Summer 7-29-2022

Stress and Burnout in Teachers as Caused by Teaching in a Post-Pandemic World: An Auto-Ethnographic Study by a Woman High School Math Teacher

Aloysia Larson
jr1602wx@go.minnstate.edu

Stress and Burnout in Teachers

as Caused by Teaching in a Post-Pandemic World:

An Auto-Ethnographic Study by a Woman High School Math Teacher

A Project Presented to

The Graduate Faculty of

Minnesota State University Moorhead

By

Aloysia Larson

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science in

Curriculum and Instruction

July, 2022

Moorhead, Minnesota

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Stress in the teaching career leads to burnout and teachers leaving the profession. That stress is compounded by the effects of teaching during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This is an autoethnographic study by a woman high school math teacher in the Midwest of the United States. The researcher performed deductive content analysis on emails from the school years of 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 to analyze her own personal experiences of teaching during the pandemic. The aim of the study was to answer the two research questions: (1) What factors contribute to the stress experienced by a math teacher during the pandemic?; and (2) In what ways does the stress experienced by a teacher reflect in the teacher's performance, effectiveness, and job satisfaction? The stress identified by the data included but were not limited to behavior and academic needs of students, lack of support from administrators and other teachers, an overwhelming work load, lack of autonomy, lack of respect, and teaching during the pandemic. The consequences of that stress included but were not limited to burnout, dissatisfaction with the career, poor job performance and effectiveness, and leaving the career. This study can help bring awareness to the causes and consequences of stress in the teaching career. The researcher recommended that these findings be shared with administrators and teachers to influence small changes in practices that could make big changes in the stress felt by teachers.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Teaching can be a very rewarding career. Most teachers find joy and value in their jobs knowing that they are helping young people learn and develop into the future leaders of the world. Teachers can also be a positive adult figure in the lives of their students, which is often a big role to fill and this is part of what attracts teachers to the profession. With all the joys of teaching come some difficulties, which is why teaching is also a very stressful career (Richards et al., 2016). Teachers experience stress in their jobs for a variety of reasons, and the long-term effects of that stress can lead to burnout, which can cause even the best teachers to leave the career (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). It is important for teachers to be able to deal with the stress of the job in order to be able to stay positive, prevent burnout, and stick with the career long-term. It is also important for administrators and teacher education programs to be aware of the risks and consequences of this stress so that they can provide teachers with the skills and resources necessary to combat the stress of teaching.

The issue of stress in the teaching career was heightened during the Covid-19 pandemic. When the global pandemic started, schools rapidly switched to distance learning or hybrid models in order to stop the spread of the virus. In the years to follow, the pandemic continued to impact the field of education (Boté-Vericad et al., 2021). In this rapid restructuring of education, teachers were forced to completely change the way they taught, adapt their curriculum, and continue to meet the demands of the job, all while communicating with students through a screen. The prolonged effects of teaching during and after the pandemic continue to be a source of stress for many teachers.

Brief Literature Review

There are many different causes of stress in teaching. Those include, but are not limited to, student misbehavior, long days, intense workloads, high stakes testing, excessive expectations for new teachers, poor working conditions, loss of autonomy, and low pay (Fisher, 2011; Hanson, 2013, Miller & Flint-Stipp, 2019; Richards et al., 2016). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced new sources of stress when teachers had to adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of their students at a distance. Teaching during the pandemic presents extra stresses such as fear of getting sick, job insecurity, Zoom-fatigue, increased helplessness, and a loss of self-efficacy (Shebby, 2020). Stress compounded over time leads to burnout, which causes teachers to lose the energy they once had for work, negative feelings towards others and themselves, and a loss of accomplishment (Richards et al., 2016). Burnout is causing teachers to leave the profession, which is then negatively affecting students (Fisher, 2011). What starts as maybe a few small issues compounds and affects the whole education system negatively.

There needs to be a way to deal with this stress in hopes that teachers will become less burnt out. This responsibility lies with teachers, administrators, and school districts. First, teachers' basic needs need to be met, which includes the mental and physical needs of teachers. These basic needs must be placed above all other needs (Goodwin & Shebby, 2020). Beyond basic needs, three things that positively impact instructors' teaching experiences are having academic freedom and control over the curriculum, having access to professional development, and receiving consistent teaching evaluations (Perrotta & Bohan, 2020). All three of these things can help improve teachers' self-efficacy and lower stress. Self-efficacy is a teacher's self-concept of how well they can do their job. According to Kasalak and Dagyar (2020), positive self-efficacy protects teachers from burnout and stress while increasing job satisfaction. Thus, it

is important for teachers to strengthen their self-efficacy. Part of strengthening self-efficacy includes managing the stresses that are within teachers' control. Teachers can practice a number of different coping techniques such as maintaining a healthy lifestyle, keeping a work-life balance, and having a positive mindset (DiCarlo et al., 2020).

Statement of the Problem

Teachers that are stressed and burnt out cannot reach their full potential at excelling in their jobs. The stress of the job manifests itself in so many ways, including physically, emotionally, and professionally in a diminished ability to perform at work. When stress is prolonged, it leads to burnout and causes teachers to leave the career (Richards et al., 2016). Schools lose valuable teachers because of this or keep teachers that are not able to perform to their full ability. Both the teachers and the students suffer from this (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). There needs to be a solution to dealing with the stress that is bound to happen in this job. Part of the solution lies with the school and administration in providing teachers with the tools to prevent or manage the stress, and part of the solution lies with the teachers and how they perceive the stress.

