studies on the experiences of teaching remotely in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of elementary school teachers (Chan et al., 2021). Without the perspectives of these teachers, the full range of challenges remains unknown. Understanding their challenges may lead to the development of appropriate resources and specific training for teachers.

Problem Statement

Similar to teachers in secondary schools, elementary school teachers suddenly needed to engage in remote teaching and learning (Chen, 2022). Research findings suggested the importance of the school system to meet challenges like COVID-19 by

understanding the experiences of teachers who taught during the pandemic (Chen, 2022). Chan et al. (2021) described problems encountered by elementary teachers, including teacher's mental health, technology issues, increased workload, and task stress. Previous research has not included reflection on the more subjective experiences related to these stresses. Thus, further research was needed to understand the experiences of elementary school teachers so that administrators can provide resources to help teachers, according to Carver-Thomas et al. (2021). Without such research, the full range of challenges faced by teachers during COVID-19 are unknown (Bassok et al., 2020; Borup et al., 2020; Chan et al., 2021; Dolighan & Owen., 2021). According to Carver-Thomas et al. (2021), further research was needed to understand the lived experiences of elementary school teachers and how administrators can provide resources to help teachers. Without understanding teachers' challenges, the development of appropriate resources and specific training may not be developed.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in the United States who taught remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, between January and May of 2020. The study focused on learning about the challenges that elementary teachers encountered through descriptions of their lived experiences during the early months of transition. This time period was selected because in December of 2019, the COVID-19 virus emerged, and in the United States during spring 2020, school instruction changed from face-to-face to remote (Brigandi et al., 2022; Coronavirus Disease Pandemic, 2020).

A descriptive phenomenological method was selected to understand the experiences described from the teacher's perspectives of teaching online during COVID-19. These insights may contribute to understanding how administrators can more effectively support teachers. This study may highlight the additional stress for teachers that occurs when schools are unable to provide appropriate resources, which may lead to further development of policies and resources. The study may also contribute to positive social change with rich data that could assist stakeholders in supporting elementary school teachers effectively during a pandemic or other unusual condition that require changes that impact the education systems.

Research Question

In order to explore the lived experiences of elementary school teachers who taught remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic the following research question guided the study:

How do third through fifth grade elementary school teachers in a public school describe their lived experiences of teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically from January through May of 2020?

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1992) ecological systems theory (EST) proposes that learning occurs during social interaction and that the ecological environment consists of subenvironments (as cited in Lau & Ng, 2014). These subsystems include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Lau & Ng, 2014). Proximal processes refer to the individual's interaction with their environment,

which plays a role in Bronfrenrenner's EST framework of nested systems (Ozaki et al., 2020). Ozaki et al. (2020) indicated that the EST model can help to understand a person's development and how the environment plays a role by examining the person, process, context and time intersect. Abrams et al. (2021) and Figlio et al. (2019) reported that a person's environment including experiences and traumas can significantly impact the meso, macro, and micro systems.

This theory was relevant to the research question because it supported the understanding of elementary school teachers lived experiences while teaching online during COVID-19 and how each subsystem plays a role in their development. While phenomenological studies do not generally use theoretical frameworks as the philosophy serves as a framework, using EST provided additional insight. For example, EST can play a role in understanding teacher's well-being, and how they interact with their environment (Price & McCallum, 2015). The EST framework supported, in addition to the phenomenological protocols, the research design and was used to develop the interview questions and the approach to data analysis of the descriptions of experiences provided by elementary school teachers.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative approach was used for this study due to the nature of focusing on the lived experiences of teachers during COVID-19. Quantitative research uses statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data to investigate a phenomenon. It helps to determine the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent or outcome variable within a population (Creswell, 2012). However, qualitative research helps to

understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions (Pathak & Kalra, 2013). In this study, teachers were asked to describe their lived experiences of teaching remotely during the COVID-19.

Of the possible qualitative approaches, phenomenology was selected as the most appropriate method to understand the lived experiences of elementary school teachers during COVID-19. The development of phenomenology was credited to Husserl (Larsen & Adu, 2021). Husserl (2001) proposed that the phenomenologist focuses on the structure of cognition and its correlation to things that are known. The tradition of transcendental phenomenology focuses on the meaning of the phenomena and helps to identify the way the participant perceives the phenomena (Husserl, 2001). Moustakas (1994) also emphasized that transcendental phenomenology provided a meaningful understanding of the lived experience.

Descriptive phenomenology, as further developed by Giorgi (1997) reveals the essence of the phenomenon from the perspective of those directly involved in it. According to Giorgi et al. (2017), the phenomenological method describes the experiences being lived by using a thorough analysis of the data and incorporating the perspective of phenomenological psychological reduction. Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) explained that the descriptive phenomenological method was, thus, free of imaginative variation and description of the essence of the phenomenon. The lived experiences are viewed as indicators of the lived meanings and values of the participants. This contrasts with the tradition of interpretive phenomenology, which included the researcher's interpretation of the experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Giorgi (2012) used

phenomenological psychological reduction within the limits of human consciousness when analyzing the data that were not shared with empirical reality. It is important for the researcher to read the description as a whole and understand the data then reread the beginning of the description to transform the data into psychological value (Giorgi, 2012). The researcher then uses the essence of the experience to assist with free imaginative variation which was imaginatively altering the experience in order to view the phenomenon under investigation. (Giorgi, 2012).

This study included six third to fifth grade elementary school teachers in a public school. Data were collected through individual interviews. Giorgi et al. (2017) indicated that descriptive interviews can allow for rich analysis of the data. Rubin and Rubin (2012) asserted that interviews are also helpful in authentic and in-depth data for qualitative research. Interviews helped me to understand the lived experience of elementary school teachers and their experience teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews were analyzed following Giorgi's recommended process to allow for rich description of the data (see Giorgi et al., 2017).

Definitions

Asynchronous learning: Asynchronous learning refers to learning that does not occur at the same time (Garrison et al., 2003).

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): This term refers to an infectious disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) virus (World Health Organization, 2019).

Distance learning: Distance learning refers to students who are learning online and not physically at school (Doghonadze et al., 2020).

Face-to-face: Traditional way of learning for teachers and students in a brick and mortar school (Doghonadze et al., 2020).

Phenomenology: Qualitative research that focuses on the study of an individual's lived experiences within the world (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003)

Remote learning: Educating students either synchronously or asynchronously from a physical distance (Pryor et al., 2020)

Synchronous learning: Synchronous learning occurs at the same time and can be in various forms such as traditional classrooms with a set schedule (Garrison et al., 2003).

Virtual instruction: A means of educating students using online technology to continue educational learning (Beaunoyer et al., 2020).

Assumptions

Assumptions can be viewed as what the researcher accepts as true but without sufficient evidence (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). All research was based on philosophical assumptions. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) described how philosophical assumptions (ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology) are the main premises in qualitative research. These assumptions are found within interpretive frameworks such as positivism, postpostivism; interpretivism, constructivism, hermeneutics; feminism(s); racialized discourses; critical theory and Marxist models; cultural studies models; queer theory; and postcolonialism (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Ontology investigates the world that we live in, and the nature of the reality and epistemology was a way to explain and understand what we can know and who can we know (Patton, 2002). Axiology can be correlated with ontology and epistemology. It is the value system and influences what is believed to be true. Methodology is a paradigm that allows humans to use systematic inquiry to ask certain questions and use certain approaches (Patton, 2002). The phenomenological approach reflects these assumptions about reality, knowledge, and values. A specific assumption for this study, then, was that the participant would provide information that was truthful and accurate but that their reports would be shaped by their view of reality and their sources of knowledge. Explicitly documenting assumptions can help to reduce misunderstanding to the research (Leedy & Ormond, 2016). Another assumption was the voluntary participation of the participants. In this research study, participants were offered a gift card.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this qualitative research was the lived experiences of elementary school teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19 and included constraints surrounding the study. Delimitations of a study include factors and variables that are not included during the investigation of the study. They include the boundaries of the research study and what the researcher will include and exclude (Simon & Goes, 2013). The data collection for this study delimited to participants who met the following criteria: (a) identified as an elementary school teacher; (b) taught grade levels third to fifth, specifically from January through May of 2020, and (c) worked in a public-school district. Thus, the potential transferability to future research regarding the lived

experiences of elementary school teachers who taught online during COVID-19 may be limited.

Limitations

Limitation of a study refers to restriction that can impact the study such as the research design, results, and conclusion of the study (Simon & Goes, 2013). Using descriptive phenomenology has limitations, including difficulty of analyzing and interpreting the data and constantly assessing biases and preconceptions (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Trustworthiness can also be a potential bias in the study due to possible bias responses from the participants. However, triangulation was used to help with issues of trustworthiness. Reliance on a participant's lived experiences may result in subjective themes that do not represent the lived experiences of all elementary school teachers. To decrease subjectivity of the participants' responses, the interview questions were predetermined, and every participant was asked the same questions.

Another limitation was participant recruitment, which was limited due to teachers' increased workload and stress. This made it difficult for teachers to find adequate time to participate in the study. As a school psychologist and an employee of the school system, it was important to distinguish between roles when conducting interviews with participants while maintaining professionalism. It was important to be aware of biases and be nonjudgmental when conducting interviews. I used a reflective journal during this process to help reduce bias.

Significance

The findings of the study provided insights on how COVID -19 affected the lived experiences elementary school teachers while teaching online during COVID-19. The outcome of this study provided meaningful information to teachers, students, parents, stakeholders, and the community so that they can better understand how to provide resources for teachers during a pandemic. Findings from the study may also be useful to school psychologists. School psychologists provide counseling, consultation, crisis preparedness and response, and development of academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions in a school setting (Ritchi et al., 2021). Due to COVID-19, school psychologists did not have physical access to students (Brock & Holland, 2021), and had to create new ways to support students, teachers, and parents. Greater understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on elementary school teachers can lead to better resources to help students and teachers increase academic, and social/emotional learning during a pandemic.

Summary

Chapter 1 of this study covered an introduction to the phenomenon that was explored, the lived experience of elementary school teachers transitioning to online teaching during the Covid-19. The pandemic created challenges for teachers in the United States (Chen et al., 2022). Chan et al. (2021) reported that teachers reported social-emotional concerns, technological issues, increase workload, and stress as a result of teaching online during the pandemic. The background of the study focuses on previous studies relevant to the topic, including general information and studies on teachers'

challenges during the transition to online teach from January through May of 2020. The theoretical framework, Bronfenbrenner's EST, was described in relation to understanding teacher experiences. The problem, purpose of the study, and nature of the study were discussed, as well as the limitations, significance of the study, and social implications.

