

AMERICAN EXPATRIATES' EXPERIENCES OF STRESS AND BURNOUT WHILE
TEACHING IN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS WITHIN SOUTHEAST ASIA:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Sandra Nicole Jackson

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe and understand American expatriates' perceptions of their lived experiences with burnout and stress while teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia. The theories guiding this study were Hans Selye's (1951) theory of stress, as it explains the physiological stages of stress the body goes through, and Christine Maslach's (1997) theory of burnout, which explains the factors associated with burnout. The present study was guided by five research questions, including a single central research question, to discover the participants' lived experiences with stress and burnout. Four additional subquestions explored emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, decreased sense of personal accomplishment, and responses to stress in the workplace. The participants of this study were 11 American expatriates who have experienced stress and burnout in their past positions as international educators in Southeast Asia. Data collected for this study included Maslach's Burnout Inventory for Educators (MBI-ES), individual interviews, a single focus group interview, and documents. Data were analyzed through bracketing and analysis to identify themes, and by synthesizing data to write thick, rich descriptions. The phenomenological data analysis revealed participants' lived experiences with burnout and stress included frustration, feeling overwhelmed, and anxiety. Participants described how job expectations, workloads, and their own commitments to job performance affected them.

Keywords: burnout, depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, expatriates, international schools, self-efficacy, stress, teachers.

Copyright Page

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all the people who have a dream that they do not know they can reach. Do not let your future be overshadowed by the storms of your past. Continue to reach for all the seemingly impossible possibilities.

Acknowledgments

The dissertation journey is one that is not to be taken lightly or for granted. I did not complete it without the support of many individuals in my life. I am grateful to have an opportunity to acknowledge the impact they have made throughout this process.

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List of Abbreviations

General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)

Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators (MBI-ES)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe and understand American expatriates' perceptions of their past lived experiences with burnout and stress while teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia. The background for this study provided a concise overview of current issues in the work and environment of educators. Framed in the theory of stress of Hans Selye and the theory of burnout developed by Christine Maslach, the research questions aimed to synthesize data about teacher experiences and fill a gap in the literature on this topic.

Background

Countries in Asia, such as Japan, are adopting more English-based curriculum to meet the needs of a global economy and growing expatriate community (ISC Research, 2018). American expatriates' experiences of burnout and stress while teaching in international schools established solely within the Pacific Southeast Asia had yet to be investigated. American sponsored schools in Asia identify the studied countries as three Pacific regions, depending on the geographic area of the country. South Korea is considered Pacific West, mainland Japan is considered East while Okinawa, a prefecture of Japan, and Guam are considered South (Communications, 2019). This geographical and political region is also identified as East Asia, containing eight countries, including Japan and South Korea. For the purpose of this study, the regions studied will be identified as Southeast Asia, to encompass the terminology utilized by civilian and expatriate representatives in mainland Japan, Okinawa, and South Korea. This section aimed to lay the foundation that aided in building a case for research on burnout and stress experienced by American expatriates employed in international schools within Southeast Asia.

Historical Context

Originally, the basic tenet of international schools was to support and provide a Western education for people in countries with a significant population of globally mobile expatriates (Bunnel, Fertig, & James, 2016). International schools found their roots in the basic ideals of Western education, and many of them choose curriculum and standards from England (Bunnel, 2008; Machin, 2017). There is, however, a growing trend of international schools adopting United States-based curricula in the last 10 years (ISC Research 2018).

International schools often operate using the English language in some capacity but generally, there is no statute defining what an international school is other than self-declaration (Machin, 2017). Aimed at accommodating expatriates globally, international schools are typically parent-funded institutions. Some international schools are based on the tenets of a specific religion, while other schools practice creating global communities within the school to solve real-world problems.

As the trends of international schools continue to change and evolve, consideration should be given to the international teachers providing English-based education to a population that is becoming comprised of mostly local citizens (Machin, 2017). Further, as the trends and expectations of international schools grow and change, teachers must somehow adapt and continue to provide a unique education to a diverse body of students. Some predictors of burnout that could result from the dynamics of the international school environment include social support inside and outside of the workplace, role overload, workload, and access of job resources (Maslach, 2003; Rajak, & Chandra, 2017).

Only in the last 20 years has teacher burnout been studied pointedly, using valid and reliable instruments specifically structured to assess occupational stress in the field of education.

Several studies that investigated factors of burnout utilized the Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1997) to identify situations and environmental factors that positively affected symptoms associated with burnout.

Social Context

Working and living in a unique environment – in a foreign country and in schools serving various cultures and languages with unique academic norms – may have an effect on how American expatriates in international schools in Southeast Asia experience and display stress and burnout. In an environment overseen by two bodies of government, the United States and the host nation, the perception of the international educator teaching experience has the potential to be notable and uncommon to educators who teach on their home soil. However, the outcomes for teacher stress and burnout may be similar around the world, including losses due to teacher attrition and difficulty hiring educators, thus affecting students' quality of education (Kipps-Vaughan, 2013; Pas et al., 2012).

When teachers become overly exhausted or burnout in their profession, a large number of them leave the field of education in pursuit of other careers. If not handled effectively, burnout can increase absenteeism and counterproductive instruction, which negatively impact the quality of learning for students (Pas, et al., 2012). A review of the literature related to teacher stress and burnout in the United States and around the world makes it evident that teachers often deal with situations that cause them physical, mental, and emotional hardships that can negatively affect their self-efficacy and sense of accomplishment (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; Pas, et al., 2012). Negative self-efficacy and sense of accomplishment, whether actual or perceived, can have lasting effects on the work life of educators. Therefore, the ability to stay within the system identified with causing these negative feeling is highly unlikely.

Theoretical Context

Hans Selye (1951) and Christine Maslach (1997) have both extensively researched and studied stress factors and effects in various contexts. Selye's (1951) research originated with stress as it relates to bodily functions and reactions. He later termed stress as General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS), which has three components occurring consecutively. The three components of GAS – alarm, resistance/adaptation, and exhaustion – are used to describe general responses the body has to stress (Selye, 1951). Maslach furthered these studies by focusing on emotional stress and how it manifests itself in the service sector, later constructing the Burnout Theory and the Burnout Inventory (1997).

This research aimed to describe the experiences that American expatriates who have worked in Southeast Asia in the past had with stress and burnout, thus adding to the body of research that describes and identifies how stress and burnout impact educators (Thibodeaux, Labat, Lee, & Labat, 2015; Wang, Hall, & Rahimi, 2015).

American expatriates who have taught overseas in international schools and shared their unique experiences as educators gave voice to a small community of teachers that may have different stressors needing to be addressed in the future. Further, this study sought to provide administrators, head teachers, and other education officials with useful information to enable them to aid their teaching staff and support teacher retention.

Situation to Self

This topic is very near and dear to my heart, as I was once an international school teacher in Southeast Asia, a Pacific region identified by schools that serve dependents of military sponsors. The unique environment that encompassed the school I worked for presented what I

feel to be unique challenges effecting teachers' ability to manage job-related stress. I taught in an international school for one year and I experienced stress and burnout on some occasions.

The stressors that contributed to my experience with stress and burnout varied, but they presented themselves in less than subtle ways. I struggled with understanding the written and unwritten rules and expectations of an international teacher at the school site and within the establishment as a whole. Some of the struggles were due to barriers in language and cultural norms. I did not have a mentor teacher, and my struggle with school leadership was sometimes palpable. Since that time, I have pondered whether other teachers experienced similar struggles in their first years of working in an international school. How I dealt with the struggles and stress of teaching overseas during that time was dependent upon the available resources and upon myself. There were no actual resources for teachers who were experiencing extreme amounts of stress and burnout. Finding fluent English language resources was a daunting task.

As I figured out how to teach effectively, establishing and managing expectations, I found there were other obstacles that would increasingly become the norm rather than the exception. These obstacles were not very similar to those of teaching companions who taught stateside or even in local schools at my current location. I believe there is a culture within a culture that breeds certain factors that are unique to international schools.

The participants and I shared common experiences as American expatriates who have taught in international schools in Southeast Asia. We have past colleagues, administrators, and students in common, making it a strong possibility that the participants may be more open to sharing their experiences. Approaching this study with an epistemological assumption, I investigated the phenomena of stress and burnout. The epistemological assumption asks "that researchers try to get as close as possible to the participants being studied. Therefore, subjective

evidence is assembled based on individual views. This is how knowledge is known—through the subjective experiences of people” (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). The individual views are those of the participants who shared their experiences of stress and burnout in their time as international school educators in Southeast Asia. The participants’ experiences, rather than my knowledge and assumptions about stress and burnout as an educator and the researcher in the study, were used to obtain knowledge and meaning in the phenomena in this study.

Additionally, a constructivist paradigm was appropriate for this phenomenological study. The constructive paradigm is built using open-ended questions, focusing on the phenomena – stress and burnout in this study – studying the environment of the participants, and interpreting data. With the constructivist paradigm, “The goal of research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation. Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically” (Creswell, 2013, pp. 24-25). The participants’ responses to the interview questions were subjective, in that the answers were based on their personal feelings and perceptions of their experiences of stress and burnout as international school educators in Southeast Asia. Semi-structured, open-ended interviewing was utilized during data collection to allow participants the opportunity to share their experiences with stress and burnout. I, the researcher, collaborated with the participants of this study to ensure accurate interpretation of the data collected. The data collected were analyzed for themes and rich, thick descriptions of their experiences.

Problem Statement

Although the school-age population in the United States was projected to grow by over 220,000 students from 2013 to 2017 (Digest of Education Statistics, 2015), the teacher attrition rate in the United States remains above 7%, which equates to over 250,000 teachers leaving the

field of education (Digest of Education Statistics, 2015). Further, the population of international schools has grown to more than 8,000, with significant growth projected in the future (Jonietz & Harris, 1991; Machin, 2017). More than half of “public school teachers who left teaching in 2012–13 reported that the manageability of their workload was better or that their general work conditions were better in their current position than in teaching” (Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014, p. 9). To help prevent or diminish teacher burnout and stress, the stressors and circumstances that lead to burnout need to be identified and addressed in international schools, as English-speaking teachers play an important role in international education (Jonietz & Harris, 1991; Machin, 2017). There are many studies that have used quantitative data to study the amount of stress and burnout that teachers experience in the United States or teaching English overseas (Richards, 2012; Thibodeaux et al., 2015; Yu, Wang, Zhai, Dai, & Yang, 2014). Therefore, the problem of this study was American expatriates’ past lived experiences of stress and burnout while teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia. (Goldring, et al., 2014; Kyriacou, Kunc, Stephens, & Hultgren, 2010; Lindqvist, Nordanger, & Carlsson, 2014).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe and understand American expatriates’ perceptions of their past lived experiences with burnout and stress while teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia. At this stage in the research, burnout was generally defined as “a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced sense of personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity” (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997, p. 192). Stress was generally defined as “the non-specific *response* of the body to any demand placed upon it” (Persson & Zakrisson, 2016, p. 149). The theories guiding this study were

Maslach's Burnout Theory, which describes how stress may manifest itself in the workplace (Maslach, et al., 1997) and Selye's Stress Theory, which describes, using General Adaptation Syndrome, stages the body uses to mitigate stress (Johnson & Johnson, 2010).