Purpose of the Study

This study is about the author's experience as a math teacher during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a high school math teacher, the researcher had always felt stressed by the career, but was generally able to handle the stress in a healthy way and still thrive in the career. But, given the state of the world due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher was curious if there was a way to better understand and help alleviate teacher stress and burnout. The stress many teachers were faced with during the pandemic wasn't a healthy amount of stress and teachers

need to be able to deal with that stress in order to remain positive about their jobs, stay in the career, and continue thriving in the role that can be so rewarding. This problem is what sparked the need for this research.

Research Questions

What factors contribute to the stress experienced by a math teacher during the pandemic?

In what ways does the stress experienced by a teacher reflect in the teacher's performance, effectiveness, and job satisfaction?

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it impacts the wellbeing and success of both teachers and students. If teachers are equipped with the tools, skills, and knowledge to lower the stress of the job, they are better able to perform the tasks of their job, can relate to students more positively, and in turn, create a better learning environment for students. Teachers enter the profession wanting to make a positive impact in the lives of young people. Teachers don't want to be held back by stress and burnout, but unfortunately, that is the reality of the situation for many teachers. The timing of this study was relevant as teachers were faced with the new stress of teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study uses retrospective data analysis, that is, analysis of the content from emails communications that took place from the spring of 2020 to the spring of 2022. The study should bring to light some of the causes and consequences of stress, especially related to the pandemic, and should offer some solutions to dealing with that stress.

Research Ethics

Permission and IRB Approval

Since this is an auto-ethnographic study, no IRB approval was required due to the fact that the researcher was also the unit of analysis in the study. Likewise, permission from the school district was not needed.

Limitations

In this study, the researcher conducted an auto-ethnography study. The researcher made a significant effort to control for her own biases, but, as is the nature of biases, some are subconscious, so it is possible that some of the researcher's subconscious biases limit the study. The results of this study are focused exclusively on the researcher's experience, thus this could mean that the results were clouded by the researcher's personal reactions to stress in teaching.

Conclusions

In this chapter, the topic of teacher stress and burnout was introduced. A brief literature review was covered, and the problem, purpose, and research questions were stated. Then the significance and the ethics of the study were discussed. The following chapter is a review of literature, which covers the causes and consequences of stress and burnout in teaching and offers some solutions for how to deal with that stress.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Teaching is simultaneously a very rewarding and very stressful career. Stress can negatively impact teachers' job performance and can lead to teachers leaving their jobs. The changes in education caused by Covid-19 also add new stress to the job. Work conditions are strongly related to teachers' stress, burnout, and attrition (leaving the profession) (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). It is important to understand the causes and consequences of stress so that educators and schools prioritize alleviating this stress. After recognizing the issue of stress, educators need to be equipped with tools and techniques for handling the stress in order to keep the job a rewarding and positive experience. It is the goal of this literature review to discuss the causes and consequences of stress and burnout for teachers and then to offer some solutions for dealing with stress and burnout.

The methodology used in this study is auto-ethnography, which means the researcher used her personal experiences as the data. This research technique will be discussed in the body of the review

Body of the Review

Causes and Consequences of Stress and Burnout in Teachers

Stress Factors Influencing Teacher Burnout. Teaching is known as a very stressful career. There are a variety of reasons why teachers may be stressed by their jobs. Some of those causes are "long days, intense workloads, and limited interactions with other adults" (Richards et

al., 2016). Other sources of stress are high stakes testing, pressure to achieve perfection, excessive expectations for new teachers, poor working conditions, inadequate support from parents and administration, loss of autonomy, and secondary trauma (Fisher, 2011; Hanson, 2013; Miller & Flint-Stipp, 2019; Richards et al., 2016). Additionally, Hanson (2013) describes that one of the leading causes of stress is student misbehavior because these misbehaviors wear down on a teacher, and strategies that work for students in one class don't work for other students in another class. All the items on this long list of stressors negatively impact teachers.

The researcher was a math teacher with a large percentage of her students being special education students, including students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). For this reason, the researcher was particularly interested in a study conducted by Boujut et al. (2016) in which stress, burnout, and coping strategies of teachers were analyzed as related to teaching students with ASD. Teaching students with ASD seems to be a source of stress for teachers, but some teachers who specialize in teaching students with ASD are able to handle the stress better because they have more training, experience, and tailored classroom conditions when compared to a general education teacher without those supports. Therefore, lack of supports when it comes to teaching students with special needs seems to be yet another source of stress for teachers.

All this stress compounded over time leads to burnout. Richards et al. described burnout as "the depletion of emotional resources, feeling negatively toward others, and losing feeling of accomplishment in one's work" (2016, p. 2). Teacher burnout is causing teachers to leave the profession at alarmingly high rates when compared to other professions, and "without effective teachers, class sizes increase, school administrators become frustrated, parental concerns grow, and stress levels increase" (Fisher, 2011, p. 4). In the study conducted by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015), the consequences of all this stress and burnout included, but were not limited to,

"exhaustion and psychosomatic symptoms, reduced accomplishment and loss of self-efficacy, and negative affect and loss of self-esteem" (p. 6). All these negative consequences that affect teachers also the indirectly affect students' learning, so it is in the best interest of both teachers and students to alleviate some of this stress.

