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Causes and Effects of Teacher Burnout

Donna Ault Jacobson
Walden University

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Donna Jacobson

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Dr. Paul Engelsberg, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2016

Abstract

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by

Donna Ault Jacobson

BFA, Ohio State University, 1975

MAT, Monmouth University, 1996

MSED, Monmouth University, 1999

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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Abstract

Teacher burnout is not a new problem; however, with increasing frequency, teacher burnout leads to teacher attrition. Teacher burnout is a problem that affects school districts nationwide because of the financial and academic toll it has on education. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teacher burnout, its perceived causes, and its effects in an urban high school in the northeastern United States. The conceptual framework was based on Vygotsky's social development theory. The research questions focused on factors that contribute to teacher burnout and teachers' perceptions of the ways in which their burnout affected instruction as well as their interactions with parents, colleagues, and administrators. The data collection method was based on in-depth interviews with 5 high school teachers who experienced burnout. The interview data were analyzed and color-coded to identify recurring themes and patterns. An individual narrative was developed for each of the 5 teachers followed by a cross-case analysis of the data. Major findings suggest that teacher burnout may result from several factors such as educational mandates, classroom discipline issues; it affects classroom instruction and impacts interaction with all educational stakeholders. The study's implications for positive social change are rooted in identifying and eliminating the factors that contribute to teacher burnout in order to retain highly qualified and motivated teachers who will provide students with consistent, high-quality, equal educational opportunities that help them reach their full academic potential.

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Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to the memory of my late husband, Ronald Jacobson, whom I loved and adored with all my heart. We were soul mates, lovers, and best friends. He was my Rock of Gibraltar; he always stood by me and encouraged me to follow my dreams.

This is also dedicated to my late mother, Margaret Ault, and my late father, Lee Ault. My parents instilled within me a work ethic that inspired me to always do my very best at every task I decided to take on. My father loved to learn and never had the opportunity to attend college and earn a degree, so he was very proud of me. While pursuing my first master's degree, I promised him that one day I would earn a doctorate in education.

This is also dedicated to my brothers, Pat and Russ, sisters-in-law, Linda and Nancy , and friends Sue, Jane, Maura, Eileen, and Karen. In addition, I would like to thank my step-daughters, Helene and Susan and granddaughters, Alana, Kayla and Hilary. They consistently believed in me and encouraged me to continue my studies after my husband passed away, although several times I was so overwhelmed that I almost gave up.

Last, but surely not least, I dedicate my doctoral study to Evan. He came into my life and gave me a reason to live again. He is my love; he is my soul mate. He lovingly supports, understands, and accepts me for who I am. He inspires me every day to follow my dreams and believes in me and my desires to make a difference in this world.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Teaching is simultaneously a rewarding career and a challenging profession, due to a variety of reasons that range from legislative mandates to classroom management challenges. The pressure to conform to federal legislative requirements and district and state mandates have created a stressful situation for teachers (Kamenetz, 2015; Martinetz, 2012). On a more personal level, student misbehavior, a lack of autonomy, the feeling of isolation, and additional trials such as the stress of trying to balance home and work create a heavy burden on educators that can lead to teacher burnout (Ávalos, 2011; Fernet, Guay, Senécal, & Austin, 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

The signs of teacher burnout include, but are not are not limited to, illness, impatience, absenteeism, a lack of commitment, and poor job performance (Parker, Martin, Colmar, & Liem, 2012). Understanding and eliminating burnout is important because the classroom teacher may be the only role model at-risk students have to guide them and their only chance to aspire to better lives and end the cycle of poverty that so many of them face (Payne, 2012). The causes and signs of teacher burnout will be explored in greater depth in Section 2, along with the impact teacher burnout and absenteeism have on students' success, especially with regard to at-risk students. Section 3 is an explanation of the research methods used for this study. Section 4 is a description of the results and Section 5 includes discussion, conclusions, and recommendations.

Background

Every year, thousands of teachers leave the field of education, stressed and disillusioned as a result of teacher burnout (Ingersoll, 2012; Morales, 2011). Teacher

burnout not only affects student success; it also places a heavy financial burden on school districts. According to the Alliance for Excellence in Education (as cited in Haynes, 2014), "roughly half a million U.S. teachers either move or leave the profession each year—attrition that costs the United States up to $2.2 billion annually" (p. 1). The Alliance report further stated that in 2009, the new teacher attrition rate was 9% in high poverty areas; as of 2014, the rate had doubled (Balu, Beteille, & Loeb, 2010).

Burnout and attrition are not limited to new teachers; veteran teachers also succumb to them, as described in further detail in Section 2. However, new teacher attrition rates are increasing every year (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). In fact, 40 to 50% of new teachers leave the profession after 5 years (Amos, 2014). Some teachers quit within the first few years of entering the field of education, while others exit only after many years of practice; teacher burnout may play a role in attrition.

Although attrition was not the focus of the research described in this paper, it presented itself as a recurring theme in a qualitative approach to studying teacher burnout as it relates to five teachers within one suburban high school in New Jersey. Some of these teachers entered the field of education the traditional way (e.g., graduating from college with an education degree, completing a student teaching experience or internship), while others became teachers through alternate route teacher certification programs. The particular school featured was selected for the study because of the accessibility to candidates; I work in this building and have an excellent rapport with staff and administration. Another reason this site was chosen is that the school is progressive,

and the administration is supportive of staff and eager to identify and eliminate situations that may lead to teacher burnout.

The primary research objective was to define and understand teacher burnout. Secondary aims were to determine teachers' perceptions of the effects that burnout has on student success and to investigate how burnout affects interpersonal relationships of the stake holders within a community of learners.

Teacher attrition rates have steadily increased over the past decade and a half (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). There are many policy factors that contribute to teacher stress and burnout. One legislative factor cited in research by Sunderman, Kim, and Orfield (2005) was the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) along with state-mandated testing. NCLB, Race to the Top in 2010, and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for Career and College (PARCC) testing, 2014-2015, all increased teacher accountability for student achievement scores, without taking into account other mitigating factors, such as student absenteeism and poverty. Teacher tenure and retention are now based on student performance scores on state-mandated tests that are aligned with the Common Core Standards (Ravitch, 2014). As a consequence, this pressure has been cited as a possible catalyst for teacher burnout, which increases teacher stress and lowers morale (Fernet et al., 2012; Kamenetz, 2015). Other factors that can contribute to feelings of burnout are isolation, a lack of respect from superiors, lack of autonomy, increased workload, and student discipline/classroom management problems.

Teacher burnout and attrition affect districts, states, and student achievement in two ways; one is academic, and the other is financial. Academically, teacher burnout and

attrition have a negative impact on student success because of inconsistencies in instruction. Teachers who experience burnout are inclined to arrive on the job unprepared and more concerned with making it through the day than with the quality of education students are receiving (Vandenberghe & Huberman, 2011). Some teachers who experience burnout have an increased rate of absenteeism. Inconsistencies in staffing and instruction make it difficult for school administrators to maintain high standards, make necessary improvements, and implement new policies that increase student achievement when their staff is constantly changing.

Some districts fill teaching vacancies with substitute teachers who are not highly qualified; this affects student achievement. Filling a teaching vacancy is not enough; a teacher needs to be highly qualified to motivate and inspire all students to excel. Annually, more than 1,000,000 teachers, about 14% of all teachers, change districts, transfer to different schools within the same district, or leave the field of education all together (Gray & Taie, 2015; Ingersoll, 2012) Teacher instability affects student motivation and enthusiasm for learning; so, it is important to identify teacher burnout before it has a chance to grow into a larger problem.

The single most influential component of an effective school where students are learning is the individual teachers within that school (Marzano & Heflebower, 2012). The failure to retain the best teachers could impact students' future success. According to Marshall (2013), students are more successful in districts that have higher rates of teacher retention. National mandates require school districts throughout the United States to help

all students learn by providing equal opportunities for quality education. However, high attrition rates introduce a lack of consistency (Gray & Taie, 2015).

Teacher turnover is also costly financially (Haynes, 2014). High teacher turnover rates are especially prevalent in hard-to-staff-schools located in poverty-stricken or rural areas. To attract and recruit teachers, districts need to be able to offer incentives, such as competitive salaries, tuition reimbursement, workshops, and adequate health care packages for personnel and their families (Warren & Sorges, 2013). In poverty-stricken areas and rural communities, money is tight, and tax dollars which support education are inadequate (Fernet et al., 2012). All the factors mentioned above are costly; when districts hire and train new staff, they need to be able to retain them, or the dollars spent are wasted.

As a result of teacher turnover, burnout, and retirement, all students, especially at-risk students, are in need of highly qualified teachers to achieve, if they are to succeed and end the cycle of poverty. Approximately one-third of the student population at the study site falls into the at-risk category; they are from lower income homes (Amos, 2014). All students need teachers who are both highly qualified and emotionally prepared to give them the tools they need to succeed. It is critical to define burnout and understand how it impacts teacher attrition. According to the U.S. Department of Education, more than 2,000,000 new teachers will enter the teaching profession within the next decade, and 666,000 will leave within their first 3 years (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010).

Problem Statement

The school featured in this study is part of a district where money is tight and state funding has not helped to relieve the financial burden. Each year there are approximately 20 new teachers to train at the study site; some are new to teaching and others are new hires from other districts or schools. The pressure to adhere to state mandates, utilize high-stakes testing, and improve technology has intensified, and this pressure is beginning to take a toll on teachers' morale within the school studied and could lead to burnout. According to Ingersoll (2012), this pressure could affect morale and foster symptoms of teacher burnout.

The problem is teacher burnout and how it impacts all the stakeholders. School leaders need to understand teacher burnout in order to support teachers. The objective of the study was to proactively identify and understand the issue of teacher burnout and how it affects classroom learning and the communication between parents, colleagues and administrators.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this qualitative case study on teacher burnout were to:

1.   Identify what factors contribute to teacher burnout.

2.   Describe how teachers perceive their burnout impacting their performance.

3.   Explain how teachers perceive their burnout impacting communication with parents, colleagues, and administrators.

The goal of this study was to provide a foundation for future research into programs that specifically address teacher burnout, such as a stress management guide. The subject of preventative programs is examined in the literature review. Herman and Reinke (2014) suggested in their stress management guidebook that the solution could be as simple as an attitude adjustment. Singer (2012) concurred that attitude may play a key role in how people deal with stressful situations, and modifying one's reactions may reduce the stress that leads to burnout. Singer also suggested that coping skills and strategies can be developed over a period of time that can help to eliminate the negative responses that fuel burnout. The idea of building coping skills, according to Dierking and Fox (2012), is very empowering, because teachers feel more in control of their emotions and better able to handle stress in their workplace.

Continuing with the premise of prevention, this study will serve as a springboard for future studies that explore proactive solutions to the costly crisis of teacher burnout and attrition (Segura, 2011). Reducing teacher burnout and improving retention rates may prompt positive social change, as well as translate into improvements in the quality of education.

Conceptual Framework for the Study

The conceptual framework of this study on teacher burnout was rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory. Vygotsky was a Russian-born psychologist who believed that individuals first learn and derive meaning from working in collaboration. According to Rieber and Robinson (2004), Vygotsky's social development theory is comprised of three main components. First, collaborative learning

sets the ground work for individual reflection on learning. Second, development is enhanced by learning from a more astute individual; Vygotsky referred to this notion as more knowledgeable other (MKO). Vygotsky identified the third notion as the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which refers to the gap between current learning and new knowledge and how to successfully build on base knowledge and accomplish goals with the assistance of those who are experts in that area (Moll, 2013).

The conceptual framework, as I interpret Vygotsky's theory about scaffolding and collaboration (Miller, 2011) is based on the premise that educational administrators, such as principals, have it within their power to develop a culture that provides staff with opportunities to build communication and cognitive skills through social learning and reflection. According to Moll (2013), Vygotsky postulated that eliminating isolation and providing individuals many opportunities to collaborate and problem-solve in a nonthreatening environment helps them develop coping skills and focus on the task, rather than on becoming overwhelmed by the situation. Although the theory at the time Vygotsky first developed it applied to students, rather than adults, it has become apparent that the theory of collaboration and scaffolding learning is not age defined.

According to Vygotsky's theory and research on cognitive development, individuals need to share their ideas, their strategies, their successes, and their enthusiasm with one another (Miller, 2011). DuFour and Marzano (2011) are stalwart proponents of building cognitive skills through the collaboration that occurs in professional learning communities. The concept of a professional learning community is that individuals learn as they move from social interaction to dialogue to problem solving with colleagues

(Kafele, 2015). Communities in which professionals learn from one another can provide opportunities for teachers to develop cognitive skills through collaboration. Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, and Many (2010) suggested that collaborative relationships influence both school culture and student achievement.

The framework is based on administrators supporting and providing opportunities for collaboration, as well as empowering teachers to problem solve (Aguilar, 2013). When teachers work in collaboration, they focus on different types of learning opportunities, such as sharing teaching strategies or analyzing student work (Avalos, 2011). Collaboration promotes teacher retention and enhances teacher quality, because the teachers feel empowered and supported by their colleagues (Hopkins & Spillane, 2014). Warren and Sorges (2013) suggested that when teachers feel empowered with the tools they need to cope with stressful situations, they have fewer problems with student misbehavior. Programs that promote teacher collaboration, such as active problem solving, encourage teachers to work as a team to help foster student engagement, which translates into an increase in student achievement (Zeichner & Liston, 2010).

Nature of the Study

The nature of this qualitative study was an inquiry into the factors that contributed to teacher burnout and how burnout impacted teacher performance and teacher communication with parents, colleagues and administrators. The basic approach was to interview five high school teachers who fit the criteria in an urban community about their experience with teacher burnout. Interviews were selected as the only instrument used to collected data because the process set an informal tone to the study and helped create a

relaxed environment. Participants were asked researcher generated open ended questions to elicit narrative responses. A case study design, in which each participant was a case unto itself, was selected to collect this information about teacher burnout.

Research Questions

The following research questions were designed to guide the study and to encourage narrative responses, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the root of the problems.

1. What factors contribute to teacher burnout?

2. How do the teachers perceive their burnout impacting classroom instruction?

3. How do the teachers perceive their burnout impacting interactions with parents? How do teachers perceive their burnout impacting interaction with colleagues? How do teachers perceive their burnout impacting interaction with administrators?

Definitions

Burnout: A feeling of stress and frustration that an individual can experience which could culminate in attrition (Martinetz, 2012).

Collaboration: The action of colleagues working jointly to achieve a specific goal (Marshall, 2013).

Group dynamics: A pattern of change or growth develops from the interaction to build a strong bond between the individuals as they work for a common goal (Kafele, 2015).

High-stakes testing: Formal summative assessment of students that uses student scores to evaluate a school's effectiveness and ranking (Martinetz, 2012).

Mentor: A person with more experience, acting as a role model for another individual who is new to the experience (Wang, Odell, & Clift, 2010).

Teacher attrition: A reduction or decrease in the numbers of teachers, because they leave the profession (Scheopner, 2010).

Teacher isolation: Feeling of separation or actual separation when working with or interacting in any way with colleagues (Marshall, 2013).

Assumptions

The first assumption was that all participants would be honest in their responses and interview questions. The second assumption was that all the candidates volunteering would fit the criteria and participate in the interview process. The third assumption was that the school administration would be supportive of the study undertaken.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of data collected for this research was a case study that focused on five individual teachers and their experiences with burnout (Yin, 2013). In accordance with the case study structure, this study was bound by time February through April 2011 (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010). It was also bound by place, a single public high school campus of a suburban community in central New Jersey.

This project was limited to one public high school and extended over a period of 3 months as stated above. All of the participants were employees of the Bridge Township

School District in Central New Jersey. Participants initially were identified by their

willingness to respond to a study recruitment flyer.

Limitations

The limitations of the study are as follows:

1. The participants in this study were teachers from one suburban, public

 high school in New Jersey. The sample included a cross-section of grade

 level, subject area content, experience, and age level.

2. The sampling was not random; participants were volunteers.

3. Originally the sample size of participants was anticipated to be 10.

 However, only seven responded and only five agreed to participate.

4. Most of the interviews conducted were only 30 minutes long; one

 interview was 45 minutes in duration.

5. Single interviews were the only data source.

6. The information gathered is not generalizable to other schools or contexts

7. Another limitation was that I was the sole collector, processor, analyzer,

 and interpreter of data collected. Consequently, there is a possibility of

 research bias, inasmuch as I was familiar with the study site and collected

 data from colleagues I saw on a regular basis.

Significance

School administrators acknowledged it was prudent to investigate and understand

teacher burnout and the growing dilemma of teacher attrition, because they could place a

severe burden, both financially and academically, on the school district (Amos, 2014).

This study served as a springboard for promoting a professional development program to address teacher burnout and increase teacher wellness. The study results may be used by the district's professional development committee in collaboration with administration to develop a wellness program that has a collaborative-style learning environment and is designed by teachers to help eliminate teacher burnout.

Another significant contribution of the study professionally was that other school districts and professional development institutes can review the findings and take a purposeful stance to look more closely at their staff and recognize ways they can deal with teacher stress and burnout before it becomes an issue. The most significant contribution is that of a positive social change that fosters an environment in which teachers are treated like professionals by their administrators and given respect, support, positive feedback, and opportunities to grow. Creating a stable work force may help reduce the incidents of teacher burnout and attrition and inspire the workforce because they have the tools to motivate their students and that could translate into more effective classroom instruction.

Summary

Teacher burnout impacts districts both financially and academically, costing schools billions of dollars each year (Nash, 2010). The consequences of teacher burnout are: physical illness, frequent absences, poor job performance, anger toward students, lack of job commitment which affects student performance, and teacher attrition. The problem was teacher burnout and how it impacted teacher attrition in a central New Jersey public high school. This study on teacher burnout focused on defining and

understanding teacher burnout. The goal was to be proactive by identifying and understanding the issue of teacher burnout before it became an attrition issue.

Section 2 is a literature review focused on the reasons behind and consequences of teacher burnout. The second section also highlights the conceptual theory of social interaction among colleagues and the role it plays in addressing the problem of burnout. In Section 3, I described and defended the research design, research questions, and the context of the study, data analysis strategies, role of research, and accessing and protecting participants. Section 4 is an explanation of the cases; a description of the process for collecting data, recording data, and tracking results; and a presentation of the study's findings. In Section 5, I interpreted the findings, discussed the implications for social change, and made recommendations for further action.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review is focused on the phenomenon of teacher burnout. The purpose of this literature review was to explore and understand teacher burnout by focusing on contributing factors, how burnout impacts student learning, and how to decrease burnout. The review begins with a description of the study's conceptual framework and what, if any, role social interaction plays in decreasing burnout. The review of the literature related to the methodology used to conduct the study. The problem of teacher burnout is explored by highlighting the following components: (a) the factors that contribute to teacher burnout, and (b) how teacher burnout and attrition impact student learning. There is a review of literature that compares and contrasts different points of view about teacher burnout. This section concludes with a summary of major and potential themes and perceptions.

Literature Search Strategy

A three-step approach was used to conduct the literature review on teacher burnout. The first step involved building background information. Educational journals and publications were searched for articles related to teacher burnout, with priority given to those studies published most recently. The search was expanded to include some older articles. Key phrases or words were used to refine the search. Once the articles were identified, they were flagged and revisited to develop background information to support the framework of the study. Using educational data bases available through Walden University's library, ERIC, and Education Research Complete, over 250 publications

were searched and at least 75 articles were identified as relevant to this literature review on teacher burnout.