Significance of the Study

Considering the rates of teacher attrition in the United States, looking at the causes of stress and burnout of teachers who serve a very small but vital percentage of the United States population is of vital importance. Expatriates and local citizens may decide to enroll their children in international school education to meet the needs of their children's academic progress (Machin, 2017). If American educators are stressed and burned out on the job, there will be a constant and significant shift and strain on the quality and quantity of education available for these families.

There have been many studies that have looked at teachers' experiences with burnout and stress that have identified stressors leading to burnout and stress in the participants' work environment (Pas, Bradshaw, & Hersfeldt, 2012; Rumschlag, 2017; Wang, Hall, & Rahimi, 2015). This study aimed to add voice to a unique group of American expatriates teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia who may have experienced burnout and stress. From study of this group of participants, research on teacher burnout and stress grew to represent educators whose experiences have not been previously considered in the prevention of such outcomes. The resulting findings of this study should give given school leaders knowledge of the professional, social, and cultural pressures characteristic of teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia, highlighting areas in need of improvement, along with areas that show positive professional results concerning the educational work environment.

Studies of teacher stress and burnout using Selye's Stress Theory (1951) and Maslach's Burnout Theory (1997) are prevalent, and this study added a layer of depth to the information available on teacher experiences. This affirmed findings in theories and created reasons to look further into the variables associated with the theories. This unstudied sample of participants revealed the prevalence of stressors previously discussed by burnout or stress theories; previous research was further supported with information from the participants' statements. Additionally, this study added to the body of knowledge pertaining to teacher stress and burnout, both nationally and internationally, through the lenses of Selye's Stress Theory and Maslach's theories concerning burnout, giving greater depth and breadth of information to district officials who aim to retain experienced teachers.

The information revealed in this study could potentially help build administration and teacher leaders' support for teachers who are working through issues with stress and/or burnout at their school sites. Learning what is affecting teachers negatively is a reflective practice that allows for improvement and change (Gluschkoff, Elovainio, Kinnunen, Mullola, Hintsanen, Keltikangas-Järvinen, & Hintsanen, 2016; Pas, et al., 2012). Further, awareness of existing issues has the potential to create positive change or affirm practices that are in place.

Research Questions

The present study was guided by one central research question and four subquestions. This section identifies each research question and provides a narrative that further explains each research question as it relates to the phenomena of stress and burnout.

Central Research Question

How do American expatriates who have taught in international schools in Southeast Asia describe their past experiences with stress and burnout?

Burnout can be described by identifying the presence of distinct characteristics, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. This psychological syndrome often appears in individuals who work for or with people in some continuous capacity, such as teaching, customer service, or social work (Maslach et al., 1997). Teachers work with students, parents and other family members of students, administration, and coworkers to create and support the process of educating students. However, burnout has been identified as a dominant cause of high teacher attrition rates and absenteeism in schools. Teachers who are overly stressed and burned out may have a negative impact on student learning and the overall quality of instruction that is provided over long periods of time (Rumschlag, 2017).

Subquestions

SQ1: How do American expatriates who have taught in international schools in Southeast Asia describe their past experiences with emotional exhaustion as a lived experience?

Emotional exhaustion is “reduced emotional feelings that result in an individual not being able to give of themselves at a psychological level” (Maslach et al., 1997, p. 192). When educators become emotionally exhausted, their energy and enthusiasm for teaching tends to decline. “Emotional exhaustion might have discouraged teachers from understanding the merits of the tasks they taught and of the methods they used, and teachers might have been impatient to provide their students with convincing explanations and examples” of those tasks (Shen, McCaughtry, Martin, Garn, Kulik, & Fahlman, 2015, p. 528). Teachers then display noticeable characteristics of fatigue, debilitation, and energy loss that may result in a lack of emotional discernment with students, teachers, parents, and other people connected to the job site (Chang, 2009).

SQ2: How do American expatriates who have taught in international schools in Southeast Asia describe their past experiences with depersonalization as a lived experience?

Depersonalization can be described as negative, cynical attitudes and feelings about one's clients, i.e. students (Maslach, et al., 1997). When teachers develop a cynical attitude towards their students, they begin to create distance and they disconnect from the relationships that are built in the classroom (Chang, 2009). Being unable to positively cooperate with others in an educational environment could adversely affect a teacher's employment.

SQ3: How do American expatriates who have taught in international schools in Southeast Asia describe their past experiences with a decreased sense of personal accomplishment as a lived experience?

Decreased personal accomplishment is described as, "the tendency to evaluate oneself negatively, particularly with regards to one's work with clients" (Maslach, et al., p. 192). There are many factors that have been documented as having an adverse effect on teachers' perceptions of their own personal accomplishments, which could at some point result in educators leaving their profession. "Educators who are not treated as professionals and lack control of their instruction can feel irritated with their work as they try to conform to others' philosophies" (Rumschlag, 2017, p. 32).

SQ4: How do American expatriates who have taught in international schools in Southeast Asia describe their past experiences when responding to stress as a lived experience?

Stress can be described as "the stimulus from which the body has definite short-term and long-term reactions" (Johnson & Johnson, 2010, p. 219). Hans Selye (1951) further describes stress as General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS), a process in which the body responds to stress.

Alarm, resistance, and exhaustion, or the processes of GAS, may be revealed differently in each individual responding to stress.

Definitions

1. *Burnout* – The term burnout refers to “a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity” (Maslach et al., 1997, p. 192).
2. *Decreased Personal Accomplishment* – The term decreased personal accomplishment refers to “the tendency to evaluate oneself negatively, particularly with regards to one’s work with clients” (Maslach et al., 1997, p. 192).
3. *Depersonalization* – The term depersonalization refers to negative, cynical attitudes and feelings about one’s clients, i.e. students (Maslach et al., 1997).
4. *Emotional exhaustion* – The term emotional exhaustion refers to reduced emotional feelings that result in an individual not being able to give of themselves at a psychological level (Maslach et al., 1997, p. 192).
5. *Expatriate* – The term expatriate refers to an individual who relocates to a foreign country (Biemann & Andresen, 2010).
6. *General Adaptation Syndrome* – The term General Adaptation Syndrome refers to a collection of reactions in response to stress, alarm, resistance/adaptation, and exhaustion (Johnson & Johnson, 2010).
7. *International Schools* – The term international schools refers to schools that provide a Western education to countries with a significant population of globally mobile expatriates (Bunnel, Furtig, & James, 2016).

8. *Stress* – The term stress refers to “the stimulus from which the body has definite short-term and long-term reactions” (Johnson & Johnson, 2010, p. 219).

Summary

Chapter one explained the significance, purpose, problem, background, and definitions that support this study. Although there has been extensive research on teacher burnout and stress around the world, on strategies to build resilience during times of burnout and stress, and on factors that cause burnout and stress, there has been no research documenting the lived experiences of American expatriates who have been employed in international schools in Southeast Asia. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe and understand American expatriates’ perceptions of their past lived experiences with burnout and stress while teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of Chapter Two in this study is to synthesize the literature available on the theoretical framework and related literature that support it. The theoretical framework of this study was grounded in the work of Hans Selye's (1951) theory of stress and Christine Maslach's (1997) theory of burnout. Predictors of stress and burnout, such as work stress, job demand, classroom factors, school-home partnership difficulties, culture shock, and resultant teacher attrition, guided the synthesis of research related to teacher stress and burnout. Further, coping strategies and resiliency were explored as resistant dispositions that mitigate and/or regulate the degree to which people experience stress and burnout.

Theoretical Framework

In an attempt to identify and describe the events that take place when the body is under stress, Hans Selye (1951) developed a theory about stress called General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) or stress syndrome. Most of Selye's research and theories about stress and stress response lie heavily embedded in the medical field of research and are focused on internal, physical body actions and reactions. He studied stress in instances related to hormonal balances and imbalances, stress of organs and bodily functions, and how the body is constantly fighting to function in a homeostatic state during times of stress. Selye initially referred to stress as "the non-specific neuroendocrine response of the body," until he realized that all of the body's systems play a role in stress response (Szabo, Tache, & Somogyi, 2012, p. 474).

The cause of stress could be physical, such as too much exercise; chemical, such as substance abuse; or biological, such as a change in environment. The physical, chemical, or biological agent could have a specific effect, such as a change in the body's insulin production, a

virus, or an extreme emotion; or a non-specific effect, which could be anything an individual receives as such (Selye, 1951; Szabo et al., 2012). Selye spent many years clarifying and justifying the idea that stress encompassed an infinite range of possibilities and, therefore, stressors should be considered nonspecific effects and outward reactions to stress.

Selye identified GAS as an event and suggested three stages an organism undergoes in order to mediate the situation(s) presented by the stressor, that is, the chemical, biological, physical, or physiological phenomenon causing the stress (Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Selye, 1951; Szabo et al., 2012). When the human body experiences nonspecific stress and advances through the steps of GAS, it is trying to achieve its original state of homeostasis, a regulated and normalized function of the body. Selye concluded that, regardless of the origin of the stress, the general patterns or stages of stress response remain the same. The three stages of GAS are alarm, resistance or adaptation, and exhaustion (Selye, 1951).

Selye regarded the initial response to stress as the alarm stage, commonly known as fight or flight. During the alarm stage, the body prepares itself to engage the stressor that is or will be threatening the body's state of homeostasis. Blood glucose levels rise, awareness is heightened, the cardiovascular system increases its activity, and painful sensations are more poignant, as the body prepares to combat or flee the stressor (Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Turton & Campbell, 2005). For teachers, these stressors may appear as standardized testing, recertification, frequent communications with difficult parents, misunderstandings and disagreements with peers and/or administration, personal situations that bleed over into the workplace, cultural shock, or difficult students, to name a few possibilities (Maslach et al., 1997; Richards, 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Alternatively, Turton and Campbell (2005) hypothesized that many people do not experience fight or flight during a stress response. Instead, they defer to tend-and-befriend stress responses. Tend-and-befriend behaviors are actions that support attachment and care-giving responses that are often, but not exclusively, displayed between mothers and their children (Turton & Campbell, 20015). Predominately displayed by females and labeled as maternal, tend-and-befriend behaviors and stimulants are activated in situations in which the alarm phase or fight or flight would be initiated. However, instead of an alarmed reaction, females were observed trying to figure out to how to attend to the stressor or mitigate the situation, similar to the way a mother tries to figure out how to soothe an upset child. This could reveal itself in a teacher who constantly tries to appease overly attentive parents. Further, the female participants attempts to befriend the opposing person in order to reduce the possibility that there might be another alarming situation (Turton & Campbell, 2005). To further prevent stressful situations with people, tend-and-befriend responses may carry on for extended periods of time.

The alarm stage is the initial phase of stress the body goes through when GAS is activated. The alarm stage of GAS is active more often than people may realize, as our body goes into brief or extended periods of fight-or-flight activities (Selye, 1951). The stressor, for teachers, may induce physical, mental, or emotional reactions, such as sweating, anxiety, or worry, for example. Subsequently, the immune system does not respond well during this stage, and the person receiving the stress becomes more susceptible to illness (Johnson & Johnson, 2010). Teachers work in an environment where they come into contact with many adults, children, and common areas throughout the day, which also means they come into contact with several pathogens that could potentially make them ill; therefore, biological stressors are also present.