Stress Caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic. In addition to the stress that is presented by a "normal" school year, Covid-19 caused additional stress to teachers, partially because the pandemic was stressful in general and partially due to the rapid change in how schools functioned. As described by Goodwin and Shebby (2020), teaching during the pandemic presents extra stresses such as fear of getting sick, job insecurity, Zoom-fatigue, increased helplessness, and a loss of self-efficacy. They explain that "if [teachers] cannot contact students, deliver effective learning experiences, or address students' basic needs, educators' feelings of professional worth and competence are apt to take a hit, adding stress to a job that, even before the pandemic, 6 in 10 teachers rated as highly stressful" (p. 1). This is only the start of the stresses caused by Covid-19.

In one study done by White et al. (2010), a university ran a pilot course in which face-to-face and remote students participated simultaneously (hybrid model). The university instructors received extensive technology training beforehand and always had a technology support person available while teaching. Even with these supports in place, the teachers said that things would need to change if they were going to teach class this way ever again. They said the logistics of managing both in-person students and distance learning students was very difficult. Technology issues wasted time in class. It was difficult to deliver certain content to online students while in-person students received that content. The instructors thought the online component, with all its glitches, was just a distraction to the in-person students. They also said that in order to have an

effective class, extensive planning was required. These instructors had all these difficulties even though they had training, technology support, and additional preparation time. In other studies by Washington et al. (2020) and Richardson et al. (2020), similar difficulties were experienced by teachers implementing technology in their classrooms. They said that in order for technology to add something positive to the learning experience, both teachers and students needed adequate training, more time, and more support. Many secondary teachers were forced into a hybrid model during the pandemic with zero preparation, close to no technology support, and less preparation time than normal. It only makes sense that this rapid change in instruction was an extremely stressful event for teachers.

Solutions to Stress and Burnout in Teachers

Big-Picture Solutions. It is important to note that the responsibility for coping with and eliminating stress in the teaching profession is partially the responsibility of teachers themselves but also is much deeper than a personal responsibility. Solving this issue also lies with educational institutions and with society as a whole. As a society, so much pressure is placed on individuals to succeed at their jobs, especially teachers, since test scores, future careers, and the wellbeing of young people are at stake. According to Casimiro et al. (2020), "the underlying problem lies in the requirements of modernity; focused on obtaining results regardless of their consequences on the quality of life and therefore, on the physical and mental health of the affected people" (p. 3). Fixing this societal issue was beyond the scope of this current paper, but it is worth acknowledging. The issue of stress and burnout in teaching will only get worse as time goes on if there isn't a system-wide change.

There are things that administrators, school districts, and teacher preparation programs can do to help alleviate some of the stress of teaching. First, it is important for schools to place

the mental and physical health of teachers high on the priority list. For example, during the rapid switch to online instruction during the pandemic, instead of focusing mainly on addressing technology issues, schools should first proactively address the emotional and physical needs of the teachers. Once those needs are met, then they can adjust to the new technology demands (Goodwin & Shebby, 2020). After basic needs are met, then Goodwin and Shebby (2020) suggest some things schools can do to help support the teachers, including helping teachers connect with one another, framing professional conversations around problems solving, helping teachers achieve small successes, and helping teachers learn from one another. These strategies can help keep a positive environment during this challenging time, which can help build teachers' self-efficacy.

There are also some school-wide practices that can help teachers keep stress low. According to Perrotta and Bohan (2020), three things that positively impact instructors' teaching experiences are having academic freedom and control over the curriculum, having access to professional development, and receiving consistent teaching evaluations. Academic freedom allows teachers to teach in a way that is comfortable to them and allows for differentiating for the needs of their students. Having access to professional development provides teachers with the tools needed to learn new strategies related to teaching, especially the tools required for teaching during a pandemic. Receiving consistent evaluations leads to consistency of expectations and performance. All three of these things can help improve teachers' self-efficacy and lower stress.

When it comes to professional development, there is some professional learning that is always relevant, and some that is newly relevant during the pandemic. Rivero (2020) makes several suggestions about what kind of content and attitude should be taken in professional development. She states that professional learning should be content-focused, teacher- and

student-centered, and instructionally relevant and actionable. Rivero mainly focuses on tangible skills that teachers need in order to implement instruction in this new model. Summers (2020) suggests that even more important than these tangible skills (such as technology support), is training teachers about social and emotional learning (SEL). This includes relationship-building and gives teachers techniques to help engage learners in the new school format of online learning. SEL is important to consider when moving forward in education during this pandemic.

In addition to the new needs of teachers during the pandemic, there are some common stressors such as student behavior issues and individual learning needs that can be supported. Herman et al. (2018) suggest that equipping teachers with coping skills and providing environmental supports can help alleviate teacher stress. One of those environmental supports that they suggest is implementing a school wide student behavior-management system so that teachers feel supported and have the tools to deal with one of the major stresses of the job: student behaviors. Similarly, Oakes et al. (2013) discuss that since teacher self-efficacy is tied closely to student behavior and academic achievement, when teachers are supplied with tools to help students succeed, such as a multi-tiered system of supports, teachers then have higher self-efficacy, and hence, better chances at lowering stress.

Coping Strategies for Stress. There are many things teachers can do to keep the stress of the job manageable. Self-efficacy is a teacher's self-concept of how well they can do their job. According to Kasalak and Dagyar (2020), positive self-efficacy protects teachers from burnout and stress while increasing job satisfaction. Thus, it is important for teachers to strengthen their self-efficacy. Part of strengthening self-efficacy includes managing the stresses that are within teachers' control. MacIntyre et al. (2020) studied two different types of coping techniques: approach coping and avoidant coping, with many different coping strategies for each technique.