Knowledge about the lived experiences of elementary school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic can help provide supports and trainings for teachers in the future who experience a pandemic or other situation that requires online learning for students. Georgi's (2012) approach to descriptive phenomenological method was used to understand the experiences described from the teacher's perspectives of teaching online during COVID-19, while Brofenbrenner's (1979) EST provided an understanding to the lived experiences of teachers using subenvironment.

Chapter 2 includes the literature review strategy, a detailed discussion of the theoretical foundation, and literature review related to key concepts. Key concepts include impact of COVID-19 on education, emergency remote teaching during COVID-19, teacher challenges during COVID-19, challenges of elementary school teachers, self-efficacy in online teaching, and teacher well-being. A detailed literature of previous research is presented that develops the context for understanding experiences of elementary school teachers who taught online during COVID-19.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of elementary school teachers who taught remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic and how administrators can support teachers. As a result of the pandemic, teachers have encountered numerous challenges (Chan et al., 2021). During the pandemic, teachers have been emotionally exhausted and experienced high levels of task stress and job uncertainty (Chan et al, 2021). Teaching efficacy, school connectedness, and teaching autonomy were related to job satisfaction during the pandemic (Chan et al, 2021). Many factors have been studied regarding the experiences of teachers during the pandemic, however, little was known regarding the lived experiences of third to fifth grade elementary school teachers in a public school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This chapter begins with the literature search strategy, theoretical framework, and key concepts related to the literature review. The literature review includes scholarly journal articles that were published within the last 5 years, focusing on teaching experiences during the pandemic.

Literature Search Strategy

As part of my literature search strategy, I used scholarly, peer-reviewed articles for the literature review of elementary school teachers using remote learning during COVID-19 and supports that are needed from school administration to teach children remotely. Information was obtained for this literature review through the following databases: Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), PsycInfo, Science Direct,

ProQuest, PsycARTICLES, PsycEXTRA, and Thoreau through the Walden University

Library system. The following keywords were used: *transcendental phenomenology,*

teaching during COVID-19, distance learning, COVID-19 pandemic, asynchronous

learning, virtual learning, virtual teaching, online learning, online teaching, synchronous

learning, *elementary school teachers and online teaching, remote learning, remote*

teaching, and *technology in school setting*. Articles prior to 2017 were used only for the

theoretical framework portion of the literature review. Articles that were not full-text

versions through the Walden library were excluded. I used articles that contributed to the

research literature and addressed my research question.

Theoretical Foundation

EST developed by psychologist Bronfenbrenner, suggesting that human

development is impacted by different environmental systems (as cited in Ettekal &

Mahoney, 2017). These systems include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem,

macrosystem, and chronosystem, which impacts a person's development throughout their

lifespan (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017; see Figure 1). Ozaki et al. (2020) reported that

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1993) EST framework can help to understand a person's

perspectives in various settings and how each system can play a role in the person's

psychological state of mind. Microsystems are systems that the individual interacts with

regularly (e.g., parents, guardians, siblings, teachers, and peers), and the mesosystem

includes each of the individual's microsystems and the individual's interaction between

the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Development can be influenced by the way the

mesosystem interacts with each other (Ozaki et al., 2020). The exosystem impacts a

person's development based on individuals who are involved in the person's life (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). The macrosystem includes the beliefs, values, and norms set forth by the cultural, religious, and socioeconomic organization of society (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). The macrosystem can influence a person's development within all systems (Ozaki et al., 2020). The chronosystem consists of a person's development throughout life while looking at environmental changes (Ozaki et al., 2020).

Bronfenbrenner's theory was helpful in understanding how each system impacts teachers during COVID-19. The macrosystem refers to the culture, subculture, or social system and its impact on development (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). It is important to understand the impact of the pandemic within the macrosystem in regard to teachers who taught online during the pandemic. The chronosystem refers to the impact of all systems over time and its influence on development such as a nonnormative historical event such as the pandemic (Brigani et al., 2022). Understanding the overall development of teachers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic was important in this study. Bronfenbrenner's EST reveals the impact of an individual's development within the ecological subsystems and how each system is codependent on the other and can impact other systems. The ecological system shows that individuals are impacted by their interpersonal relationships such as family and school. The school, which was part of the microsystem of a teacher, played a role during COVID-19. The chronosystem and exosystem can impact a teacher's ability to teach depending on the resources that are available and how the pandemic impacted the teacher. If the ecological systems are impacted by a pandemic such as COVID-19, then these systems can affect the performance of a teacher in various ways.

Studies related to teaching and teachers have used EST to understand how each system can impact a child's development. Brigandi et al. (2022) reported that Bronfenbrenner's EST gives insight into the developmental changes in individuals such as teachers and their response to the ecological transition as a result of COVID-19. Teachers with positive people in their lives showed a relationship with positive student outcomes (Turner & Theilking, 2019). The effects of the microsystem can play a role in our interaction with the world. Teachers were required to change their instructional approach from face-to-face to online learning, which impacted the relationship of the micro and mesosystem, involving home, school, parent, students and teachers (Brigandi et al., 2022). Decisions made in the exosystem can impact teachers and content knowledge, self-efficacy, and competence (Brigandi et al., 2022). The processes of EST can help understand human development and how changes in these systems can impact a person's development (Hyler & Gardner, 2017).

In this study, EST helped me to understand how the experiences of teachers during COVID-19 can create life changes based on the environmental systems within the EST. The EST included behavioral and environmental change of the individual based on the quality and context of the environment (Hyler & Gardner, 2017). This study identified changes that teachers experienced during COVID-19 while teaching remotely.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of

elementary school teachers who taught remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The

literature review includes discussion of research relevant to understanding how COVID-

19 impacted various segments of the overall educational systems including stakeholders.

The subdomains included are the impact of COVID-19 on education, teachers' online

challenges, elementary school teacher's challenges, self-efficacy in online teaching,

teachers' stress and well-being, and a synthesis of the research.

Impact of COVID-19 on Education

According to UNESCO data, as of May 8, 2020, a total of 1,268,164,008 students

from preschool to higher education have been affected by COVID-19. Politi et al. (2021)

reported that as a result of COVID-19, people had numerous fears such as contracting the

virus and its overall impact on society. Baxter et al. (2022) reported that school closures

during spring 2020 impacted students, teachers, parents, and society resulting in social

and economic turmoil. The pandemic created acute work stress due to people being

forced to work in different working conditions (Rudolph et al., 2021). This section

reviews the literature of face-to-face learning and the shift to remote learning focusing on

its impact on students, teachers, and stakeholders. During the pandemic, principals

needed to implement health and safety measures, and learn new technology while

providing supports for teachers to use these technologies (Müller et al., 2022). Teachers

were now faced with teaching remotely rather than face to face. Summers (2020) reported

that teachers realized the difficulty of teaching virtually and resources that were needed

but limited. Teachers were then required to modify their lessons while encountering

increase workloads (Kaden, 2020).

The online learning shift impacted stakeholders such as parents, staff,

administration, and students (Iivari et al., 2020). Online learning can be referred to as e-

learning, distance learning, virtual learning, or remote learning, where teaching was

online using technological tools (Moore-Adams et al., 2016). Administrators needed to

respond to emergencies related to the COVID-19 that they were not prepared for

including how to educate students online (Müller et al., 2022). Prior to the pandemic, the

majority of classes were face to face with only a small percentage of Kindergarten to 12th

grade students attending virtual (Pourreau, 2015; Wu, 2016). Müller et al. (2022) reported

that the pandemic created an increase in education inequality due to inequality in access

to online learning for some communities which created a decline in school performance.

Emergency Remote Teaching During COVID-19

Emergency remote teaching (ERT) is an ad hoc strategy for teaching online

during emergency situations such as COVID-19 pandemic in order to continue the

teaching process for students (Kulic & Jankovic, 2022). Common issues during ERT

include lack of digital infrastructure (Guangul et al., 2020; Ramlo, 2021; Marinoni et al.,

2020), difference in teacher's pedagogical competence and technological issues

(Marinoni et al., 2020; Ramlo, 2021; Sharadgah & Sa'di, 2020), higher chances for

academic deceit (Arity & Vesty, 2020; de Boer, 2021; Guangul et al., 2020; Sharadgah &

Sa'di, 2020), reduction in students' engagement (Guangul et al., 2020), and teachers'

increased casework (Jankowski, 2020; Ramlo, 2021; Sharadgah & Sa'di, 2020).

Teachers felt unprepared to support students online due to lack of professional development to teach online instruction and lack of knowledge on finding appropriate online tools for their students (Philippakos & Voggt, 2021; Philippakos et al., under review). Research has found a reduction in modifications and services for students with disabilities during remote teaching (McFayden et al., 2021). Ibna et al. (2022) reported that many educational institutions were not prepared for ERT, and teachers reported difficulties in lack of services, external distractions, family distractions, and lack of understanding technology.

Gudmundsdottir and Hathoway (2020) provided an open-response survey to 1,186 teachers throughout different countries to collect data on their experiences and readiness for online instruction. Ninety-two percent of American teachers reported that they did not have any online teaching experience but were familiar with some digital resources (Gudmundsdottir & Hathoway, 2020). In regard to COVID-19, national surveys (Hebert et al., 2020; Philippakos & Voggt, 2021) as well as qualitative studies (e.g., Bishop, 2021) reported challenges teachers encountered while teaching remotely such as using technology. Teachers reported that they were not equipped with the tools needed for the transition which impacted the delivery of their instruction to students (Philippakos & Voggt, 2021; Philippakos et al., under review).

Teacher Challenges During COVID-19

Experiences and perceptions for teachers who taught online during COVID-19 varied (Philippakos et al., 2022). Chan et.al. (2021) reported that teachers experienced unclear job expectations and uncertainty due to shift in teaching online during COVID-

19. Teachers reported issues such as lack of internet availability (Atiles et al., 2021; Steed & Leech, 2021), limited technological resources for teachers and students (Atiles et al., 2021; McFayden et al., 2021), restricted administrative support (Chan et al., 2021; Steed & Leech, 2021), lack of pertinent training (Atiles et al., 2021; Gudmundsdottir & Hathoway, 2020), difficulty meeting all students' needs (Harris et al., 2021; McFayden et al., 2021; Steed & Leech, 2021), and staff reduction (Phillips et al., 2021). Hartshorne et al. (2020) reported that teachers who taught online during the pandemic were faced with homework issues (lack of support from home), technology issues, mental wellness and accessibility issues (lack of access to internet/computer).

The change from face-to-face teaching to online teaching involved mixed feelings of teachers that included tension, lack of support, and difficulty accepting the new change which was found to be stressful for teachers (Hodges et al., 2020). Student outcomes were impacted by sociodemographic factors that impacted educational resources and support offered by teachers (Engzell et al., 2021; Maldonado & De Witte, 2020; Tomasik et al., 2020). Kulic and Jankovic (2022) reported that during COVID-19, online learning had numerous drawbacks, such as decreased level of interaction, increased opportunity for academic dishonesty, drawbacks on reliance of free tools and its limitation, decrease in the learning process, and student's limitation on technology. Jelinska and Paradowski (2021) reported that professional developmental support for teachers plays a role in their readiness and confidence when responding to crisis such as teaching online during the pandemic.