Resistance, also called adaptation, is the second stage of stress response or GAS (Selye, 1951). In this stage, the body begins to make changes in the way it functions in order to be able to “survive” the stressor that is attacking its physiological wellbeing (Selye, 1951). For example, if the stressor is starvation, the body will begin to slow its metabolic rate and reduce its need for physical activity to compensate for the lack of nutritional intake. Acts of resistance by a teacher could be having adverse reactions to difficult situations, taking days off to avoid doing something that would cause more stress, talking with colleagues about what to do, or displaying signs of burnout, especially depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. In this way, the body is adapting to the change in circumstances (Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Selye, 1951). Similarly, teachers who are constantly being berated by a difficult parent may begin to detach emotionally from the situation to survive the school year without losing their professional posture within the situation. Meanwhile, internally, the body is making hormonal and systematic adjustments to keep the body physically regulated.

Extreme and prolonged exposure to stressors can potentially lead teachers’ bodies to enter the last stage of GAS, which is exhaustion (Selye, 1951). Alternatively, or concurrently, exhaustion can coincide with burnout, which is characterized and described partially, but significantly, by levels of exhaustion. Consequently, exhaustion can manifest itself in many different forms that affect the body, physically, emotionally, and mentally. Heart disease, memory loss, depression, stroke, insomnia, anxiety, ulcers, and other debilitating diseases and actions, such as murder or suicide, are associated with long-term exposure to and experience of stress (Maslach et al., 1997; Turton & Campbell, 2005). Ultimately, the exhaustion phase of stress can be directly and indirectly connected to those illnesses and actions that can lead to death.

After his research on GAS, Selye began to discern two types of stress, eustress, and distress (Le Fevre, Matheny, & Kolt, 2003). Although the chemical reaction is similar, Selye realized that the subject undergoing stress may perceive the stress positively or negatively and have emotional reactions that mirror that perception (Szabo et al., 2012). Labelling them eustress and distress, positive and negative stress respectively, Selye expanded the differentiation of stress, as other researchers' findings expanded his own thinking and studies. Distress, scientifically speaking, represents over or under stimulation from a nonspecific factor, and eustress is described as stimulation somewhere between over and under stimulation (Szabo et al., 2012). In short, eustress has a normalizing effect, while distress is present in high and low extremes. For teachers, receiving continuous negative feedback may cause distress, while receiving positive feedback and productive direction for improvement, or an impending promotion or ceremony of recognition, might provide experiences of eustress. When studying teachers' experiences of burnout and stress, this study looked at how participants react to distress and where possible eustress factors, personal recognition, coping strategies, etc., are lacking in their places of work and within themselves.

Burnout Theory (1997), as developed and described by Christine Maslach, is more specifically aligned with the outcomes of stress as experienced by many teachers in the field of education. Burnout Theory is centered around the observed and noted social workplace experiences of people who work in the human-services career sector. Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment emerged as the most significant and regularly occurring outcomes in human services experiencing burnout. These experiences of burnout and attrition rates in the human-service sector, and more specifically the field of education, ultimately led to the development and implementation of Maslach's Burnout Inventory for

Educators (MBI-ES), which has evolved into several different versions to meet the needs of people in specific job fields. The MBI-ES was used in this study to identify teachers who have experienced levels of burnout above the mean score.

There are arguments that burnout is the same as depression or is simply another way to articulate job dissatisfaction. Burnout could possibly lead a person to experience depression, however, depression must be diagnosed by a doctor and it affects every aspect of a person's life, not the stress or dissatisfaction at a job exclusively. On the other hand, burnout has been associated with problems that are solely present in the social workplace (Maslach et al., 1997). Further, when comparing the results of job satisfaction surveys to burnout inventory surveys, there were no significant correlations between the collections of data. There was a notable correlation between job dissatisfaction and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, two dimensions of burnout (Maslach et al., 1997).

Alternatively, there are other definitions of burnout that slightly deviate from Maslach's definition. Freudenberger (1974) looked at burnout as failure in a job, relationship, or personal endeavor. More specifically, a person sets out to complete a long-term goal and is met with a failure as an end result. Maslach's definition of burnout lends itself to continuous negative experiences, while Freudenberger's definition has a finite negative impact; you fail then you quit. Perhaps in this manner, a teacher quits a job after one unsuccessful or unsatisfactory year. A feeling of defeat is experienced within the contexts of both definitions of burnout.

Emotional exhaustion, which is noted to be the most prevalent component of burnout (Maslach et al., 1997; Schaufeli & Taris, 2005; Papastyliaou, Kaila, & Polychronopoulos, 2009; Yilmaz, Altinkurt, Guner, & Sen, 2015), occurs when individuals feel mentally drained and are unable to make socioemotional connections with others at their place of work (Maslach et al.,

1997; Rumschlag, 2017). In essence, individuals experiencing mild to moderate levels of emotional exhaustion may feel emotionally and mentally depleted (Rumschlag, 2017).

Emotional exhaustion exudes qualities that would present a stress component; but with its other dimensions, depersonalization and personal accomplishment, burnout becomes more complex and significant than a moderate amount of stress (Maslach et al., 1997).

When individuals in the teaching field have a consistent stream of experiences in which they feel like there is nothing more that can be given, notions of being defeated and feelings of being alone with professional struggles lead to beliefs of self-doubt. They ultimately negatively affect motivation and self-efficacy. This desensitized state of existence may deteriorate the individual's sense of effectiveness when teaching or performing other work-related tasks. When teachers are not motivated and feeling equal to the task, students are also affected, as their education is being impacted.

Depersonalization, another dimension of burnout, tends to become apparent when educators begin to have decreased personal connections with their students and counterparts (Aloe, Shisler, Norris, Nickerson, & Winker, 2014). They, the teachers, may make negative comments or think negatively about their students. Negative thoughts and comments could include a certain perception of students, such as, "These students act like they have been raised by wolves." or "Trying to get these kids to put forth effort is pointless." In order to stabilize negative experiences, the teacher may create physical boundaries, such as always standing behind the teacher desk or purposely not making any physical contact with the students. This decreases the positive nature of the teacher-student relationship, as there is a reduction in natural bonding and feelings of community in the classroom (Aloe et al., 2014; Maslach et al., 2017).

Depersonalization can also be identified when teachers mentally and emotionally detach from the classroom environment by altering or retarding the development of the student-teacher relationship; these actions may happen consciously or subconsciously depending upon the participant (Maslach et al., 1997). When this happens, teachers tell fewer stories that make valid connections with students, make less time to get to know one another throughout the school day, and are probably less likely to develop strong relationships with parents and others within the school environment. In essence, teachers are trying to cope with the stress of the job by distancing themselves from the situations that cause negative thoughts and feelings.

Strong displays of cynicism, as shown through depersonalization, portray the individual experiencing burnout as having an overtly negative attitude or as being “excessively detached” in terms of responses or actions to others (Leiter, Maslach, & Schaufeli, 2001). Feeling “under the weather,” having a bad day, or dealing with personal stress does not constitute one as being excessively detached. The teacher who was once happily involved, who perhaps supported students by attending extra-curricular activities and maintained friendly interactions with them, more often than not begins to dread each day and has an air of pessimism in daily remarks and verbal interactions with staff and students.

Depersonalization, in its development, results in negative feelings and is interconnected with emotional exhaustion, which often shows in studies (Maslach et al., 1997). When participants score high on the emotional exhaustion subscale of the MBI, they usually score high for depersonalization as well. Consider a person who is feeling depressed, fatigued, or just fed up with a particular situation. This person may not feel like socializing and does not want to connect with people in the same manner as they did when they were feeling comfortable and effective with their tasks. When such correlations are recognizable, the participant usually has a low

score for personal accomplishment. Often, when a teacher is dealing with large classes on a regular basis and having regular encounters with difficult students, parents, or staff members, they tend to develop traits of depersonalization.

A low sense of personal accomplishment occurs when a teacher feels that he or she is no longer effective in the classroom as an educator; it is the third indicator of teacher burnout. Personal accomplishment does not share subscales with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, but a decreased sense of personal accomplishment should not be understood as an opposite dimension. However, there are minimum correlations between low personal accomplishment and the other two dimensions of burnout (Maslach et al., 1997). Spending extra hours before and after school is not uncommon for teachers who prepare for future classroom activities, assessments, and other responsibilities. However, over time, if those efforts are not recognized or shown to have positive and lasting results, or if teachers begin to question their effectiveness as educators, then their sense of self accomplishment diminishes (Maslach et al., 2017; Rumschlag, 2017). On the contrary, when teachers receive continuous direct feedback on their performance and feel that their work is meaningful, they tend to have a higher sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 1997). Thus, it can be surmised that people who score low on the personal accomplishment scale feel that their work is not making a difference, or that they do not have adequate opportunity to develop their skills in order to do so (Maslach et al., 1997).

Schools that serve expatriate and local families and employ overseas teachers are often located near military bases and surrounded by housing units occupied by expatriates. Parents are constantly volunteering and substitute teaching at these local schools. Also, some parents are likely to make regular visits to the classroom and are in constant communication with the school

and teacher, via email, phone calls and impromptu visits. With all this parent involvement, many teachers begin to feel insecure and uncomfortable in their work environments (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Parents may react severely to situations concerning a single teacher, which further reduces teachers' self-efficacy and heightens stress (Cieslinski & Szum, 2014; Clement, 2017). Teachers begin to question their ability to be effective educators and communicators and feel like they are unable to meet the needs of society, especially of expatriate families, which could potentially lead to all dimensions of burnout (Maslach et al., 1997).

On the whole, the three dimensions of burnout, as experienced by teachers and others in the field of education, are chronic and severe experiences that affect individuals socially, in the workplace, and professionally (Maslach, 2003; Maslach et al., 1997). These dimensions are descriptions of lengthy, continuous responses to stressors triggered by repeatedly negative interactions with people throughout the workday, or by other experiences within interpersonal contexts, like teaching children. Naturally, when stress has caused a person to reach the point of exhaustion they will remove themselves from the situation (Maslach et al., 1997; Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986).

Consequently, burnout leads to teacher attrition and contributes greatly to teacher shortages within the United States and in other countries across the world (Aloe et al., 2014; Maslach et al., 1997). Job stress and burnout can lead to personal and physical ailments, such as tiredness, problems sleeping, problems with family and friends, and substance abuse (Maslach et al., 1997). American expatriates teaching overseas may be even more difficult to replace if they are leaving the system due to factors that lead to teacher burnout. Therefore, the dimensions and characteristics of stress and burnout guided this research to attempt to identify teachers' experiences of them overseas.

Related Literature

The associations of workplace stressors and burnout vary in degrees, contexts and outcomes. While all people encounter stress in their lives, there are few pointed situations or contexts that produce chronic, negative stress. Consistently experiences negative stress results in negative physical and emotional reactions which can ultimately result in resigning from situations that produce the stress permanently. With teaching, as with many other occupations, there are several potential job-related situations, expectations, or changes that could result in prolonged experiences with stress. Links between an educator's personal and professional environment, work expectations, strained communication, perceptions of community and building support and the resultant stress and burnout correlations as well as the presence or absence of resilience and coping strategies guided the related literature section.

Job Demand Stress and Burnout

Generally speaking, an individual who experiences work-related stress or a role stressor over long periods of time may begin to feel all or any combination of the three dimensions of burnout to some degree. The expectations of the job, written and unwritten, may prove to be the cause of that stress from time to time (Maslach et al., 1997; Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016; Richards, Levesque-Bristol, Templin, & Graber, 2016). The stress-related factors that are experienced by teachers can be normalized, initially, but over time they lead teachers to those burnout components that reduce their work productivity and their personal connections with students, peers, and administration – and that eventually lead to educators leaving their profession, which is more commonly known as teacher attrition.