Some examples of approach coping strategies are acceptance, planning, and actively trying to make the situation better. Some examples of avoidant coping strategies are denial, self-distractions, and disengagement. Unsurprisingly, approach coping strategies have more positive results on stress, anxiety, wellbeing, and happiness of teachers than the avoidant coping strategies had. These approach coping strategies can be easier said than done, though, when times are challenging. It's useful for teachers to have specific techniques in order to use the approach coping strategies.

Many of the techniques that can help manage the stress of teaching fall under the category of "self-care". Several researchers echo similar techniques for management of stress-for teachers or non-teachers. These techniques include mindfulness such as yoga, breathing, meditation, and self-reflection, goal setting, getting a balanced diet, exercising, sleeping enough, keeping a positive mindset, and keeping a work-life balance (DiCarlo et al., 2020; Fisher, 2011; Hanson, 2013; Miller, 2019; Richards et al., 2016; Yong, 2007). All of these techniques contribute to physical, mental, and emotional health of any person, so they would certainly apply to the health of a teacher. Keeping healthy is one big way teachers can manage the stress of the job.

Theoretical Framework

Since teacher stress and burnout isn't an easily quantifiable topic, there have been a variety of ways this has been studied. The research cited in this literature review included both qualitative and quantitative data sourced from methods such as surveys filled out by teachers as self-reflections of stress-levels or some teacher interviews. All of the research summarized the data taken from many different teachers and consolidated it into overarching ideas. None of the articles focused on individual teachers and none of the articles were presented as an auto-

ethnography. For this reason, the research conducted in this study, an auto-ethnography, offered a new viewpoint.

Auto-ethnographic study is "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*)" (Elllis, 2010). This method of research allows the individual researcher to have an opinion and share their experience. Autoethnographies combine ideas of autobiographies with ethnographies. The autobiographic portion has the researcher reflecting back on significant life events and sharing those events in a way that readers may find interest or relate to. The ethnographic portion has the researcher analyzing and relating these events to their cultural impact and helping the reader understand that culture. The finished autoethnography uses the evidence of text (emails, in this case) to support and provide evidence for the personal and cultural experiences that are shared (Hughes, 2017; Ellis, 2010).

Research Question(s)

What factors contribute to the stress experienced by a math teacher during the pandemic?

In what ways does the stress experienced by a teacher reflect in the teacher's performance, effectiveness, and job satisfaction?

Conclusions

In this chapter, literature was reviewed, first focusing on the causes and consequences of stress and burnout in teachers. The causes in a typical teaching year were discussed, then the causes of stress as related to the Covid-19 pandemic were discussed. Next, solutions to stress were stated, including solutions that administrators and schools can implement, as well as coping

strategies that teachers can use. Finally, the theoretical framework was discussed and the research questions were restated. The next chapter will introduce the research method that was conducted.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

Introduction

Teaching can be a very stressful career. As discussed in the literature review, the consequences of this stress reach far beyond the individual teacher. Students suffer from the consequences of teacher stress too. The prolonged consequences of stress lead to burnout, which the researcher was experiences at the time of the study. The researcher experienced excessive stress while teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic and determined that there is a need to better understand this stress and the consequences it has on teaching performance and job satisfaction. This topic has been heavily studied quantitatively, so the researcher chose to conduct a qualitative auto-ethnographic study. It is the goal of this study to answer the following research questions in order to learn more about stress. In this chapter, the research design, setting, instrumentation, and procedures are presented.

Research Question(s)

What factors contribute to the stress experienced by a math teacher during the pandemic?

In what ways does the stress experienced by a teacher reflect in the teacher's performance, effectiveness, and job satisfaction?

Research Design

The research method used was auto-ethnography. This method was chosen for multiple reasons. One reason is that there wasn't research about stress in the literature review that was presented as an auto-ethnography, so the researcher determined that auto-ethnography would

offer a new perspective. The auto-ethnography method was a way for the researcher to do some self-reflection in order to find a solution to stress. The emphasis of the research is on retrospectively analyzing the content of emails sent and received by the researcher in order to understand the impact of stress and coping strategies in her job. One benefit of this research method is that it can reveal nuances and subtleties that some of the research in the literature review missed when covering broad ideas. While the results are personal to the researcher's experiences, the hope is that they are relatable to other educators as well.

Setting

This study took place based on the emails sent and received during the teacher's employment at two different schools. During the time of this study, the researcher worked at one school (School A) for the 2019-2020 and the 2020-2021 school years. She worked at a different school (School B) during the 2021-2022 school year. School A, with population about 1,100 students, is in the Midwest in a city of population about 125,000. It is the high school in the school district with the highest percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch, at 38.7%. It is also the high school with the highest percentage of students in the Individualized Education Program (IEP), at 13.9%. Lastly, it is the high school with the highest percentage of English Language Learning students, at 11.2%. Minority enrollment is 34% of the student body with over 20 languages spoken ("About Us", 2019). School B, with a student body of 1910 students, is in a Midwest city of population 43,409. In this school district, 35% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch, 7.47% of students are English learners, 2.36% of students are homeless, and 17.51% of students receive special education services (Lunak, 2021, p. 13).

Participants

Since this study is an auto-ethnography, the only participant was the researcher herself. She was a 28-year-old female math teacher completing her fifth year of teaching. The researcher was experiencing teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic prior to and during the time of the study.