Challenges of Elementary School Teachers

Elementary school teachers face many challenges, including dealing with classroom behaviors, balancing work and life responsibilities, low wage, working additional hours, and feelings of isolation (Leech et al., 2022). The pandemic created a new way for elementary school teachers to teach, which included teaching students online rather than face to face. Chan et al. (2021) conducted a study with 151 public elementary school teachers in the United States, with 70% in California who taught during COVID-19, and reported that the majority of teachers were emotionally exhausted, had increased workload, and faced uncertainty in their job duties. Philippakos et al. (2022) reported in a study of 228 Kindergarten to fifth grade students that 69% of teachers reported lack of confidence teaching remotely and lack of preparedness teaching online. Mahmud (2022) reported that when teachers have lack of resources to assist students then they can become less engaged in helping their students.

During the pandemic, teachers were faced with difficult challenges, pressure and varying emotions while spending hours learning new technology (D'Mello, 2021). It was difficult for teachers to contact students who failed to show up to online classes since teachers needed to use their personal phones (Kaden, 2020; Martinez & Broemmel, 2021). Sharabi and Cohen (2022) conducted a study with elementary teachers, and they reported that the shift from in-person teaching to virtual learning was challenging, creating increased tension, an unorganized environment, and issues among school stakeholders (principals, teachers, parents etc.). Elementary school teachers in a study reported that parents' involvement and relationships changed for the worse during the

pandemic where parents blamed teachers regarding online classroom management and at times responded to teachers in aggressive tones (Sharabi and Cohen, 2022). Leech et.al. (2022) conducted a study that included elementary school teachers who taught during COVID-19, and teachers reported challenges such as students not attending classes online, technology issue for students, lack of motivation from students, difficulty teaching curriculum in a remote setting, feeling disconnected from students and staff, increase workload, lack of resources for students, and difficulty communicating with parents.

Self-Efficacy in Online Teaching

Bandura et al. (1999) referred to self-efficacy as an individual's belief in one's competency when given a situation. Self-efficacy can be correlated with the individual's effort towards attaining the goal and persistency when faced with adversity (Bandura, 1993). Teacher's self-efficacy refers to a teacher's belief about one's own capability (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Soncini et al. (2021) reported that high self-efficacy can assist teachers with challenges such as distance learning and possibly prevent negative effects. Studies have shown that teacher's beliefs and self-efficacy are a primary barrier to using technology in education (Ertmer & Ottenbteit-Leftwhich, 2010; Ertmer et al., 2014; Moore Hayes, 2011). Self-efficacy is a component for learning outcomes (Bandura, 2006). Understanding technology played a role in self-efficacy in online learning environment (Corry & Stella, 2018).

Due to COVID-19, teachers were required to teach virtually and use technology as a means of communication with students. Online skills required for teachers included

managing the online classroom, creating instruction for the online platform, motivating

and engaging online students, and instructional design in the online environment

(Dolighan & Owen, 2021). During synchronous and asynchronous environments,

teachers used a variety of technological devices (such as, laptops, tablets) to enhance

students' learning experiences and support continuing education (Dhawan, 2020; Hodges

et al., 2020). As a result, teachers were required to have technology-based pedagogical

skills, such as providing learning materials through Google Classroom (Wong et al.,

2020). New teaching demands as a result of COVID-19 can create an increase in

teacher's stress levels (Chen, 2021). Dolighan and Owen (2021) conducted a study that

included 132 secondary teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19 and found that

teachers who had previous training in delivering online instruction had higher online self-

efficacy score.

Teachers' Well-Being

Johnson et al. (2005) asserted that teaching is known to be one of the most taxing

professions across the country. The well-being of teacher plays a vital role in having a

learning environment that is supportive and effective (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Chen

(2021) reported that an increase in teacher's stress can create higher levels of teacher

attrition. Education Week (2020) reported that more than 124,000 schools in the United

States were closed as a result of the pandemic which impacted at least 55 million

students. Chen et al. (2021) conducted a study with a total of 107 teachers from 25

different states in the United States and reported that teachers indicated challenges with

lack of student participation/engagement, students without access to technology, concerns

with student's mental health, no physical face to face interaction, difficulty with work-life balance and learning new technology.

A mixed method approach was used to understand teacher's well-being during COVID-19 using a sample of 151 elementary school teachers in the United States in summer, 2020, by Chan et al. It was revealed that the majority of teachers reported being emotionally exhausted and had an increase levels of task stress and job ambiguity (Chan et al. 2021). Teachers also became concerned with the emotional well-being of their students, trauma from COVID-19 and learning gains of their students as a result of the shift to online learning (Prothero, 2020; Walker, 2020). Prior training such as preservice courses or professional development and prepandemic experiences with online instruction can increase teachers' efficacy (Dolighan & Owen, 2021; Jelinska & Paradowski, 2021).

Summary and Conclusions

Researchers have conducted extensive research on COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, teachers had new challenges due to swift change from face to face to remote teaching (Chan et.al., 2021). These included studies on education inequality due to inequality in access to online learning, lack of student engagement, and increase in teacher's caseload (Guangul et al., 2020, Jankowski, 2020; Müller et al., 2022; Ramlo, 2021; Sharadgah & Sa'di, 2020).

Other studies focused on teachers at various grade levels and their challenges during this period. For example, variance in teacher's educational competence and technical issues (Marinoni et al., 2020; Ramlo, 2021; Sharadgah & Sa'di, 2020). Chan et

al. (2021) indicated that teachers reported job uncertainty and ambiguity with job roles during COVID-19. Teachers also reported internet issues (Atiles et al., 2021; Steed & Leech, 2021), lack of administrative support (Chan et al., 2021; Steed & Leech, 2021), limited training (Atiles et al., 2021; Gudmundsdottir & Hathoway, 2020), limitations in meeting all students' needs (Harris et al., 2021; McFayden et al., 2021; Steed & Leech, 2021), and a decrease in staff (Phillips et al., 2021).

Previous studies have also described the role of the ecological system and its impact on elementary school teachers (Brigandi et al., 2022). Bronfenbrenner's theory describes how human development was impacted by various environmental subsystems (as cited in Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). A variety of studies have focused on various elements of the system. Müller et al. (2022) found that that the pandemic resulted in inequality in certain communities regarding access to online learning. Ibna et al., (2022) reported the educational system was unprepared for ERT, which resulted increase stress levels for teachers. Teacher's self-efficacy impacted their ability to use technology (Ertmer & Ottenbteit-Leftwhich, 2010; Ertmer et al., 2014; Moore Hayes, 2011).

However, there was little research focused on elementary school teachers who taught remotely during the pandemic, or their lived experiences (Bassok et al., 2020; Borup et al., 2020; Chan et al., 2021; Dolighan & Owen., 2021). The current study offered a new approach employing a phenomenological research method, which allowed for rich descriptions of the phenomenon, and focused on an understudied part of the teaching populations.

In Chapter 3, a detailed discussion of the methodology used in this research study is provided. It covers the research design and specific aspects of the methodology, including participant selection, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, data collection, and data analysis plan. Issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures are also discussed.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in the United States who taught remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically January – May of 2020. A further goal was to learn about what supports are needed to support teachers in similar conditions that interrupt normal schooling. As a result of COVID-19, people encountered numerous problems (Cortese et al., 2020), such as depression, anxiety, fear (Arslan et al., 2020; Çıtak & Pekdemir, 2020), burnout, uncertainty, conflicts, and various psychopathological issues (Tanhan, 2020). The phenomenological method was used here to allow for descriptions of the experiences through the perspective of phenomenological psychological reduction. These descriptions of lived experiences are viewed as indicators of the lived meanings and values of the participants.

In this chapter, a detailed explanation is provided on the methods used to conduct this qualitative phenomenological study. This chapter includes the rationale for using transcendental phenomenological research design. The role of the researcher is followed by the methodology. The methodology section of the chapter includes participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, and data analysis plan. Issues of trustworthiness focuses on credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This chapter concludes with ethical procedures and a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

A qualitative approach was suitable due to the research question and purpose of the study. Merriam and Grenier (2019) explained that qualitative research studies the nature of the phenomena including quality, manifestation, and construct the participant's experiences to the phenomena. Qualitative research allows the participants to share detailed explanations of their experiences and provides information regarding the participants behaviors, and point of view (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

In contrast, quantitative research helps to learn about a particular group of people by using scientific inquiry and relying on data that was observed or measured (Allen, 2017). As a result, quantitative analysis was not considered suitable for this study, and a qualitative method was selected because it focuses on the participant's experiences, how their world is constructed, and the meaning attached to the experiences (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The method selected was a transcendental phenomenological research design that allowed me to focus on the lived experiences of the participants and uncovered the meaning of the phenomenon. A phenomenological study examines the lived experiences of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon while developing a description of the experience (Creswell, 2013). Giorgi et al. (2017) explained that descriptive interviews can allow for rich analysis of the data. From this perspective, phenomenology was descriptive rather than interpretive and can help to understand how phenomena present themselves to awareness (Giorgi, 2012). This phenomenological approach allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the data (Giorgi, 2012). This approach aligns

with the research question for this study: How do third to fifth grade elementary school

teachers in a public school describe their lived experiences of teaching remotely during

the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically January – May of 2020.

<p style="text-align:center;">**Role of the Researcher**</p>

A researcher is important in educational research and develops positive

relationships with the participants to advance the research process (Zhang & Liu, 2018).

The researcher's role as the observer is to analyze the data and provide an analysis while

acting as the research instrument (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Phillippi & Lauderdale,

2018). In this phenomenological study, the role of the researcher was to be an observer.

As the observer, I established rapport with participants and encourage open

communication. I was responsible for recording each participant responses. To prevent

misunderstandings, I asked follow-up questions as needed. I provided a safe environment

for participants to share their experiences without judgment.

I worked as a school psychologist for a public school at an elementary and a high

school in Florida. I intended to recruit participants who worked in a different school but

in the same county. In qualitative research, the researcher uses safety measures to help

protect participants and their data. Information that was obtained that can reveal the

participant's identification was omitted. I was not familiar with any of the participants on

a personal and/or professional level.

It is important for a researcher to identify any potential biases that can arise. As

the researcher, it was important for me to identify any potential biases that may have

occurred. The researcher should bracket, that is, remove, themselves from phenomenon

they are investigating and be aware of any explicit and implicit biases that may arise (Alase, 2017). Alase (2017) indicated that the researcher should remove any personal experience from the lived experiences of the participants to validly understand the lived experience of the phenomena. The informed consent form from Walden University provided detailed information regarding my role as the researcher and the role of the participant, which helped to manage bias in the study.