The workload involved with being an educator has been noted to be a significant cause of stress and burnout. The workload includes growing expectations given to teachers by building

administrators as well as the ever-changing needs of students in the classroom (Collie et al., 2012; Goddard, O'Brien, & Goddard, 2006; Mulholland, McKinlay, & Sproule, 2013; De Simone, Cicotto, & Lampis, 2016). Teachers are required to teach multiple classes, and often multiple subjects, to classrooms full of students; grade each assignment individually and as objectively as possible; create lesson plans on a daily basis; provide differentiated instruction, while incorporating various learning styles and research-based techniques; keep in touch with each student's parents or guardians regularly; and continue to seek and show professional growth and maintain adequate certifications (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016; Maslach et al., 1997). Furthermore, teachers spend many hours before and after school grading papers and planning, which has been found to be linked with increased emotional exhaustion (Rumschlag, 2017; Williams & Dikes, 2015). Although not an exhaustive list, the written requirements of teachers in and of themselves can be a daunting task for anyone to keep up with for extended periods of time, never mind the length of a school year.

The educational environment is always changing, growing and requiring subject-matter expertise. Teachers are constantly in a state of alarm, deciding between fight or flight, seemingly at a moment's notice. Every so often there are new standards, new curricula, new expectations, upgraded technology, or teaching practices that teachers need to master, implement, and show success in. Perhaps seasoned teachers can mitigate that stress with coping strategies and resilience, however, the accountability that is placed on teachers can be the breaking point for many (Long et al., 2012). Fortunately for teachers overseas, assessment and progression accountability are less overt and severe in their consequences than in some stateside schools. Nonetheless, the expectation of growth and achievement continues to remain present, and when

teachers feel like they lack the knowledge and expertise to achieve, stress can become apparent (Johnson & Johnson, 2010).

Adding more stress to the job description are middle management duties that teachers often are responsible for executing. Grade-level team leaders, staff liaisons, school improvement billets, etc. can also be catalysts for work-related stress. Even more, expectations of oneself can be positive or negative adding to the stress of taking on middle management responsibilities (Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Stauffer & Mason, 2013). Considering that teachers with these duties are still required to complete the contractual obligations they signed as classroom teachers, there is potential for great successes and failures, which is normal for anyone taking on extra responsibilities. If teachers are not able to handle the responsibilities and feel they are not capable and supported, they may begin to experience burnout symptoms more often and with greater intensity (Brackenreed, 2011; Gonzales et al., 2016). Overseas teachers often receive a stipend for some extra duties, but, depending on their rapport with colleagues, they may not feel as though they have an adequate amount of support.

Notably, the self-efficacy of teachers can be positively built upon or rapidly diminished by the number of tasks and objectives they are required to complete. The length it takes for teachers to complete those obligations or their accuracy, plays a significant role in teachers' beliefs about their effectiveness as an educator (Stauffer & Mason, 2013). This is worth explaining in greater detail because self-efficacy plays a major role in the development or prevention of teacher stress and burnout (Brown, 2012; Schwarzer, Smitz, & Tang, 2000). Further, low self-efficacy may trigger the development of low self-esteem, including negative thoughts about one's ability to accomplish goals and make sound decisions. Teachers

experiencing this are likely to back away from challenging tasks, including teaching itself (Brown, 2012; Tang, Au, Schwarzer, & Schmitz, 2001).

As previously noted, teachers' duties and job descriptions can be taxing. Being required to complete an array of written and unwritten tasks takes a mental, physical, and emotional toll on each individual (Richards et al., 2016). Mandated support for before and after-school activities, such as prom, other school dances, fairs, and sporting events, are common occurrences most for teachers. However, job demands can also be voluntarily bestowed upon the teacher by himself. Teachers often burden themselves with these tasks because they want to support their students, but they sometimes overextend themselves if others do not participate regularly. When teachers feel optimistic and appreciated at work, they may more willingly commit to extra duties and responsibilities involved with the school, district, and other educational entities (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015). Unfortunately, if those extra efforts and the willingness to complete extra tasks are not met with some form of appreciation, a negative sense of accomplishment may begin to develop (Stauffer & Mason, 2013).

Classroom Factors of Stress and Burnout

The classroom environment is a place of learning, growing, sharing and discovery, but it can also be a stressor that leads teachers to experience stress and burnout (Gibbs & Miller, 2013; El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016). Consequently, the student-teacher relationship is paramount to positive student behavior and conduct in the classroom (Veldman, Tartwijk, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2013). Although no two students are completely alike, some extreme classroom dynamics can create highly stressful situations that lead teachers to feel worn out by their responsibilities to the classroom (Aloe et al., 2014; Collie et al., 2012). Unfortunately, in

many cases, teachers who are able to contain and control students notorious for inappropriate behavior may end up with the bulk of those children year after year.

Teachers have reported that they spend a significant amount of class time addressing problematic behaviors in the classroom (Aloe et al., 2014; Beaman, Reynolds & Stephenson, 2011). Further, dealing with behavior problems affects teaching, time dedicated to teaching and learning, student learning, and the stability of the classroom environment. Having large classes, interacting with students who constantly show a general disinterest for learning, and low achievement can cause teachers to experience emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016). Consider a classroom filled with children from many different countries and with differing socio-economic status, struggling to adapt and stay on pace with their classmates. They may be walking into a school ahead of the curriculum at their previous school or using a different curriculum altogether. Some information gets lost in translation because of constant and moderate behavior problems in that classroom only magnifies the difficulties of transitioning for both the student and the teacher. In the case of teachers overseas, this is the norm and not the exception for many classrooms. When teachers cannot effectively complete their goals for students and give the instruction and guidance that is needed, the stress of trying to control behavior in the classroom begins to negatively affect their sense of accomplishment, and depersonalization and emotional exhaustion can begin to emerge (Hinds, Jones, Gau, Forrester, & Biglan, 2015).

Moreover, managing student behavior and creating a cohesive classroom environment can be doubly stressful when there are several students in the classroom diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). From 2003 to 2011, the percentage of school-aged children diagnosed with ADHD increased from 9.5% to 11%, affecting over six million

children in the United States (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, 2018). Some research suggests that many of these children have been misdiagnosed, however, impulsive or inattentive behaviors are constant factors in the general education classroom. Students with these behaviors sometimes require specialized accommodations and modifications to curriculum, instruction, and disciplinary procedures to support them in the classroom. If ADHD has a significant educational impact on a student, special education services may be required to ensure they have access to a quality education. This classroom dynamic can provide several sources of stress to even the most seasoned teacher.

The student-teacher relationship has a significant impact on teacher stress (Spilt & Koomen, 2015). Negative student-teacher relationships and problems related to classroom management can result in frequent teacher absences and subpar instruction as dimensions of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion are displayed by teachers experiencing burnout, further putting a strain on the classroom environment (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016; Spilt & Koomen, 2011; Veldman et al, 2013;). Strained relationships in the classroom can put an extreme amount of pressure on any teacher; consequently, students in the classroom may not get the best experiences and opportunities due to the combination of issues that arise from constantly adverse classroom dynamics (Maslach et al., 2017).

Other mitigating factors in the classroom environment include the student and teacher turnover ratio (Stauffer & Mason, 2013). Students and teachers may have difficulties assimilating to a new district, school, and/or classroom routines and expectations, a diverse student and staff population, and a new culture within a culture as students and teachers move from country to country (Hoglund, Klinge, & Hosan, 2015). In addition, inbound students are not necessarily in the same place in the curriculum as the rest of the class. Teachers are obligated

to ensure those students meet grade-level expectations and are ready for assessments prescribed by the host country and/or home country.

Standardized Testing and Stress

Academic accountability, also known as high-stakes testing, has developed into a constant source of stress, not only for students but for educators as well (Gonzales, Peters, Orange, & Grisby, 2016; Richards, 2012). Student performance on standardized tests has a direct correlation with teachers' sense of self-efficacy as educators (Gonzales et al., 2016). If students perform well, teachers generally feel a sense of accomplishment and job satisfaction, because the students' performance reflects the teachers' ability to get students to learn and understand academic information. On the contrary, when students perform poorly on standardized tests, especially over a span of several tests, teachers feel a decreased sense of accomplishment.

One of the mitigating stress factors associated with standardized testing is time. Often, teachers must implement a pacing guide, if this has not already been done at the district level or higher, so that tested standards are taught and essentially mastered by students before the designated test taking date(s) (Gonzales et al, 2016). Gonzalez et al. (2016) reported that teachers were frustrated about the amount of teaching time lost in preparing for and administering standardized tests. The frustration of time constraints is intensified when time has to be carved out to give specialized instruction to students whose classroom performance is indicative of failure on the standardized tests.

Further, if the teacher is employed in an institution that uses the results of standardized tests as a means to continue employment, the stress and anxiety associated with those test scores are magnified (von der Embse, Pendergrast, Segool, Saeki, & Ryan, 2016; von der Embse, Schoemann, Kilgus, Wicoff & Bowler, 2016). In studies utilizing teacher stress due to

standardized testing, teachers reported physical manifestations of stress such as heart palpitations. Pressure to raise test scores also caused stress and anxiety amongst teachers (von der Embse, Pendergrast, Segool, Saeki, & Ryan, 2016). Furthermore, the pressures of testing were preceded by counterproductive actions from teachers, such as teaching to the test, repetitive review of test-taking strategies, and constant reminders of the upcoming assessments (von der Embse, Schoemann, Kilgus, Wicoff, & Bowler, 2016).

School-Home Partnerships and Stress

Teachers of school-age children know that parental interaction is inevitable and expected, as it is crucial to students' academic achievement and behavioral success (D'Haem & Griswold, 2016; Epstein, 2011; Gartmeier, Gebhardta, & Dotger, B., 2016); consequently, parent interactions were found to be a significant cause of teachers exhibiting characteristics of depersonalization (Skaalvik, & Skaalvik, 2017). At the beginning of the school year, teachers are generally optimistic, having reflected on the areas of their profession they want to improve or perfect, and meet parents and students with positivity. Upon reflection and training, teachers learn that listening to each other, sharing ideas to create effective interventions, having clear consistent expectations, and mutually agreeing on educational and behavioral expectations are key components to having a strong school-family partnership (Epstein, 2010; Epstein, 2011; Kelleghan, 2017; Lasater, 2016). When those key components are not in place, it is highly likely that a strained parent-teacher relationship will develop at some point in the school year, causing negative and stressful interactions that over time may result in teachers experiencing emotional exhaustion and characteristics of depersonalization (Lasater, 2016).

Interactions with challenging parents not only weaken the home-school partnerships but can potentially put a significant amount of strain on teachers both emotionally and mentally.

These challenging parents can be described as demanding, apathetic, entitled, or disengaged, as it pertains to the continuous process necessary to support a healthy partnership (Lasater, 2016). In turn, teachers sometimes find themselves at odds with parents over grades, student behavior, parent involvement, or simply over a difference in opinion concerning a student's capabilities, aptitude, or effort.