Data Analysis

This study was conducted using emails exchanged between 2020 and 2022 that were exchanged as a part of the natural dynamic of the researcher's position as a math teacher. The researcher did not plan to send emails with the purpose of doing research, so the communications are indeed a reflection of what was naturally occurring.

The researcher conducted a deductive content analysis with the theoretical criteria for doings so being the elements contained in the research questions; specifically 1) factors contributing to stress, 2) teacher's performance, 3) teacher's effectiveness, and 4) job satisfaction. Deductive reasoning was used in this process, meaning the researcher already had an understanding of the subject (stress in teaching) and analyzed the data with this knowledge in mind. The researcher conducted latent analysis, which means rather than focusing on specific words or quotes from within the emails, the researcher instead focused on main ideas, trends, and themes in the email data (Bengtsson, 2016). The researcher was careful to maintain validity and rigor in the analysis by using only content and experiences that were documented in the email data.

Procedures

The procedure that the researcher followed was based on that described by Bengtsson (2016, pp. 11-13). First, the researcher created a coding list before analyzing the data. This coding list consisted of the themes, trends, and sub-categories that the researcher was looking for to answer the research questions. Next, the researcher obtained access to emails from the time frame of 2020-2022 and read through them to obtain a sense of the whole. Then, the researcher copied and pasted emails that pertained to the themes of stress, burnout, job performance, teacher effectiveness, and job satisfaction into a word document and used a color-coding system to categorize the data based on the coding list. Once color coded, the content was sorted into like colors based on the coding list and the researcher began analyzing the data to find meaning in the text. The researcher considered how the findings related to the literature reviewed and used the data to help answer the research questions.

Ethical Considerations

This study is not in violation of any ethical practices and there was no possibility of harm to any participants in this research, as the researcher was the only participant and an auto-ethnography was performed as the method of research.

Conclusions

In this chapter, the research topic and research questions were reintroduced. Then the research method was presented, including the research design, setting, participants, data analysis, procedures, and ethical considerations. The next chapter will include the results of this study.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Introduction

Through this autoethnographic study, the researcher hoped to answer two key questions: (1) What factors contribute to the stress experienced by a math teacher during the pandemic? And (2) In what ways does the stress experienced by a teacher reflect in the teacher's performance, effectiveness, and job satisfaction? In order to answer these questions, the researcher performed a deductive content analysis on emails and then use the email data to reflect on her experiences with stress as a teacher.

Data Collection

This study was conducted using emails exchanged between 2020 and 2022. These emails were exchanged as a part of the natural dynamic of the researcher's position as a math teacher, so the communications are a reflection of what was naturally occurring.

The researcher did have some difficulty retrieving email data because of the nature of her job. Between 2020 and 2022, the researcher taught in two different school districts and lost access to some of the emails from the school 2020-2021 school year because of this. The researcher did still have contact with old coworkers, though, so was able to receive email conversations from them. The researcher had full access to emails from the 2021-2022 school year. As is the nature of the job, there were hundreds, if not thousands, of emails to sort through from the two school years in question, including interactions between teachers and teachers, teachers and administrators, teachers and students, and teachers and families. The researcher

identified which emails would have relevant information in them and chose to use the data from about thirty different email conversations.

Since the emails were not written with the intention of using them as research material, the researcher naturally "cleared her inbox," deleting emails that were taken care of at the time. As such, the researcher did her best to scan the inbox and trash folders of existing emails, but largely focused on remembered occurrences to search for past emails that would hold significance. For example, when the researcher recalled specific interactions with a co-teacher during distance learning, she made sure to retrieve those emails that were relevant to the situation. The researcher used the coding process described in Chapter 3 to decipher the content of the emails

Results and Data Analysis

The results that follow are written in first person from the researcher's point of view. The stories shared each contribute perspective to answer the two research questions. A summarized answer to each question will appear at the end of the results.

2020-2021 Experiences

Behavioral and Academic Needs. At the high school where I was employed, I was assigned to the lowest level of math classes that the high school had to offer with a high percentage of behavioral and academic needs among the students. When it came to academic and behavioral needs, they varied in type and severity. Many students had diagnosed behavioral and learning disorders. To help these students learn math, I had to adapt to their individual needs and communicate frequently with case managers, administrators, and parents. Not only was this what was best for the students, it was what was legally required in order to meet the requirements of their individualized education plans. About ninety percent of my students fell into this category

that school year, so it meant that I had to have these frequent communications for about seventy different students, each with different needs.

On the other hand, some students' behaviors were so severe that they threatened the physical and emotional safety of myself and my students. Violence was not uncommon, and there were little to no consequences to that violence. On several instances, I reached out to administrators, counselors, and the school resource officers for support in dealing with the students. I was told to keep the student in my classroom so that they didn't cause problems in the hallways. I was constantly terrified for my own safety as well as that of my students and was anxiously waiting for when the next violent outburst would rattle the classroom. Stating what seems obvious, it was extremely difficult to teach and learn math in that environment.

Table 1

Behavioral and Academic Needs Email Data, 2020-2021

Sender	Recipient	Email Content
Special Education Case Manager	Researcher	"Please see the attached documents for the [Individualized Education Plans] of your student(s) on my case load"
Counselor	Researcher	"[student name] has a 504 plan. The document is attached and can be found on [website]"
Researcher	Administrator	Assistance needed with student behavioral needs Request for team meeting to find solutions for behaviors
Probation Officer	Researcher	Communicating attendance and behavior expectations for student on probation

Lack of Support. I was left to fend for myself when it came to dealing with the difficult behaviors of my students. I was told not to remove students from my classroom, even when there was violence. I was also told that maybe if I just put in more effort in building relationships with my students, they wouldn't have so many problems. These were neither safe nor realistic expectations.