The second step was a search of the same databases used in the first search; this time the focus was on key phrases such as *teacher collaboration, support groups*, and *collaborative learning communities.* Once the key phrases or words were flagged, they were scanned for information as it related to collaboration. Next, relevant facts were gathered that supported the hypothesis that social interaction and collaboration among teachers can play a role in eliminating isolation and decreasing burnout symptoms. The third step was to organize the data collected from the search into categories that reflected the concepts being studied.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study on teacher burnout is based on Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory. According to Moll (2013), the main thrust of Vygotsky's theory focuses on using social interaction as a tool to help people (specifically children) learn to cope and problem-solve. Although Vygotsky's theory does not focus on adult interactions in an educational setting (Miller, 2011), it speaks to mentoring and collaboration within the work environment. The premise of this concept is that when people collaborate, they cultivate reasoning skills and grow through communication and shared experiences (Rieber & Robinson, 2004). To date some researchers such as Edington (2013) of the University of Michigan have focused on job site wellness programs using group dynamics to develop motivation and engagement.

According to Muller, Gorrow, and Fiala (2011), a stressful work atmosphere adds to teacher stress and this impacts education. Thereby causes of stress need to be recognized and identified; once they are, then preventative measures can be taken. Muller et al. suggested that employers can help eliminate employee stress by providing employees with support and guidance.

Hopkins and Spillane (2014) suggested that effective teacher outreach programs in which teachers meet on a weekly basis to discuss problems and issues, such as classroom management, organization/time management, and time for collaboration, can improve teacher retention rates. Hopkins and Spillane also noted that student achievement increases and teacher leadership grows in environments where teachers collaborate on a variety of issues.

According to Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, and Rothstein, (2012), teachers who benefited from a collaborative environment were more inclined to remain in the field of education. By promoting social interaction, leaders stimulate a culture of reflective teachers and concurrently facilitate collaborative teams that develop into professional learning communities (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). A sense of community promotes a sense of purposefulness and promotes teacher efficacy (Hattie, 2011). Teachers feel valued in a collaborative atmosphere; they are happier on the job and treat each other, as well as their students, in a more respectful manner. Over the last 10 years, professional development initiatives have placed a higher emphasis on facilitation and collaboration. As a result, teachers are feeling more fulfilled (Avalos, 2011). The

outcome is reflected in a decline in the attrition rates of both new and veteran teachers (Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014).

Teacher turnover rates could be reversed if districts offered more opportunities for teacher collaboration (Reeves, 2012). According to Klein (2014), who is the former chancellor of education for the New York Public Schools, school improvement plans that focus on empowerment and collaboration are more successful. The result was higher graduation rates, greater teacher retention, and increased parent involvement. Klein's plan empowered principals and the teacher union. That facilitated the exchange of ideas and teacher empowerment, which, in turn, led to teacher satisfaction (Whitaker, Casas, & Zoul, 2015).

Levine and Marcus (2010) suggested there is a direct connection between social interaction and teacher retention. Peer support groups are professional learning communities that have a positive impact on teacher retention (Dufour et al., 2010). Collaborative environments help eliminate the feel of stress that is associated with working in isolation. Teachers, especially new teachers, can benefit from collaborative environments that support and encourage them to become teacher leaders (Larrivee, 2012). Supporting the idea of professional learning communities, Reeves (2012) recommended that teachers meet regularly to discuss common difficulties and triumphs and to make suggestions for improving their experience and training.

Differing Methodologies

There are numerous variables to consider when selecting a methodology that best suits a study, such as which method will ensure the correct data are being collected.

Another variable to consider is how the data should be collected. The method chosen for this study was qualitative. A qualitative research method was chosen because one of the methods for collecting data is the interview process (Dicks, Henwood, Housley, & Smith, 2013). Originally, I wanted to collect documentation but discovered that it would too intrusive to the participants so it was eliminated from my Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Instead I chose to focus on the interview process because it encourages narrative responses to questions that center on perceptions, experiences, and attitudes without being intrusive (Silverman, 2011).

Quantitative research is more dependent on mathematics, numbers, or anything that can be measured as opposed to qualitative, open-ended questions that enable narrative responses. Typically, surveys or questionnaires are the instruments used in quantitative research to the collect data, because the questions asked are closed and rely on fixed responses, to formulate facts, on-line polls that are more appropriate for a larger population (Yin, 2013). A mixed method approach uses both interviews and surveys or questionnaires. In a case study approach that focused on teacher turnover, Simon and Johnson (2013) used a quantitative approach to analyzing six studies to collect data about teacher attrition in high poverty areas. Another method is ethnography, which is used to study culture and people to gain an understanding and insight into a problem, a method or trends. It relies mostly on interviews, observation and draws conclusions, based on the investigation of one or more individuals within one setting like a focus group or culturally historical event.

Factors Contributing to Teacher Burnout

Researchers have identified several factors that can contribute to job burnout: the feeling of isolation, a lack of support from colleagues, the feeling of being overwhelmed by workload, lack of autonomy, lack of respect from administrators, few opportunities to be teacher leaders, classroom management/discipline problems, and high achievement goals that focus on high stakes testing (Leiter & Maslach, 2011; Marzano & Heflebower, 2012). Teachers' experiences of stress can result from their perceptions of demands, and can be coupled with the inability to meet those demands (Martinetz, 2012). Some teachers reported that their anxiety is due to an overlapping of personal and professional commitments (Warren & Sorges, 2013).

Teacher burnout by itself is nothing new; what is new is the increasing rate at which teachers experience burnout. It typically is accompanied by negative and cynical attitudes towards both colleagues and work in general (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015; Larrivee, 2012). Fruedengerger (1975) was the first to publish research on the concept of burnout. He identified one sign of burnout as a feeling of exhaustion and fatigue. Fruedengerger described people who experience burnout as overachievers who put pressure on themselves, find fault with everyone, complain about everything, stay late at work, and take work home. However, they never seem to get caught up, which adds to their level of stress. In some cases the stress becomes so overwhelming that it culminates in attrition (Clandinin, 2014).

In the 1980s and 90s, the Maslach Burnout Inventory, which was designed to identify burnout, gave more validity to the term and helped create a clearer understanding

of stress-related burnout (Leiter, Bakker, & Maslach, 2014). Before that, burnout was solely identified, defined, and studied clinically in the field of health care. Parker et al., (2012) argued that the three core aspects of burnout include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of low accomplishment stemmed from a loss of idealism and enthusiasm for work.

Initially, it was determined that everyone experiences some stress in life, especially on the job (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). There are some jobs where stress is common, due to the nature of the position, such as nursing. Over a prolonged period of time, the stress begins to accumulate, resulting in job burnout (Larrivee, 2012). In addition to medicine, fields with high-stress occupations include law, aviation, and education (Leiter et al., 2014). High-stress occupations where professionals are held accountable for many areas outside their control can cause them to feel anxiety and frustration. Feelings of anxiety and frustration, in turn, may affect employees' performance and their ability to relate to colleagues (Brown, 2012; Sterrett, Sclater, & Murray, 2011).When asked to describe how they feel, teachers who are emotionally and physically fatigued may say they are exhausted or drained (Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014; Ingersoll, 2012). Some teachers expressed the feeling their work has very little impact on their students. They often complain of not wanting to get up in the morning and go to work (Martinetz, 2012).

The level of communication between employees and employers and a perceived lack of resources and administrative support adds to teacher stress (Mendler, 2014). Some teachers find themselves at odds with their principals. They do not feel supported, and

they feel that unfair and unrealistic demands are placed on them (Kipps-Vaughan, 2013; Lieberman & Friedrich, 2010). A lack of support and respect can lead to the feeling of burnout, because teachers may feel unappreciated by administrators. In some instances, teachers become argumentative and labeled as trouble makers, so any attempt for self-actualization is stymied (Marzano & Heflebower, 2012).

One of the most overwhelming problems for teachers is their failure to manage the environments in their classrooms (Reeves, 2012). Student misbehavior is a specific working condition strongly associated with job stress and burnout (Ratcliff, Jones, Costner, Savage-Davis, & Hunt, 2010). In order for students to learn, teachers need to be able to handle discipline problems so they can hook at-risk students on learning and inspire them to achieve. When teachers encounter students who act out, it affects their ability to teach, thereby adding to their frustration levels (Aloe, Amo, & Shanahan, 2014; Reeves, 2012). Teacher empowerment and self-efficacy impact teacher satisfaction, because teachers feel if they can establish some sense of control in their classrooms, they have the ability to make a profound impact on student achievement (Sterrett et al., 2011).

Work environment and the lack of collaboration with colleagues can contribute to the feeling of burnout (Dierking & Fox, 2012; Reglin et al., 2013). When teachers perceive that their relationships with colleagues are dysfunctional, they feel isolated (Cooper & Conley, 2013). When they feel isolated, their stress levels begin to increase and the accumulation of stress ultimately leads to job burnout (Levine & Marcus, 2010; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Personality factors also play a role in teacher isolation. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) suggested that people who are insecure, anxious, and

ambivalent are more likely to burn out, because they tend to isolate themselves and avoid interaction with their colleagues.

How Teacher Burnout and Attrition Affect Classroom Learning

Teachers who experience burnout are more likely to lash out at students and to have little or no patience. As the symptoms of teacher burnout increase, students suffer academically and emotionally from their teachers' inconsistencies. Teacher burnout and attrition are devastating issues that also impact the quality of education and student achievement. Burnout can affect the well-being of both colleagues and the organization because increased teacher absenteeism can place a heavy burden on already over-worked staff (Berry, Byrd, & Wieder, 2013; Zeichner, 2013). The teachers who pick up the slack for absent colleagues also are overextended because doing so takes time away from their own instructional duties when they brief substitutes who are called in to cover classes.

Academically, absenteeism impacts students on two levels. First, NCLB required that, by 2006, all teachers be highly qualified in the subject areas they teach (Martinetz, 2012). However, this goal was not met in some districts, because they had to hire substitutes who were not highly qualified to fill vacancies left by teachers who were absent or quit, due to job burnout. This failure, in turn, impacted student achievement (Marzano, Pickering, & Heflebower, 2011). Second, burned-out teachers who stayed on the job were just going through the motions; their cognitive skills were on automatic (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012), and students suffered.

Financially, student achievement can be impacted by teacher burnout. According to Gray and Taie (2015), districts with a high teacher attrition rate often did not have the

funds to hire the best and brightest to fill vacancies. Instead, they hired short- or long-term substitutes who were not highly qualified in the subject matter they taught. This practice can lead to low student performance. Teacher burnout and attrition are so great that, nationally, it cost billions of dollars each year to hire and train replacements for teacher who have quit the profession (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). One-third of all new teachers will leave the teaching profession within the first 2 years of teaching, many during their first year. That is a costly phenomenon for districts, both academically and financially (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014).

Contrasting Viewpoints on Burnout

Over the past decade, most of the literature on teacher burnout has been focused on new teachers (Desimone et al., 2014; Muller et al., 2011), rather than on addressing the overall problem of teacher stress and burnout, which affects veteran teachers, too. Another popular focus was on the quick fix, a myth for eliminating teacher burnout. This was the misguided belief that the adoption of just the right program, brand name, or method would lead to higher teacher retention rates and improved student achievement (Williams, 2011).

Another research focus of the past decade was on inadequate teacher preparation programs. Some teacher preparation programs fail to prepare their graduates for the realities of teaching. Consequently, many teachers begin their careers without the strategies they need to manage student learning, which leads to early burnout. They find little or no incentive to remain on the job (Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014). Popular

perception is that burnout stems from outside, uncontrollable sources, such as lack of time, resources, and poor pay (Martinetz, 2012).

McCarthy, Lambert, and Ullrich (2012) had their own theory about teacher turnover; they a suggested that learning coping skills could help retain more teachers. McCarthy et al. also noted that some misguided leaders had the impression that teachers who left the profession were quitters who were lazy and possessed low levels of commitment. On the contrary, many good teachers are very committed to their profession, but have left the field of education for the following reasons: lack of respect, discipline problems with students, lack of influence, and state-mandated testing (Vilson, 2014).

Government mandates have also played a role in teacher burnout and attrition (Cody, 2014). For example, in 1983 the National Commission on Excellence in Education promoted school accountability through standardized testing. Over the next few years, high-stakes testing became the yardstick used to measure students' educational levels. In 2000, the implementation of NCLB, along with high-stakes testing and the pressure to produce, increased job-related stress for many teachers (Bonner, 2011). There have been hundreds of documented cases in which teachers have chosen to resign because of the stress caused from NCLB and other government mandates (Naison, 2014). In addition to the emphasis placed on improving learning for all students, NCLB recommended that all schools must be staffed with highly qualified teachers by 2006. Highly qualified means that teachers must be certified in each subject area they teach. Middle school teachers who had been teaching science and math for years, even though

they were not certified in those subject areas, were transferred to elementary schools because they were not considered qualified.

In 2010 Race to the Top, which supported the concept of teacher accountability put more stress on teachers. Currently the Common Core Standards and PARCC testing have added a new dimension of stress, given their close link to teacher evaluations (Kamenenetz, 2015; Martinetz, 2012; Ravitch, 2014). The mounting pressure to reach adequate yearly progress places a heavy burden on teachers and administrators alike (Kafele, 2015). Teachers who experience burnout may be those who are working the hardest to make sure their students meet the annual yearly progress and are successful (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2010).

According to Cody (2014), the expectations are set too high, and the rate of improvement is unrealistic for any school to achieve the goals set by the government. Case studies, national forums, and survey results suggested that the pressure to improve test scores caused some teachers stress and had a negative effect on morale (Renter & Kober, 2014). This is especially true in New Jersey, because of the new teacher evaluation legislation and stress associated with tenure laws and teacher accountability (New Jersey Department of Education [NJDOE], 2014).

These mandates created even more pressure for veteran teachers, and many left teaching because they did not have all the certifications required to teach a subject area they had taught for over 20 years. Ravitch (2014) agreed that the pressure for teachers to be highly qualified, coupled with the emphasis on mandated tests, has had an adverse

effect on high-risk districts, because they do not attract the best teachers, leading to a social crisis of inequality in education.

Summary and Conclusion

The literature review was focused on how to create the type of environment in a school setting that decreases teacher burnout and promotes teacher retention. The objective was to put a spotlight on the root of the problem and create programs that solve the dilemma of teacher burnout and attrition (Scherer, 2012). Contrary to the perception that teachers who burn out are lazy and do not want to work, teachers who have high expectations, take work home, stay late, and feel guilty because they have trouble meeting their self-imposed expectations are the ones who are more likely to experience burnout. Freudenberger (1975) described the burnout of dedicated workers as the result of taking on "too much, for too long, and too intensely" (p. 74). Hong (2010) concurred that burnout happens to people who started their careers with high ideals and expectations. The perception that teachers need only preservice training to be successful is illogical; they also need time to collaborate and share (Kafele, 2015).

Collaborative programs can be designed to provide support and guidance to colleagues and help them learn to cope with stress (Fernet et al., 2012). Although the majority of the studies to date have demonstrated that such collaborative programs have improved teacher attitudes in the short term, there is no evidence that improvement was sustainable (Berliner, Glass & Associates, 2014).

Section 3 Research Method

Introduction

A qualitative case research design was chosen to guide this study on teacher

burnout. The purpose of this study was to understand and define the factors that

contributed to teacher burnout and how burnout affected student learning and teacher

communication with parents, colleagues and administrators. This section restates the

research questions and describes and defends the research design for this study on teacher

burnout. The role of the researcher is explained. It also described the methodology used

to select participants and the instruments used to collect the data. This section includes a

description of the procedures for recruitment of participants, and the collection and

analysis of data. The validity and trustworthiness of data, ethical measures taken to

protect participants, and the data analysis are explained.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this investigation of teacher burnout.

The questions derived from the problem statement, they focused each teacher's

experience with burnout, and were related to the purpose of the study.

1.   What factors contribute to teacher burnout?

2.   How do the teachers perceive their burnout impacting classroom

        instruction?

3.   How do the teachers perceive their burnout impacting interactions with

        parents? How do the teachers perceive their burnout impacting interaction

with colleagues? How do the teachers perceive their burnout impacting

interaction with administrators?

The questions were designed to gather detailed descriptions and explanations of

experiences, which allowed a clearer understanding of teacher burnout and its impact on

classroom instruction and other aspects of teacher relations in this local setting. Each

teacher who participated in the study served as an individual case.

Case Study Tradition

The qualitative tradition that best suited this inquiry into teacher burnout was a

case study. A case study method was the appropriate method for this study because each

teacher was studied as an individual case. The purpose of this study was to identify the

factors that contributed to teacher burnout and its impact on learning and communication

with all the stakeholders. The case study approach supports intervention, deconstruction,

and the reconstruction of various phenomena (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2014). Case study

research is designed to bring out details from the viewpoints of the participants and can

be exploratory, explanatory, descriptive, intrinsic, instrumental, or collective (Maxwell,

2012; Yin, 2013). An exploratory case study design was selected because this research

was focused on the exploration of human behavior and individuals' perspectives within a

bound system: setting, time, population, and issue (Maxwell, 2012; Miles, Huberman, &

Saldana, 2013).

Qualitative case study research lends itself to understanding human perspectives

through the interpretation of data collected from the interview process (Denzin &

Lincoln, 2011; Patton, 2014; Silverman, 2011). The data collected were used to achieve

various research goals, such as to provide descriptions of phenomena (teachers'

perceptions), develop theory (what factors contribute to burnout), and test theory (impact

on teacher performance; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Patton, 2014; Silverman, 2011).

Before selecting a qualitative case study design, several other designs were researched

and found unsuitable.

The major difference between an exploratory case study and other methods is the

exploratory case study's specific approach to theory development (Maxwell, 2012;

Seidman, 2012) and the process used to collect and analyze data. The exploratory

approach's theory development allowed for the examination of details from the viewpoint

of the participants through the interview process (Miles et al., 2013; Silverman, 2011).

The primary purpose of the case study was to develop an in-depth analysis of cases or

multiple cases (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Patton, 2014). Case studies are bound by time

(3 months' data collection in this study) and place (a single school), and a specific issue

(teacher burnout) was examined.

In contrast, descriptive case studies were not appropriate because they require

descriptive theory to be developed before starting the project (Patton, 2014; Rubin &

Rubin 2012). Phenomenological study was unsuitable because it focuses on an event or

an occurrence (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2014; Saldana, 2012), and does not necessarily

focus on each individual's experience. Another tradition considered and found unsuitable

was ethnography, which is used to investigate participants over a longer period of time;

this study was based on interviews that were conducted over a shorter timeframe. An

ethnographic study is generally used to identify cultural themes and patterns using

sociocultural data analysis (Silverman, 2011); but, it was ruled out because that was not the intent of this study. The goal of this research was to identify and understand the factors that contributed to teacher burnout and how burnout impacted teacher communication with parents, colleagues and administrators.

Role of the Researcher

At the time this study was conducted, I had been employed in the district for 19 years and at the study site for 8 years as a high school teacher and substitute elementary principal in this district. I had built a level of trust within my educational community because I also served as the building's representative for the teachers' union on the district level, a representative for the district on the county level, and for the state on the national level at the national convention. I chaired the district and the county's professional development committees and chaired the mentoring program for new teachers and new hires to the district. This level of trust enabled the collection of more candid responses than if I were an outsider coming into their community.

Building a positive working relationship is the responsibility of a researcher (Patton 2014). In the roles outlined above, a trusting and supportive relationship was established within the research site. I also remained accessible and approachable to both colleagues and administrators and was afforded uninterrupted access to the individuals participating in the study. School administrators at both the building and district level offered their full cooperation for this study to proceed with the study, once I had gained Walden University's IRB approval.