According to Selye (1951), a person in a stressful situation, such as delivering difficult news to a parent, will tend to either confront the situation or evade it if possible. In confronting the situation, the teacher would want to work with the parent to share ideas and resolve conflicts to ensure the success of the student through productive conferences. A teacher evading the situation would try to resolve student issues in the classroom so as to avoid conferencing with parents, perhaps as a result of a lack of training to deal with the situation appropriately (Epstein, 2011; Lasater, 2016). On the other hand, tend-and-befriend behaviors reveal themselves when teachers decide to defuse a situation with a parent or student rather than argue or escape it. Where a heated discussion could ensue, the teacher may offer several alternative solutions to satisfy the situation, perhaps forgoing teacher preference (Turton & Campbell, 2005). Teachers keep in contact with difficult parents partly to build a partnership rather than a rivalry. Strained parent-teacher communication is doubly stressful, especially considering that the teacher must pursue and communicate with something of an adversary. In essence, teachers are prone to exhibiting traits of depersonalization and decreased sense of personal accomplishment when their conflicts with parents are left unresolved. Challenging parents are not solely to blame for the strained school-home partnerships that contribute to teacher stress and burnout.

Often, teachers receive informal or residual training regarding the establishment of professional and continuous parent-teacher communication (Gartmeier et al., 2016). Teachers

reported that they often receive memos and short sessions at staff trainings to discuss expectations of communication and conferencing with parents (Lasater, 2016). Similarly, student-teachers have reported a similar lack of preparation or confidence in practicum experiences (D’Haem & Griswold, 2016; Patte, 2011). Reasonably, a seasoned teacher may have established a systemic rapport with each year’s group of parents, however, unforeseen challenges may plague the longevity of the partnership. As a whole, teachers’ resilience may fade, especially inexperienced teachers, as they may develop traits of stress and burnout with each unresolved conflict.

School Administrative Correlations to Burnout

Encompassing the classrooms of all teachers, specialists, support staff and students is the physical school building and the implicit and explicit rules and expectations from the administration and district officials. Under those rules and expectations many teachers experience situations and requirements that make their jobs overtly stressful, unnecessarily tedious, and the source of job-related angst and frustration (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016). Factors within the system that have been found to contribute to teacher stress, and ultimately burnout, include: inadequate amount of time to teach or complete tasks involving significant amounts of paperwork, processing students believed to be in need of support services, assessment requirements, lack of administrative trust and/or support, and between-staff support and comradery (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015; El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016; Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). Administrative trust is especially difficult to build in international schools in Southeast Asia because cultural and social norms differ. Even with the professional benefit of the doubt, experienced teachers may often find it very difficult to feel settled in the

culture, routines, and expectations of the building administration (Dunn, 2011). New leadership anxiety and stress may become a regular occurrence to many teachers.

On the other hand, feelings of stress and reduced sense of self-efficacy can be minimized with consistently and overtly supportive and transparent administrative leaders (Lavian, 2012; Long et al., 2012). Moreover, coordination and mentoring can help bridge the gap between administration and teachers. For the most part, if a mentoring program is properly implemented, new or incoming teachers receive the majority of support and guidance throughout their first school year. Meanwhile, experienced teachers are thought of as trained, and sometimes no one regularly assumes responsibility over them. Mentoring from administration, periodically but consistently, can help to build connections and a sense of belonging with staff members as well as improve teachers' sense of self-efficacy (Angelle, 2006; Long et al., 2012).

Teacher Salary Correlations to Stress and Burnout

According to the Digest of Education Statistics (2019), the average salary for public-school teachers was approximately \$58,950 in 2016. The U.S. Census Bureau (2017) reports that the median household income was \$61,372. Although it is seemingly positive that the average teacher salary is roughly \$2,000 higher than the average American income, teacher responsibilities and expectations are not necessarily average or equivalent to most job fields. Many teachers who pursue graduate level education may end up with student loans averaging upwards of \$40,000. Additionally, teachers have to continue their education and often have to pay for testing to maintain their teaching credentials and certificates. Furthermore, many teachers spend between \$300 to \$1000 on school supplies for their classroom each year, while the tax write-off limit is \$250 (Figueroa, 2017). The financial pressures and generally low salaries that many teachers try to manage can lead to burnout over time (Cephe, 2010; Zhouchun, 2011).

Understandably, one of the main reasons teachers choose to work overseas is the opportunity for financial gain (Appleton, Morgan, & Sives, 2006). Teachers working in overseas locations are likely to receive housing allowances and cost of living allowances (COLA) to offset currency fluctuations and purchasing power in foreign countries. The expense of traveling to and from home and taking other vacations to escape the confines of foreign residence may coincide with financial strains of the overseas teacher.

Considering that they have to maintain households, provide for families, and purchase additional materials for classrooms in many cases, teachers may struggle to meet their financial obligations (Delisle & Holt, 2017). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), roughly 16% of the United States' teaching population works a second job to pay for debts, entertainment, and general living expenses. In North Carolina, 25 % of teachers work a second job. Most teachers' salaries do not increase at the same rate as other jobs in which the employee is required to have a similar amount of education or experience. Working an extra 10-30 hours a week to meet the needs of a household makes it difficult for teachers to concentrate, retain knowledge, seek further professional development, and spend more time delving into the nuances of academics for their students (Zhouchun, 2011).

Stress and Cultural Adaptation and Assimilation

Moving from one city or state for employment can be exciting and stressful for anyone, but the familiarity of one's homeland can make the change seem more "doable." For teachers teaching overseas, the thought and actuality of moving to countries that are far away and have different cultural dynamics, languages, and norms can be both exciting and stressful (Halicioglu, 2015; Roskell, 2013). Also, the impact of time and money involved in these types of changes can provide lingering anxiety in even the most seasoned traveler (Halicioglu, 2015; Roskell, 2013).

American expatriates teaching in international schools overseas may find themselves at one location for many years or visiting other locations over the span of employment.

Most people are highly optimistic and experience a sense of glee and wonderment when arriving in a new country. They are quite eager to absorb the culture, climate and general atmosphere of the new location (Roskell, 2013). Consequently, over time a teacher who has accepted overseas employment might experience “cultural shock,” which implies weariness that results from leaving family, friends, and familiarity, as a new culture begins to reveal how different a foreigner is from the social and perhaps ethnic norms of the host country (Halicioglu, 2015; Roskell, 2013). The shock of being in a foreign country may be amplified when considering changes associated with working for and with new people, in a new building, with new rules and nuances of socialization and professionalism.

Oberg (1960) explains his theory of culture shock using four progressive stages, honeymoon, regression, adjustment, and recovery. The honeymoon stage can last up to six months. During this stage, people visit new places, learn new information, and are shown an extraordinary amount of hospitality and kindness. New teachers are picked up from the airport, often by administration and supporting staff, and given a warm welcome, which may be a positive first step to showing social and professional support. Fellow employees happily and willingly assist with personal and employment needs, including securing housing, getting familiar with curriculum, and even sharing mealtimes. As previously stated, the air of optimism is poignant.

The second stage of culture shock, regression, occurs when there is acknowledgment by new residents that they are no longer visiting a foreign country, but are residing in that country. At this point, the fascination of being in a new country has dissipated and those teachers are on

their own to navigate the new country, new school, and new norms. The overly friendly staff members return to their normal routines as the culture and climate become more apparent. The language barriers, school-building norms, and even driving habits of local citizens can become quite frustrating (Halicioglu, 2015; Oberg, 1960; Roskell, 2013). At this point, expatriates tend to withdraw from social interactions, coping passively by not engaging or reaching out to peers and other possible support systems (Halicioglu, 2015).

In addition, trying to communicate with local people in a foreign country, whether verbally or nonverbally, is a major source of frustration associated with culture shock (Halicioglu, 2015; Tange, 2005). American teachers who move to areas of the Pacific such as South Korea and Japan have to make adjustments in order to communicate respectfully. In Japan, when people refer to themselves, they place their index fingers on their noses while in the United States, people point to their chest area. In both South Korea and Japan, bowing at the waist is the American cultural equivalent of shaking hands, with level of respect indicated by the deepness of the bow. Friends may receive a nod of the head. The national languages in these countries are Korean and Japanese, respectively, not English. The writing systems in both countries do not use the letters of the English alphabet. Although there are programs that offer language instruction and some establishments have English-speaking staff, the barrier can still cause some strife.

While some people are able to adapt to new cultural norms, others cannot adjust and decide to return to a more comfortable location with familiar norms and expectations. For American expatriates teaching in international schools overseas, finding experiences that resemble their home lives can sometimes be difficult. According to Oberg, stage two of culture shock is the critical point where people decide to stay or leave. Freudenberg (1974) might interpret this critical point as the time when someone will fail and quit, if they decide to leave.

Selye (1951) might identify the regression symptoms of cultural shock as fight or flight.

Teachers who are in a mental or emotional state of regression, as explained by cultural shock, may find themselves experiencing symptoms of stress and burnout.

If teachers decide to stay in their new environment and work through the differences of being in a new location, they have entered the adjustment stage of culture shock (Oberg, 1960). Adjustment behaviors could include taking a superior attitude toward local norms. For teachers this could be within the school system or within the country of employment. Teachers in stage three may seek to help struggling people in an attempt to show how they are handling or have handled the transition. Selye (1951) might interpret this as a resistance to the stress of trying to gain comfort in an uncomfortable situation.

One major adjustment reveals itself in the form of diplomatic representation, as teachers must represent themselves as professional representative of the U.S. government (Gartmeier, 2016). American expatriates are expected to remember that they are ambassadors of the United States and a guest of the host country. Teachers should not intertwine personal political views with those of their agency of employment or of the host country. In some areas of the Pacific, local citizens regularly protest the existence of U.S. military establishments, which is often a source of stress and anxiety about anticipated and unanticipated outcomes. Teachers should not interfere with the local nationals' right to protest, a right similar to that of a United States citizen. These protests can be stressful to expatriate teachers, who may feel that they are unwelcome or unsafe in the host country and perhaps begin to have mixed feelings about their own presence in that country.

Lastly, the recovery stage of culture shock ends the cycle of embedding oneself in a foreign country (Oberg, 1960). As teachers adjust to the social, cultural, and education norms of

the host country and employing agency, stress and anxiety caused by those changes will begin to dissipate and make way for a “new normal.” During the recovery stage, teachers begin to willingly learn and utilize basic phrases in the host nation’s language, partake in local cuisines, tour culturally rich areas, and become more immersed in the social and cultural norms of the region, with little discomfort. Oberg (1960) suggests that learning the language of the host country is essential for adjusting to life in a foreign country. Teachers in foreign countries often find it necessary to communicate with schools and local establishments to build relationships and opportunities for students and staff which builds a new normal for themselves and others. Often, within the school environment, there are teachers and staff members employed in American schools who are local citizens. Further, going back and forth between home and host countries will provide a more organic experience as travelers happily share experiences with family and friends and happily return to their host’s nation.

Coping Correlations to Burnout

No job is completely stress-free, and because this is so, people learn to cope with certain stresses associated with their occupations. Teachers know that they are going to have difficulties with students and will perhaps experience frustrations trying to get them to progress behaviorally, socially, and/or academically. Further, teaching is widely known as a stressful occupation in the United States. There are other situations that may cause strife in the work life of a teacher.

Lawver and Smith (2014) define coping as “A specific strategy which is employed by an individual to manage a specifically stressful event” (p. 77). It may be necessary for teachers to develop strategies and behaviors to cope with job stress. Arts-based reflective practices can help teachers cope with the stress (McKay & Barton, 2008). They can help teachers to become aware

of the personal and contextual factors and the coping strategies that enable them to be resilient by acknowledging their feelings, resources, and personal strengths (McKay & Barton, 2018).