Table 2

Lack of Support Email Data, 2020-2021

Sender	Recipient	Email Content
Administrator	Researcher	"It is my expectation that teachers have control over the students in their classrooms." "Consider discussing expected behaviors with your students." "Have you reached out to parents or guardians yet?"

Overwhelming Work Load. My workload was overwhelming for multiple reasons. First, because of all the behavioral issues that I was dealing with, I was often in intervention meetings. These meetings were so frequent I would sometimes go weeks without having a prep period to myself because I was always in meetings during any times where I wasn't teaching. Because of this, almost all of my preparation work had to take place "off the clock" while I was at home, often late into the night. In order to overcome the behavioral and academic needs of my students, the lessons I designed needed to be perfect. I needed to fill every minute of class with engaging, entertaining, differentiated, and approachable materials. I spent an uncountable amount of time (and money) planning, creating, and implementing these lessons. On days where my lessons weren't completely engaging, the behaviors were the worst. Overall, I believe I did an excellent job in teaching my students math, despite all the difficulties that I experienced, but this came at a price.

Table 3

Overwhelming Work Load Email Data, 2020-2021

Sender	Recipient	Email Content
Administrator	Researcher	Calendar event: Intervention meeting for behavior. Invitees: administrator, case manager, legal guardian, parent, probation officer, researcher
Case Manager	Researcher	Calendar event: Individualized Education Plan meeting Invitees: administrator, case manager, parents, researcher, general education English teacher

Researcher Personal Email	Researcher Work Email	Email to self. Purpose: Content that was created and needed to be printed for school the following day Time stamp: 1:31 am. Attachments: 2 activities, a notes packet, a warm-up, an exit ticket, a quiz

Teaching During the Pandemic. The pandemic put a difficult swing on an already difficult situation. When we were in full distance learning, I managed to adapt my resources to online resources as best I could and tried to continue to do what was best for my students. This was a difficult time to teach because the attendance of students was out of my control and there were some students who I didn't see for multiple weeks or months at a time. When we returned to hybrid and/or in-person instruction, it was challenging to get students caught up on the material they missed while they were absent while continuing to present new material simultaneously. I felt like I was putting in the most effort I possibly could and the results were not showing that.

Table 4

Teaching During the Pandemic Email Data, 2020-2021

Sender	Recipient	Email Content
Researcher	Co-teacher	"Here is the matching activity I made for solving quadratics with graphing. Feel free to use." "Are you free to meet this afternoon to plan for next week?" Discussing student attendance and performance.
Researcher	Paraprofessional	Student mental health concerns Students attendance concerns
Math Department Chair	Researcher and the math department	"The notes from the department chair meeting are attached." In notes: "We must maintain rigorous academic standards." "Attendance is taken on a weekly basis."

Impacts of Stress. The stress of this job was too much for me and was leading me to burnout. I tried my best to advocate for myself and my students, but felt there was no way I

would get support or see positive change. I worked at this school for three years but left after the 2020-2021 school year.

Table 5

Impact of Stress Email Data, 2020-2021

Sender	Recipient	Email Content
Researcher	Administrator	Resignation

2021-2022 Experiences

Positive Experiences. After leaving my previous job, I found a new job which left me feeling quite optimistic. The new job paid more, I was given a teaching assignment that I enjoyed, and I had the support of coworkers and administration. My coworkers would frequently check in on me at the beginning of the school year and I would tell them that the thing I was most blown away by was that when I asked my students to do math, they did math! My coworkers didn't seem to understand why this was significant, but after my last job, this was remarkable. I had only minor behavioral issues and I got to focus my attention on actually teaching math.

Table 6

Positive Experiences Email Data, 2021-2022

Sender	Recipient	Email Content
Researcher	Academic Coach	In response to academic coach asking how my first few weeks of the school year went: "I'm doing great. My students are absolutely delightful!" "So much math is getting done!"
Administrator	Researcher	Checking in Offering guidance with questions I had about Special Education student information Positive feedback posted on evaluation website for drop-in observation
Math Teacher	Researcher	Google Drive link to activity that was created Google Drive link to folder of online content including homework, tests, quizzes

		"Let me know if you have any more questions!"
Counselor	Researcher	In response to question about behavioral needs of a student: • Connected me with trauma counselor • Reached out to parents for me • Offered future support

Lack of Autonomy. One aspect of this new job that caused stress for me was the lack of autonomy I was allowed. The guidelines for the way I had to teach were rigid. I was told what, when, and how to teach my content. Since there were several teachers all teaching the same classes as me, I was expected to give the same assessments on the same days, use the same notes and assignments, and have the same classroom expectations. This lack of freedom was quite difficult for me because I didn't always agree with the opinions of the other teachers. The rigor of assessments wasn't what I wanted, the timeline often didn't meet the needs of my students, and I wasn't able to adjust or adapt based on how my students were doing. I didn't feel this approach was what was best for students and I had no power to change that.