According to Creswell (2012), a researcher's experience or bias when studying her own organization or immediate work setting can lead to problems of reporting data that are biased or incomplete. Interviewer bias can occur when researchers project their own feelings into the interview, causing a distortion or exaggeration of facts (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010; Maxwell, 2012). To ensure this did not become an issue, the questioning patterns were designed to reduce the possibility of distortions, calculated omissions, and exaggerations (Anafara & Mertz, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The technique was to ask the same question in many different ways, in order to cross check the responses and look for patterns that provided a more distinct picture of the situations. Checks were put in place to guard against bias and error. The specific strategies used are described later in this section.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The setting for the study was a public high school within a large, urban school district in central New Jersey. The school district is composed of 24 schools: 16 elementary schools, five middle schools, and three high schools. I selected a site that was both familiar and accessible to facilitate this study. The site that best suited this study was an exemplary high school with a reputation for being innovative and where pilot programs are tested before they are implemented district-wide.

Five teachers who met the criteria consented to participate in the study. Originally I had planned on having 10 participants for my study; but, no other candidates from other schools were sought due to accessibility. Once they verbally agreed to take part in the

study, they were asked to sign an informed consent form. Next, dates for one-on-one

interviews with participants were scheduled to accommodate each participant's schedule.

Because the sample size was so small, there were only five cases to study, it was

important to select participants from whom the most information could be collected

(Patton, 2014). The sample could be few in number and yet yield information-rich cases

to study.

To gain access to the participants, a meeting was arranged with the superintendent

of schools and the research site's building principal to assure them that the identity of the

institution would be kept anonymous and that efforts would be made to protect all

participants (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2014; Punch, 2014). I met with the gatekeepers and

secured their written permission to conduct a study (Creswell 2012). At these meetings,

full disclosure was provided to the school superintendent of all instruments used to

conduct the study, which included interview questions, the letter to participants, and a

participant informed consent form in order to gain permission for access to the research

site (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The letter seeking permission from the research site

administrators included the commitment to not bring injury or harm to the teacher

participants, as suggested by Walden University's IRB Guidebook Section III: Basic IRB

Review.

To solicit volunteers for the study, a poster briefly outlining its nature and whom

to contact if interested in participating was placed in the faculty room. Copies of the

poster were distributed to the subject area department heads to post in their offices

requesting volunteers. Staff members who were interested in participating were directed

to e-mail or speak one-on-one with me. I had an informal conversation with prospective

participants to explain the process and solicit any questions they might have regarding the

interview before they were selected to participate. Seven teachers responded initially with

an e-mail to the flyer posted; however, after meeting one-on-one to describe the process,

only five agreed to participate. Once interested, teachers had a full overview of the study;

they could make an informed choice to participate, if they were selected. Candidates were

briefed fully and encouraged to ask questions for clarification regarding the nature and

purpose of the study.

Purposeful sampling strategies were used to select participants for the study.

Purposeful sampling was defined as the means by which a particular group of participants

is chosen to participate in a study (Creswell, 2012). Patton (2014) suggested purposeful

sampling strategies as a useful framework for thinking about who should be interviewed.

To select the teachers for this study, the selection process was based on the following

criteria:

- Teacher acknowledgement of current or past feelings associated with

  teacher burnout, based on definitions provided in Section 1

- Teacher acknowledgement that burnout resulted in negative effects

- Teacher agreement to participate in the study

- Teachers' reputation for candor

Data Collection

An important step in the process of conducting this case study research was to

implement a plan that was aimed at gathering solid information that drove the study

(Creswell, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The plan featured interviews with the participants (primary sources) to solicit in-depth responses (Clandinin, 2013). The first step in the plan was to establish collection procedures that were appropriate to the tradition, and the last was to use reliable instrumentation that established validity of the study (Patton, 2014; Yin, 2013). Seven teachers responded to the initial meeting to recruit volunteers. I had an informal conversation as stated previously with volunteers so I could answer any questions they might have about the study. Only five teachers agreed to participate in the in-depth interviews, which were the primary data sources for this qualitative research study (Bryman, 2012; Miles et al., 2013; Patton, 2014).

In this study, the questions in the initial meeting were framed to identify possible participants for the study and, as stated before, to answer any questions they might have regarding the process. Researcher-generated questions based on the criteria determining eligibility were used. For example, "Have you ever in your career as a teacher experienced the feelings associated with burnout?" Then I read a list of symptoms aloud to the candidate. If so, I inquired about their candid discussion of their experience and their availability for an interview. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), researchers who design their own questions must avoid asking leading questions and must be aware of their own personal biases in order for the findings to be valid.

In-depth interviews (Appendix A) were used to develop the individual case narratives because they provided rich, thick descriptions that offered a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of teacher burnout as it was being studied (Patton, 2014, Yin, 2013).The in-depth interviews were conducted on-site and audio-taped to

ensure accuracy. The interviews were conducted in each participant's classroom and were 30 minutes in duration, except for one which lasted for 45 minutes. Researcher-generated questions were reviewed by former principals and colleagues for understanding and clarity. The questions were open-ended in nature and piloted for appropriateness and clarity, using collegial review. The formal interview questions were designed to collect data related to themes and ideas that fostered a narrative response from participants and gave participants opportunities to describe in detail their experiences with burnout from their perspectives. The questions were used to gauge the following signs of job burnout as described in the previous section: short on patience with students and colleagues and the feeling of being overworked, overwhelmed, and not appreciated (Leiter & Maslach, 2011).

The building administrator provided permission to conduct the interviews in his building and to speak with department heads about posting the flyer soliciting for volunteers. Teacher volunteers were the only source for this study on teacher burnout. Participants were selected based on teacher availability and their desire to participate in the study. To accommodate teachers who wanted to participate, times were arranged to conduct the interviews before or after participants' working hours.

Data Analysis

One characteristic of data analysis in qualitative research is that analysis occurs simultaneously with data collection (Bryman, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In keeping with the tradition, the data were analyzed as they were collected, beginning with the first interview and continuing throughout the collection phase so that any adjustments that

needed to be made could be made to ensure the validity of the study (Yin, 2013). Once

the in-depth interviews were transcribed the responses were first color coded according to

the research questions. Next, they were color coded based on similarities. Discrepant

responses were color coded after that. Three strategies were used to analyze the data after

they were color coded: (a) aggregation of the data; (b) development of individual case

narratives; and (c) cross-cases to show common patterns, themes, and trends across the

cases. Each strategy is explained below.

Leedy and Ormrod (2012) emphasized that case study data need to be arranged in

logical and chronological sequence, in order for others to gain meaning from the

research. In this study, I analyzed the data collected from each case narrative for patterns

and categorized them into themes and instances relevant to the research questions. The

categories identified included the factors that contribute to burnout, burnout's impact on

classroom instruction, and teachers' social development.

The narratives accurately depicted the impact burnout played in participants'

everyday lives. Once the data were analyzed and compared to the research questions,

were categorized and used to identify themes. The participants' perspectives, in some

cases, were altered when they reviewed their transcribed interview and they were afraid

of repercussions by sounding too critical. Although each case was different, every case

reflected some common themes.

The purpose of this analytic strategy was to develop themes across the cases to

enhance plausibility and credibility of findings (Creswell, 2012; Sensing, 2011; Yin,

2013). I used open-ended questions to elicit narrative responses and to capture a true

picture of the participants' experiences with burnout. Themes were identified, after they were color coded, that related to the initial research questions. The goal was to create manageable data chunks as I analyzed the interview responses, line-by-line, and to acquire an understanding of what contributes to the feelings of burnout, and the impact on the classroom learning and the communication between all the stakeholders.

Discrepant cases are cases that are different; they disconfirm or challenge the researcher's expectations of findings (Maxwell, 2012). After the cases were developed and analyzed, relationships and themes that did not fit, or discrepant cases, were identified and examined in their proper context to better understand the teachers' experiences with, and the impact of, teacher burnout.

According to Leedy and Ormond (2012), discrepant cases help ensure the validity of the themes. When a study's results are analyzed, if the discrepant cases outnumber those that fit the theme, the researcher must review the data for human error. If no errors are found, the discrepant cases are then noted for subsequent analysis. However, this step was not necessary in this study.

Trustworthiness

Collecting qualitative data required me to employ various strategies to address the validity of the study and reduce bias and error (Creswell, 2012). The following strategies were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings in this study: (a) building rapport with participants, (b) member-checks, (c) collegial review of the interview questions.

Building rapport with participants went beyond protecting their anonymity and concealing certain information that could have revealed their identities through verbal

disclosure and the signing of an informed consent form. It involved the responsibility of reporting participants' responses in ways that did not distort the intended meanings (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2014).

Member checking is defined as a "validating procedure" (Yin, 2013, p. 182) for the overall quality of a study. Member checking is used to assess the validity of information gathered in a qualitative study (Saldana, 2012). Leavy (2014), recommended crosschecking the data collected by inviting participants to read and reread to check their transcribed interviews for accuracy. This strategy was employed to determine if participants believed the transcripts reflected their responses to questions accurately and to assess if the analyses were credible and plausible. I met with participants before school to afford them the opportunity to review the transcribed material as well as my conclusions, and determine if the findings accurately reflected their feelings and experiences (Maxwell, 2012; Silverman, 2011).

Collegial review is the third strategy that was employed to address validity and minimize bias and error in the study. Collegial review is the process of enlisting the talents of colleagues in similar positions to obtain structured feedback about a project or a study to diminish the chance of error and bias that could invalidate the study (Yin, 2013). A recently retired former staff member and a former school administrator reviewed the open-ended questions developed for the interviews with the objective of providing me with constructive feedback.

Ethical Procedures

An important part of any study is the ethical protection of participants' rights. In accordance with Walden University's policy, I completed the National Institute of Health (NIH) training course, Protecting Human Research Participants, before beginning the study. The goal was to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the study participants and to prevent them from being singled out and subjected regarding their responses (Yin, 2013). To assure anonymity, and in keeping with the case study tradition, all interviewees were assigned a number and a pseudonym to conceal their identity and protect their privacy (Maxwell, 2012; Silverman, 2011). As an added measure of confidentiality, I was the only person who handled the data, which are stored in a secure location, thereby guaranteeing the privacy of the participants.

In conclusion, the following areas of ethical procedures were followed throughout the study. Step 1 involved meeting with the district's superintendent of schools and building principal to gain permission to conduct the study. Step 2 involved obtaining approval from Walden University's IRB; the study's approval number is 02-16-11-0333741. All required authorization was secured before data collection began. Step 3 was the scheduling of semi structured interviews to gain access to candidates for the study.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain some understanding of the sources of teacher burnout and explore how it affects classroom learning and communication with parents, colleagues and administrators.

Setting

Five full-time teachers from an urban public high school, Grades 9 through 12, in Central New Jersey were interviewed. The participants' years of classroom teaching experience ranged from 5 to 18 years. Some entered the field of education right out of college; others came from the corporate world. They included five teachers, two male and three female, whose ages ranged from 24 to 50 years. The study participants were all asked the same basic questions in the same order during their interview (Appendix A). All of the participants were as candid in their responses as was possible due to personalities and relationships with administration. They shared their personal experiences regarding teacher burnout and their decisions to remain in or to leave the teaching profession. However, in some cases, participants were reluctant to share stories of their experience at the site of the study for fear of repercussions, and this may have affected the findings.

Data Collection

Five participants selected were asked at the informal interview to agree verbally and then sign off on an agreement to be interviewed, with the understanding that their responses would be recorded and used in the study. The interviews were conducted in the

participants' empty classrooms before or after the school day. These familiar locations were selected to ensure privacy and elicit more candid responses (Yin, 2013). Before beginning the formal interview, permission to record the participants' responses was requested to ensure accuracy of reporting. A scripted statement was read aloud to each participant and recorded. That statement summarized the reasons for the study and all of the steps that were put in place to protect participants' identities. The interviews were restricted to 30 minutes in length, in order to accommodate the participants' schedules, one interview lasted 45 minutes. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were thanked for sharing their experiences and asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview to read and approve the transcripts. All five participants agreed, and all of them approved their transcribed interviews' accuracy.

The process selected for generating and gathering data for this study was interviewing. The rationale for using open-ended interview questions was that they generate narrative responses that allow the participants to share their experiences, belief systems, and personal view points (Saldana, 2012). The interviews, once transcribed, were hand-coded to reveal relationships and patterns related to the issue of teacher burnout (Saldana, 2012). With a larger number of cases, computer software might have been helpful in coding the material (Bazeley, 2013; McCarthy et al., 2012); but, hand-coding was manageable with only five participants.

Each interview was digitally recorded. The interviews were transcribed, because doing so provided marginal space and the ability to analyze and note any similarities or common themes (Patton, 2014). Listening to and transcribing the interviews also

provided an opportunity to review the information recorded. A pattern began to develop after I transcribed the interviews and examined the data.

Data Analysis

After all the information was gathered, I analyzed and color coded the responses within each case that related to the research questions. Portions of each interview that corresponded with the symptoms of teacher burnout were flagged in the margins, bracketed, and color coded. Next, perceptions of how, if any, burnout impacted classroom instruction were flagged, bracketed, and color coded. Lastly, perception of how burnout affected interaction with all the stakeholders were flagged, bracketed, and color coded. Then I reviewed each case narrative and used color-coded brackets to identify commonalities. After categorizing the commonalities I could identify themes and report my findings in a more accurate manner. Three themes were identified from the study and used to draw conclusions. This information was stored in a notebook and locked away. In addition to the transcriptions, the contents of the notebook included a copy of the poster used to solicit volunteers; a log of meeting dates, times, and the number assigned to each participant; the interview questions used; and the audio-taped interviews. To ensure confidentiality, I locked the notebook, along with the audio-tapes of the interviews, in a secure file cabinet which is housed in my residence.

Results

The following individual case narratives begin with background information about each participant. Next, each research question was addressed and each participant's

responses were analyzed and organized to detect specific patterns from the raw data.

Color coding was used to manage, categorize and identify relevant themes and patterns.

Individual Case Narrative 1: John

John's was new to teaching and his first year at this site was overwhelming. He

decided to investigate the possibility of becoming a teacher after losing his corporate job

because of downsizing. He was single, had a serious girlfriend, and hoped within the next

couple of years to get married. To him, teaching was a perfect progression and a steady

job; he just did not realize how much work it would entail. He had a master's degree in

business administration and enough credits through his undergraduate program to qualify

for an alternate route teaching certification program. In the alternate route certification

program, individuals are hired from the business world to teach, even though they have

never had an education course. In order to become certified, they are required to have a

mentor, and they must complete another 200 hours of course work within their first

couple of years of teaching.

Research Question 1: What Factors Contribute to Teacher Burnout?

Findings. The data collected from John's case supported a theme that emerged

throughout this study; teacher burnout can be attributed to several factors. An unrealistic

workload, student misbehavior, and a lack of feeling supported by administrators were

the factors that contributed to his feelings of burnout. He suggested administrators could

make a difference if they provided more support to their staff. That same feeling

resurfaced again when the participants answered Research Question 3 about their

interaction with their administrator. As a result, another theme that will be addressed in greater detail in Section 5 became apparent.

John experienced feelings associated with burnout. For example, he was stressed and found the work load to be overwhelming, which contributed to his feeling of burnout. He was not prepared for all the non instructional time he would be required to put in as a teacher. When John was originally hired, he knew nothing about writing lessons plans, creating tests, and correcting papers. He had not been in an educational environment for years, and he did not know the curriculum. John felt unorganized, overworked, and resentful of the many hours he spent developing lesson plans and grading homework assignments.

> I felt so alone. I would sit down at my desk and just stare at the curriculum, text book, and calendar and wonder how I could fit everything into the block. I would have given my right arm for a helping hand because there was always so much to do, so much material to cover. Then I would have to grade students' work and return it in a timely manner.

Second, student misbehavior and the time John spent on discipline problems also contributed to his feelings of burnout. John felt his students had a sense of entitlement and put forth very little effort. He felt frustrated when he had to stop a lesson to correct bad behavior.

> I would spend hours researching on the internet for exciting ways to present a lesson. I would create handouts so my students did not have to take notes during lectures so they would focus on what I was saying. It never failed. They still

didn't listen to me; instead they whispered to one another. So I would raise my voice, but they still kept the buzz going. I would stare at the offender, and he would challenge me with "Why you staring at me? I wasn't the one talking." Then his buddies would laugh. The next day it would be something else, like doodle all over the handout. I would stop my lecture, take the paper away, wad it up, and throw it in the trash can. Then the student would complain I was picking on him, so I told him to take his own notes and his buddies would laugh. They just had no respect for my time and did not appreciate my efforts.

John said day after day it was the same type of situation, just different players with each class. He began to feel like a baby sitter and was not sure how to get all his students to cooperate. He tried joking around with them and treating them like buddies, but there would always be a few who took advantage and took it too far. He tried threatening to "write them up," but John never followed through on his threats. He tried to give them the benefit of a doubt, because he did not want to be considered one of those kinds of teachers students made fun of because they had no sense of humor. He did not want to call home, because he did not want a hassle from parents. John started showing movies to get through the day. Although even then students were not quiet, John felt less stress and had fewer papers to grade.

Third, John thought he had a good relationship with his administrator because he was a family friend. However, when a real issue came up that he needed help dealing with, they divorced themselves from him and he soon discovered he was on his own, so he was leery of trying further attempts to communicate. He felt they could have been

more supportive and perceived that they were only available to him on their terms if it suited their agenda.

Research Question 2: How do the Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Classroom Instruction?

      Findings. John's perception that burnout negatively impacted his classroom instruction even when he was not present was another theme that resonated throughout the study. John felt he had very little patience when dealing with his class. John had good rapport with his students in the beginning, but as he became increasingly stressed, he changed. He became impatient; his demeanor was affecting his morale and attitude. If his students did not understand when he explained a concept, he became angry and would raise his voice and repeat his explanation in a more animated manner. John knew his attitude was turning his students off to learning, because they would act out or withdraw. However, he was so frustrated and tired that he found himself lashing out at them. Then he would feel remorseful, because he realized that his behavior had a negative impact on his students' abilities to excel. "I am ashamed to admit it, but a couple of really good students transferred out of my class, and I know it was because of my attitude."

      As the months passed, John's workload became increasingly difficult. He said he was bitter because he always "felt like he was in crunch mode" on grading his students' assignments and he rarely returned student work in a timely manner. There were times he was so backed up he could not provide his students with adequate feedback before their next assignments were due, and he felt he was failing them.

John's was so stressed he felt ineffective and his absenteeism increased. John was from the corporate world and became a teacher via the alternate route. As a result, he did not have any prior experience in a classroom, except as a student, and he had not taken any education courses before he was hired to teach. Although he was currently enrolled in some required education classes, in accordance with the alternate route certification program, he felt overwhelmed. In the corporate world, he could leave the day behind when he left work, but as a teacher his day extended into the night.

> My life was not my own. Sometimes I felt backed into a corner and had to choose between work and my social life. My girlfriend did not understand because she had a 9 to 5 job in an office. When she got off work she was ready to go out with our friends. If I decided to take a break and meet our friends after work, I paid for it later and would be up until the wee hours to prep for work for the next day; it really bummed me out. My girl hated sitting home watching me work, and our relationship suffered because she was bored and would go out without me and that really upset me. I always felt like I was being punished because I couldn't go, too.

John's resentment of the long hours he was required to spend doing his job was making him feel depressed. His absenteeism increased; John said he was not physically ill but needed to take mental health days in order to function. When he was absent, a substitute would be called in to teach his classes, a factor which impacted his students because of the inconsistencies in classroom instruction.

Research Question 3. How do the Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Interactions With Parents? How do Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Interaction With Colleagues? How do Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Interaction With Administrators?