During the interview, the researcher should be aware of ethical issues and remove any preconceived notions about the world and self (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I did not disclose any personal opinions during the interview in order to collect valid data. I also did not believe that there were any power dynamics. Collaborative discourse helped to identify any power struggle. The participants also have the power to withdraw from the study on their own free-will and at any time. As a researcher, I ensured confidentiality of the participants, provided informed consent, and understood the purpose of the study.

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in the United States who taught remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically January – May of 2020. The phenomenological research approach can help the researcher follow a systematic approach, according to Moustakas (1994). This section is comprised of participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation and data collection and data analysis plan.

Participant Selection Logic

The sample population included both males and females of varying ethnicities who taught at the elementary school level during COVID-19 specifically January – May of 2020. I planned to recruit a sample size of six participants using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling tends to be used in qualitative research and it allows the researcher to select individuals based on characteristics they are interested in studying to understand the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2012). The guideline for phenomenological study indicated that five to 25 participants are sufficient to achieve data saturation (Creswell, 1998). In qualitative research, it is important to achieve saturation, which can be achieved once there are sufficient data to determine conclusions and when collecting additional data did not add more value to the study (Saunders et al., 2018). In qualitative phenomenological studies, a smaller sample size tends to be used, which includes rich descriptions from the participants (Gerring, 2015).

Participant inclusion criteria for this study included the following: (a) must be an elementary school third to fifth grade teacher who taught remotely during COVID-19, specifically January – May of 2020 and (b) must be 18 years or older. Participants was selected based on their willingness to participate and their interest in the phenomenon of study.

Permission from Walden University was obtained as well as from the selected school district to recruit participants. Recruitment included using a social media platform such as Facebook (Educational Staff). I included a brief description of the research and my contact information for participants, which included my phone number and email

address. Those who replied to the flyer via email or phone call were emailed with specific

criteria and research information. I contacted the person who wanted to participate by

email or phone call to set up a face-to-face interview at a safe and secure location at the

public library. The informed consent was emailed ahead of time to every person who

showed interest in participating in the study. A follow-up email was sent with the

interview date, time, and location. Participants were provided the informed consent to

sign prior to the interview. I scanned the signed informed consent and converted it to a

PDF file, which was emailed to all participants and stored securely in a password

protected computer.

I scheduled one-on-one interviews to collect data from each participant. During

the interview, I reiterated the purpose of the study, my role, my profession and ensured

that participants were willing to consent before I started the interview. The interview

lasted between 45 minutes to an hour. If the participants had questions, I answered the

questions, and if not, I started the interview. Each participant was debriefed. Once the

interview was finished, I provided each participant the opportunity to ask questions. I

then thanked each participant for participating. I let each participant know that I would

follow-up with the results of the study once its completed. Once transcripts were

prepared, I emailed it to participants to check for accuracy of their responses and to

clarify responses if they wished.

Instrumentation

Instrument refers to the tool used by the researcher when collecting data.

Qualitative researchers can use a variety of instruments such as documents, interviews,

observations, artifacts, and focus groups (Chenail, 2011). Research instrument should be reliable and valid while having explicit instructions on usage and/or implementation (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). This study instrumentation included semistructured interviews of six elementary school teachers. Face-to-face interviews between researcher and elementary school teachers were conducted in a brick and mortar setting while ensuring confidentiality. Ricci et al. (2019) reported that when using qualitative methods, it is important to review the literature, use open-ended questions to elicit thoughts, and analyze the data.

Researchers have used interviews for many years when collecting data (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Verbal interaction between the interviewer and participants can help to build rapport and lead to more detailed questions (Billups, 2019). Semistructured interviews assist with providing the participants real-life perspectives and experiences (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). This form of interview aligns with a phenomenological study. The questions have been influenced by findings in the literature review and the theoretical framework. The questions focused on personal experiences of teachers during COVID-19, technology experience, and level of support that have not been explored with this population. The questions allowed the participants to share their experiences as well as include details on the information that was lacking in the literature. Questions also attended to the broader system in which the teacher functioned as emphasized in the theoretical framework, Bronfenbrenner's EST.

The questions were open-ended and follow-up questions were asked depending upon the responses of each participant. The interviews were recorded with adequate time

for interviewing and questions from participants. The interview questions provided

consistency when interviewing third to fifth grade elementary school teachers. It assisted

with gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of elementary school

teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19. Transcendental phenomenology studies

generally use a small number of interviews while reaching saturation and providing

results (Smith et al., 2009). Due to the small number of participants, it was especially

important to establish content validity and credibility. Braun et al. (2020) reported

interviews can help with the study's research questions. There are weaknesses associated

with interviews. Castillo-Montoya (2016) reported that interview protocol includes four

phases where the first two phases focus on alignment of questions with the research while

getting feedback from participants and the last two phases include feedback regarding the

questions and practice of the interview.

The participant may feel uncomfortable with certain questions, or they may feel

overwhelmed and discontinue the study. Issues with interviewing included difficulty with

language and understanding the participant's answers without showing frustration. To fill

in gaps in the data, follow-up interviews, member checking, and reviewing the transcript

were conducted. Member-checking was used along with having the participants review

the transcript to establish the tenet of credibility in trustworthiness. Member checking is a

participant validation technique to determine the credibility of the results (Birt et.al.,

2016). I created a summary of each transcript that was emailed to the participant to

review. Each participant was given 10 days to respond to the transcripts with any

questions, edits, or concerns. The transcripts were used for coding and analyzing the data.

The data collection instructions for this study included interviews of elementary school teachers. During the interview, it is important to note facial expressions, eye contact, tone of voice, and body movements (Smith, 2020). These interviews consisted of follow-up details from the participants. The interviews were recorded and included adequate time for interviewing, note taking, and a reflection journal once the interview was completed. Merriam and Grenier (2019) reported that interview questions can help to understand the perceptions of the person being interviewed.

This study used interview questions that I developed using research-based literature, which provided the greatest source of information based on the topic (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I used interview questions that were specific in nature relating to the lived experiences of elementary school teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19 pandemic in Florida (see Appendix). The interview questions provided consistency when interviewing third to fifth grade elementary school teachers. It assisted me with gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of elementary school teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19. The interview was semistructured while using open-ended questions and flexibility with the questions as needed (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Participants were recruited by posting a recruitment flyer on Facebook under Educational Staff. The flyer identified all required criteria for the study and included an email/phone number to contact me to participate in the study. Each participant was given a $25 Amazon gift card at the end of the study. Documents were confidential and stored

safely including informed consent. Informed consent provided participants the purpose of the study, procedures, their rights, and benefits and risks of the study. Data collected through the interviews were stored on a secure password protected laptop where I was the only person to gain access to the information. After the audio has been transcribed, it was stored on my password protected computer under Microsoft OneDrive.

The interviews were conducted at the public library and lasted between 45 minutes to an hour. The location was in a private room in the library to maintain confidentiality. Once there is evidence of data saturation and no new themes emerge, then there is completion of the study. The interviews were conducted after school hours during the weekday or weekend. The interviews were conducted in person to help establish rapport and comfort. A tape recorder was used to record the session and assisted with transcribing. Participants were allowed to stop the interview at any time. Debriefing after the interview helped participants with questions and/or concerns.

In qualitative research, the interview transcripts need to be transcribed precisely and then analyzed to find common themes (Alase, 2017). Qualitative data analysis software allows the researcher to use their time more efficiently by providing the researcher more time to explore the meaning of their data (Patton, 2015). I used an online software company to transcribe the audio files, *Rev (Transcribes your audio or video Transcription Service).* Once the transcript was completed, then I reviewed for accuracy and gave each participant a copy to review as part of member checking.

Data Analysis Plan

In phenomenological research, the data analysis is a meaningful process of collecting data through processes to apply meaning to the phenomenon without bias (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Data analysis was employed using Giorgi's (1997) phenomenological method to describe the experiences with a thorough analysis of the data. To begin, a transcendental attitude was used to analyze the data using pure consciousness (Giorgi et al., 2017). That is, according to Giorgi et al. (2017), the researcher uses the raw data, and detailed phenomenological psychological analysis of the data was performed using the viewpoint of the phenomenological psychological reduction.

Giorgi (2009) explained that it is important to interpret data by describing the meaning of the experiences using emergent themes. Using Giorgi et al.'s (2017) 5-step approach to data analysis, it is important for the researcher to first read the entire transcript to gain an understanding of the sense of the whole while reviewing the transcript several times before moving to Step 2. The second step requires the researcher to adopt the phenomenological psychological attitude by the *epoché* (or suspension) of the natural attitude and by assumption of the phenomenological psychological reduction, that is, studying the natural attitude structures (Giorgi et al., 2017). During the interview, each participant's statement should be treated as having equal value while using textural description to indicate what the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Epoché, the concept of suspending our judgments, described by Husserl (2012), assists the researcher in being aware of the natural attitude

and bias regarding the phenomenon and develop ways to overcome its impact. Implementing the concept of epoché, I reviewed my biases and determined if these biases affected my analysis of the participant's lived experiences. The researcher then uses the scientific phenomenological reduction to divide the data into meaningful units, which can be one sentence or a paragraph and is a part of Step 3 (Giorgi et.al., 2017). Using a phenomenological attitude, the researcher breaks the meaningful units into two-sided columns (Column 1 and 2), which helps to organize the process for the researcher. Slashes are also placed in the description where appropriate (Englander & Morley, 2023).

Step 4 is within the scientific phenomenological reduction, and the researcher then transform the participant's lifeworld expressions into psychological meanings lived by the participants (Giorgi et al., 2017). The relationship between Column 1 (ex. naïve description) and Column 2 (ex. phenomenological description of psychological meaning) can be analyzed, and more columns can be added if needed (Englander & Morley, 2023). The researcher uses eidetic variation, which allows them to focus on the phenomenon under investigation using detailed analysis (Englander & Morley, 2023). The use of free imaginative variation was used, which focuses on imaginatively altering features of the experience to investigate the phenomenon using different perspectives (see Giorgi et.al., 2017). The fifth step involves the researcher using the transformed meaning unit expression to describe the psychological structure of the lived experience (Giorgi et al., 2017).

My research question was as follows: How do third to fifth grade elementary school teachers in a public school describe their lived experiences of teaching remotely

during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically January – May of 2020?. I worked as a school psychologist at an elementary school in a public-school system, and I understood that this could have influenced my analysis of the data. Thus, phenomenological reduction was used to help me become aware of my preconceptions and remove existential questions. As the researcher, I read the entire transcription and assumed the attitude of the scientific phenomenological reduction. I delineated psychological meaning units by re-reading the description from the beginning. Imaginative variation was then used to highlight psychological meanings by the participants' lived experiences during COVID-19. The transformed meaning units were used to describe the psychological structure of the experience.