Table 7

Lack of Autonomy Email Data, 2021-2022

Sender	Recipient	Email Content
Algebra PLC (Professional Learning Community) Leader	Researcher and PLC members	Google Drive link calendar of the dates we were expected to give assignments, quizzes, tests
Algebra PLC Leader	Researcher and PLC members	Google Drive link to test and quiz documents that were expected to be given
Administrator	Math Department	"Instructional plan/model must be aligned with other teachers of that course. Make sure your PLC is in agreement about the schedule of exams. Students should have the same experience with all teachers." "Each department is expected to report the grade distribution that will be followed."

Lack of Respect. I felt a lack of respect in a number of different ways. I interpreted the lack of autonomy as a lack of respect from my administrators. I felt they didn't trust me as a professional to do what was best for my students. I also felt a lack of respect from parents. On several instances, parents emailed or call me with demands that their child deserved a better grade or special treatment. I didn't feel that parents had trust in teachers when I would receive these communications.

Table 8

Lack of Respect Email Data, 2021-2022

Sender	Recipient	Email Content
Administrator	Math Department	"Instructional plan/model must be aligned with other teachers of that course. Make sure your PLC is in agreement about the schedule of exams. Students should have the same experience with all teachers." "Each department is expected to report the grade distribution that will be followed."
Parent	Researcher and Administrator	Distrust with researcher's grading practices. Request for meeting to review test scores.
Parent	Researcher and Administrator	Request for student to be allowed special privileges for due dates

Teaching During the Pandemic. While the pandemic was less new during the 2021-2022 school year, its effects were still ever present. At all times, I had to have both in-person instruction and online materials prepared and posted for all my courses so that when students were quarantined, they could still follow along. This was a huge time commitment on my part with little benefit for students because of the lack of follow-through and accountability on their part. Additionally, there were obvious gaps in knowledge from the previous year of distance learning so sometimes I felt I had to teach double time to make up for what my students missed the previous year.

Table 9

Teaching During the Pandemic Email Data, 2021-2022

Sender	Recipient	Email Content
Administrators	All teachers	"Review the PDF of [website] expectations" "Weekly materials posted with links" "Must be posted by Friday at 4 pm" "Post deadlines" "Post link and schedule for virtual meetings"
Researcher	Student	Expectations reiterated for quarantine time. No response from student.
Researcher	Algebra PLC team	Conversation to discuss gaps in knowledge of Algebra students. Team came up with plan to do daily warm-ups to address missing skills

Impacts of Stress. While this new job felt like a significant improvement compared to my previous job, I was still unhappy with certain aspects of it. I continued to feel burnt out and decided to leave teaching high school all together. I haven't left the field of education, I just no longer teacher high school math.

Table 10

Impacts of Stress Email Data, 2021-2022

Sender	Recipient	Email Content
Researcher	Administrator	Resignation

RQ 1: What factors contribute to the stress experienced by a math teacher during the pandemic?

As described in the stories shared above, I experienced stress for many different reasons including, but not limited to, behavioral and academic needs of my students, lack of support, an overwhelming work load, lack of autonomy, lack of respect, and teaching during the pandemic.

RQ 2: In what ways does the stress experienced by a teacher reflect in the teacher's performance, effectiveness, and job satisfaction?

The difficulty dealing with the severe behavioral and academic needs of my students caused me to lose faith in my ability to teach. When administrators would tell me that I was partly to blame for the behaviors, I started to believe them. The lack of support with these issues made me feel like I was all alone dealing with this difficult situation. I was very dissatisfied with my job and would often dread coming to work. The overwhelming work load took over my personal life, and when I didn't have enough time to accomplish all my work tasks, my job performance suffered. The lack of autonomy didn't allow me to do what was best for my students, meaning I wasn't the most effective teacher I could be. The lack of respect made me dissatisfied with the job, and the difficulty of teaching during the pandemic made me a less effective teacher.

Reflection

I don't want this research to sound like it was only a negative experience, because in the end, it wasn't. Even through all the stress, the job was worth it. I love teaching, I love my students, and I wouldn't trade my experiences for anything. Though I have left teaching high school for now, I am now working in higher education. I hope to use what I have learned though my experiences to help future teachers have successful careers.

Conclusions

In this chapter, the data collection process was described and the researchers results and analysis were shared through autoethnography. The research questions were answered using the results. In the next chapter, implications for practice including an action plan and a plan for sharing will be presented.

CHAPTER 5

Implications for Practice

Action Plan

Recognizing, understanding, and managing stress caused by the teaching profession is vital if teachers want to stay in the profession. In the future, the researcher will continue advocating for their own and their colleagues' health and well-being in the teaching profession. Teachers are a team that can lift each other up, so advocating for each other can help keep the stress of the job manageable. This is, after all, what is best for both teachers and students.

While the COVID-19 pandemic is no longer a new occurrence, it is still ongoing. The impacts of the pandemic on teaching are long-lasting, so teachers continue to adapt and modify their teaching to ensure that all students are able to learn during this pandemic. The stress management techniques and information discussed in this study continue to be relevant and the researcher will continue reflecting and adapting so that she can continue being the best teacher she can be, no matter what circumstances present themselves.

Plan for Sharing

These results will be shared with former and present teacher and administrative colleagues in multiple school districts. The discussion of teacher stress and burnout is an important one with teacher shortages in all of the researcher's former work places. Starting the conversation about causes and consequences of stress and burnout can help improve the school climate and working conditions for teachers. The data shared in this study is that of one individual teacher, so it is only the beginning of the conversation as each teacher experiences

stress in their own way. Beginning this conversation can hopefully spark some changes for

teachers.