Findings. Overall, John perceived his burnout affected his ability to communicate with parents, colleagues and administrators. He felt overwhelmed by responsibility, and he perceived his burnout affected his ability to communicate with parents. John was uncomfortable interacting with his colleagues he felt inadequate and judged because of his inexperience. He also perceived his administrators were not approachable. In addition, he felt they had the ability to provide support that would help eliminate his feelings of teacher burnout but did not know how to communicate that to them without sounding negative.

For example, regarding parents, John was reluctant to contact them and work with them on issues related to student discipline or missing homework assignments. He confessed it made him uncomfortable, because at times he doubted his own capabilities and thought parents may point to his inexperience as the catalyst. During back to school night, John had trouble fielding question from the parents who attended the program, because he was not confident of the curriculum he was hired to teach. He found he reverted to his salesman days and double-talked his way through his presentation with charm, which he realized was a cop-out. He was in survival mode and would do anything to please parents.

There were times John felt his colleagues did not take him seriously. For example, John could make small talk with his colleagues, but when it came to dialoguing about lesson plans, workload, and classroom management he was on guard. He had been in sales and worked as a "lone wolf." He was not used to letting his guard down, because his job was very cut throat, and some people he worked with could not be trusted. For example, he would never let on that he did not understand how to execute a lesson, because that could be viewed as a weakness, and in his old world only the strong survive. By the same notion, he would never share a good lesson because "people" are always ready to steal an idea and market it as their own. Consequently, John had a very guarded relationship with colleagues. He was leery of and uncomfortable with colleagues, due to his feelings associated with burnout, until he team taught a lesson with a veteran teacher in another subject area and found value in the experience.

John felt he did could not relate to his administrators on a scholarly level, so he avoided any work-related discussions with them. John also felt he had to mask his inexperience and feeling of overload to protect his job. He went to great lengths to become his administrators' buddy, making jokes, meeting them for a game of basketball after work and occasionally went for a beer outside of work. However, he was still treated as an outsider especially when the subject turned to school, his opinion was ignored. He said that he learned a hard lesson and would never make that mistake again.

Individual Case Narrative 2: Alex

Alex was a master teacher who was comfortable with his workload but was stressed over have to comply with state and local mandates. He had been teaching just 8

years, but had been in the business world in various occupations for over 10 years before

setting his sights on education. He graduated from college with a dual degree and hit the

business world with great enthusiasm but could not seem to find his place in the

corporate world; it just did not satisfy him.

By the time Alex realized he was dissatisfied, he was married with children and a

mortgage. Consequently, he was a little leery of starting something new, when at his

wife's urging he applied for a teaching job and was immediately hired. Alex loved his

work immediately; he had finally found his dream job. He was very social, never felt

isolated or overworked, and never had any difficulty with classroom management. Alex

was in his element. His students were always engaged, and his colleagues came to him

for advice because he was a good problem solver. Last year, Alex was told to follow new

school technology mandates that he did not like.

Research Question 1: What Factors Contribute to Teacher Burnout?

Findings. The theme that more than one factor precipitates burnout is apparent in

Alex's case narrative. Alex explained that the lack of autonomy and cooperation from his

administration contributed to his feelings of burnout. Alex felt as though he had no voice.

He had become disillusioned with teaching and felt unsupported by his administration,

because of school mandates regarding technology. He was being forced to infuse

technology into his lessons several times a week or face being written up. This disturbed

Alex, because he felt the use of technology did not enrich his students' learning

experience. As a master teacher, he said he continued year after year to get incredible

results from his students. His students were inspired to develop new concepts and ideas

through dialoguing and collaboration. He shared documentation that his former students

had been admitted into some of the best colleges. He continued his thought by adding:

> They throw out unrealistic mandates because they are not educators. For example,
> we are supposed to infuse technology into at least three lessons for each class
> each week, when we have very few computers and half of them do not work.

He wanted validation and support, but all he received were relentless reminders

about how to teach to the 21st century learner. Alex lamented, "They should leave good

teachers alone; we know how to get the results they want. Why fix it if it isn't broken?

We know our students and how best to reach them."

Research Question 2: How do the Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Classroom Instruction?

Findings. Alex felt a lack of motivation to teach, and he felt his students suffered

as a result supporting the theme that burnout does affect classroom instruction. Alex

stated that he knew his students learned best using the "Socratic method of instruction,"

and he resented "being told how to teach." He prided himself on fostering students'

acquisition of higher-level, problem-solving skills. Alex reported that for years he had

challenged students to think outside the box, and he took such pride in his students'

success. To Alex, his job was more than a job; it was his calling. As a master teacher with

many years of success, he felt he had the answer to reaching his students, and changing

his methods to accommodate the newest quick fix was not the best for his students.

> Here I am spending precious class time instructing students on technology, and
> half the time the computers we have do not work or are unavailable to us. I am not

teaching my students something new; they cut their teeth on computers and are better equipped to teach me when it comes to technology. They have that skill; it does not need to be taught. They need time to organize, analyze, and apply their knowledge to real-life situations. I am making them career and college ready. I used to get up in the morning anxious to get to work and enthusiastic. Now my morale is low, and I know it impacts my relationship with my students and their achievement when I am not at my best classroom instruction suffers.

Alex felt frustrated, because he was not allowed to confer with the district administration on the technology mandate, and he believed that it had a negative impact on his ability to provide his students with a meaningful education. He was told that research indicated that today's students needed to be technologically savvy and it was his job to make sure they were ready to produce for their employers.

Alex summed it up like this, "Our administrators never hassle me, but I have noticed how they treat other staff members; they have a dismissive attitude." He suggested it was best if one could "fly just under the radar" and not bring any attention to oneself. Alex related a story about a former department head who told him to always cover his back and not question the boss. However, Alex admitted he had not heeded that advice and quickly was reminded he was just a teacher. He was on the faculty counsel once, and they would meet with the administration monthly to discuss staff and educational issues. Alex said, "There was no discussion; whenever one of us on the counsel offered a suggestion, he was quick to attack us. It became a joke."

Research Question 3: How do the Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Interactions With Parents? How do Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Interaction With Colleagues? How do Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Interaction With Administrators?

Findings. Alex had a good relationship with parents and colleagues and did not perceive his burnout interfered with or changed his interactions with them**.**However, he felt mostly at odds with his administrators during the period he perceived the feelings of teacher burnout. His feeling of burnout greatly affected his ability to interact with them in a positive manner. Alex felt administrators could make a difference by being more approachable and developing initiatives to support their teachers addressing the theme of administrative support.

 For example, he stated that his students' parents come to back-to-school night just to say "Hi" and tell him how much their child loves his class. His colleagues respect him and admire his ability to always think of the greatest activities and resources for his students. They laugh at his jokes and pat him on the back.

> Parents, students, and my colleagues love working with me because I am a team
> player, a good listener, and problem solver. They respect me and my opinion. I
> guess I should feel lucky, but I don't take it for granted; I work at it. I am never
> too tired to help a colleague, listen to a parent's concerns, or help my students to
> achieve their best. I don't know why I feel the need to extend myself for others
> maybe deep down I wish someone would do the same for me.

In contrast, Alex saw his administrators as self-serving and unsupportive of his ability to teach. Alex resented them and at times looked for ways to defy their authority. He acted aloof and arrogant, but not insubordinate enough to get written up. However, he felt that as a result of his attitude he was not favored with the best classes and perceived his feelings of burnout held him back from career advancement. Alex yearned for the opportunity to create a more collaborative work environment with administration.

Individual Case Narrative 3: Jane

Jane had been employed as a teacher for 14 years and had worked in the business world for 12 years before she started teaching and in the last 2 years she has been experiencing teacher burnout. She left the business world because she was bored and needed a challenge but now felt disillusioned and stressed. In the beginning of her career she was at another high school, Jane loved teaching; she taught all ability levels, her students were polite and eager to learn. However, when Jane was transferred to this site from another school, everything began to unravel for her. She was teaching only lower ability students. She felt her students were disrespectful, her colleagues were snobby, and her administrators unavailable. It was also at this time that her husband and she divorced. Although Jane did not disclose how long she was married, she did share that she had no children. Jane was a loner who rarely, if ever, joined conversations with colleagues about work or play. She indicated that she did not have any close ties with family or friends. She volunteered for the case study; but, she almost did not complete the interview process because she seemed to get worked up and rant as soon as the interview began. Jane already had decided to quit her job by the time she came for her interview. She was

unhappy about everything; attributed her unhappiness to home and life situations; and accused the administration, students, and parents of having it in for her. Although she cited classroom management/student discipline and a lack of administrative support as problematic, her unhappiness and problems did not seem to arise just from work-related issues.

Research Question 1: What Factors Contribute to Teacher Burnout?

Findings. Jane identified a heavy workload and student misbehavior as stressful, similar to John's experience. In addition, she cited problems with her students' parents and a lack of support from her administrators as contributing to her feelings of burnout supporting the theme that burnout stems from more than one factor. For example, Jane complained of her workload; she spent most of her free time correcting papers and writing lesson plans. She felt the school's policy, requiring that each teacher assign an hour's worth of home work each night, to be a waste of her time.

> I look like a bag lady. Night after night I schlep home bags full of homework to correct; then I schlep them back the next day after I have spent my whole evening grading them. We are supposed to give an hour's worth of homework every night, which is a joke because favorites in the school are never held accountable. This semester I have 75 students, and on top of their class work I have to grade all their nightly assignments; it is just too much! If I do not return the work the next day I risk being written up or reprimanded. When do I get time for me? I'm stretched very thin, and something has got to give.

Jane talked about students' attitudes and identified their lack of respect as a source of irritation to her.

> They come to school and expect to be coddled because their parents tell them how special they are all the time. The girls are little princesses, and the boys are all jocks or Einsteins. If they do not do their homework, it is my fault because I did not explain it well enough so they could do it on their own. In other words, I did not do it for them, or the other excuse is that I am assigning too much. When I threaten to give them an "E," they get feisty and verbally abusive, and I will not stand for their insubordination and I write them up.

Jane had trouble communicating with parents and felt they had a bad attitude. Jane felt a shift in student and parent attitudes; students were disrespectful, and parents condoned this lack of respect for authority figures. She said her students were combative and challenged her on a regular basis and threatened to have their parents call the principal to register complaints about her.

> This one day a boy kept falling asleep in my class so I made him stand. He got mad and walked out of class. He got his cell phone out and called his parents, and they called the principal. I got in trouble later and was told I was being written up. How am I supposed to teach kids like that? His parents made all kinds of excuses for him and made me out to be the bad guy, when all I was doing was my job. What do they want from me?

Jane identified, just as Alex nonexistent administrative support as the factor that contributed to her burnout. Jane perceived her administrators did not like her. She wanted

them to support her when it came to discipline problems, and she felt they always took the students' side. Jane also felt some of her stress stemmed from a lack of administrative support when dealing with parents. When her administrator and she had a conference with the parents of a student she was having problems with in class; Jane collected all her relevant documentation to show the parents. However, when she arrived for the conference she found out she was the one being interrogated. "I could not believe how the parents were attacking me and telling me it was my fault, and the principal agreed that my expectations were too high and I needed to adjust." Jane was ordered to change grading practices. "They tell me I am too demanding and that I am expecting too much from my students; what happened to academic excellence?" She complied but expressed the feeling that this impacted the way she would interact in the future with her administrators. She saw them as unfair and distrusted them.

> I made up my mind I was not going to put up with student misbehavior like talking back and not following rules, so I started writing up a blue discipline slip every time there was an infraction and sent students to the office. I ended up with five students in the office at once. Do you know that they did not get in trouble at all? I did for writing so many up. I received a lecture on creating a more student-centered classroom, and they got off with no punishment. What am I supposed to do, turn my back and let them get away with it?

Research Question 2: How do the Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Classroom Instruction?

  Findings. Jane admitted she knew her burnout negatively impacted her classroom instruction, supporting the reoccurring theme. She further stated that she did not care anymore whether or not her students learned, she had checked out mentally. She knew the quality of their classroom learning was inconsistent, but she just wanted to get through the day. Jane explained that she spent so much time correcting disruptive behavior that she had very little time to teach. As a result, she perceived that her other students were deprived because she was distracted by the disruption. She noted that that was when she started to just go through the motions, not caring if her students learned anything.

    I began to lose interest. I felt my hands were tied and my administrators wanted me to fail, so I stopped caring. If the students wanted to act up and not pay attention, I ignored them and only paid attention to the one or two who acted interested, until they too joined the pack. That is it; they were like a pack, and if the ring leader was out they were good.

Research Question 3: How do the Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Interactions With Parents? How do Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Interaction With Colleagues? How do Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Interaction With Administrators?

  Findings. Jane realized that her interaction with parents, colleagues and administrators was negative but she stated that was due to their attitudes and not her

burnout. She thought parents babied their children and failed to teach them manners. She felt her colleagues were spineless and let parents and administrators walk all over them. She had little to no respect for her administrators; she felt they were not supportive of their staff. She did however express the thought that their attitude set the tone for the school and if they wanted to create a better work environment they had the power to do it, supporting the theme that administrators can make a difference.

For example, Jane felt the problems were a result of parents wanting to be friends with their children and blamed them for being enablers. For example, she thought parents were too lax with their children, allowing them to be disrespectful and then questioning her discipline tactics. If and when parents followed through on the threats made by students, she said the school administrators took their side and reprimanded her. Jane had never been a parent and found it difficult to understand parents' attitudes about their children.

> Things were different when I was in school. Parents respected teachers; if I had gotten into trouble with a teacher my pop would have wailed the daylights out of me and made me apologize. Today, parents do not believe "little Johnny or Susie" did anything wrong. They are so quick to blame the teacher, but my problems with parents were not a result of my burnout. They were a result of their poor parenting skills.

Jane had very little respect for her colleagues and never interacted with them. Jane thought her colleagues were inadequate people pleasers. She suggested that they let administrators walk all over them. She also stated they were self-serving, inconsiderate

tattle-tales. She described an incident when she was making a student stand throughout the entire period because she caught him napping during class.

> Here I was trying to teach, and this kid is snoring during my class and everyone is laughing. I shook him to wake him up, and then I made him stand by his desk for the remainder of class. I would not allow him to lean on anything; he had to stand ram rod until the bell rang. Next thing I know I am being called down to the office and another teacher comes to relieve my class. Apparently another teacher, who was teaching next door, was eaves dropping and reported me to our assistant principal. I was reprimanded for using corporal punishment; she wrote me up and placed the letter in my personnel file. I was so angry at that other teacher for running to our administrators, I felt like I was in elementary school. So, why would I want to interact with any of them?

Jane felt that her administrators were out to get her and found fault with everything she did. "I feel as though I am under a microscope; they watch my every move." Jane described another occasion when she was called into the vice-principal's office because she had sent so many students to the office for bad behavior. The administrator suggested she try some different strategies to diffuse disruptive behavior. The vice principal even gave her a list of websites to checkout, and she wadded up the paper and threw it in the trash can in front of the administrator. Consequently, she was written up for being insubordinate. In addition to not being supportive of her, Jane said administrators were not cooperative when she confronted them with a problem.

At the conclusion of the interview, Jane told me that she was quitting her job at the end of the school year and that she just could not take it anymore. However, she ended with the statement that she was not leaving because of burnout. Jane said she had decided to change careers, because she needed a new challenge and no longer wanted to teach.

Individual Case Narrative 4: Monica

Monica had the most teaching experience of all the participants; she has taught at both the elementary and high school levels and admitted to experiencing stress on both levels but was reluctant to share details of her experiences at this site. Monica is a highly qualified special education teacher. She began teaching when she was a young, single mother who had many responsibilities and a strong desire to make a difference in the lives of children. Monica's first experience with burnout occurred early in her career; her first job. Monica loved teaching her special students and was full of enthusiasm and highly motivated to be the best teacher ever. She understood how important the beginning years are to all students, especially special needs children, because of the foundation that education builds for their future success. Consequently, Monica became stressed when she felt she was letting her students down.

Research Question 1: What Factors Contribute to Teacher Burnout?

Findings. Monica felt several factors contributed to her feelings of teacher burnout, which supports the theme that burnout cannot be traced back to one single factor. She identified her instructional and non-instructional workload, the feeling of isolation, student misbehavior and a lack of support from her administrator as factors. For

example, Monica felt stressed by her workload, which included teaching and creating lesson plans, coupled with the vast amount of non instructional duties she was required to complete weekly, such as writing progress reports and attending daily meetings. Monica perceived she was burned out. Although she had a small group of students, they all had special needs and required more one-on-one instruction than regular education students. She said a coworker called her superwoman.

> The minute my feet hit the ground in the morning until my head hit the pillow at night I was trying to be everything to everyone. I have never failed at anything in my life, and I was not going to let this workload get me down. I pushed myself into near exhaustion. I took my work home with me night after night; I felt so guilty because my poor little child needed me, too. There were days that nothing seemed to go right; I was disorganized, and my life was falling apart. I had to just keep going; what else was I supposed to do? I needed my job, so I was trying to stretch every minute of the day into two. I had no time to think; I was in constant motion. I even worked through lunch.

Monica suggested working in isolation contributed to her feelings of burnout. Monica noted that she felt cut off from colleagues, but her feeling of isolation came from workload and the fact she worked in a specialized area and had little in common with her colleagues. Her challenges were vastly different from theirs. Years later she was able to look back on the experience and put the situation into perspective, but at the time it occurred she was extremely stressed.

I felt so isolated. I was in a self-contained classroom with many special needs

students, and all the reports I had to write kept me busy. I was so busy that I rarely

had time to interact with my colleagues. I had IEP meetings I had to attend almost

every prep period, and they were exhausting. I had no energy for anything outside

my work life. As I stated before, I was so stressed that it affected my relationship

with friends at work; I never had time to be a friend. I was very unhappy.

Monica felt student misbehavior added to her feelings of burnout. Monica's

students were basically well-behaved, but there were days when anything could set them

off. She was required by mandate to cover a specific amount of material daily. She felt

frustrated whenever she was not as prepared as she needed to be, because there were days

she needed to spend her prep time in a meeting. When that happened, Monica felt

unprepared and like she was off her stride.

My students would get antsy because there was too much down time between

tasks. I was trying to stay one step ahead of them. They were special education

students, and I think sometimes that makes them even more sensitive and difficult

to keep focused. When they would pick-up on my stress, I would lose them. I was

at a loss, because I was held accountable for my students' learning. They were not

bad; it was just difficult to get them focused. It was very stressful, because I knew

I could do better if I just had more prep time.

Monica felt that the administrators at her former school did not understand or

support her. She stated, "Administrators didn't want to listen to my suggestions about

adjusting student work levels, because they had their own agenda." She felt they did not

have her students' best interests at heart; all they cared about were test results. "It was very stressful, and I was unhappy." When she reached out to a supervisor, she was cautioned not to make waves. "I tried my best to get their ear but to no avail; they didn't want to hear the truth. I had to get out of that situation, because it was making me ill. I had a small child at home and was trying to hold the course, but it was increasingly difficult. I was on the verge of quitting when I requested a transfer." When Monica received notification of her transfer, she cried tears of relief because of her feelings of burnout she felt devalued .

Research Question 2: How do the Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Classroom Instruction?

Findings. Monica perceived she was inefficient as a teacher because she felt stressed and stretched too thin to be effective, supporting the theme that teachers perceive burnout can negatively impact classroom learning. As a special education teacher, Monica was faced with meeting the child study team or parents several times a week during her prep time, which was very stressful to her because, as stated previously, she rarely had time to plan lessons or prepare for class. Because she had to cover specific lessons with her students each day, Monica tried to compensate by rushing through the curriculum with little regard for her students' needs. As a result, her stress had a negative impact on her students. They were not demonstrating proficiency in areas they should have, and she had no one to go to for guidance. Monica thought her feelings of burnout had affected their success because they did not make adequate yearly progress and this was stressful to her.