I used NVivo 12 to assist in collecting, organizing, analyzing, visualizing, and reporting the data. NVivo is a software program used in qualitative research to analyze audio data that included interviews which helps to organize, code, and manage data (Richards, 1999). NVivo uses a container known as nodes for coding, which represents ideas, things, people, concepts, and categories and where the references of the text are stored (Richards, 1999). It is imperative to identify concepts, events, themes and examples to better understand the research problem (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Themes and categories from the data were used to help triangulate the data, which included the experiences of elementary school teachers during COVID-19. Patton (2002) referred to triangulation as using multiple methods in qualitative research to gather rich data to understand the phenomena.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research was ensuring that there is credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Adler (2022) indicated that trustworthiness in a qualitative study requires transparency by providing explicit research techniques and providing transparency with the epistemological and theoretical bases of the research.

Credibility

Credibility indicates the congruency of the findings in qualitative research and is equivalent to internal validity (Stahl & King, 2020). The researcher can establish credibility by being aware of any characteristics that can impact data collection. The participants can be provided with the interview questions beforehand to help establish credibility (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Stahl and King (2020) reported that triangulation is another way to establish credibility by using several sources of information to identify patterns. I had the research participants read and provide feedback on the results to ensure accurate and credible results. During the interview, I did not provide my own views on the phenomenon of interest to help reduce bias. I engaged in bracketing and member checking to ensure credibility. Credibility is supported when the researcher focuses on triangulation, member checking, and interview technique, and the researcher is engaged with the participant (Stahl & King, 2020).

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research seeks to ensure external validity and determine if the findings of the study can be used in other contexts, which relies on the researcher's thick description of the phenomenon (Stahl & King, 2020). It is important for the researcher to thoroughly describe the collection of data, which assists other researchers in determining if the study may be transferable to their research. The themes about the phenomenon provided insights for future elementary school teacher. Detailing rich descriptions of elementary school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic provide future researchers the tool to model their research based on this study and to be able to have similar results.

Dependability

Dependability establishes whether the research study's findings are consistent and reliable, and if other researchers reviewed the data, they would derive similar results and conclusions about the data (Stahl & King, 2020). I intended on documenting the exact methods use to collect, analyze, and interpret the data. Dependability was achieved by the procedures described in Chapter 3 and included information during the data collection and process.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research indicates that the research was not influenced by biases or assumptions of the researcher (Stahl & King, 2020). An audit trail was used in confirmability to provide transparent steps of the data analysis, information on how themes were created, and how the conclusion was derived (see Given, 2012).

Audit trails that are comprehensive include the research design while providing detailed

data collection, analysis, reduction, and synthesis (Wolf, 2003). The transcripts helped

reduce bias when analyzing the data. Once the data were coded, a reflexive statement was

used to examine any biases that may have occurred during the data collection process.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical issues can occur during any stage of the study. Issues that can arise

include anonymity, confidentiality, seeking permission, informed consent, power

relations, and avoiding harm (Lin Abdullah Kamal, 2021). According to Cohen et al.

(2005), researchers first need to obtain permission before conducting research in any

setting. I followed the protocol established at Walden University for submitting and

obtaining approval from the International Review Board (IRB) to conduct my study and I

followed all research standards.

Lin Abdullah Kamal (2021) indicated that informed consent is needed in order to

ensure that the participants volunteered to be part of the study. Hammersley and Traianou

(2012) noted that participants have the right to withdraw from the study during any stage

without permission from the researcher. All participants in this study were informed of

the purpose of the research study. Each participant was required to sign a consent form if

they wanted to take part in the study. The consent form was signed prior to the interview.

The consent form included a detailed description of the research study, participant's

rights, and what was expected as part of participation. Each participant was given the

right to leave the study when needed as well as the opportunity to decline debriefing. If

the participant declined to be in the study once all detailed and transparent information was provided, I recruited new participants using purposive sampling.

Creswell (2012) explained that while examining the lived experiences of participants, confidentiality must be maintained for participants. Hammersley and Traianou (2012) explained that it is important for the researcher to maintain confidentiality of the data and anonymity of the participants. Data were stored electronically in NVivo 12 on a password protected computer in a specific folder. All data collected for this study were anonymous and confidential. The participant's privacy was protected, and a number was used instead of their real name. Therefore, no participant's identity was revealed.

During research, it is important to reduce harm for both the researcher and the participant, and if harm could potentially come forth, the researcher needs to determine if it can be justified or reduced (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). I did not anticipate any harm to any of the participants for this study. As a school psychologist, if a participant was harmed at any point, I stopped the interview and provided necessary resources. I also provided debriefing and member checking in order for the participants to disclose any issues that may have arisen. The study was conducted in a safe environment.

Power relation can occur in a study when the power of certain people may resist a researcher's investigation (Henn et al., 2006). I encouraged participants to answer questions naturally and established rapport prior to the interview. Participants were informed that I was the only researcher, and I was a school psychologist for the school

district. I applied the phenomenological perspective of epoché to suspend bias, and I informed participants of the purpose of the study to help reduce any power struggles.

Summary

Chapter 3 included the rationale for selecting the research method. A transcendental phenomenological design was selected to address the research question: What are the lived experiences of elementary school teachers during COVID-19, specifically January – May of 2020? A transcendental phenomenological research design allowed me to focus on the lived experiences of the participants while uncovering the meaning of the phenomenon. The phenomenological method used allows for rich descriptions of the experiences by using the phenomenological psychological reduction. Purposive sampling was used in the study by recruiting six participants. The criteria for the participants included being third to fifth grade elementary school teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19. The data were analyzed into themes, and I developed descriptions of what the participants experienced and how they experienced it. This qualitative research method for this study used rich descriptions of the phenomenon by using semistructured interviews. Participants were interviewed face to face along with a tape recorder. I did not disclose any personal opinions, and I do not believe that there were any power dynamics. Each participant could have withdrawn from the study at any point. Biases were suspended using epoché. Issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures were examined to protect the integrity of the study and participants. Chapter 4 will outline and provide discussions regarding the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in the United States who taught remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, between January and May of 2020. Data were collected using semi structured interviews completed in person at the public library using six participants to answer the research question. The interviews were recorded via Zoom to allow for transcription. This chapter includes the study setting, participant demographics, and the process used to collect and analyze the data, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and a summary.

Setting

The goal of the study was to explore the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in the United States who taught remotely during COVID-19. The study was approved in November, 2023. Six participants were interviewed at the public library in a private room during after-school hours and on the weekend. The interview room in the library was quiet, and no distractions were noted.

Demographics

The inclusion criteria for participants included being 18 years or older elementary school teachers who taught third to fifth grade remotely during COVID-19 between January and May of 2020. The six participants included five females and one male. All participants had at least 2 years of teaching experience. Three participants worked at the same elementary school. The other three participants taught at a different elementary

school. All six participants were elementary school teachers between third to fifth grade in a public school. Participants were excluded from the study if they missed the scheduled appointments to collect data. Three participants taught third grade, two taught fourth grade and one taught fifth grade. Table 1 shows the participant demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Grade level taught	Years of teaching
Participant 1	Female	3rd	7
Participant 2	Male	3rd	25
Participant 3	Female	4th	3
Participant 4	Female	5th	9
Participant 5	Female	3rd	2
Participant 6	Female	4th	5

Data Collection

To assist with data collection, I posted a recruitment flyer on Facebook under Educational Staff. The flyer identified all required criteria for the study and included an email/phone number to contact the researcher to participate in the study. I included a brief description of the research. Those who replied to the flyer via email or phone call were emailed with specific criteria and research information. I contacted the teachers who wanted to participate by email or phone call to set up a face-to-face interview at a safe and secure location at the library.

Once potential participants contacted me, I emailed them the consent form so they could make an informed decision regarding if they wanted to participate in the study. I gave participants 48 hours to review the form and determine if they wanted to be a part of the study.

I spoke to each participant via phone and provided the basis for my study. Once I met with each participant at the appointed time, I went over the consent form that they each signed. I referred to each participant as a number, such as Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 4, Participant 5, and Participant 6. All participants agreed to have Zoom record the interview. The recruitment and data collection process lasted for about 6 weeks.

Prior to each interview, each participant was reminded of the purpose of the study. Afterwards, I began the interview and recording, and then the data collection process began. The time for each interview varied and ranged from 30 minutes to 50 minutes. There was a total of six semistructured interviews. Giorgi et al. (2017) reported that interviews can bring forth rich description of the data. I did not seek additional participants because saturation was met. Saturation occurs when sufficient data have been collected and new data may not generate additional information (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

After the interview, the recordings were transcribed in Zoom. The transcription of each interviewed was saved in a password protected folder on my laptop. I reviewed the transcript and did member checking. Member checking assisted in confirmation, modification, and verification of the interpretation of the research. I offered participants

the opportunity to review the data. An interviewee transcript review was used to have participants correct, add, or remove data. I provided copies of the transcript via email to participants so they could provide feedback on accuracy.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is the process of looking for repeated patterns in each data set (Xu & Zammit, 2020). It was recommended to follow six phases of thematic analysis: familiarize yourself with the data, generate initial codes, find themes, review themes, define and name the themes, and produce the report (Braun & Clark, 2006). Initially, I familiarized myself with the data by reading each interview three times and highlighting each line for coding in NVivo. Giorgi (2012) reported that the researcher should comprehend the data and then reread the data prior to transforming the data. I then generated a list of ideas to produce initial codes from the data. I worked systematically with the data set and focused on each data item.

I identified various aspects in the data items to determine if repeated themes were formed. Using NVivo, I was able to tag and name the selections of text in each data item. Once I coded and collated the data, I sorted the codes into potential themes. I created a table in Excel to assist with the themes. I wrote the name of each code and included a brief description. This allowed me to view the relationship between codes and themes. I immersed myself into the data to determine whether the data answered the research question. The data in relation to the research question on the lived experiences of teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19 showed themes that described teachers' lived experiences.

I then generated the themes, and I began to refine those themes. I disregarded any themes that did not have sufficient data to support it. I used direct quotes to help describe the themes. There were 19 codes that appeared consistent throughout the data and included the following: anger, confused, depressed, difficult, difficulty communicating with parents, frustration, lack of interaction, lack of knowledge with technology, lack of parental support, lack of privacy, lack of resources, lack of support from administration, lack of time, lose my purpose, no computers and or internet, overwhelmed, sadness, stressful, and lack of training. I then used Excel to help determine the categories and patterns. Once the data were coded, I had four categories: (a) mental health issues, (b) technological issues, (c) insufficient resources, and (d) limited support from administration. I then looked at overarching themes.