References

About Us / Building Demographics. (2019). Retrieved January 10, 2021, from

    https://www.fargo.k12.nd.us/Page/1369

Bengtsson, M. (2016). How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content analysis.

    NursingPlus Open, 2, 8-14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.001

Boté-Vericad, J.-J., Lowry, J., & Sutherland, T. (2021). Challenges for the educational system

    during lockdowns: A possible new framework for teaching and learning for the near

    future. *Education for Information, 37*(1). 149-153.

    https://doi-org.trmproxy.mnpals.net/10.3233/EFI-200008

Boujut, E., Dean, A., Grouselle, A., & Cappe, E. (2016). Comparative Study of Teachers in

    Regular Schools and Teachers in Specialized Schools in France, Working with Students

    with an Autism Spectrum Disorder: Stress, Social Support, Coping Strategies and

    Burnout. Journal of Autism and Developmental

Casimiro Urcos, W.H., Barbachán Ruales, E.A., Casimiro Urcos, C.N., & Casimiro Urcos J.F.

    (2020). Stress, Anguish, Anxiety and Resilience of University Teachers in the Face of

    Covid-19. Utopia y Praxis Latinoamericana, 25, 453–464.

DiCarlo, C. F., Meaux, A. B., & LaBiche, E. H. (2020). Exploring Mindfulness for Perceived

    Teacher

Ellis, Carolyn; Adams, Tony E. & Bochner, Arthur P. (2010). Autoethnography: An Overview.

    Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 12(1), Art. 10.

    http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1101108

Fisher, M. H. (2011). Factors Influencing Stress, Burnout, and Retention of Secondary Teachers. Current Issues in Education, 14(1).

Goodwin, B., & Shebby, S. (2020). Research Matters/Restoring Teachers' Efficacy. Educational Leadership, 78(4), 1–4.

Hanson, K. (2013). Turnover in Teachers: Stress, Burnout, and Fixing the Problem. BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education, 5(2), 50–54.

Herman, K. C., Hickmon-Rosa, J., & Reinke, W. M. (2018). Empirically Derived Profiles of Teacher Stress, Burnout, Self-Efficacy, and Coping and Associated Student Outcomes. Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 20(2), 90–100.

Hughes, S., & Noblit, G. (2017). Meta-ethnography of autoethnographies: a worked example of the method using educational studies. *Ethnography & Education, 12*(2), 211-227. https://doi-org.trmproxy.mnpals.net/10.1080/17457823.2016.1216322

Kasalak, G., & Dagyar, M. (2020). The Relationship between Teacher Self-Efficacy and Teacher Job Satisfaction: A Meta-Analysis of the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice, 20(3), 16–33.

Lunak, B. (2021, October 21). *2020-21 Annual Report.* Annual Report. Retrieved July 18, 2022, from https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/1645516/2020-21_Annual_Report.pdf

MacIntyre, P. D., Gregersen, T., & Mercer, S. (2020). Language teachers' coping strategies during the Covid-19 conversion to online teaching: Correlations with stress, wellbeing and negative emotions. System, 94, N.PAG.

Miller, K., & Flint-Stipp, K. (2019). Preservice Teacher Burnout: Secondary Trauma and Self-Care Issues in Teacher Education. Issues in Teacher Education, 28(2), 28–45.

Oakes, W. P., Lane, K. L., Jenkins, A., & Booker, B. B. (2013). Three-Tiered Models of Prevention: Teacher Efficacy and Burnout. Education and Treatment of Children, 36(4), 95–126.

Perrotta, K., & Bohan, C. H. (2020). A Reflective Study of Online Faculty Teaching Experiences in Higher Education. Journal of Effective Teaching in Higher Education, 3(1), 50–66.

Richards, K. A., Levesque-Bristol, C., Templin, T. J., & Graber, K. C. (2016). The Impact of Resilience on Role Stressors and Burnout in Elementary and Secondary Teachers. Social Psychology of Education: An International Journal, 19(3), 511–536.

Richardson, J. W., Lingat, J. E. M., Hollis, E., & Pritchard, M. (2020). Shifting Teaching and Learning in Online Learning Spaces: An Investigation of a Faculty Online Teaching and Learning Initiative. Online Learning, 24(1), 67–91.

Rivero, C. (2020). What Teachers Need Now: As Teaching and Learning Needs Change, Let Professional Learning Principles Guide the Way. Learning Professional, 41(4), 24–27.

Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2015). Job Satisfaction, Stress and Coping Strategies in the Teaching Profession-What Do Teachers Say? International Education Studies, 8(3), 181–192.

Summers, L. L. (2020). The Right Blend: SEL Skills Support Teacher Learning in Person and Online. Learning Professional, 41(4), 32–36.

Washington, L. D., Penny, G. R., & Jones, D. (2020). Perceptions of Community College Students and Instructors on Traditional and Technology-Based Learning in a Hybrid Learning Environment. Journal of Instructional Pedagogies, 23.

White, C. P., Ramirez, R., Smith, J. G., & Plonowski, L. (2010). Simultaneous Delivery of a Face-to-Face Course to On-Campus and Remote Off-Campus Students. TechTrends: Linking Research and Practice to Improve Learning, 54(4), 34–40.

Yong, Z., & Yue, Y. (2007). Causes for Burnout among Secondary and Elementary School Teachers and Preventive Strategies. Chinese Education and Society, 40(5), 78–85.