Research Question 3: How do the Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Interactions With Parents? How do Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Interaction With Colleagues? How do Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Interaction With Administrators?

Findings. Monica perceived that her feelings of burnout did not negatively impact her communication with parents. However, she felt it did impact her interaction and socialization with colleagues and her administrator. She also echoed the theme expressed by the other participants that administrators could help eliminate the feelings of burnout if they were more supportive and approachable.

Monica had a good rapport with parents. Monica always made time in the evening to make calls home. She saw the value in collaborating with parents and spent hours of her personal time writing notes to parents on ideas and activities they could use to reinforce her classroom instruction and to help students excel. Monica perceived that she over compensated and pushed herself to the point of exhaustion; because she felt so over worked she was afraid of neglecting her students' needs. As time went on, she found herself beginning to resent her students' parents because she was putting their needs ahead of her own, and this was very stressful to her.

> As soon as I put my students left the building, I would set up my classroom for the next day and make calls home to parents. There were days some parents would want to meet in the evening after work, and I never said that it was inconvenient even when it was. I always went that extra mile to meet with parents. I felt obligated, and at the same time I wanted to help. I just did not know

how to say "not today." I guess I always put myself in their place, and if they took

the time to come in to see me, how could I refuse? So, yes, my relationship with

parents was always positive.

Monica did not relate to her colleagues. She felt that none of her colleagues

worked as hard as she did. They always seemed to have time during lunch and their prep

period to gossip, and she barely had time to breathe, so she avoided them. When Monica

did take a minute to sit with them in the faculty room, all they did was complain. She was

totally turned off by their attitudes. In addition, her colleagues used non instructional time

in the faculty room to bash students, other teachers, and their administration, which made

her feel bitter towards them.

Monica's feelings of burnout caused her to feel her administrator did not care or

try to understand her. Monica was afraid to approach her administrator for help, because

her feelings of burnout made her feel that she was at fault for not being able to fit

everything in and make it work. Deep down, she was angry at her administrator because

he was more interested in pleasing the district administrator than in implementing

changes that would have benefited students.

The first hint that my workload was increasing and I had no input was the year I

was told about computer and portfolio initiatives that were being introduced in the

district. My students were very low functioning and I was expected to adapt the

initiative for my special needs students and put them into practice concurrently

without any training. I had to go on the internet and research how to do it. I was

not even sure how either initiative would benefit my students. Apparently, a

supervisor had been to a workshop where the participants were introduced to these miracle cures, and everyone jumped on the band wagon. It reminded me of years ago when "whole language" was the quick fix. It failed miserably because no one was trained. I wish administrators would remember they were teachers once, too. Monica longed for a more collaborative work environment. She felt powerless and did not know how to go about changing the mindset of those in charge.

Individual Case Narrative 5: Sara

Sara, a third-year teacher at this site, began her career 5 years ago at an elementary school. When asked about her current position as a high school teacher at this site she was reluctant to share and chose instead to focus on past experience. The flyer asking for volunteers did not specify burnout at current site so I arranged our interview date. Basically, a heavy workload, classroom management, a lack of administrative support, and working in isolation were the chief causes of her perceived feelings of burnout. Sara's background is as follows: She is an only child and was the first person in her family to enter the field of education. She loves to learn and she knew from a very early age that one day she was going to become a teacher. She was an education major at a state school and did her student teaching with her former third grade teacher, Mrs. A. They had a bond, and the time Sara spent with Mrs. A. was a very positive introduction to teaching. Sara was anxious to one day have her own classroom. She began her first job excited and starry-eyed, but within the first couple of months she was stressed and contemplated quitting.

Research Question 1: What Factors Contribute to Teacher Burnout?

  Findings. Sara stated the reoccurring theme that several factors including an unrealistic workload, student misbehavior, isolation and a lack of support from her administrator contributed to her feelings of teacher burnout. For example, when she was hired to teach elementary school, Sara was excited to be in control in her own classroom. However, Sara explained that she was overwhelmed by the workload. She knew the content area backward and forward, but she was not skilled in organizing her time, lesson planning, keeping students on task, and all the paper work that went along with the job. "I did not have a set routine. Half the time I got distracted and forgot to do attendance, and the office would call; I felt so stupid." When she was student teaching, her cooperating teacher had taken care of all of their non instructional duties, so she was not equipped with the skills she needed to complete them and felt overwhelmed.

    Mrs. A., my cooperating teacher, was wonderful. When I was her student she used to let me help her teach. We had a great system. I was the over achiever when I was little and always finished my work first; so there were times I taught my peers while she took care of the paperwork. It was just like it was when I was little. Not much had changed since I was her student. She was always so helpful. As her student teacher, all I had to do was sign-off on the lessons she wrote. I loved teaching with her; everything was so simple and uncomplicated.

  After she had her own classroom, Sara realized that there was a down side to her student teaching experience. She had no idea how to manage everything non instructional and still teach to a room of third graders, because had never had the hands-on experience.

"I loved everything about Mrs. A. I just wish she would have let me do more so I got the full picture of the job, instead of trying so hard to help me."

Sara's lack of classroom management skills led to discipline problems with her students, which added to her stress and burnout. As Sara reported, "I had trouble transitioning from one subject to the next; just asking students to take out one book as they placed the other under their desks morphed into chaos." She was single with no children of her own, and she was an only child. In addition, Sara did not have nieces or nephews to interact with or supervise on her own as an adult. Her only contact with younger children was as a volunteer at church and while student teaching; both instances were under the supervision of another adult. She was not used to dealing with children on her own. Sara's assessment of the situation was that "I really like kids but I have never spent much time around them so, I am not always sure of how to talk to them."

Sara remembered her experience with Mrs. A. when she was in the third grade and wanted her students to like her, just as she had liked Mrs. A. She went out of her way to be their pal; she bought them treats, played games with them, and teased with them trying to keep them focused and on task. "We were not supposed to, but I gave Jolly Ranchers out as a treat." Nothing seemed to work; she began to feel that she was too nice and that they were taking advantage of her kindness.

She did not feel as though the students respected her. "They would get up and wander around the room, pass notes, or talk to one another when I was trying to explain a lesson." Sara, an admitted over achiever, over-planned every day and knew she needed to cover a certain amount of material to get through her curriculum. "I felt like a failure

because I set high goals for myself and my students." When discipline problems erupted, it threw her off her game. "I kept my classroom door shut, because I was embarrassed that I could not keep my students on task. There was always so much noise, and I always needed to ask them to quiet down or return to their seats." Sara worried about the other teachers and what they were saying. She felt they were always gossiping about someone behind their back. "I was so stressed; I felt vulnerable to their ridicule because I was new."

Working in isolation contributed to Sara's feels of burnout. Everyone she worked with had their set routine, and she felt left out. "I would poke my head into their classrooms to say 'hi' as I passed in the morning, and they would not even pick their heads up to look in my direction. They would grunt and keep working." Although Sara was an only child, she was not a loner; she craved opportunities to collaborate because she had spent so many years alone. "I loved being in college. I even loved dorm life and having roommates; I felt like we were all sisters. We still remain close today." Sara was enthusiastic about teaching and learning to be a better teacher. She would try to share teaching strategies and techniques she learned in graduate school with her colleagues, thinking it would open the door to an exchange of information. I over-heard a colleague talking about a lesson she was planning to do, and I started to tell her about a strategy I had used that was very successful. She just looked at me, smiled, and walked away. It was really an awkward moment.

The next day when Sara overheard a colleague refer to her as "the cheerleader," she lost her enthusiasm and desire to collaborate with others. She tried to fit in, but still

felt like an outsider and described an occurrence that really stood out in her mind as insensitive. "One day during lunch time in the faculty room, one of my colleagues invited everyone there, except me, to join them for a drink after work. It was so obvious I was being snubbed. I felt I like I was being punished for trying to be accepted." Sara was filled with anxiety and reached out to her mentor for help; she needed guidance, but her mentor told her she was being too sensitive.

A perceived lack of support from her administrator added to Sara's feeling of burnout. She cited an incident that occurred outside the classroom with an extra-curricular activity where she felt undermined by both parents and students. She was forced to accept their excuses, which she felt were manufactured. She said, "I work well with my colleagues at this school, and I respect administration. I just wish they demonstrated that they respected me." Sara described a couple of other examples to illustrate how administrators treated her unfairly, however she felt her interaction with them was brought on my her feelings of burnout.. These examples are not disclosed here, in order to conceal Sara's identity. She felt so upset over these incidents that she almost left her position before she had reached tenure.

In addition, after receiving no support from her mentor, Sara asked her principal for suggestions on how she could improve. He told her she was doing fine and that all new teachers have the same experience with managing their classrooms and organizing their time. "He told me it was all a normal part of the process; he was not alarmed and told me that I should not worry." When Sara asked for permission to enroll in a series of workshops geared to new teachers, she was told that she would have to take personnel

days, pay for it herself, and get approval from the district superintendent before she would be allowed to attend the workshops offered during the school day. "He went on to tell me that I did not need more classes, that I had just graduated from college, and it was not wise to take too many days off during my first year; it could affect my tenure." As a result, Sara's motivation to improve was stifled, but only temporarily because she transferred out of that school a year later.

Research Question 2: How do the Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Classroom Instruction?

Findings. Sara perceived that her burnout negatively impacted classroom learning, supporting the theme confirmed by each participant . Sara felt that the same factors cited above that led to her perceived burnout also impacted student learning and kept her from being the best teacher she could be. She felt overworked; between writing lesson plans, studying the curriculum, correcting papers, teaching and preparing her students for tests, she felt drained. "I used to stay up so late at night preparing for the next day that on Friday nights I would crash." Sara loved teaching, but when she was weary she would lose control. There are only so many times you can ask students to return to their seats and stop wandering before you lose patience. I was okay in the beginning of the year, but then day after day, I tried to smile and keep going but then I would scream. I was like the little tea pot in the children's rhyme; I would blow my top.

When Sara became overwhelmed, she became ineffective. She wanted to quit because she felt defeated. Her burnout was impacting her ability to teach the way she wanted to teach. "All I wanted was for them to pay attention; I was very frustrated." For

example, she tried to be better organized with her lessons and spent hours doing test preparation. She planned every second of the day, but if a child or group of children acted out, she would lose patience and become sarcastic. "I had to bite my tongue; I was afraid of what might come out." Her classroom management skills were not improving, and her patience was wearing thin.

Day after day, Sara spent so much time on discipline that there was little time left for instruction; her students suffered the consequences. She tried everything she could think of to hook them and control the environment. "I spent hours on the intranet researching fun activities to interest them, but nothing worked." To add to her stress, her students' pre and posttest scores on the material she taught reflected little growth. "I felt like I was personally afraid of failing my kids." She became disillusioned and did not feel she was making an impact as a teacher because of her students' low summative test scores.

Research Question 3: How do the Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Interactions With Parents? How do Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Interaction With Colleagues? How do Teachers Perceive Their Burnout Impacting Interaction With Administrators?

Findings. Sara perceived that her burnout created a non productive relationship with parents, colleagues and her administrator. She stated that at times she felt bullied by all of them. She felt parents and colleagues dismissed her because she was young. She felt administrators were not approachable and made her feel her concerns were trivial. She also expressed the feeling that a more approachable and supportive administrator

would have made a difference to her and helped her through the period in her life when she experienced burnout.

When reflecting on her relationship with parents, she realized that they were really there to be supportive, and she should have seized the opportunity to collaborate with them. However, in the beginning she perceived their intentions as self-serving Looking back on the situation, Sara said, "I realize now how often I became defensive or over reacted to being questioned by parents about my handling of various situations, but I felt attacked.". For example,

> If I called home to discuss a problem with a student's misbehavior, I was questioned about my classroom management skills. I felt parents just did not understand how difficult it was to juggle a classroom full of 8-year-olds, and I felt overwhelmed and ineffective. Consequently, any suggestions they gave about how to work with the student fell on deaf ears because they seemed like excuses for their child's bad behavior. "We got home late, so Jerry did not sleep well last night, and he did not have time to do his homework." or maybe "Nancy is acting out because she is coming down with a cold." I suspected parents were enablers; they manufactured excuses for everything. I felt I was being undermined and that my abilities were consistently being challenged. I found dealing with parents to be tremendously stressful.

Sara felt isolated, and her relationship with her colleagues was strained because she internalized her feelings of burnout. At first, Sara tried reaching out to her colleagues, but they were very secretive, withdrawn, and suspicious of her attempts to share. "I

should have realized it was not going to be easy from day one. I brought chocolate cookies in to share with the staff; I left them in the faculty room with a note saying 'happy 1st day' when I came in the first day of school. Well, not even one had been taken from the tin at the end of the day. When I inquired, I was told everyone is on a diet, so I took them home." Sara explained that a lack of collegiality was foreign to her, because her college classes featured collaborative projects and had not prepared her to work in isolation. "I had an overwhelming feeling of loneliness and felt like my contemporaries only looked out for themselves."

Sara became resentful and wondered how her colleagues seemed to manage it all so well. She began to avoid any interaction with them. As a result, Sara said, "I arrived early for school and stayed in my classroom all day, even for lunch, just to dodge them." She realized after she transferred to a different school that avoiding them only fueled her feeling of isolation.

Sara felt as though her principal was unavailable, and she perceived him as unsupportive. Sara had very little interaction with her principal, and she felt uncomfortable bothering him because he spent most of his time in his office doing paper work. "Every time I stopped by his office, his door was closed or he was on the phone." For example, after her first call home regarding student discipline problems, she reached out to her administrator for additional training or support with parents. "I was embarrassed to ask, but I felt the conversation had not gone well and wanted to give him a heads-up. I also asked what I should have done differently. He told me not to stress, that what I felt was normal and I would know what to expect the next time." Sara felt like he

did not take her concerns seriously. Looking back on it, she now realized she could have read him wrong. He may have had confidence in her when she did not have confidence in herself, but at that time it added to her stress. "Maybe I was over reacting, but at the time I was upset and he did not help me to feel better." Because of her feelings of burnout, Sara perceived her principal thought she was not worth his efforts. She wished he would have been more supportive, reiterating the theme expressed by all the other participants.

The discrepant findings derived from the case narratives were not factored into the analysis because on both occasions the majority of the participants' experience supported research findings about burnout factors. John was the only participant who had very few complaints about his interactions with his superiors. Reeves (2012) suggested that some teachers do not feel respected by their administrators, which was not the case in John's situation. He felt respected, but he covered his insecurities with his ability to become one of the players. There is very little literature supporting John's relationship with his boss. Most of the literature spoke to the feeling of being under appreciated by the administrator (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013).

Another example of discrepant findings was Alex's experience. He did not feel as though he was isolated from his colleagues nor overloaded with work; however the other participants experienced the feeling of isolation and a heavy workload, both of which have been cited as burnout factors. Jane was another discrepant case and that finding was not factored into my recommendation because she was the only participant who did not feel she would benefit from a collaborative environment and she preferred to work in isolation.

Findings: Cross Case Analysis

Three themes emerged in one interview after another from analyzing the raw data as were previously stated in the data analysis section. First, teacher burnout is precipitated by many factors and cannot be traced back to one single issue. For example, the following were noted in the findings as contributing to burnout: a lack of support; being overworked; discipline problems with students; problems with state and district mandates; and the feeling of isolation from colleagues. Second, teachers' perceived feelings of burnout negatively impacted their classroom instruction. For example, they would become short on patience and either yell or become sarcastic and it would turn their students off to learning. In addition, some participants reported increased absenteeism so there was an inconsistency in student instruction. Third, teachers perceived their administrators had the ability to provide support that could help eliminate the feelings of teacher burnout. For example, listening to their concerns and providing opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and administration. What participants did was put a face on the abstract concept of teacher burnout. They offered portraits of what the issues look like in the day-to-day world of the classroom. In so doing, they shed light on the organizing questions of the study.

All five teachers interviewed had experienced the symptoms of burnout at some point in their teaching careers; they were candid in their descriptions of their experiences. Despite individual variations, there was considerable agreement among the participants about the sources of the stress they faced and how different types of stress affected their performance.

Each of these five cases was, in one way or another, unique. The newer teacher, Sara, as stated in her narrative, a heavy workload, classroom management, a lack of administrative support, and working in isolation were the chief causes of her perceived feelings of burnout. John perceived the heavy workload and lack of free time as stressful. He also conceded that he was new to the career. Given time and collaboration skills, he became comfortable and could handle anything that came his way. His only complaint was a lack of autonomy and support from administration. He was comfortable with the workload and did not feel isolated at any point in his career, except from his administration. Monica's heavy workload, lack of collaboration, and the demands made of a novice special education teacher caused her to question her career choice, but 18 years later she stated she was very happy in her present position and reluctant to say anything negative.

John, Alex, Monica and Sara expressed a desire to remain in education and work through any problems they encountered. The fifth participant, Jane, stood out because she was so disillusioned on every level. Jane expressed an unusual variation on the theme of isolation, she was the only teacher who did not see the value of collaboration; she preferred working alone. Her problems appeared to stem from deeper issues; in this way she differed markedly from the other participants. The next section focuses on these similarities.

Factors That Contribute to Teacher Burnout

This study has confirmed that several factors can contribute to the feelings of burnout and they vary from teacher to teacher. John, Jane, Monica, and Sara expressed

the feelings of being over worked and student misbehavior as contributing to their teacher

burnout. Monica and Sara noted that the feeling of isolation contributed to their feelings

of teacher burnout. John, Alex, Jane, Monica, and Sara all cited a lack of administrative

support as a contributing factor.

The following paragraphs explain, in further detail, the feelings each participant

expressed about workload. For example, as new teachers, Sara and John were unprepared

to handle instructional and non instructional duties. Jane and Monica, both veteran

teachers, were overwhelmed by non instructional duties and assignments. Sara, at the

beginning of her career as an elementary school teacher, was almost paralyzed by her

workload. She had started out confident in her ability. "I came into my classroom so

excited and ready to take on the world." Sara did her student teaching the second half of

the school year with her former third grade teacher, Mrs. A., and organizationally

everything was in place. She stated, "It wasn't until I was teaching in my own classroom

that I realized I missed out on learning how to manage both my non instructional duties

and my students. I know Mrs. A. thought she was doing me a favor by handling all the

non instructional duties, but she didn't in the long run. I felt overwhelmed by the

workload."

John, who was also new to teaching, had entered the field of education through

the alternate route program. He had not participated in any educational classes prior to

teaching so he was not prepared for all the instructional demands placed on him. "I had

to learn to write lesson plans that included Common Core standards and followed our

curriculum, and no one had ever taught me how to do it." John had come from the

corporate world where the demands were different. "I could leave work at work, but as a teacher it followed me home. I quickly learned that teaching is not a 9 to 5 job." He felt he had sacrificed his personal life to keep up with lesson plans and grading papers. "The workload and expectation of what I was supposed to accomplish were sometimes overwhelming. I did not know how much longer I could last, and I did contemplate quitting my job."

Jane felt the workload was stressful, due to state and local mandates.

I would spend every evening grading papers and writing lesson plans for students who do not appreciate me. One of the negative aspects, in my opinion, is the misinformation about the profession. Most "civilians" think it is easy; you work 10 months a year and have a 2-month vacation. I must find a job during the summer. I don't vacation, and during the school year I work like a dog. Within the last few years, the education system has gone through an overhaul, and accountability has affected my workload. State mandates place a heavy burden on us. We are now evaluated on student performance; if students do not make the grade, it affects our employment status.