Once I was satisfied with my themes, I created a table in Excel. I then looked at the validity of each theme in relation to the data set (see Braun & Clark, 2006). I reviewed the table to determine if it accurately showed the meanings in the data set as a whole. I used direct quotes to find pattern and themes with all participants. I re-read the data set to ensure the themes functioned in terms of the data set. Then I determined if there were any themes missed during the early stages, and there was not. I then refined and defined the themes. I identified the essence of each theme. Then, I was able to answer my research question to assist with my study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As established in previous chapters, evidence of trustworthiness was established by credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These strategies were considered in all areas of this study to help determine trustworthiness.

Credibility

Creswell (2003) reported that credibility is the degree to which a study is consistent and trustworthy. During this study, I contacted all participants and provided information regarding the purpose of the study. Once the interview was transcribed, it was sent to each participant for member checking to ensure credibility. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended member checking. After each participant approved the transcription, I began with analyzing the data. Member checking assisted with clarifying any misunderstandings or inaccurate responses.

Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), transferability occurs when there are adequate data, and dependability is having the consistency between the data and findings. Confirmability is the researcher's ability to make sure the data collected accurately reflects the participant's responses and not the researcher's biases (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Transferability occurred by gathering demographic information for each participant. Each participant had their years of teaching, gender, and grade level documented. This allows for future researchers to conduct a similar study. To maintain dependability, I saved all documents including recordings, data, and transcripts on a password protected laptop. I maintained an audit trail that included each step to assist

with transparency and reliability of this study (see Creswell, 2003). To ensure

confirmability, I used a reflective journal to assist me with maintaining awareness of any

potential bias. I allowed participants to check their transcript for any inaccurate

information. These procedures assisted in ensuring my study was trustworthy.

Results

I interview six participants for this study. My interview questions were focused on

the research question and the theoretical framework. The goal of the study was to explore

the lived experiences of elementary school teachers who taught remotely during the

COVID-19 pandemic, specifically from January through May of 2020. Results indicated

themes that answered the research question. Table 2 indicates the themes for the research

question that directed this study. Each theme is reviewed in this section.

Table 2

Research Question and Data Themes

Research question	Data themes
How do 3rd-5th grade elementary school teachers in a public school describe their lived experiences of teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically from January through May of 2020?	Theme 1: Mental health issues Theme 2: Technological issues Theme 3: Insufficient resources Theme 4: Limited support from administration

Research Question

The research question in this study asked the following: How do third to fifth

grade elementary school teachers in a public school describe their lived experiences of

teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically from January through

May of 2020?. The goal of this research question was to explore the experiences of

elementary school teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19. There were four

themes that emerged from the analysis conducted using NVivo 14 qualitative data

analysis software. In this section, I discuss each theme and include direct quotes from the

data that were collected.

Theme 1: Mental Health Issues

This theme focuses on the mental health issues that arose with all participants (N

=6) who taught online during COVID-19. The first theme emerged from the interview's

first and second questions. The first question asked participants about their experience

teaching remotely and the second question focused on the teacher's experience

transitioning from face to face to remote learning. The majority of the participants

appeared comfortable sharing their experiences. All participants ($N = 6$) reported having

mental health issues related to teaching online during COVID-19, which included

frustration, feeling overwhelmed, and feeling stressed. Participants felt overwhelmed and

frustrated due to the rapid changes from face-to-face teaching to remote teaching.

Teachers were given little to no resources to teach online, which impacted their mental

health. The district did not provide resources for teachers who needed emotional support.

Participant 1 reported feelings of frustration and being overwhelmed with the process.

She stated, "It made my frustrated. It seems like the majority of teachers felt

overwhelmed and so did admin. I felt overwhelmed and upset." Participant 2 also felt

frustrated by not having adequate time to learn the new platforms. Participants needed to

learn new platforms on their own time which impacted time with their family. For

example, Participant 2 shared, "It was finding my own time to learn this. That was

frustrating to say the least." Participants 3, 4, 5, and 6 all mentioned feeling frustrated and

overwhelmed. All participants ($N = 6$) reported emotional lability.

Some participants felt irritated trying to teach online and not having clear

directions on what to do and how to do it. Participant 3 spoke about feeling frustrated due

to limited directions by saying, "It felt frustrating because we were given little directives

on what and how to do things." Participant 4 reported the time taken to learn new tasks

and stated, "It was time consuming to learn and frustrating. I felt overwhelmed. It was

emotional for me." Participant 5 recalled feeling overwhelmed with the process and

stated, "I soon realized that it was overwhelming and frustrating. I felt overwhelmed and

wished things were back the way it was." Participant 6 reported the difficulty with

transitioning during the process and stated, "I found the transition to be frustrating. I

don't think they understood the frustration we felt and lack of support. It was

overwhelming to say the least. I felt stressed with teaching online and having little

support." Both Participants 1 and 6 felt angry. Participants also worried about their

student's well-being and academics. Participant 1 reported, "I would find myself getting

angry when students were not doing work or not turning in work that I planned,

forgetting what life could be like for them at home," and Participant 6 reported, "I felt

angry at times." Participant 1, 3, and 6 reported feeling stressed out. The high stress

levels felt by the participants impacted their ability to function at an optimal level.

Participant 1 reported, "It was stressful to say the least," and Participant 3 felt stressed

and reported the impact on family: "I felt very stressed out. I tried my best to be a good

mom but I felt depressed at times because of all of the added stress." Participant 6 reported, "I did try to do the best but that's not easy either. I felt stressed with teaching online and having little support." In summary, all participants reported having to deal with various mental health issues, such as stress, frustration, feeling overwhelmed, and feelings of loneliness. Participants reported having no supports to assist with those feelings.

Theme 2: Technological Issues

The emergence of the second theme became evident when all participants shared their lack of knowledge using technology. The second theme emerged with the interview's third question, which asked participants about their experiences with technology. All participants ($N = 6$) reported having difficulty with technology. Having to learn new programs with little to no training was difficult for participants. They were open-minded to learn, but the resources were not available or limited to help them and their students. Some participants were savvy with technology while others had difficulty prior to teaching remotely. The participants who were more familiar with technology still had difficulty learning the new online programs. Participant 1, 2, 4 and 5 reported increased frustration with having to learn new technology. Participant 1 reported, "Technology can be your best friend but it can be a nightmare." Participant 3 revealed similar experiences and stated, "Not everyone comes from a technology background," and Participant 5 reported, "Technology may be my weakest area." Some participants also reported that students struggled to learn the new online programs. It was difficult for teachers to assist students because it was not face to face. Parents also had difficulty

troubleshooting technology issues to assist their child. Participant 2 revealed the impact

of students having prior knowledge with technology: "Children who had expose to

technology in the home did a much better job transitioning to online learning verse in

person learning." Participants found it difficult to find the time to learn new technology

because they also needed to research on their own how to use these technologies.

Participant 4 reported limited time to learn new technology and stated, "As a result, we

were stretched and had to learn new ways to utilize technology and problem solve."

Participant 6 reported having adequate knowledge of technology and stated, "I'm good

with technology;" however, participant 6 also reported difficulties with technology

despite technological background: "I struggled with understanding how to use some of

the online websites like Google classroom. My students also had difficulty using

technology."

　　　　Some participants were able to consult with other coworkers to find appropriate

online resources while others were able to research resources online. The majority of

participants felt that it was difficult to learn new technology with little to no training.

Some participants did not feel comfortable teaching themselves new programs. Their

confidence was low and they were not sure if they were doing an adequate job because

they did not receive proper training. Participant 1 reported having to self-learn and stated,

"I had to learn everything from how to do a Zoom meeting, to what a Google Classroom

was, along with how to set one up. I spoke to other teachers and they felt frustrated too."

Participants felt frustrated having to teach new online platforms to students and not

having adequate training to better assist students. Participant 2 indicated the difficulty

with troubleshooting technical issues with students and reported, "It was difficult to problem solve technology issues with young children and parents who had little knowledge of the Chromebook or technology platforms." Some participants wanted more training to teach effectively. Participant 3 and 6 reported needing training in order to feel confident and supported using new technology platforms. Participant 3 reported, "Training on technology for both students and staff would have been helpful," and participant 6 reported, "I wished the students had more training with technology as well." Participant 4 reported the lack of confidence using technology and reported, "As a result, we were stretched and had to learn new ways to utilize technology and problem solve. Technology is used more so than before but when you don't feel confident then it can be frustrating." All participants reported feeling inadequate to use the new platforms. Students also struggled to use the new online format. Little to no training was provided to assist students and teachers with learning new technology. Some teachers learned by watching tutorials online while others used the limited resources they had.

Theme 3: Insufficient Resources

All participants ($N = 6$) reported having inadequate resources. The third theme emerged from the fourth question regarding supports from administration. Participants ($N = 6$) reported that administration gave insufficient resources to teach students successfully online. Participants felt overwhelmed and frustrated with trying to teach remotely and having little to no resources. Online programs for students were limited and teachers needed to find materials to teach their students remotely. Initially, not all students had a laptop and/or internet, so some students were not able to attend classes

online. Students were not given the option to borrow a laptop or be provided with internet from the school prior to going remotely. Not all students had laptops and/or internet at home. Participants reported that these limited resources impacted students which in turn affected teachers. Participant 1 reported having to learn with scare resources by saying, "We were all given this directive to go to remote learning at a fast pace and then given limited to no resource on how to do that." Participant 2 reported limited resources and stated, "I felt as though I did not have a lot of resources to help with teaching remotely." Participant 3 reported needing more training and resources for future planning. Participant 3 reported, "I had to find my own resource."

Some participants used online tools to find resources. However, they were not confident in the validity of some of the programs. Participants would have felt more confident if the programs were provided by administration. Some administrations did provide resources; however, it was limited. A few participants reported feeling uncomfortable speaking with administration regarding needing resources. Participant 1 reported finding new online resources and stated, "Luckily, everyone was going through this, so one of the main teacher websites that we use for resources, started offering digital resources so that helped for a bit on the academic side." However, Participant 1 reported, "We had a new way to teach with limited resources and skills with teaching online." Participant 2 also reported having resources shared and stated, "The assistant principal sent out resources like online tools we needed to know and where to learn more about it;" however, Participant 2 reported "Admin could have done more research to find us resources to teach the kids online." The participants who received the resources felt that

they needed training on implementing the programs successfully. Participant 3 was also provided with some resources and reported, "Admin gave us access to the tools and resources that we needed to teach our students" but reported "more training and resources are needed for the future for students and teachers." Participant 4 tried to find resources and stated, "I am capable of learning on my own but it would have been easier if I had more resource at hand."