Coping and burnout have a cause-and-effect relationship: not possessing the appropriate coping strategies can result in experiences of burnout (Montero-Marin, Prado-Abril, Marcelo, Gascon, & García-Campayo, 2014). Stress responses, such as outwardly emotional responses or emotional overload, are typically behaviors that result from or lead to emotional exhaustion, a key component of burnout. Similarly, and highly associated with job stress, neglect is another negative coping response that supports the development of depersonalization (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). The subject tends to withdraw from social interactions and purposely disengages in activities within the job that create intrapersonal and interpersonal connections (Griffith, Steptoe, & Cropley, 1999; Montero-Marin et al., 2014). On the whole, negative or inactive coping strategies are associated with burnout (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997; Montero-Marin et al., 2014).

Coping with classroom management and student behaviors can be a constant source of stress and anxiety for teachers. Along with receiving adequate training and support, learning strategies to cope with these situations is useful to mitigating components of stress and burnout. Building coping strategies promotes resilience and teacher retention (Lo, 2014). Learning and developing strategies to cope with the stress of challenging student behaviors may require teachers to actively reach out for social support from trusted colleagues, friends, and family members. Additionally, positive thinking and reflective practices are important to building resiliency in highly stressful environments, such as the classroom (Lo, 2014).

Other coping strategies associated with reducing or resisting the effects of stress and burnout include spiritual practices, problem-solving strategies, and exercise (Feltoe et al., 2016;

Yildirim, 2017). Exercise not only reduces stress, it also promotes a healthy lifestyle. This is pertinent because prolonged stress and anxiety not only have negative psychological effects but negative physical effects.

Learning coping strategies can help teachers work through job-related stress (Aloe et al., 2014). Although there are a variety of resources overseas, it is often difficult for civilian workers to find support, counseling, and other mental health resources independently. Recovery activities may be a viable solution to dealing with teachers' experiences of stress and burnout. Insomnia and stress have been noted as effects of burnout, but recovery techniques including sleep, relaxation, and meditation have been shown to have mediating effects on those ailments (Gluschkoff et al., 2016).

Social Support

For teachers, depersonalization affects their relationships with fellow educators, support staff, and students. Although depersonalization, a component of burnout, describes a condition in which people withdraw socially, seeking social support is helpful in resisting the development of burnout and stress (Burke, Greenglass, & Schwarzer, 1996; Yildirim, 2017). Teachers should seek support from peers, administration, and family members. Social support should also be available, as relationships are built through sports, hobbies, and other settings where group interactions may occur. People who lend support to teachers help them to talk about, think through, plan, and problem-solve the situations that cause them stress at work, thereby reducing the perceived severity of situations (Wolgast & Fischer, 2017). When speaking to someone trusted, the teacher may emotionally vent problems and frustrations in order to cope with occupational situations (Feltoe, Beamish, & Davies, 2016, Wolgast & Fischer, 2017; Yildirim,

2017). In turn, teachers are more mentally and emotionally healthy for themselves and their students.

Suppression

By avoiding the situations that cause stress, teachers learn to physically or mentally flee from problems (Hinds et al., 2015). Teachers may find themselves participating less in meetings or deciding to not verbally spar with an oppositional parent in order to keep peace. These types of behaviors may be identified as depersonalization or cynicism according to Maslach's (1997) Burnout Theory. Depersonalization is a detachment from social situations and responsibilities in the workplace (Maslach, 1997). However, feelings may be harbored internally, in order to reduce the possibility of an outwardly stressful situation. These coping techniques mirror Selye's (1951) alarm stage of stress, where the body goes into fight or flight mode. Suppressing difficult situations at work does not resolve the situation, nor does it make the situation more bearable if it cannot be resolved. Anger, anxiety, and frustration can be related to suppression and surface emotions (Lee, Pekrun, Taxer, Shutz, Vogle, & Xie, 2016).

Humor

Using humor as a coping mechanism is mostly a subconscious action (Ho, 2015; Yildirim, 2017). Teachers who use humor as a coping mechanism typically experience lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and higher levels of self-confidence (Ho, 2015). Ho (2015) revealed that in order for humor to be utilized as a coping mechanism, a certain amount of self-esteem has to be present in one's personality. The support of administration in meeting the needs of educators provides a mitigating effect to emotional exhaustion, therefore allowing humor to be a plausible strategy to coping with environmental work stressors (Ho, 2015; Yildirim, 2017). In addition, having a supportive staff allows teachers to feel that they are

in a safe environment and believe their peers can relate to the stresses of the workplace (Dyck & Holtzman, 2013; Ho, 2015)

Resiliency

As explained by the Stress Theory or GAS, the subject experiencing stress goes through biological changes to attempt to resist and survive stress, until the point of exhaustion in chronic and significant situations (Selye, 1951). Whether there is a serious situation with a parent, extreme acts of disobedience from students, pending deadlines, or a situation where teachers may be relieved from their position due to decreased demands for staff, which is not an uncommon occurrence for teachers working overseas, the human body is always making hormonal and system changes to maintain homeostasis during stressful situations (Selye, 1951). Likewise, the person experiencing a stressful situation is constantly trying to decide how to deal with it (Selye, 1951).

Resiliency, or the lack thereof, has been documented in research articles as a mitigating factor in teachers who do or do not persevere when work-related stressors are prevalent and dimensions of burnout begin to affect their daily lives (Bowles & Arnup, 2015; Brackenreed, 2011; Richards et al., 2015). Resilience, as it pertains to teachers, may be thought of as the ability to persevere or work through stressful situations that happen constantly or periodically, while maintaining a positive presence for students (Gu & Day, 2007; Richards et al., 2016). Further, experienced teachers, educators who have been teaching more than five years, have been found to be more resilient than young, inexperienced teachers; however, there is no conclusive evidence that resilience is an innate or learned skill (Richards et al., 2016).

Developing resiliency in the educational environment reduces stressors associated with burnout, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased sense of

accomplishment (Richards et al., 2016). Early-career teachers who demonstrated moderate levels of adaptive functioning also displayed resilient characteristic traits (Bowles & Arnup, 2016; Bowles & Hattie, 2013). Self-efficacy, self-esteem, and desensitization to the common role stressors of educators are personal resources and stress mediators that support resilient behaviors (Airila, Hakanen, Schaufeli, Luukkonen, Punakallio, & Lusa, 2014; Huang, Yang, & You, 2016). Some teachers may attempt to become desensitized from stressful situations at work but actually become emotionally detached in the process. If they are not making connections with students, peers, and other staff members to cope with their work environment, teachers may be displaying depersonalization, a component of burnout (Maslach, 1997).

There are some actions that head teachers, principals, and other school leaders can take that help support or diminish teacher resiliency in the workplace. Positive support from administration has been shown to uplift and empower teachers and build stamina when there are large and significant tasks and expectations to meet. The ability to complete those significant tasks and expectations is a source of intrinsic motivation for many teachers (Thibodeaux et al., 2015). Although the climate of international schools may vary from building to building, showing support and recognition of teachers and others working to support student education is essential to creating a climate of autonomy and feelings of accomplishment.

Summary

The theoretical framework in Chapter Two of the present study provides a detailed synopsis of how the phenomenon of stress has developed over time. Burnout, which encompasses some characteristics of stress, can be utilized to illustrate the experiences of people employed in the human-service sector. The related research supports the links between teacher stress and burnout as predictors of attrition, decreased self-efficacy, and job dissatisfaction for

educators. In addition, the literature review reveals information that can lead to improved work conditions for educators as well as information for personal emotional and mental growth and development to build resiliency and coping skills. The information presented in the literature, although applicable to educators in many environments, does not necessarily reflect the needs, stressors, or experiences of American expatriates who have taught in international schools in Southeast Asia.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe and understand American expatriates' perceptions of their lived experiences with burnout and stress while teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia. American expatriates who participated in the study are, or were, located in the countries of Japan and South Korea and have taught, but no longer teach, in international schools in that region. The present study sought to address the gap in the literature regarding how teachers, Americans living in foreign countries in Southeast Asia, experience stress and burnout in the field of education. American expatriates with past experiences of at least three years in international schools were the targeted participants in the present study. The participants were no longer actively teaching in international schools. Interviews were conducted to allow participants to share their experiences. This chapter discusses the research design, setting, participant selection, data collection, and analysis methods that will be used for this study. This chapter concludes with trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Design

Utilizing a qualitative, transcendental phenomenological research design (Moustakas, 1994), this study intended to describe and understand the phenomenon of stress and burnout as experienced by American expatriates who previously taught in international schools within Southeast Asia. Qualitative inquiry looks to explore and uncover new or deeper meaning into the phenomenon being researched. In this study, the phenomenon being researched is stress and burnout as experienced by former educators in a specific region of the world, Southeast Asia. This common experience shared by participants makes a phenomenological approach appropriate

for this study (Moustakas, 1994).

A qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study was necessary to allow the participants to speak candidly on their experiences of stress and burnout, instead of being reported quantitatively, which provides little depth. Having vivid explanations based on the experiences of humans, instead of one definition or description of that experience, makes for a more detailed study (Van Manen, 1990, p. 16). The transcendental (meaning, “in which everything is perceived freshly for the first time”) phenomenology research design requires that the researcher set aside prior knowledge, experiences, and biases concerning the phenomenon and look for new meaning and understanding by collecting data from research participants (Creswell, 2014, p. 60; Moustakas, 1994). In the study, I did not embed my personal and professional experiences pertaining to stress and burnout in this research. The emergence of information will arise from data collection and analyzation procedures.

In this study, I bracketed out my lived experiences of stress and burnout while previously employed at an international school in Southeast Asia. I had to separate my preconceived notions of the phenomenon throughout the research process by journaling (Moustakas, 1994). However, some experiences of the phenomenon were vivid and significant, thus epoche or bracketing did not completely allow me, the researcher, to set aside all biases (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994).

Multiple methods of data collection, primarily individual interviews, provided a plethora of information that was collected until data saturation was reached. The focus of the study was the shared, lived experiences of human participants, thus interviewing the participants were the most vital portion of the study. The goal of this study was to fully describe the experiences of stress and burnout as explained by American expatriates who were teachers in international

schools in Southeast Asia. “The challenge is to explicate the phenomenon in terms of its constituents and possible meanings, thus discerning the features of consciousness and arriving at an understanding of the essences of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 49). Moustakas (1994) recommended that the information gathered should be organized and grouped into themes that will guide the narration of the study using textural and structural descriptions.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

How do American expatriates who have taught in international schools in Southeast Asia describe their past experiences with stress and burnout?

Subquestions

SQ1: How do American expatriates who have taught in international schools in Southeast Asia describe their past experiences with emotional exhaustion as a lived experience?

SQ2: How do American expatriates who have taught in international schools in Southeast Asia describe their past experiences with depersonalization as a lived experience?

SQ3: How do American expatriates who have taught in international schools in Southeast Asia describe their past experiences with a decreased sense of personal accomplishment as a lived experience?

SQ4: How do American expatriates who have taught in international schools in Southeast Asia describe their past experiences when responding to stress as a lived experience?

Setting

The setting for this study was Southeast Asia; the islands of Japan and the peninsula of South Korea were the target areas. American expatriates who have taught in international schools located in overseas locations were considered for this study.