Jane felt disillusioned and noted, "I thought the teaching workload would be a piece of cake after working in the business world and being held accountable if my register came up short or I lost an account, but it is not."

Prior to transferring to secondary education, Monica had been teaching special education on the elementary level for many years and loved her job. However, she felt her workload had increased dramatically over the last couple of years, due to state

mandates. She said, "When I taught on the elementary level, I had to attend IEP meetings during my half-hour prep. Out of 180 days of school, I had 43 preps taken away. There was no time to write lesson plans or prep for class." Monica felt overworked and worried that she might be letting her students down. She knew she had to make a change, either by transferring to a different work environment or quitting teaching altogether.

Regarding classroom management and student misbehavior both Sara and John had trouble communicating on a professional level with their students. They were both new teachers who were inconsistent with rules and discipline. As a result, their students tended to take them for granted, often testing the limits of their patience. Sara and John began to resent the lack of control they had with their students, and that affected their morale. Jane, a veteran teacher, had discipline problems because her students knew how to push her buttons to get a reaction. The follow paragraphs describe each participant's experience as it relates to the perceived impact of burnout on classroom instruction.

Sara noted that, in the beginning of her career, her uncertainty about how to handle discipline problems placed her in stressful situations. She said, "I was not sure how to handle my students when they acted out. My classroom management skills were ineffective; it flustered me." Sara found it very stressful, and often during that first year she wondered if she had made the right career choice.

John, who was also new to teaching, expressed the feeling that student misbehavior was a source of job-related stress. He said, "Currently I am feeling overwhelmed by the students who are disrespectful and think they know it all." He knew what it was like to be in the "real world" and to have a career; he didn't think teaching

would be as challenging as it was. He said, "I spend too much time correcting disruptive behavior, instead of teaching my lessons. I get frustrated because I give so much, and they do not appreciate it." John felt he had to be stoic all the time to get students' attention. "Whenever I would let down my guard and make a joke, they would take advantage and try to push to the limit. Then I would lose my temper because they were being disrespectful." John found this to be very stressful. The longer Jane taught, the more her classroom management skills diminished. Her patience with her students deteriorated. "I have heard every excuse in the book for falling asleep during class or not having homework done on time. I used to lose my temper, but now I just do not care. They are only hurting themselves. I am not going to get sick over it."

Sara felt isolated; she had no real interaction with teachers at her former school. The feeling of isolation was not limited to new teachers, like Sara. Monica, a veteran teacher, reported having very little interaction with colleagues at her former school and feeling isolated, too. However, both Sara and Monica made a deliberate effort to reach out to colleagues and embrace opportunities to collaborate when they transferred to their new schools. Alex and Jane were the only two teachers who felt isolation did not impact them.

John isolated himself and had no interaction because that was the norm in his previous job, and he was not used to collaboration. In Jane's case, she did not express the feeling of being isolated. She chose to isolate herself and not interact with anyone, including her family, and she did not feel it affected her feelings of burnout. She suggested she was never a "joiner" and loved her time alone; she did not need other

people to be happy. He was a team player and had a good rapport with everyone. The following are brief narratives outlining the experiences of the participants.

At her first school, Sara felt abandoned. She noted, "I felt so isolated in my old school, and it was not because I was the youngest teacher there; it was because the attitude was secretive." The teachers there were very closed-minded. She said, "They guarded their lesson plans like they were gold, afraid someone would steal their idea and take credit for it." They were, according to Sara, especially unwelcoming and suspicious of anyone new to the school, which added to her feeling of isolation. Even her teacher mentor, who was appointed by her principal, was guarded and did not extend herself to Sara. Monica felt isolated but tried to be available for everyone, and as a result she did not have time to associate with her colleagues. She also found herself to be envious because they actually had down time to interact with each other, while she did not have a minute to herself, let alone time to socialize with others. Monica felt as though she had to make every minute count and her colleagues could not relate to her because they just did not understand her level of responsibility. She was being pulled in several directions at once, and, because of her workload, she made a conscious decision to focus on her job and not interact with colleagues. Jane was an exception; she preferred to work on her own, and therefore deliberately isolated herself. She said, "I like to work alone. I always have, even at my old school." When referring to her colleagues, she shrugged and answered, "I do not need them; what have they ever done for me?"

A lack of feeling supported by their administrator was a reoccurring theme as a contributing factor to teacher burnout in all five case study narratives. For example, Jane

simply stated that her administrators were not approachable. "In fact, I feel they are out to get me." She felt as though administrators watched everything she did from the time she signed in until she left at the end of the day. Jane said, "They don't respect me, and I don't respect them because they do not support me. I just want them to leave me alone." Jane was convinced that her classroom intercom was bugged so that administrators could spy on her. Jane even suggested that her administrators asked other teachers to spy on her. She noted, "Every time I have a problem with a student they get on my case, like I am doing something wrong." Jane felt misunderstood and as though she had to defend everything she did. She described a situation in which administrators accused her of yelling too loudly and told her to "get a grip on it." Jane concluded by saying, "I feel like I am not heard, and I cannot talk to them."

Monica also felt that her principal was not approachable. When she wanted to talk about compromise and a way to satisfy the state mandates imposed on her and still make sure her students received the best education a special needs student deserves, her suggestions were ignored. Consequently, she gave up. Monica even devised an alternative plan that addressed the issues she felt were stressful and impacted her ability to be the best teacher she could be. However, she was told her ideas would not work. Her principal would not even share her ideas with school district administrators. According to Sergiovanni, Starratt, and Cho (2013) people in leadership positions have a duty to bring out the leadership in others by supporting and encouraging proactive thinking. Balu et al. (2010) also noted that leaders can make a positive impact on teacher retention by supporting their staff.

Teachers' Perception of How Burnout Impacts Classroom Instruction

All five of the participants felt their classroom instruction was hampered by their feelings of burnout. Sara, as a new teacher, had trouble balancing instructional and non instructional duties, along with discipline problems, and felt her short-comings affected her classroom instruction. John, also a new teacher, found he had problems, not only with instructional duties but also with time management, and that affected his classroom instruction. Alex, a veteran teacher, felt his dissatisfaction, caused by not being able to teach in the style he believed benefited his students most, affected his interaction with his students and his morale, which in turn impacted his classroom instruction. Jane, a veteran teacher, had discipline problems that plagued her classroom instruction. Monica, also a veteran teacher, felt she was pulled in too many directions at once to be as effective in her classroom as she knew she could be, and this saddened her.

Sara felt ineffective as a teacher and that there was a direct relationship between her burnout and her ability to provide good classroom instruction to her students. She mentioned that she would become flustered easily because she was unsure of her abilities. For example, if she had her back turned to the class, anything could happen and it usually did. She felt like she had to have eyes in the back of her head. She noted, "If Sue's pencil dropped on the floor, there would be a free for all. Johnny would steal her pencil, and a scuffle would begin over who owned the pencil." The next thing she knew, everyone would start taking sides, and the lesson would stop. "My feeling of burnout because I was overly tired impacted my ability to be an effective teacher."

John's burnout affected his attitude; he would become sarcastic and his banter

with students proved hurtful. He found that when he was over tired he had little patience with them and would lose his temper and yell, causing his students to withdraw emotionally. In addition, when John became too stressed, he would call in sick, so a substitute teacher would be hired to essentially babysit his class, causing his students to miss out on quality instruction.

Jane admitted to just giving up and not caring about whether or not her students understood the information she was trying to teach them. She conceded that their lack of respect and her feelings of burnout caused her to give up on teaching them anything. She stated, "I worked so hard to create lessons and plans. If they had been more appreciative of my time, things could have been different. My students' misbehavior was stressful to me and created a poor instructional environment."

Monica felt as though she was not as good a teacher to her students because her workload stressed her. She also felt pulled in too many directions at once. Adding to her stress, she never felt totally prepared to teach her classes. Monica was afraid she was not providing her students with everything they needed to grow and become self-sufficient adults.

Teachers' Perceptions of Burnout Impacting Interaction

Three of the five participants perceived that their burnout affected their interactions with parents. Sara was intimidated being a new teacher on the elementary level. Luckily her classes were small and she only had 20 parents to deal with each year. John, being a high school teacher had over 150 parents to deal with each year because of block scheduling. Each semester he would have a new set of students and on back to

school night he would become an entertainer trying to avoid the real issues; he just wanted to please the parents. Jane was combative and also being a high school teacher had to deal with large classes and about 150 parents each year too.

Monica basically had good relations with parents, although Monica sometimes put their needs above her own needs. When she was at the elementary level her special education classes were very small, usually 7 or 8 students so she had a very close relationship with parents. On the high school level her classes were not as large as Alex or Jane's classes. They usually numbered 13 or 14 unless she was doing in class support then her numbers were higher, yet she retained a good relationship with parents. Alex had honors students so his classes were medium in size so, he saw about 100 parents all total each year and he retained a great relationship with them.

In some cases, staff members were unfamiliar with working in collaboration with colleagues and felt awkward reaching out to them. For example, sometimes John had very little interaction with other teachers. He unintentionally isolated himself because working in collaboration was foreign to him. In his previous job everyone was in competition with one another and very guarded; it was a different world. Yet, he discovered once he had the opportunity to co teach a lesson he had a very rewarding experience. Monica and Sara on the other hand had trouble as elementary teachers finding common ground with their colleagues. They always felt like an outsider. However, both when they started teaching on the secondary level were embraced by their colleagues and found many opportunities to collaborate.

John's feelings of burnout made him feel insecure because of his lack of

experience and he had trouble communicating on a business level with his administrator. He had a social relationship with his administrators and was accepted as "one of the guys" but at times he would have liked to have felt validated as a teacher by his administrator as well. Jane reported her feelings of burnout fueled her negative attitude toward her administrators. She mentioned that on more than one occasion they would tell her she need an attitude adjustment. Monica and Alex stated they felt their burnout made them leery of approaching their administrators. As result, they did not extend themselves and rarely interacted with their administrator. They also stated that they perceived their administrators did not seem to want to establish collaborative relationships with them either, but added it may have stemmed from their feelings of burnout.

Alex felt his burnout made him resentful of the mandates imposed on him, and he perceived his administrators did not appreciate his expertise as an educator and this affected his interaction with them. He said, "Having to follow district and school-level mandates is counterproductive. Most of our school administrators have not been in the classroom in years. Tell me, what do they know about teaching?".

Looking back, John perceived that the stress of trying to keep up his charade made him more vulnerable. Eventually, he began to avoid contact with his administrators, because he saw them as his enemy. He was afraid everything he said would be taken out of context and he would be labeled a trouble maker. He became resentful that he had to cater to their moods. He began to overreact to administrative criticism of any kind and found he was apprehensive about interacting with them on any level.

Overall, all five participants admitted their feelings of burnout negatively impacted their interactions with parents, colleagues and or their superiors and that negativity added to their stress. John and Sara both felt insecure about approaching parents, colleagues and their administrators because of their lack of experience. Alex interacted well with parents and colleagues but not with his administrator, he felt his input would not be treated respectfully because he felt devalued. Monica also interacted well with parents, but not always with her colleagues nor administrator because she was afraid she would be perceived as not being proficient if she admitted she needed help. Jane thought everyone was against everything she did and that if she were to approach them for help they would be unavailable.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Several strategies were employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the information collected during this qualitative study (Maxwell, 2012). The data were then carefully studied and coded, as suggested by Saldana (2012). One of the strategies used to ensure validity of the information collected during the interview process was member checking, because it facilitates reliable and meaningful inferences from the data collected (Seidman, 2012). Member checking, as described by Dicks et al. (2013), is a process in which participants have the opportunity to review the data that were collected. In this study, participants reviewed their transcribed interviews, in accordance with the process of member checking, to assure accuracy of the reporting.

Summary

Many factors contribute to teacher burnout as reported in the findings and supported by research. A heavy workload, classroom discipline problems, the feeling of isolation and a lack of support from administrators was common among most of the participants. In addition, the participants felt that burnout had a negative impact on their classroom instruction and that their interaction with parents, colleagues and administrators. In addition, three themes seemed to appear from the responses. First, teacher burnout cannot be accredited to one issue and can surface for a variety of reasons. Second, burnout could affect a teacher's dedication to students and adversely impact student learning. Third, teachers perceived that if they were more supported by all the stakeholders, especially their administrator in a collaborative manner, it could help reduce or eliminate instances of burnout.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

I investigated the causes and impact of teacher burnout. Throughout the past 2 decades, thousands of teachers left their chosen profession because of teacher burnout. Teacher burnout is very real and not limited to new teachers; it also takes a mental and physical toll on veteran teachers. The consequences of teacher burnout, if it goes unchecked, are both academic and financial. Each year teacher burnout costs school districts billions of dollars to hire and train new staff (Nash, 2010). The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a clearer understanding of the factors that contribute to teacher burnout and how teacher burnout could affect student achievement and how teacher burnout affects teacher interactions with the other stakeholders within the community of learners.

Five teachers from one high school in New Jersey were asked a series of open-ended questions that were related to the following research questions:

1. What factors contribute to teacher burnout?

2. How do the teachers perceive their burnout impacting classroom instruction?

3. How do the teachers perceive their burnout impacting interactions with parents? How do teachers perceive their burnout impacting interaction with colleagues? How do teachers perceive their burnout impacting interaction with administrators?

The responses were color coded to correspond with the research questions and then organized thematically to draw the conclusions expressed below. Three main themes emerged from the interviews. First, teacher burnout can be triggered by a variety of issues. Second, the findings indicated teacher's perceived that burnout could negatively impact classroom learning. Third, teachers perceived that a more positive work environment fostered by collaboration and supported by administration could help reduce teacher burnout. The responses obtained from the study participants on the 15 interview questions helped to formulate the foundation for recommendations made.

Interpretation of the Findings

The following section highlights four conclusions based on the themes that emerged from the study.

Conclusion 1: Teacher burnout could lead to attrition if the various contributing factors are not rectified.

Conclusion 2: Teacher's perceived burnout could have a negative impact on student learning because of teachers' decreasing levels of commitment to students when they experience burn out.

Conclusion 3: Teachers can benefit from a more collaborative environment.

Conclusion 4: Administrators have the ability to make a positive impact on the school environment.

Each conclusion is drawn from the study's findings, which are discussed in detail below.

Conclusion 1: Teacher Burnout Could Lead to Attrition

The interview process produced a plethora of information regarding the factors stoking teacher burnout. Supporting that finding, Clandinin (2014) noted in his research on attrition that teachers leave the profession for a variety of reasons. Contributing factors such as increased workloads, student misbehavior, isolation, and the lack of administrative support and how that affected teacher satisfaction and burnout were validated as variables.

New teachers are especially susceptible because their college preparation programs could not provide them with the real-world experience they receive on the job, and teaching can be an overwhelming task. Teachers must become acclimated to a new curriculum and state and/or Common Core standards. They need to adjust to their students, parents, school demographics and climate, and district policies. According to Marinell and Coca (2013), if new teachers are unable to make that adjustment they feel overworked, and the stress often times leads to burnout and attrition.

For example, in the cases of Sara and John, both were new teachers who knew content area backward and forward, but they both felt overwhelmed and overworked because they were not skilled yet in planning, organization, and time management. The findings indicated and research supported the premise that an unrealistic workload, as well as the volume of work associated with lesson planning and grading, along with a lack of empowerment contributed to teacher burnout (Fernet et al. 2012). Just trying to fit everything into each day was stressful. This problem is common to many new teachers; it is an adjustment because they are faced with so many new challenges (Goodwin, 2012).

Sara stated that she felt overworked, because she did not know how to accomplish

everything she needed to do in a day's time and admitted to wondering if she should quit.

According to Flook et al. (2013), it is not uncommon for new teachers like Sara to feel

overwhelmed with combining instructional and non instructional duties, but it does

become easier with time and training.

Sara thought she knew all about being a teacher. Mrs. A., her cooperating teacher,

had taught her, but once the realization hit Sara that she was on her own to figure

everything out, she became stressed and as mentioned above, began to doubt herself.

John felt overworked and stressed, due to his non instructional duties. He went home

every night with work to do and stated the time commitment was unbearable; he was

miserable. John's perception of an unrealistic workload, according to Skovolt and

Trotter-Mathison (2010) was exacerbating, because he had yet to develop strategies that

would help him build flexibility into his day. John always felt pressured to conform.

As new teachers Sara and John were not alone. Johnson et al. (2012) suggested

that many veteran teachers also feel overworked if they have not acquired the skills they

need to manage their workload. Jane and Monica, both veteran teachers also expressed

the feeling of being over-extended at work. And like Sara and John they feel it affects

every aspect of their lives. Part of Monica's job was to file reports on her students'

progress. She worked day and night just to keep up with all those reports. Monica's

situation as a special education teacher is not unique. According to McCarthy et al.

(2013), many special education teachers have the same experience. They are pressured

and must adhere to state and local mandates or their district loses funding. In addition, teachers may lose their jobs, so the stakes are very high to produce.

Segura (2011) suggested that many times feeling overworked is related to being unorganized and over extended. Larrivee (2012) confirmed that the feeling of being overworked can contribute to stress levels, because it is often a symptom of burnout. Jane felt assigning 1 hour of homework per night to each student was just busy work for her students and a waste of her time. Fisher (2011) confirmed Jane's feelings suggesting that many times students and teachers feel overworked because there is too much emphasis in education on homework for homework's sake, instead of meaningful assignments that prepare students for careers.

Sara and Jane expressed the feelings that students' misbehavior and dealing with difficult parents added tremendous stress to their day. John also felt irritated with his students when they did not take school seriously. When teachers, as in Sara and Jane's experiences, encounter students who act out, it affects their ability to teach. This adds to their frustration levels (Ratcliff et al., 2010). One of the most overwhelming problems for teachers is their failure to manage the environment in their classrooms (Reeves, 2012).

Donaldson and Johnson (2011) described classroom management and student misbehavior as genuine stress factors, and these factors contributed to the type of feelings Sara experienced. Teachers set high goals for themselves, and when classroom management issues get in the way they feel inadequate. Those feelings of inadequacy sometimes culminate in attrition (Buchanan, 2010). Ratcliff et al. (2010) affirmed Sara's

experience of student misbehavior breeding a climate of disrespect in which students continue to act out even when they are asked to stop.

Jane's feelings about student misbehavior and attitudes are reaffirmed by Nash (2010), who noted that it is a universal problem; many teachers become stressed and leave teaching because they cannot deal with their students acting out. Aloe et al. (2014) noted that students have changed, as Jane suggested, and that student misbehavior can be stressful at any stage in a teacher's career.

John's feelings are reflective of a new teacher's experience with classroom management, especially a teacher who has never had any prior experience in a classroom (Brown, 2012). Fernet et al. (2012) suggested the apparent notion to a new teacher is that students do not care about learning if they are rowdy in class. However, Fernet et al. hinted that the contrary may be true, that many times the students acting out are doing so out of frustration because they do not understand the material. By acting out, they call attention away from their lack of success, so that their behavior can be blamed for their failing. Even though that may be the case, teachers continue to cite student misbehavior and the feeling of not being respected as reasons for leaving the profession (Hong, 2010).

The feeling of isolation from colleagues was cited as a factor by Sara and Monica. Sara stated that she almost quit her job because she felt overwhelmed and longed for support from her colleagues or her administrator, but she received no additional training. Monica felt isolated, due to her overwhelming schedule and the feeling her colleagues were unavailable and did not understand her commitment. Isenberg, Glazerman, Johnson, Dolfin, and Bleeker (2010) suggested that, without a quality support system in

place, educators expressed the feelings of isolation associated with burnout. Literature affirms Sara's feeling that working in isolation is stressful, especially to new teachers. As a veteran teacher, Brown (2012) noted that "old school" style teachers tended to work in isolation; that was just the way it was done. However, within the last decade or so, new teachers fresh out of college have been collaborating on projects for years and are more motivated when they are allowed to work with their peers.