Some participants reported that in the future it is important for administrators to be aware of the need for adequate resources if the need to teach remotely occurs. Having insufficient resources impacted teachers, students, and parents. It is also important for teachers to be trained properly on using those resources. More training and resources are needed for the future for students and teachers. Participant 4 indicated needing more resources and reported, "I wished we had more resources for staff and students." Participant 5 and 6 reported that it was difficult to teach online with limited resources. Participant 5 reported, "I had to learn new things and didn't have much resources to help me" and participant 6 stated, "It's difficult to try and find resources on your own. We had our meetings twice monthly and they didn't offer any resources." All participants reported the need to have more resources to help students and themselves. Having limited resources appeared to impact their performance and well-being.

Theme 4: Limited Support From Administration

All participants ($N = 6$) reported having limited support from administration. The fourth theme emerged from the fourth question regarding administration and supports given. Participants felt that administrators did not provide staff and students with

adequate resources. Some participants felt that administrators provided minimum to no

supports. Most participants had to find resources on their own and some did not feel

comfortable sharing how they felt having limited resources. Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6

felt that administration attempted to assist but could have tried harder. Participant 1 felt

administration lacked knowledge on how to provide more supports and stated, "Admin

sent out emails for us to email them with questions but sometimes it felt useless. Like

they didn't answer the questions since they didn't know the answer." Administrators did

hold meetings on Zoom with staff. However, participants did not feel comfortable sharing

that they felt inadequate to teach remotely due to lack of resources. Some participants

were hoping administrators would provide the resources during the meetings. However,

participants were given little to no resources. Participant 3 reported feeling that questions

regarding supports were not answered during meetings and reported, "But when we met

us teachers wanted to know what resources they can share but it felt like more of a check

in." Participant 5 and 6 reported that administration did not provide supports to staff

during meetings. Participant 5 indicated, "I had weekly meetings with admin but that

wasn't the best either. It was more to socialize," and participant 6 stated, "Admin was

supportive in certain ways and unsupportive in others. We had our meetings twice

monthly and they didn't offer any resources."

It appeared that participants felt job insecurity if they reported to administrators

that they did not have adequate resources. Participants felt administrators did not provide

an environment that was comfortable for them to share the issues that were at hand.

Participants ($n = 2$) did not feel comfortable addressing the limited support from

administration. Participant 3 stated, "The other teachers that I spoke to were also struggling so it would have been nice if we all had more supports and training from admin. I don't think anyone felt comfortable enough to complain." Participant 6 also did not feel comfortable speaking with administration and reported, "I didn't feel safe speaking to admin about how I felt. I also talked with my admin to see what resources they had. Admin could have helped out more." Some participants reported that administrators should have researched resources or contact the district for additional resources. They did not feel as though administrators did their best with assisting staff and students. Participant 4 felt comfortable speaking with administration regarding supports and stated, "I did feel comfortable emailing them when I had questions." She felt that administration did not have many supports to give and stated, "I felt like he did listen but didn't have much input since he was learning too."

Some participants reported that their administrators appeared to have limited resources because it was all that was given to them. Participants felt that it was a new way of teaching and administrators were trying to figure out how to teach students effectively given the limited time to do so. All participants ($N = 6$) reported that administration was responsive given what they had but teachers and students were impacted due to limited knowledge. Participant 1 felt as though administration did what they could and stated, "My administration looked like they tried their best but I feel like they did what they could, given what they got." Participant 2 reported, "Administration was supportive to the extent of their knowledge that they had," and participant 3 reported similar experiences and stated, "Admin gave us access to the tools and resources that we

needed to teach our students. However, those tools were what they thought we needed. We needed more than that." Some teachers felt that despite having to change rapidly to remote teaching, administrators should have continuously be engaged in finding appropriate resources to help teachers and students. Participant 4 felt administration's lack of preparation impacted teachers and stated, "If admins were more prepared then teachers would be too." Participant 5 also wanted more direction on what to do and stated, "As much as I like my admin I do wish we had more directives." Participant 6 reported, "Admin was supportive in certain ways. I wish they had more learning for us."

Participants reported that training would have helped them teach students more effectively. Students needed curriculum that addressed academics and social emotional learning. When participants were given resources, they needed to train themselves. This left a lot of participants feeling insecure to use the resources since they were not sure if they were doing it correctly. All participants ($n = 6$) reported the need for more training. Participant 1 and participant 2 reported needing more training. Participant 1 said, "Give more training," and Participant 2 recommended having administration provide training to students to assist with learning the new online platforms and reported, "I would have like for maybe having the students get a presentation from our technology specialist which admin could have arranged. Admin could have done more research to find us resources to teach the kids online." Participant 3 also indicated the need for training and stated, "We needed more training on academic pieces for our kids," and participant 4 reported the same need and stated, "More training for everyone would have been great." Participant 5 reported needing more training and stated, "I wished I had training on how to do this.

They told us what we would be doing but didn't provide the training to do what we needed to do." Participant 6 also reported having more training and stated, "They told us what we would be doing but didn't provide the training to do what we needed to do. I had no training so I struggled with learning these online platforms." In summary, all participants reported having limited support from administration. Some participants did not feel comfortable voicing their concerns and needs. Some participants felt as though administration did what they could to assist; however, they could have provided more resources to staff and students.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

In Chapter 4, the data were examined and analyzed, and I explained the methodologies used in the study. The objective of this descriptive phenomenological investigation was to understand the lived experiences of elementary school teachers during COVID-19. The research was conducted in the United States, and a sample of six participants was used in the study. The analysis of the data revealed four themes. These themes included (a) mental health issues, (b) technological issues, (c) insufficient resources, and (d) limited support from administration. This chapter also addressed the research discoveries and included the setting, demographics, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, themes, and codes. The findings of this research investigation revealed similarities and differences in the participant's lived experiences.

The study's results revealed elementary school teachers encounter numerous difficulties while teaching remotely during COVID-19. All participants interviewed reported emotional instability, difficulty with technology, feelings of inadequacy using

technology, having inadequate resources, and having limited support from administration. Most participants wanted more training to help students learn new online platforms while a few felt that administration did the best that they could do given the resources they had. The majority of participants felt frustrated with the rapid changes to teach online with limited resources. This in turn impacted their mental health. There were no supports provided to assist teachers who were struggling mentally. Some participants did not feel comfortable expressing their needs to administration. Evidence of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were provided. The conclusion of this chapter included the results of the data collected during the interviews along with direct and indirect quotes for the participants to help answer the research question in the study.

Chapter 5 provides the interpretation of the findings and includes peer reviewed literature in Chapter 2. The findings are analyzed using the theoretical framework in this study, based on Bronfenbrenner's EST. The limitations of the study are also discussed in Chapter 5. Finally, recommendations and implications for social change based on the findings are discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of elementary school teachers who taught remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically from January through May of 2020. Semistructured interviews of six elementary school teachers taught remotely during COVID-19 was conducted to answer the research question. There have been studies on the effect of COVID-19 in the education system focusing on middle and high school; however, there are limited data on the experiences of elementary school teachers who taught during COVID-19 (Chen, 2022). Minimum to no research was found on understanding the lived experiences of elementary school teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19. It is difficult to understand the challenges encountered by teachers during COVID-19 without this research (Bassok et al., 2020; Borup et al., 2020; Chan et al., 2021; Dolighan & Owen., 2021).

I conducted this study to explore the lived experiences of elementary school teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19. Their experiences may suggest further supports needed in the future if a pandemic or some other emergency occurs and teachers are again required to teach remotely. The results of this study described the lived experiences from teachers, which were constructive but also negative. The primary findings of this study indicated the importance of having mental health supports for teachers. All participants had different areas of mental health impacted such as feelings of anger, confusion, frustration, sadness, overwhelm, and stress. Participants also had

difficulty with understanding technology and having to use the online platforms with little to no training. Participants also needed to find academic resources for their students and resources for themselves with minimum support from administration. This also impacted their mental health and created feelings of inadequacy. These findings are discussed in detail in this chapter.

In this chapter, I explain the interpretations of the findings based on the themes that are associated with the research question. I also describe the limitations of the study and recommendations based on analyzing the data from each interview. Also, the implications and potential for positive social change are suggested.

Interpretation of Findings

In this section, I explain my interpretations of my results. The themes in the findings were (a) mental health issues, (b) technological issues, (c) insufficient resources, (d), and limited support from administration. This chapter includes a discussion of how the theoretical framework that guided this study relates to these. It also includes the connections to the findings and the literature as developed by the research question in this study.

Research Question: How do third to fifth grade elementary school teachers in a public school describe their lived experiences of teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically January – May of 2020?

The research question was developed to understand the lived experiences of elementary school teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19. The four themes for this research question were mental health issues, technological issues, insufficient

resources, and limited support from administration. The literature was connected to the mental health issues, technological issues, insufficient resources, and limited support from administration as experienced by elementary school teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19. The data collected indicated participants required various supports in order to teach students successfully.

Theme 1: Mental Health Issues

The literature indicated that teachers who taught remotely can have their mental health impacted negatively. During COVID-19, teachers encountered numerous stressors such as teaching remotely, job security, and limited time to prepare virtual instruction (Doghonadze et al., 2020; Raisinghani, 2020). It was reported that COVID-19 was traumatic for educators (Roman, 2020). Teachers' mental well-being was impacted due to the stressors of having to implement a new way to delivering instruction while following mandates from state, federal, and local levels (Crosby et al., 2020). COVID-19 created an increase in teachers and students' depression, stress, and anxiety (Collins et al., 2020). Teachers also had an increase in casework which can impact their well-being (Jankowski, 2020). Soncini et al. (2021) reported that teachers were emotionally exhausted. Hartshorne et al. (2020) indicated that teachers had reported mental health issues and difficulty with technology while teaching online. Chan et al. (2021) reported that during a study, many of teachers were emotionally exhausted during COVID-19. Teachers had an increase level of stress due to the unpredictable routine with COVID-19 (Isa & Mazhar, 2020). Some teachers worried about their jobs as a result of COVID-19, which caused an increase in stress (Chen, 2022).

Theme 2: Technological Issues

The literature indicated teachers had technology issues during COVID-19. Clausen et al. (2020) reported about 55.1 million of Kindergarten-12th grade students were impacted by remote learning due to COVID-19. Remote teaching included learning systems such as Google Classroom (Laho, 2019). Ferri et al. (2020) reported that some teachers had limited proficiency in using digital content. Students and teachers were faced with issues regarding internet connectivity and inequalities with technology (Smith et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic created a change for teachers that impacted their perception regarding teaching with technology (Miller et al., 2020). Marinoni et al. (2020) reported technological issues for teachers who taught remotely. Ibna et al. (2022) reported that teachers had issues with understanding technology. Leech et al. (2022) reported that teachers faced challenges such as students having issues with technology, and limited resources for students and teachers. Chen et al. (2021) reported that teachers reported having difficulty with learning a new way of working remotely and having to learn new technology. Teachers' confidence was impacted when trying to learn new technology (Noor et al., 2020). Due to limited knowledge with technology, teachers had added stress (Nagasawa & Tarrant, 2020; Tarrant & Nagasawa, 2020). Nordlöf et al. (2019) reported that teachers who had technology training had increase self-efficacy and confidence.