There are over 8,926 international schools worldwide and over 5,000 of those schools are located in Asia (Machin, 2017). As more international schools open, there is potential for growth in the area of English-speaking teacher employment.

International schools have the potential for unique cultures and climates that include students and teachers from various countries, including American expatriates. As the dynamics of the international school change, including shifts to more local citizens attending international schools, looking at the international teachers' experiences may also change (Machin, 2017).

No information about stress and burnout experienced by American expatriates while teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia was discovered during review of the literature. However, research was available concerning stress and burnout among educators teaching in their respective home countries, as well as comparisons of international-school teachers with native school teachers regarding their experiences as educators.

Participants

For this study, the criterion-based sample included 11 participants (Creswell, 2013; Dukes, 1984). The participants were selected based on the MBI-ES results and snowball sampling to share their past experiences of stress and burnout during individual interviews (see Appendix D), a single focus group interview (see Appendix E), and in documents (Creswell, 2013). The sample of participants was purposeful in that they have worked in international schools in Southeast Asia and their MBI-ES results indicated they have experienced burnout and stress. Snowball sampling was used; participants referred by another participant were considered for the study. Gathering as much information as possible about the participants' experiences was pertinent to reach data saturation (Creswell, 2013). The participants who met the criteria for this research have been, but were no longer, teachers employed in international schools in Southeast

Asia who have experienced significant levels of stress and burnout as measured by the MBI-ES.

The participants of this study met certain criteria that indicated they had experienced stress and burnout, the phenomenon of this study (Creswell, 2013). The participants that met the criterion of having had significant experiences of stress and burnout were considered for participation in this study. The MBI-ES (see Appendix A) was administered to potential participants to identify former international teachers who have experienced significant levels of stress and burnout. Further, the sample participants had completed three years of teaching in an international school in Southeast Asia which allowed for a variety of experiences within the region.

Procedures

Following a successful proposal defense, but prior to conducting research for this study, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (See Appendix B) was attained. IRB approval included the approval of the consent form (See Appendix C). After gaining IRB approval, potential participants were asked to take the MBI-ES. The MBI-ES uses a seven-point Likert scale to assess the three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Maslach, et al., 1997). Permission to use the MBI-ES was obtained prior to survey distribution, which was completed online. Two studies substantiate the validity and reliability of the MBI-ES, “a factor-analytic study by Iwanicki and Schwab (1981) with 469 Massachusetts teachers and by Gold (1984) with 462 California teachers support the three-factor structure of the MBI-ES” (Maslach et al., 1997, p. 206).

The MBI-ES was used to provide the study with a criterion sample of potential participants who have had experiences of stress and burnout as American expatriates who have taught in international schools in Southeast Asia. The survey was administered electronically,

through a survey system that has informed consent embedded into the beginning of the survey. The survey made preliminary information available about what aspects of burnout each participant has experienced and how often they feel they live those experiences. There was individual and group data available via the survey site, with which I was able to compare each individual to the group norm. Although the survey was not to be used in data analysis, it was helpful in learning about participants who have had frequent and significant experiences of stress and burnout and in guiding interview questions and possible emerging themes in data analysis.

The MBI-ES has been tested for validity and reliability with over 25 years of research. Some early studies used to affirm the validity of the MBI-ES were the factor analysis study of Iwanicki and Schwab (1981) and Gold (1984), which validated the three sub-scales that represent the components of burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 1997). The studies of Iwanicki and Schwab (1981) and Gold (1984) also confirmed the reliability of the MBI-ES with “Cronbach alpha estimates of .90 for emotional exhaustion, .76 for depersonalization, and .76 for personal accomplishment while Gold reported estimates of .88, .84, and .82 respectively” (Maslach et al., 1997, p. 206).

The MBI-ES access information, which includes informed consent, will be sent to the purposeful sample population of former international teachers in Southeast Asia. After the collection window closed, the MBI-ES scores were normed by subtopics, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Each individual participant’s sub-scores were compared against the norm scores. The full-time teachers who scored higher than the norm for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization or lower than the norm for personal accomplishment met the criteria for this study.

A criterion sample of 11 former international teachers were asked to participate in this

study. Maximum variation was obtained by choosing participants with various years of experience, backgrounds, teaching positions, age, and gender identifications. Snowball and convenience sampling were utilized to reach data saturation.

Next, individual interviews were used as a primary source of data collection for this phenomenological study. The open-ended questions asked participants what they have experienced and how they experienced it as it pertains to stress and burnout (Moustakas, 1994). Participants' interviews were conducted at locations the participants chose individually and recorded using two digital audio devices. The interviews were professionally transcribed after confidentiality agreements had been signed by the chosen transcription service. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of the participants.

A focus group interview and documents were used to collect data. Participants were asked to participate in a focus group interview online using pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. It was made available via an online forum. Also, participants created photo narratives (see Appendix G) to reflect on experiences with stress and burnout or to document new experiences that may have occurred after the interviewing process. For the photo narrative, participants were asked to choose a photo that encompasses their experiences of burnout and stress. Then they were asked to create a caption for it. A sample photostory (see Appendix F) was provided. All data collected were securely stored on a password-protected computer.

Moustakas (1994) suggests analyzing data collected through horizontalization and developing meaningful clusters of information. Data analysis was completed using phenomenological reduction, which included epoche/bracketing, horizontalization, developing clusters of meaning to create themes, and using those themes to write textural and structural descriptions of teachers' experiences of stress and burnout (Moustakas, 1994).

Finally, a composite description was written that discussed the essence of the phenomenon of stress and burnout. The composite description focused on the experiences that are common among all participants (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994).

The Researcher's Role

I was the central instrument of research, through individual interviews, coordinating a focus group interview, collecting documents, and analyzing data from the MBI-ES to select participants. As the human instrument, I recorded and received information as it was given to me and not as I would have interpreted it from my own experiences and understanding. I used epoche procedures to separate my biases and experiences from the research.

I am a doctoral candidate in a curriculum and instruction program. I have taught in public schools and schools under the state juvenile court facilities as a substitute teacher, and in international schools and military-affiliated schools as a full-time teacher. Currently, I am a fifth-grade teacher and visual-media coordinator in a military-affiliated school and have been in this position for six years. Further, I work with military-affiliated students in the capacity of a volunteer basketball coach and referee.

The biases I brought into this study were my experiences associated with stress and burnout as an international teacher and my perception of others' experiences of the same phenomenon. There was a strong possibility that the experiences of the participants might mirror my own; I had to journal and bracket my biases, thoughts, and assumptions on these matters throughout the study.

The participants were my peers in the sense that we all previously worked for international schools in Southeast Asia. I knew some of the participants by association from working in the same international school during different time periods or from other social

settings. I did not hold a supervisory role over the participants in any capacity. I did not utilize any teachers whom I presently work with because our teaching assignments differ from those required for this study.

Data Collection

This study utilized the MBI-ES, individual interviews, a focus group interview, and documents. Each participant was asked to participate in a 13-question semi-structured interview to discuss their experiences of stress and burnout.

Maslach Burnout Inventory

Potential participants were asked to complete the MBI-ES to compare each individual's ratings against the group mean to identify the highest levels of emotional exhaustion, decreased sense of personal accomplishment, and depersonalization. This survey uses a seven-point Likert scale to rate the degree to which survey takers perceive their experiences of burnout. The MBI-ES and survey consent was completed online using MindGarden.com.

Individual Interviews

The individual interviews were semi-structured, informal, and interactive. Individual interviews were conducted in quiet settings that were most convenient and comfortable for each participant. The interviews were conducted in person and on the telephone, depending on the location of the interviewee. The area was checked for sound and two recording devices were utilized. Participant consent was obtained from each participant prior to the interview (Creswell, 2013).

Open-ended Individual Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. Briefly describe the journey you took to become a teacher.

3. How did you come to work for an international school within Southeast Asia?
4. How many years did you work for an international school within Southeast Asia before changing employers?
5. What situations or responsibilities most commonly caused you stress as a teacher?
(CRQ), (SQ4)
6. What are some of your most vivid or impactful past experiences with stress while working in an international school within Southeast Asia? (CRQ), (SQ4)
7. How do you recall the stress you felt manifested itself, physically, mentally, and/or emotionally? (CRQ), (SQ4)
8. How do you recall managing the stressors associated with your job? (CRQ), (SQ4)
9. What situations or responsibilities do you recall caused you to feel like you were burning out (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and/or decreased sense of personal accomplishment) of the teaching profession? (CRQ), (SQ1), (SQ2), (SQ3)
10. Describe your past experiences of teacher burnout as a teacher at an international school within Southeast Asia. (CRQ), (SQ1), (SQ2), (SQ3)
11. Describe past particular instances of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and/or decreased sense of personal accomplishment as a teacher that worked at an international school within Southeast Asia. (CRQ), (SQ1), (SQ2), (SQ3)
12. How do you recall that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and/or decreased sense of personal accomplishment impacted you physically, mentally, or emotionally? (CRQ), (SQ1), (SQ2), (SQ3)

13. What else would you like to share about your past experiences with stress and burnout as a teacher in an international school in Southeast Asia? (CRQ), (SQ1), (SQ2), (SQ3), (SQ4)

Questions one through four are background questions to engage the participants to talk about their background in education. Standard background questions were used to gain information such as a description of the interviewee's job, years of education, and age (Patton, 2015). Participant feedback from background questions further confirmed that the interviewees met some of the criteria for this study, such as being a teacher in an international school in Southeast Asia with at least three years of experience. The background questions allowed for the interviewees to share other information that supported maximum variation items, such as prior overseas experiences, being male or female, or being an experienced or inexperienced international teacher (Creswell, 2013).

Questions five, six, and eight through 11 are experience questions. "Questions about what a person does or has done aim to elicit behaviors, experiences, actions, and activities that would have been observable had the observer been present" (Patton, 2015, p. 444). The participants were asked to retell events in their past teaching experience as teachers in international schools in Southeast Asia that led or often led them to experience symptoms of stress and burnout. Allowing participants to share their experiences led to other questions that resulted in vivid and detailed responses.

Questions seven and 12 are sensory questions, in that they asked the interviewees to describe stress and burnout and the stimuli they experienced due to stressors they have discussed. "Sensory questions attempt to have interviewees describe the stimuli that they experience. Technically, sensory data are types of behavioral data—they capture the experience of the

senses” (Patton, 2015, p. 444). Possible sensory responses included feeling headaches, anger, frustration, taking days off work, and other reactions that come about when an individual becomes overwhelmed with work experiences.

Focus Group Interview

Creswell (2013) suggested focus group interviews as a means to get individuals who are hesitant to speak in a one-on-one setting to express themselves with people who share similar experiences.

Focus group interviews were significant in the data collection progress in that normal human conversation tends to trigger thoughts and ideas pertinent to qualitative research (Goldring, et al., 2014, p. 172). For this study, the focus group interview included four participants, who met in an online forum, via Google Forums, that was open for a limited time to answer broad to specific questions used to gather more information about their past experiences of stress and burnout. By sharing their experiences in an online discussion, more detailed information emerged, or information not previously discussed, adding to the collection of thick, rich descriptions.

The focus group prompt thanked the participants for participating in the anonymous focus group interview. Each participant in the group was reminded of their past affiliation with international schools in Southeast Asia. They were asked to respond to each question before commenting or asking clarifying questions to other participants.