The situation that Sara faced was extremely stressful because she always felt like the odd person out. According to Fernet et al. (2012), that type of environment of feeling like an outsider breeds stress and burnout. Connecting Sara's feelings to the relevant research, many teachers leave the profession due to the feeling of isolation (Ingersoll, 2012). Nash (2010) suggested mentors could make a difference and should pave the way for new teachers by helping them to adjust to their new role.

John felt insecure with his colleagues, and, as previously stated, was unsure of just how much to trust them. In a study conducted by Flook et al. (2013), some new teachers who were considering leaving the profession admitted that they lacked self-confidence around their colleagues. Consequently, like John, they avoided contact with other teachers. Leiter et al. (2014) confirmed that people who felt burnout at work tended to withdraw and isolate themselves from their colleagues, just as John stated he did.

Monica was so over worked that she isolated herself by not interacting with her colleagues, and this only added to her feelings of burnout. According to research conducted by McCarthy et al. (2012), when teachers fail to connect it is more difficult for them to cope with stress. It was difficult for Monica to relate to her colleagues. Skaalvik

and Skaalvik (2011) noted that when teachers are fatigued it is difficult for them to form

relationships with their contemporaries. Marinell and Cocoa (2013), suggested the stress

related to feelings of isolation can result in teacher attrition.

Sara, Jane, Monica, and Alex did not feel supported by their administrators, and

this added to their burnout. As a new teacher, Sara reached out to her administrator

because she felt as though she was floundering. However, she received no guidance.

Reeves (2012) suggested this type of situation can contribute to feelings of burnout, as

employer and employee develop a combative relationship. Student discipline and dealing

with parents' attitudes in general, according to participants, was overwhelming. As noted

in Jane's case study experience, she reported being verbally attacked by her students'

parents. Not being defended by her administrator added to her stress and fueled her

decision to retire.

Sara thought her principal did not care about her or her success; she felt

insignificant. Fisher (2011), when studying the turnover rate of teachers, noted that new

teachers need more support and guidance if school districts want to retain them.

According to research, many teachers leave the field of education because they feel

unappreciated and taken for granted (Fernet et al., 2012). Flook et al. (2013) explained

that, when teachers feel their principal has let them down and their efforts are not being

acknowledged, they often resign and move on to other schools. That was true of Sara.

Goodwin (2013) concluded that principals need to acquire the knack of making their staff

feel valued, if they want to retain them.

Jane's feelings about her administrators were toxic, and she seemed to enjoy being a rebel. Scheopner (2010) suggested that teachers like Jane who are combative have trouble interacting with administrators. Many new teachers such as John have expressed the feeling that they were uncomfortable with their administrators because they lacked confidence in their ability to teach. Marshall (2013) suggested teachers need opportunities to discuss instruction and evaluation with their administrators. Teachers may unknowingly harbor feelings of resentment, as Jane clearly did, against superiors who do not validate their abilities. Kipps-Vaughan (2013) described how the lack of administrative support from superiors makes teachers feel devalued.

Monica's perception that she was powerless to make a difference is common to the experience of other teachers who have had initiatives forced on them by their administrators. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) pointed out that the lack of self-efficacy can culminate in feelings of burnout. Sterrett et al. (2011) suggested that, when administrators change their mindsets and foster teacher leadership by dialoguing and interacting with teachers, the educational community benefits.

The failure to provide teachers with resources and tools they need to do their job can add to their stress (Marzano & Heflebower, 2012). Without having to ask for it, Monica just wanted her administrator to fight for her and get her some relief and coverage or resources to compensate her for all the time she spent in meetings and writing reports. Some teachers like Monica find themselves at odds with their principals. They do not feel supported, and they feel that unfair and unrealistic demands are placed on them (Martinetz, 2012). Supporting this finding, Scheopner (2010) suggested there is

a direct correlation between a lack of support and teacher stress. Smith and Finch (2010) noted that each teacher's experience varies according to content area. Consequently, implementing lesson plans that fulfill educational mandates, engage students, and advance their learning is difficult to master without quality mentoring and support from colleagues. Santoro (2011) also supports the finding that a lack of administrative and collegial support can lead to teacher burnout.

Alex said he felt disillusioned and on the verge of burnout because of his lack of autonomy on the job. Because of school and district mandates, he was forced to infuse technology into his lessons several times a week, which increased his workload. In addition, Alex did not feel that the technology requirement enriched his students' learning experience. Merrill and Stuckey (2014) noted that increased workloads due to state mandates and the volume and range of workload that forced technology on staff, as in Alex's case, seem unfair to some teachers. This is especially the case when their professional judgment as to how to reach students is devalued (Santoro, 2011).

Alex added that laptops that did not work properly increased his stress, yet he was pressured to adhere to the mandate. Compounding the stress, all the participants felt there was no support system in place. There was a lack of cooperation from their administrators, and there were very few opportunities to problem solve with colleagues. Study participants also felt they were being treated with a lack of respect by their supervisors, a factor that, according to Parker et al. (2012), stymied any attempt for self-actualization. Balu et al. (2010) noted that there is little or no incentive for teachers to excel and grow when they feel unsupported and their ambitions to improve are stifled by

their administrators. Louis and Wahlstrom (2011) observed that teachers often feel

unappreciated by principals who have it within their ability to empower their staff but fail

to follow through.

Alex felt unmotivated because of leadership mandates that he believed were

counterproductive to good teaching practice; that depressed him. According to Kouzes

and Posner (2013), is not unusual for individuals to feel that way because, like Alex, they

perceive they are powerless to change things. Parker et al. (2012) suggested that when

teachers feel as though their classroom instruction is not valuable they become

discouraged and despondent. Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2013) confirmed that

observation and suggested it may be one reason for such high teacher attrition rates.

Sara was not alone in her perceived feelings that her students' parents were

questioning her management skills; many teachers who are new face the same insecure

feelings (Scherer, 2012). Many books have been written to help teachers learn to handle

problematic parents, a fact which suggests that the problem exists. Whitaker (2011)

confirmed this situation is problematic for some educators and has authored several

books to help teachers. Wilde (2014) also identified parental relationships as a problem

for many teachers and responded by suggesting 80 strategies to assist teachers when they

are faced with difficult parents.

In addition, Sara put on a happy, over-confident face and kept her insecurities

from her colleagues. She was embarrassed to admit to feeling burnout; after all, she was

new to the profession. Sara's feelings of burnout also influenced the way she responded

to her colleagues; she tried to pretend she was in control and did not need their help

because she felt they were not supportive. According to Buchanan, Prescott, Schuck, Aubusson, Burke, and Louviere (2013) early career teachers "find it discouraging to be in the company of colleagues who are unsupportive or inconsistent in their attitudes and behavior (p.118). Sara was unhappy and she contemplated quitting.

The environment in Sara's school became toxic for her, and the stress never seemed to go away. Gray and Taie (2015) noted that the feeling of working in loneliness is one of the reasons new teachers leave within their first 5 years. If beginning teachers have not had the opportunity to interact with parents in a teacher preparation program or during their student teaching, they are more likely to be ill at ease and not confident in their abilities (Ingersoll, 2012). That was John's experience. Hong (2010) suggested new teachers are more inclined to overcompensate, as John did at back-to-school night, when he tried to charm his way through the meeting.

Alex stated that he had a good working relationship with parents and colleagues because he was always available, which is a common trait for individuals who experience burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).They sometimes put their own needs on the back burner to accommodate others because they feel as though they have no control over their own situations (Larrivee, 2012).Teachers who experience burnout have a tendency to want to make things better for other people, so they take on the role of a teacher leader and problem solver. Reeves (2012) suggested that if teachers like Alex were shown more respect for their expertise, they would not feel devalued and contemplate attrition.

Jane's feelings that her administrators were not supportive are expressed every day by teachers who feel they are not appreciated by their administrators (Reeves, 2012).

According to McCarthy, et al. (2012), there are many issues that stress teachers like Jane, but the lack or perceived lack of respect and support from their administrators affects their self-esteem. Jane was distrustful of her colleagues. Many teachers who isolate themselves are insecure about their ability to teach and they have trouble relating to their colleagues (Cooper & Conley, 2013). In Jane's case, the factors that contributed to her burnout led to attrition.

Conclusion 2: Teacher Burnout Impacts Student Learning

Teachers perceived that burnout could have a negative impact on student learning because of teachers' decreasing levels of commitment to students when they experience burn out.Teacher burnout can impact the quality of education (Larrivee, 2012). Academically, burnout can manifest itself in teacher absenteeism, whether the absence is physical or mentally tuning out. Teacher absenteeism impacts students on two levels. Physical absenteeism requires the hiring of a substitute, and the substitute may not be as qualified in the content-area as the regular teacher (Marzano et al., 2011). Teachers who mentally tune out struggle to get through the day (Kouzes & Posner, 2012), and their students suffer from their lack of preparedness. In poverty-stricken urban areas the turnover rate is higher than in other areas. Consequently, students often do not have the opportunity to learn from experienced educators.

Research reflects Sara's perception that her burnout had a negative effect on her classroom instruction. Her feeling of being overworked impacted student learning, because she would lose patience with her students (Ratcliff et al., 2010). The climate in the classroom would become one of chaos, and little learning would take place.

According to McCarthy et al. (2010), when teachers become agitated and cannot control their students' behavior, they feel ineffective as teachers. Sara also felt her lack of organizational skills affected classroom learning, because she had trouble keeping her students on task, which was consistent with the research (Goodwin, 2012).

John's impression that he was letting his students down confirms Skaalvik and Skaalvik's (2011) research on teacher attrition and how one's frame of mind can affect perception. Beginning teachers like John who have no clinical experience often feel as though they are not making a positive impact on student learning if they cannot reach all of their students. They are demoralized because their focus is on the 1 % they cannot reach instead of the 99% they can reach (Santoro, 2011). Reeves (2012) confirmed that when teachers feel ineffective they can become impatient as John did, defensive, or just begin to shut down.

Jane's defeatist attitude carried over into the classroom, and her students were aware of her dissatisfaction. According to Kipps-Vaughan (2013), when teachers like Jane stop caring, students begin to act out even more than usual, and classroom instruction suffers. Fernet et al. (2012) suggested a pessimistic attitude can negatively impact learning, because teachers like Jane are resigned to the idea that things will never improve, and it stifles students' motivation.

Monica's special needs students were used to routine (Murawski &Spencer, 2011), and when Monica needed to deviate from the schedule she became frazzled. Her body language changed, and she rushed around trying to make the most of every minute, which affected her students. According to research conducted by Benzer (2012) on 100

teachers in Turkey about body language, body language is universal, students in general are sensitive and can sense emotional changes, and those changes can impact the way they behave. Monica's students were particularly sensitive to her and her moods, and teacher stress can serve as a catalyst for students' off-task behavior (Ratcliff et al., 2010), which added to Monica's feelings of burnout.

Sara's burnout also impacted her students' learning. She planned every second of the day, and if a child or group of children acted out, it started a chain reaction. Before she knew it, she had lost control of the students, as well as control of the day's schedule. Day after day she spent so much time on discipline, there was little time left for instruction. Sara knew that teachers who experienced burnout were also more likely to lash out at students and have little or no patience. As such symptoms increase, their students suffer academically and emotionally from their teachers' inconsistency. Sara wanted to be a good teacher, but she knew there were days she was not getting through to her students.

In John's case, he began to resent the many hours he spent developing lesson plans and grading homework assignments. This impacted student achievement directly, because he was so late in returning school work that his students had little guidance and direction for subsequent assignments. John found very little time for rest and relaxation with his friends. In the corporate world, he could leave the day behind when he left work. However, as a teacher, his day extended into the night. His lack of free time negatively affected his morale and attitude. When dealing with students, John had very little patience with them.

In Alex's case, as stated previously, he felt defeated before he even began his day, because he felt school-level mandates cramped his teaching style and forced him to teach in a manner that was not relevant to his students' needs. He resented the lack of autonomy, and he felt pressured into conforming, which manifested as stress and burnout. Alex felt that the time he spent on technology was a waste; his students' academic needs were not being met. Because he thought his students suffered, due to inconsistencies in his instruction, his usual enthusiasm waned, and his students picked up on this change. Alex found he was starting to act unprofessionally. For example, he complained aloud to his students about the technology mandate and expressed his feelings of burnout. Alex felt his dissatisfaction trickled down to his classroom, because his teaching style changed, which negatively impacted his students' achievement.

As noted in Jane's case, teachers who experience burnout can also be short on patience or can adopt a defeatist attitude. They give up and just go through the motions, not caring if they engage their students (Muller et al., 2011). According to Johnson et al. (2012), a defeatist attitude can negatively impact classroom learning, especially when teachers relinquish control of the classroom to the students. Mendler and Mendler (2011) suggested teacher-to-student interaction can become combative. The stress and burnout Jane experienced filtered into the classroom. Her students could sense the tension, and this negatively impacted student learning.

Jane's lack of rapport with administrators, students, and parents created a negative environment for student achievement. She perceived a lack of support from her administration. If she reported a student for misbehavior, her administration turned

everything around and made her the bad guy. For example, she said that when she would write a student up for an infraction she received a lecture that she brought it on herself. Jane said she was told that she was too serious and she needed to change her style and be a fun teacher. She spent more time correcting student behavior than she did teaching. Burnout can, as in Jane's case, produce a counterproductive environment, due to a lack of patience and understanding (Hong, 2010). However, Jane felt she did not need to adjust her teaching strategies, because she was a perfect teacher.

Monica stated that the huge workload she encountered at the elementary level affected her ability to be the best teacher she could be, and this was stressful to her. She felt her inability to perform her job affected her students' success. She worried that she was short changing her students because she was pulled in too many directions at once and had little time to focus on student achievement. According to Herman and Reinke (2014), when teachers are unhappy, stressed, burned out, and feeling unappreciated, it is difficult for them to feel they are anything more than a negative influence. This was Monica's perception.

Burnout impacts the organizational structure of a school district on two levels. Because district funding is based on student achievement, when student scores do not meet specified standards, sometimes districts are unable to hire the best teachers because of a lack of funds. Increased teacher absenteeism can also further increase the work loads of over-worked staff that pick up the slack by taking time away from their own instructional duties to brief substitutes (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). In addition, burnout can impact retention of caring teachers who are sometimes the only positive role models

some students encounter during their lifetimes. Consequently, it is important to understand the causes of burnout and implement strategies that effectively reduce teacher burnout and attrition.

Conclusion 3: Collaboration Benefits Teachers

Teachers could benefit from a collaborative environment, such as a professional learning community. Dufour et al. (2010) concluded that effective teacher outreach programs that met on a weekly basis and promoted discussion of problems and issues such as classroom management, organization/time management, time for collaboration, and stress management techniques improved teacher retention rates, because teachers could discuss problems and issues that they found to be stressful. Individuals need social learning activities and opportunities to communicate their needs. Four of the five teachers who participated in this study stated that they benefited from collaboration.

Sara was unhappy and felt isolated and nonproductive during the time she was experiencing burnout. Marzano et al. (2011) suggested that when teachers have the opportunity to work together and share their knowledge, they are more productive. When Sara started at this site said she felt empowered to discussion problems with her department head, he was nonjudgmental, and provided her with opportunities to observe and work with teachers who had mastered the skills she knew she was lacking.

John said he always felt like he was playing catch-up. That feeling led to resentment, which left him feeling inadequate and burned out. It was not until John worked on a unit with a colleague to teach an interdisciplinary lesson that he began to

understand how to manage his time. Both John and his students benefited from the collaboration.

Alex enjoyed working with his colleagues. In the responses he provided, he indicated that he inspired co teaching activities and professional sharing of content area material and teaching strategies that improved his students' educational experience. According to Caine and Caine (2010), professional learning communities promote a positive environment, because the setting fosters collaborative problem-solving. In addition, teacher support groups that facilitate the exchange of ideas can lead to teacher empowerment, which in turn leads to teacher satisfaction.

At the beginning of her career, Monica shared that she spent many long hours on her own, just trying to figure out how to engage students, write lesson plans, and handle discipline. Like Sara, she was in a non collaborative work environment. Monica knew she needed more opportunities to learn from and dialogue with colleagues, if she were going to remain in the field of education, so she sought out classes and support groups to fill in the gaps in her experience. However, she was reluctant to share about her experiences at this school.

Stress and burnout can stem from a variety of reasons, as noted in research question one. Based on the conceptual framework for this study, Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory of scaffolding and mentoring through communication, I applied this theory that originally focused on student to teacher development. After the study was completed, the findings indicated that a lack of opportunities to collaborate with colleagues can contribute to the feeling of teacher stress, resulting in teacher

absenteeism, which can negatively impact student achievement (Gray & Taie, 2015). If teachers feel devalued, it is difficult for them to function in a positive manner with students. However, in relationship to the conceptual framework, Muller, Gorrow, and Fiala (2011) suggested that through increased communication, problem-solving and the development of cognitive skills, teachers can feel as though they are making a difference. Fullan (2014) suggested positive thinking can produce positive results and, through collaborative activities, colleagues and administrators can produce positive outcomes.

Conclusion 4. Administrators Impact School Environment

Administrators have the ability to make a positive impact on school environment. Sergiovanni et al. (2013) suggested educational leaders have the ability and duty to empower their staff by providing them with various opportunities to collaborate and develop professionally. Sara sought the opportunity to take workshops and classes, but was persuaded by her principal that they were unnecessary because she had just graduated from college. He told her she just needed more time on the job to improve. When she reached out to her colleagues and wanted to share, they were suspicious and chose to work in isolation because that was the climate fostered in that school. The teachers in her old school were basically judged against each other, so they did not want to collaborate. Her principal had the ability to promote a more collaborative environment but chose instead to detach himself and be content with the status quo. Consequently, her second year of teaching Sara transferred from that school and found a more collaborative climate in a new school. Sterrett (2012) noted that, if leaders stimulated a culture of reflective teachers and concurrently facilitated collaborative teams, the team members

would be less stressed and more satisfied in their work environment. That is an observation that has application to Sara's case.

Alex wanted the opportunity to become more of a teacher leader, so he basically created a professional learning community with his colleagues on his own. He knew if he asked his administrator for support he may have met with resistance. Alex meets with his colleagues in the morning or during a prep period to create a lesson plan bank and share materials and resources. He did not have the confidence that his administrator would support his efforts, so he chose not to broadcast them. However, had Alex felt his administrator were approachable and supportive, a collaborative framework could have been implemented throughout his school.

The conceptual framework for this study was Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory, which suggests that individuals benefit from collaborative problem-solving and develop cognitive skills that help them cope with stressful situations, such as burnout. However, the relationship between the finding and the conceptual framework of social interaction is complicated. For example, the framework is based on social interaction and discussion to reduce the symptoms of burnout. The factors contributing to teacher burnout--including heavy workload, student misbehavior, working in isolation, and lack of administrative support--have a common theme based on detachment and a lack of collaboration. The relationship between classroom instruction and teacher burnout can be manipulated to fit the mold. Through discourse and emotional support, teachers who experience burnout have an avenue to learn how to resolve their feelings.

Discovering a solution to the problem or a healthy way of dealing with burnout can reverse the situation and create a positive effect on classroom learning.