Theme 3: Insufficient Resources

The literature identified that teachers had insufficient resources during COVID-19. Teachers felt unprepared to support students online due to having insufficient

resources and locating online tools needed for their students (Philippakos & Voggt, 2021). Teachers reported having limited tools to assist with transitioning from face to face to online learning during the pandemic (Philippakos & Voggt, 2021). Students and teachers were faced with resource issues regarding internet connectivity and inequalities with technology (Smith et al., 2020). Participants needed to use Zoom to connect to their students, which was new to students and the majority of participants. Participants felt there was lack of resources on how to use new platforms that impacted their confidence. Teachers and students needed training on how to troubleshoot internet and technology issues (Beaunoyer et al., 2020).

Theme 4: Limited Support From Administration

Teachers need support from administration, and when teachers feel supported by administrators, this can positively affect students (Boylan et al., 2018). The literature reported that teachers had inadequate support from administration. There were limited supports from administration (Chan et al., 2021; Steed & Leech, 2021). Some teachers reported feeling there was a lack of support from administration, which creating feelings of stress (Hodges et al., 2020). During remote teaching, teachers needed support from administrators to assist with students who were struggling (Kaden, 2020). Online learning gave students the opportunity to take more responsibility for their learning and motivation; however, some students had difficulty engaging online (Bacă, 2020). Teachers needed administrators to provide concise expectations and use open communication (Pryor et al., 2020). To assist with a successful transition during remote teaching, teachers needed ongoing professional development (Bradley et al., 2020).

Bronfenbrenner's EST

There was a connection between current literature and the data collected during this study. The theoretical framework used to develop this study was Bronfenbrenner's EST. Chigangaidze (2021) stated that an individual's environment impacts their behavior. The EST theory indicates that our development is impacted by our ecological environment (Lau & Ng, 2014). This theory helps to understand the impact of each subsystem during COVID-19. Teachers' mental health was impacted during COVID-19 at the microsystem level, which included work and family. Conflict with the mesosystem such as lack of administration support can impact a teacher's family microsystem. A teacher's exosystem, such as feeling stressed and frustrated at work, can impact their family system at home. The macrosystem, such as the culture at work, can impact a teacher's personal development. The chronosystem of the teacher's shift from teaching face to face to remotely was impacted significantly due to limited resources and ongoing mental health issues.

<div align="center">

Limitations of the Study

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of third to fifth grade elementary school teachers who taught remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically January – May of 2020. There were limitations to the study. Creswell (2003) indicated that limitations of the study as characteristics that impacts the finding of the research. The first limitation of this study was dependability. The sample size was small and included six participants. The small sample did reveal saturation, which was shown by the repeated themes during each interview. When there is

redundancy within the data, then saturation has been met (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

The generalizability of the findings can be limited when there is a smaller sample size

(Creswell, 2003). Credibility was another limitation to the study. The participants shared

their experiences. However, the purpose of this study was not to generalize but to gain

insights into teachers' lived experiences during COVID-19. The purpose of this study

was to provide the lived experiences of teachers during COVID-19 and not to generalize.

Transferability was another limitation. The data included detailed information, audit trail,

how the data were collected, and the research question. The sample criteria were included

in the study, population, and what was being studied. The research was transparent, and

readers are able to form their own conclusions. The final limitation was trustworthiness. I

needed to be aware of my own biases because I worked as a school psychologist in a

public-school system at the elementary level. I was able to bracket by setting aside

preconceived notions and biases. By adopting a natural attitude, I was able to set aside

preexisting ideas, beliefs, and biases regarding the subject matter. Therefore, I was able

to explore the research problem on a deeper level. During the study, I used an audit trail

of notes and journaled reflections to limit any bias that may arise.

Recommendations

This study provided insights into elementary school teachers' lived experiences

who taught remotely during COVID-19. The data collected assisted in filling in the gap

in the literature about elementary school teachers' lived experiences who taught remotely

COVID-19. Future research can also fill in the gap by exploring the experiences of

teachers who work at charter or private school, which could provide more data on teachers' perspectives.

Participants in this study revealed the difficulties teachers encountered during COVID-19, which included a negative impact on mental health, lack of resources, limited support from administration, and difficulty with technology. Teachers required resources and support from administrators to help teach students successfully. Participants felt inadequate to use new platforms given the lack of training from administrators. It was time consuming for participants to find resources on their own to learn new platforms. Participants had increased stress levels at home and work. Some participants had children to take care of at home and needed to teach students online. Some participants missed the face-to-face interaction when connecting with students.

This study focused on elementary school teacher; it is recommended to pursue similar studies on teachers who work at charter or private schools. These studies can gain insight into areas of need for teachers if in the future they encounter another pandemic and are required to teach remotely. It is also recommended to conduct a similar study in various states in the United States at the elementary level. These studies could lead to more insight into teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19.

If future studies collect more data and find similarities, stakeholders can help develop a more comprehensive plan for teachers in the future if teachers need to teach remotely due to a pandemic. Research addressing the implications of the pandemic on elementary school teachers can include cultural factors, ethnicity, specific geographic locations, and gender differences. This can help researchers with additional data on the

effects of the pandemic on elementary school teachers. This study on teachers'

perspectives during COVID-19 can also assist with school closures due to various

reasons besides COVID-19 and what supports might be needed.

Implicatins

The findings of this study can contribute to positive social change for teachers.

These findings can help develop training for administration and stakeholders to help

better assist teachers during a pandemic. This can increase teachers' mental health

wellbeing and reduce stress. This study can also provide insights on how administrators

can better assist teachers with technology and what supports are needed to teach

effectively. This study is significant because it shows the issues that arose when teachers

were suddenly told to teach remotely during the pandemic. The lived experiences of

elementary school teachers in this study revealed their overall teaching experience during

COVID-19 to be challenging. The effects of the pandemic impacted their mental health,

and they faced challenges with resources, technology, and administration.

Participants in this study showed concerns with feeling unprepared to transition

from face-to-face teaching to online teaching. The lack of preparation and resources

created an increase in mental health issues. Participants felt some support from

administration but felt it was not adequate to meet their needs and students' needs. This

study may also provide valuable insights to administrators on how they can best assist

teachers in the future if another pandemic occurs. Being aware of how the pandemic can

impact teachers can provides stakeholders with finding appropriate resources to assist if

another pandemic occurs.

This study may also have an impact on positive social change at the district level. Teachers in this study reported having mental health issues related to the pandemic. They did not report any support system in place for teachers. This information may assist the district to include counseling resources and services for teachers. The district can look into having online therapy for teachers when they need it. By providing online therapy, teachers are able to receive counseling even if they are unable to leave their homes due to a pandemic. This study can also assist administrators with knowledge to help improve teaching and learning in a remote setting during a pandemic by using the recommendations and experiences of elementary school teachers. The study can also impact students who are learning remotely by providing stakeholders with valuable information on how to support teachers remotely and what supports can help increase students' success.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of elementary school teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19. This study used a transcendental phenomenological research design, which allowed the participants to share their lived experiences as I uncovered the meaning of the phenomenon. This study included the lived experiences of teachers teaching remotely during COVID-19 and how those experiences filled in the gap in the literature. Six elementary school teachers who worked at different public schools were interviewed to gain their perspectives of teaching remotely during COVID-19. Giorgi et al. (2017) reported that descriptive interviews can create rich data to analyze.

After the data from the interviews were collected, the data analysis showed the emergence of four themes that answered the research question. Four themes that emerged from the data included (a) mental health issues, (b) technological issues, (c) insufficient resources, and (d) limited support from administration. The findings of this study focused on the gap in research by providing an understanding of the lived experiences of elementary school teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19. It provided data to show what is needed from stakeholders to assist teachers remotely. All of the negative changes in the teachers' environment then impacts the chronosystem.

The theoretical framework, Bronfenbrenner's EST showed how development is impacted by our environment (as cited in Lau & Ng, 2014). At the microsystem level, teachers' mental health was impacted due to the stressors of teaching online and having families to take care of. The mesosystem was impacted due to limited supports from administration such as providing limited resources and training. This stressor can impact the microsystem which included teachers' families. The exosystem was then impacted due to the stressors from work with feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. The teacher's view of the culture at work and feeling isolated can impact development and the macrosystem.

The results of the study showed that all participants had mental health issues as a result of teaching remotely. The majority of the participants reported lack of resources, lack of support from administration, and technology issues. These findings have the potential for positive social changing by providing stakeholders data that can help teachers teach remotely successfully during a pandemic. Meaningful resources are

needed to help teachers when faced with a pandemic. Teachers' mental health can improve when given adequate resources and supports for them to teach remotely during a pandemic. Stakeholders who are aware of the needs of teachers can then provide needed supports during a pandemic. They can also plan ahead and devise a plan in place in case a future pandemic occurs. This can help to alleviate stressors encountered by teachers during a pandemic. In order to create a positive change in society, more studies are needed to understand how teaching remotely during COVID-19 can impact teachers and students in the future. It is important for school district to understand how to address the needs of teachers who teach remotely so they have a smooth transition when teaching virtually.

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Appendix: Data Collection Interview Protocol and Questions

Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is Natasha Gorman and I appreciate your time to participate in this research study. I am currently a doctoral student at Walden University enrolled in the Psychology Program. My dissertation focuses on the lived experiences of 3rd-5th grade elementary school teachers who taught remotely during COVID-19 pandemic. This face to face interview will be tape recorded and at any point during the interview, you are allowed to terminate your participation. The interview will last about 45 minutes to an hour. We will debrief after the interview for about 10-15 minutes. Once I have analyzed the recording, I would like to speak with you face to face or via Zoom to go over your responses and clarify any comments and/or questions. I want you to feel comfortable during the interview and I can repeat a question as many times as you like. Are there any questions for me? Are you ready to begin the interview?

Interview Questions

1. What was it like to teach remotely during COVID-19?
2. Tell me about your experience as you transitioned from teaching your students in person to teaching your students from a distance in the spring of 2020?
3. What was your experience with technology like during your transition to distance learning?
4. Describe the experience of support you received from administration during the transition?
5. Are there additional experiences during spring 2020 while teaching remotely that you would like to share?

Thank you for taking your time to participate in this interview. Your responses have

provided me with valuable insight during your transition from face to face to online

during COVID-19. If you have any question regarding the results, feel free to contact me

by phone or email. Are there any additional questions for me? I will be in touch soon and

I appreciate you taking the time to assist me.

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