The concept is that collaboration fosters new perspectives, and participants hone reasoning skills through social interaction and shared responsibilities. First, when shared with colleagues, a heavy workload can become more manageable as duties are divided. Second, dialoguing about stressful situations removes the feeling of working in isolation, because it stimulates a partnership and builds a trusting foundation for solving problems, such as student misbehavior, or for developing a collaborative environment with administration. When individuals such as Sara become overwhelmed and stressed, their cognitive powers of reasoning may become closed off. However, through social interaction, as it relates to the framework and dialoguing, they are stimulated to learn new coping skills (Moll, 2013). New teachers need guidance and more opportunities to express feelings as a means to finding a solution to problems, such as how to organize their day and how to manage non instructional duties as more experienced teachers do (Hopkins & Spillane, 2014).

Sara suggested that at the time she was experiencing burnout she could have used a friendly ear to discuss her problems, not as a gripe session but as a problem-solving opportunity. She wanted a chance to interact with someone more experienced that could help her learn to help herself. When Sara felt stressed, she had trouble making good choices; her reasoning skills were clouded. According to Leiter and Maslach (2011), Sara's perception was valid; there is a direct correlation between stress and the inability to reason. Fisher (2011) confirmed that through dialoguing with contemporaries about

problems it is possible to develop coping skills that would have helped Sara survive and thrive in her workplace.

When individuals work in isolation because they prefer to work alone, that is one thing. However, imposed isolation can become stressful when individuals feel like outcasts from society (McCarthy et al., 2012). Social pain manifests itself when individuals like Sara are bullied by coworkers, and bullying can lead to physical and emotional illness (MacDonald & Jensen-Campbell, 2011). The conceptual framework of social interaction, in which teachers and administrators collaborate and dialogue to problem-solve, builds a foundation of inclusion and stimulates the acquisition of coping skills (Caine & Caine, 2010).

Teachers are more satisfied on the job when they collaborate and feel supported by their administrators (Alvy & Robbins, 2010), verifying that the lack of support and collaboration was contributing to Sara's stress. Reeves (2012) suggested that administrators can help eliminate feelings of burnout if they give teachers more respect and support.

In Sara's case, instead of having opportunities to develop cognitive reasoning and coping skills through social interaction, she worked in isolation and felt unsupported. In a perfect world, there would be social interaction between educational leaders and teachers. Principals would work jointly with teachers to discuss needs and form teams to address any problems that surfaced; principals would empower teachers and help them reach their full potential. Whitaker (2011) suggested that great principals nurture leadership in others

through shared leadership, social interaction, and fostering opportunities for teachers to experience self-actualization.

John's lack of experience with knowing how to deal with his students put him at a disadvantage. If he would have had an opportunity to engage other teachers in dialogue or social interaction for help, as the framework for this study suggested, he could have developed more coping skills. McCarthy et al. (2012) supported this premise and suggested teachers could develop survival skills through collaborative opportunities to talk with other teachers who have had similar experiences. Flook et al. (2013) noted in their research that both new and veteran teachers benefit from sharing war stories; veteran teachers feel renewed and new teachers develop coping strategies.

Learning how to interact and dialogue with all the stakeholders is the basis for the conceptual framework of this study. Hopkins and Spillane (2014) confirmed the premise that new teachers need opportunities to learn how to communicate instructional goals. On back-to-school night, John demonstrated the need for such opportunities. Further supporting this concept, Scherer (2012) suggested that new teachers need the support and guidance of veteran teachers that collaboration can provide to ensure they know how to navigate. Levine and Marcus (2010) also recognized the value of collaborative activities as a means of enhancing teacher learning and student achievement.

On the issues of parent relationships, the concept of communication and collaboration with parents is consistent with the framework design. Dealing with parents can be a thorny issue, but cultivating a relationship of trust through communication can be rewarding for all the stakeholders (Mendler & Mendler, 2011). Fisher (2011)

suggested teachers can turn the situation around by just listening to parental concerns, even though in some instances they may not be very tactful in the delivery. Working in unison to understand and develop solutions with parents can build a strong bond and benefit student success (Whitaker et al., 2015). Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) noted that working in a non collaborative school culture and climate can adversely affect teacher satisfaction and can lead to burnout.

Research results suggest that principals are more successful if they develop the ability to communicate and collaborate with their staff (Goodwin, 2013). Sergiovanni et al. (2013) concluded that administrators who facilitate team building and teacher leadership through collaborative activities are more successful at attaining teacher cooperation and increasing student achievement.

The concept of social interaction and dialoguing with colleagues about his frustration perhaps could have helped Alex cope. Working in collaboration with others, Alex may have developed an action plan to address the situation or at least his stress (McCarthy et al., 2012). Herman and Reinke (2014) suggested support groups that come together to discuss problems and solutions are effective tools for coping with stress. Larrivee (2012) also supported the idea of developing strategies with colleagues to help manage stress.

Flook et al. (2013) suggested that supervisors and other administrators can make a difference when they work collaboratively with staff. Sergiovanni et al. (2013) suggested that teachers are more motivated to produce and school climate is more positive when administrators empower teachers through collaboration. The environment for Alex was

stifling and he felt devalued. According to Fernet et al. (2012), adding the component of collaboration could have helped to mitigate stress and enhance productivity within the entire school. Levine and Marcus (2011) noted that when there are real or perceived ambivalent feelings between teachers and administrators, the environment is counterproductive.

The analytical features of the social development theory focus on the exchange of ideas and collaboration of colleagues. Because of her special certification, Monica's situation did not relate to the conceptual framework. Her area is so highly specialized that there were no other colleagues in her building to commiserate with or collaborate with to lessen her workload. However, she could have benefited from having a sounding board and friendly ear to let her blow off some steam periodically so she could reason through her problems. According to Herman and Reinke (2014), dialoguing with colleagues about everyday concerns and sharing coping strategies and war stories can help teachers put stress in perspective.

Limitations of the Study

The following issues could pose a limitation to the study.

1. Population. This study was limited to teachers from one public high school in an urban New Jersey community. The participants included both new and veteran teacher from different grade levels and subject areas.

2. Sample size. The sample size was smaller than anticipated. I originally planned to have a sample size of 10 but only seven expressed any interest in finding out about the study and 5 chose to participate.

3.   Interviews and Length. The only data collected was from the formal interviews. Four were 30 minutes in length and one was 45 minutes long.

4.   Interview Instrument and Data Collected. I generated the research questions for the interview, and was the sole collector and interpreter of the data. Subsequently, the research may not be as objectively reported due to research bias.

Recommendations

Teacher burnout is a real phenomenon. School districts are losing great teachers at an alarming rate every year. This year in New Jersey, as in other states, teacher tenure laws and evaluation systems have undergone the greatest overhaul in over 30 years. Many veteran teachers, in my district, have expressed they are discouraged and unsure if they want to experience this new chapter, so they are leaving the teaching profession. According to the latest national research conducted by the Alliance for Excellent Education (2014), it costs 2.2 billion dollars annually to hire and train new staff. The rate of turnover is costly and can pose an academic and financial toll on the educational system; students suffer from a lack of instructional continuity, and districts are burdened economically. The following recommendations are based on this study's four conclusions. Those conclusions, as described previously, are: teachers burn out for a variety of reasons, burnout affects student success, burnout impacts teachers' interactions with others, and administrators can create a positive environment to help curb teacher burnout.

District Level Support Initiatives

District-level leaders should acknowledge that a problem exists; teachers are stressed and burned out. Teacher burnout impacts student achievement because of teacher absenteeism due to burnout and student misbehavior that disrupts the educational experience for students. School-level leaders should survey new and veteran teachers at each school to assess both their professional and emotional needs. District-level leaders could appoint a professional development committee to investigate state, county, and local opportunities for meaningful training to help identify the catalysts that ignite burnout. District-level professional development committees could investigate preventative measures for burnout. After district-level professional development committees have reported back findings, district and school-level leaders should work with the committee and use all the resources they have available to them to develop a stress management workshop that addresses teacher needs.

If addressed by district leaders, this first recommendation advocates for ongoing support programs as a way to deal with stress that leads to burnout and absenteeism. For example, wellness programs could resonate with teachers because they address issues that may lead to absenteeism and illness. Stress relief training in areas such as honing time management skills, yoga classes, journaling, peer coaching, support groups, or action research that stimulates self-actualization (Sergiovanni et al., 2013) can be made available to all staff members. If districts would adopt a wellness program to deal with physical and emotion illness that stems from burnout, they would keep more teachers in the classroom and greatly improve the opportunities for student success.

This recommendation also focuses on the conceptual framework of this study, working in collaboration through dialogue and problem-solving to develop coping skills and strategies to eliminate burnout. Employers should provide support and guidance to employees by providing opportunities for staff to meet with individuals who are trained in stress management to help them develop coping strategies so they are better prepared to handle stressful situations as they arise. The district administrators, working in tandem with the professional development committee, should track the progress of the program and reassess process so they can learn to identify additional stressful situations or changes in patterns and collaboratively set specific goals to modify the programs as needed.

Update Professional Development Program

The next logical step is for district and school-level leaders to support teachers by addressing student misbehavior that disrupts student learning and fuels teacher burnout. District and school leaders could invest in professional development training that would provide staff with classroom management training on how to succeed with difficult students and additional workshops in differentiated instruction to connect with students. Whitaker (2011) indicated that students act out when frustrated or bored. By adding various strategies to their repertoires, teachers may learn how to hook all students, keep them on task, and manage classroom misbehavior that previously they found stressful. District-level leaders should add outreach programs on the state, county, and local levels that could provide opportunities for teachers to share instructional expertise, as well as

analyze student work and create a learning community to make a positive impact on students' achievement.

Encourage Collaboration

District-level leaders should adopt a policy to support a collaborative work environment, because teachers benefit from working together. As suggested in Recommendation 1, a district-level professional development committee could investigate and help implement a collaborative work environment by fostering the creation of professional learning communities in each school. A few years ago, the NJDOE eliminated the requirement for districts within the state to maintain a professional development committee. Instead, the NJDOE suggested districts leave the professional development up to each chief school administrator, who in turn left it to school principals to provide. As a result, the focus shifted from professional learning to standardized test preparation strategies, creating a stressful work environment for teachers and students. By re-establishing professional development committees, district-level leaders support opportunities to collaborate and cultivate professional learning communities in which areas of improvement are fostered that address staff and student needs. Dufour and Marzano (2011) suggested that effective teacher outreach programs, such as professional learning communities (PLC) improve teacher retention rates. According to Avalos (2011), PLCs and support groups for teachers that facilitate the exchange of ideas can lead to teacher empowerment and that leads to teacher satisfaction.

Proactive Leadership

School administrators have the ability to make a positive impact on the educational environment by supporting teachers and by promoting and fostering teacher leadership that culminates in teacher growth and student success. This could be accomplished through shared leadership. First, each school-level leader should establish PLCs within each school. Each team would elect a team leader to guide the PLC. Collaborating as reflective practitioners who are grouped according to content area/grade level, teachers would investigate and share strategies and lessons to improve student understanding. Each PLC would look at best practices, such as Understanding by Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011) or higher-order questioning and discuss how to apply the strategies to lessons. This practice would ensure student achievement and eliminate some of the workload that is associated with burnout because teachers are not left to their own devices to create meaningful lessons.

Second, teachers would feel supported by administrators and colleagues, thereby reducing or eliminating the feeling of working in isolation. Dialoguing and problem-solving with administrators and colleagues would form the foundation for a stronger community of learners. Building on that premise, it would lead to a positive social change by retaining highly-qualified teachers who are more resilient because they are actively involved in making decisions that can make a positive impact on teacher growth and student achievement.

Recommendations for Further Study

Broaden Study

This study on teacher burnout was narrow in scope, because it focused on just five individual case narratives. Teacher burnout and attrition are important issues that impact student achievement, so they deserve additional study with a larger and more diverse population to capture a clearer snapshot of teacher burnout. For example, a comparison from school-to-school, years of experience, private versus public school and urban versus suburban schools to name a few possibilities could give insight into additional problems.

Action Research

Another recommendation is to follow up the research with collaborative teams of professional learners and then conduct action research, such as tracking progress and recording teachers' level of satisfaction and retention. According to Boyd et al. (2011), when an administrator provides staff with many opportunities to work independently on meaningful projects it builds self-esteem and job satisfaction.

Investigate Professional Learning Communities

An additional recommendation is the need for further study on Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) and how they influence teacher satisfaction and teacher retention (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012).

Implications for Social Change

Teacher burnout has created a social issue that affects the quality of education across the country. According to Gabriel (2013), teacher burnout can lead to increased absenteeism and substitutes who are not highly qualified in their subject area to teach are

brought in to schools to fill-in for the absent teacher. This can short change students because it affects the quality of education students are receiving. One of the symptoms of teacher burnout is the lack of patience with students and this can affect student morale and impact student achievement.

The implications for a positive social change are based on identifying the causes of teacher burnout, its impact on student achievement, and social solutions to the problem of burnout (Flook et al., 2013). Additional implications are rooted in eliminating teacher burnout before it escalates into increased attrition rates. Teacher attrition negatively impacts students both academically and socially, especially students in poverty-stricken communities where the only means available to break that cycle of poverty comes from a good education (Balu et al., 2010). Academically, students are short changed because of the inconsistencies within the education they are receiving, due to teacher absenteeism or lack of qualified teachers and substitutes to fill the vacancies. As indicated in the findings, many of the substitutes hired are not highly qualified in the areas they are hired to teach, and this can impact student achievement. Socially, the interactions between teachers and students--especially at-risk students--can help students develop their social skills through effective classroom management and teachers' modeling of enthusiasm for learning (Payne, 2012). Some of the poorer districts with a high population of at-risk students cannot attract or retain the best and brightest teachers, because of conditions that lead to teacher burnout.

The significance of the positive social change is to provide all students--especially at-risk students--with consistent, high-quality educational opportunities with teachers

who will help them reach their full academic potential (Klein, 2014). The following are areas that could be addressed in order to promote teacher retention and address the foundation for social change by retaining highly motivated and qualified teachers ensuring that all students have an equal playing field and the opportunity to succeed.

The conceptual framework for this study focused on collaboration and social interaction to provide support for teachers as a remedy to burnout. Scherer (2012) suggested that effective administrative leaders are the ones who provide support for teachers and develop their leadership abilities by creating a strong collaborative environment that allows them to be part of the collective community. One of the greatest needs humans have is self-efficacy according to Flook et al. (2013). Administrators who afford their staff opportunities to grow and become teacher leaders design job satisfaction into the organizational environment (Sergiovanni et al., 2013). Sergiovanni et al. went on to suggest that, once leaders empower their staff members, they learn how to become master teachers. Empowered by administrators, through the support of additional professional development programs, non tenured teachers are encouraged to work together as a team to solve both existing and future problems (Warren & Sorges, 2013). According to the findings from this case study, which are supported by relevant research, respect and support from administrators and colleagues in leadership roles are also vital to stimulating positive social change. With the high attrition rate of new and veteran teachers, it is even more important to devise plans that will address and meet the needs of highly qualified teachers, in order to retain them (Goodwin, 2013).

Reflection

Viewing teacher burnout through the lens of a researcher who is also a teacher, substitute administrator, and union leader was a complex experience, due to preconceived ideas that, if not held in check, could have biased the results. As a teacher, many of the feelings expressed by the interviewees mirrored my experience as a novice teacher and were the catalyst for selecting this problem to study. It was surprising that the same issues that I acknowledged over 20 years ago as contributing factors to the feeling of burnout are still prevalent and not yet resolved. However, this finding meant that it was especially prudent to remain objective during the interview process so as not to project any prior feelings or prejudices onto the interviewees' stories.

I substitute as an elementary principal and I know first-hand the demands and responsibility that accompany the title, so I knew it was imperative to just listen with an open mind to the narrative responses regarding administrators. I know how often individual teachers misinterpret the actions of a distracted administrator, so it was a challenge to remain neutral and not engage in discussion to explain or make allowances for the administrator. It was necessary to remain mindful and nonjudgmental while interpreting the individual responses to the interview questions.

As a union leader I was able to gain the confidence of the participants because of the trust factor that accompanies the position, the responses were candid. Interviewees knew that their identities would be protected and the results would be published in a responsible manner. However, as an advocate for change, I needed to guard against the perception that this study evolved from a personal agenda based on implementing

programs to eliminate the problem of teacher burnout. In retrospect, the process also proved to be enlightening as I began to focus on future research and projects to remedy the problem of teacher burnout.

Conclusion

Although burnout is work related, most of the teachers interviewed who experienced burnout found it filtered into their home lives and affected their ability to function. The responsibility for finding a way to deal with burnout currently rests with individual teachers. However, one of the recommendations from this study suggests administrators can also play a fundamental role in finding a way to deal with burnout. School district administrators, who are progressive and proactive, should recognize that working in collaboration benefits all the stakeholders within their educational institutions because the link between teacher burnout and attrition is very real. Burnout creates a social crisis that impacts not only teachers; it also affects students, both academically and socially. The problem will not go away on its own. Whether it is physical or emotional, teacher absenteeism due to burnout impacts student achievement.

Teacher absenteeism also can affect the ability to provide high quality instruction to students. Teacher burnout needs to be given serious consideration by educational leaders in order to find a solution. District and building administrators have the power to effect positive change by supporting professional learning communities and fostering a collaborative community. Teacher instability affects student motivation and enthusiasm for learning, which is why it is important to identify and develop programs to help teachers learn to cope with burnout before it morphs into a larger problem such as

attrition. Reducing teacher burnout promotes a constructive approach to building a

stronger community that fosters life-long learners and benefits students, teachers and

society.

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Appendix A: In-Depth Interview Guide

Interview No._____

In-Depth Interview Guide

Protocol:
The interviewer will greet interviewee at door and show them to their seat. Next, explain that the interview will be tape-recorded and the interviewee will have the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview after it has been transcribed to ensure accuracy of statements.

Introductory Comments: Welcome! Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. I am interested in learning more about you and your experiences during your teaching career. I am going to take all of the information from your interview and the interviews I have with other teachers to write my dissertation at Walden University. All of the information in this interview will be confidential. My notes for your interview will contain a number that only I know. I will not use your name in my report. I will not share what we discuss with anyone. It is my hope that by interviewing teachers like you we can learn more about teacher burnout. Thank you for your help.

Permission to Tape Conversation: I would like to tape record our conversation. It will help me while we talk because I might have difficulty writing down exactly what you are telling me and I want to make sure I remember all of our conversation. No other person will listen to the tape recording. I will be the only person who is transcribing it. Will it be okay for me to tape record our conversation? Thank you. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Questions

1. First I would like to check some background information for my notes:

a. How long have you been teaching?

b. In addition to teaching, are you responsible for any ancillary duties, if so what are they?

2. Did you have another career before you entered the field of education or is this your first career?

You've told me a little about your teaching career. I would now like to ask you a few questions regarding your perception about teaching.

3. Why did you choose to become a teacher?

4. What type of qualities does a person need to be a successful teacher?

5. How did you feel about your students?

6. Describe your work relationship with the other teachers in your building/cohorts/administrators.

7. Describe your relationship with parents.

8. How do you feel about your teaching assignment?

9. Tell me about the negative aspects of teaching.

10. If you have any discipline problems, please describe how you handle them?

11. If you have discipline problems do you ever need to write students up and send to the office? If so, how often?

12. Has your enthusiasm changed about your effectiveness at work? If so, describe how?

13. Do you believe that you are experiencing burnout or have experienced burnout in the past?

14. If so, please talk about your experiences and what you believe is contributing to or have contributed to past burnout.

15. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for talking with me. Your responses are greatly appreciated. I

learned a lot from our conversation. I will call you once your interview is transcribed so

you can read it over.