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. What are some significant and reoccurring past experiences as an international teacher in Southeast Asia that you perceived as stressful? (CRQ), (SQ4)

2. What caused those previously mentioned past experiences as an international teacher to be stressful to you? (CRQ), (SQ4)
3. What do you feel you experienced most frequently, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, or a decreased sense of accomplishment and how did it manifest itself when you were an international teacher in Southeast Asia? (CRQ), (SQ1), (SQ2), (SQ3)
4. How have your perceptions of job-related stress as an international teacher changed over time? (CRQ), (SQ4)

Questions one, two, and four are experience questions. These questions ask participants to discuss observable past experiences and communicate details of events (Patton, 2015). By inquiring about past experiences that the participants frequently deal with, perhaps others in the focus group interview were able to make connections and continue to engage in a semi-focused dialogue. Also, understanding why participants perceive their experiences in certain ways supported the meaningful clusters and themes that emerged from this study.

Question three is a sensory question. Participants were asked to describe how their reactions to experiences manifest themselves physically, mentally, or emotionally. In this way, participants attached behaviors to the effects of their lived experiences of burnout and stress (Patton, 2015). By sharing this information in the focus group interview forum, other participants asked and/or expanded on the topic with their experiences and perceptions. These connections between participants expanded and clarified information obtained during individual interviews.

Documents

Participants were asked to submit a photo narrative as a part of data collection. “Although not considered primary data—that is, they are not produced with the intent of informing a research objective—documents and other secondary forms of textual and visual representation

can be highly informative” (Goldring, et al., 2014, p. 223). Emotions and feelings can be difficult to articulate with words or in the moment of questioning. After some thought processing, participants were asked to choose a photo that strongly represented their perceptions of lived experiences with stress and burnout. A representation of the stress experienced during standardized testing might have resulted in a descriptive conversation of how the participants describe their emotions during that time of year or during a certain circumstance they commonly experienced as educators. Photo narratives can be described as a projective technique and for the purposes of this study, participants were asked to use pictures to tell their stories of stress and burnout as a teacher. Participants were asked to submit their entries electronically to me so that their submissions remained confidential. The entries were identified by each participant’s pseudonym in the study.

Data Analysis

In keeping with Moustakas’ (1994) format for conducting transcendental phenomenological studies, I bracketed my thoughts and experience throughout the study. Horizontalization was utilized to generate meaningful clusters and themes that describe participants’ experiences of stress and burnout.

Before initiating data analysis, Moustakas (1994) recommends obtaining “a full description of your own experience of the phenomenon” (p. 122). The process of bracketing requires the researcher to journal or bracket out personal experiences so that the meaning drawn from the study comes purely from the participants’ experiences. (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). I, as the researcher, journaled my experiences with burnout and stress while working in an international school in Southeast Asia, as well as my thoughts and feeling throughout the research process. This was especially important to do when gathering data, as participants’ vivid

and detailed recollections of perceived experiences may have caused personal memories and connections to resurface. Each time data were reviewed, bracketing through journaling was used to set aside biases about the experience.

All significant statements from individual and focus group interview transcripts and other data sources were recorded, horizontalized, and considered to develop distinct and non-overlapping statements (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Horizontalization required me to listen to and read transcripts several times to identify significant statements. Each interviewee's transcript was put through the process of horizontalization individually. Each documented experience was viewed with equality for significant, meaningful statements. The significant statements were unique and representative of the experiences of stress and burnout that were predominant throughout the data collection process.

Meaningful themes or units were developed based on the previously identified significant statements (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). These statements emerged from horizontalization through the nonvariant qualities presented as significant experiences of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Open coding and focused coding were utilized to assist in the organization of significant statements and the grouping of those statements into meaningful units. Those meaningful themes were significant and overarching experiences of stress and burnout expressed by participants. There were four broad themes, with accompanying subthemes identified during this process.

The themes and subthemes identified were described and supported with verbatim examples from interview transcripts and other forms of data collection. In this way, a textural description was created that provided information about what the participants experienced (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). A description of what the participants experienced,

emotional exhaustion, for example, included verbatim examples obtained through data collection. More specifically, the significant statements and meaningful themes supported the textural descriptions of the participants' experiences of stress and burnout.

Structural descriptions of how participants experienced burnout and stress were written to "reflect on the setting and context in which the phenomenon happened" (Creswell, 2013, p. 159). For example, participants explained feeling stress in staff meetings when standardized test scores were presented. This stress could manifest itself physically with anxiety, for example. Again, the significant statements were revisited, and the interview transcripts were reviewed to look for the times and/or places that influenced participants' experiences.

Textural and structural meanings were synthesized into a narrative that describes the essence of the participants' past experiences with stress and burnout (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). When integrating the results, I looked for the past lived experiences that the participants' have in common, heightened anxiety during parent-teacher conferences or frustration with required data analysis, for example. These meanings were further explored and solidified by reviewing the focus group interview discussions as the participants conversed about common experiences. I confirmed them via member checks.

Trustworthiness

Implementing strategies to ensure trustworthiness was essential to the authenticity of the study. To establish trustworthiness of this qualitative research study, steps to ensure credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were utilized.

Credibility

Credibility required that I accurately represent what the participants thought, perceived, and did (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation of data was used to provide evidence of

credibility in this study (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation was achieved by collecting data from individual interviews, a focus group interview, and documents. Further, Creswell (2013), and Lincoln and Guba (1985), recommend member checking with all participants to critique preliminary data analysis results. This occurred within the focus group interview. Soliciting participants views of the findings further added credibility to the study (Creswell, 2013).

Dependability and Confirmability

A study is dependable when it can be repeated in other settings under the same circumstances (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Dependability was established by providing detailed explanations of the setting and procedures used in this study. Dependable data collection and analysis allows other researchers to use the same methods with fidelity. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Audit trails were used to add dependability to this study. Creswell (2013) explains that “external audits allow an external consultant, the auditor, to examine both the process and the product of the account, assessing the accuracy” (p. 209). The auditor(s) had no connection to the study and was asked to ensure all conclusions and explanations were supported by data.

Confirmability was established in the present study. If others are able to confirm this study, trustworthiness will be established (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I bracketed my biases throughout the study in order to be more open to a new and descriptive understanding of stress and burnout (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). A journal was kept throughout the research process to record accounts of peer debriefing sessions. To further ensure that I maintained a level of openness to the information and an understanding of the phenomenon, a peer reviewer was actively involved in the research to confirm my findings in this study. A peer reviewer is “an

individual who keeps the researcher honest; asks the hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations” (Creswell, 2013, p. 208).

Transferability

Transferability in a qualitative study refers to the detailed descriptions that enable readers to transfer information to other settings (Creswell, 2013, p. 209). Rich, thick descriptions were embedded throughout this study so that readers can use this information in other settings (Creswell, 2013). There are detailed descriptions of the setting and the participants of this study to support transferability. The detailed descriptions that this study provided allowed the reader to “decide whether similar processes will be at work in their own settings and communities by understanding in depth how they occur at the research site” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 78).

Ethical Considerations

IRB approval was obtained prior to the study being conducted. Administrative approval was also obtained where necessary to complete this study. Participants were provided informed consent (see Appendix C) and were aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Further, participants were well informed of the processes and procedures to protect their identities throughout the process of conducting this study and presenting its findings.

All data containing participant identification were treated as confidential. Pseudonyms and vague descriptions of participants and their worksites were used to help keep all identifying information confidential (Creswell, 2013). During the focus group interview, the confidentiality of participant responses and research would not necessarily be protected, as they might share their experiences with one another, however, confidentiality was highly suggested. I, the researcher, did not share confidential information with people outside of the study. “Researchers

need to be mindful of protecting the participants' privacy through masking names and developing composite profiles or cases" (Creswell, 2013, p. 60).

Only persons directly connected with the study had access to the data collected. An oath of confidentiality was obtained from professional transcribers. Information was stored on a password-protected computer, within password-protected email accounts for digital items. When advised, the audio files from interviews will be destroyed, three years after the completion of the study.

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe and understand American expatriates' perceptions of their lived experiences with burnout and stress in international schools in Southeast Asia through individual interviews, a focus group interview, and documents. Ten to 15 former international teachers who have had significant experiences of stress and burnout while working in international schools in Southeast Asia, as measured by the MBI-ES, were invited to participate in this study. Participants were asked to participate in individual interviews and a focus group interview. Individual interviews were audio recorded using two devices concurrently and data were professionally transcribed. Also, participants were asked to provide documents that will be used to support the triangulation of data.

Phenomenological reduction as described by Moustakas (1994) was used to analyze data in this study. Further, open and focused coding was used to identify significant statements and generate themes (Creswell, 2017). Finally, appropriate measures were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. This study hoped to provide an understanding of American expatriates' lived past experiences of stress and burnout in international schools in Southeast Asia.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe and understand American expatriates' perceptions of their lived experiences with burnout and stress in international schools in Southeast Asia. Transcendental phenomenology was used to focus on participants' perceptions of their lived experiences with burnout and stress. Eleven American expatriates participated in this study, sharing their perceptions of their lived experiences of burnout and stress through individual interviews, focus group interviews, and photostory documents. The themes of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, decreased sense of personal accomplishments, and stress, in regard to participants' experiences, are presented. Participant descriptions, participant demographics, research results, and a summary are included in this chapter.

Participants

The participants in this study were 11 American expatriates who had previously taught in international schools in Southeast Asia. Convenience and snowball sampling were used to identify participants who had at least three years of experience teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia before moving to other employment, either inside or outside the field of education. All of the participants in this study had been international-school teachers in Japanese prefectures. Four of those participants had also taught in South Korea. Three participants had also taught in international schools in continents outside of Asia. Participants included 10 females and one male, four African Americans, two Hispanics, one Asian/Pacific Islander, and five Caucasians, from three elementary schools, one middle school, and one school serving students from kindergarten through eighth grade (K-8). The variation of ethnicity occurred naturally through convenience and snowball sampling.

Table 1

Participant Overview

Participant	School Setting	Gender	Ethnicity	Level of Education
Bethan	Elementary	Female	Caucasian	Bachelor's
Denise	Elementary	Female	Asian/Pacific Islander	Master's
George	Elementary	Male	African American	Bachelor's
Hannah	Elementary	Female	Caucasian	Bachelor's +15
Janet	Middle	Female	African American	Master's
Lana	Elementary	Female	Caucasian	Master's
Leslie	Elementary	Female	Caucasian	Doctorate
Mary	K-8	Female	Hispanic	Bachelor's
Mia	Elementary	Female	Hispanic	Bachelor's +15
Shawna	Elementary	Female	African American	Master's
Sheryl	Preschool	Female	African American	Bachelor's

A detailed description of each participant is provided below. All participants were provided with a pseudonym that is used throughout this study to protect their identities.

Bethan

Bethan, who specialized in early elementary education, completed her years in an international school teaching kindergarten. Bethan recalls her first-grade teacher being quite inspiring and beginning her on her journey towards education. Her passion for teaching primary grades was reignited by her time working at a preschool her children attended and as a substitute teacher. During her time working at the preschool, she completed her master's degree and was

subsequently hired full time at an international school. Bethan reflected on her self-induced stress: “I just really wanted to do justice for the kids to make sure I was teaching them what they needed to be taught and that they were learning and that at times could have been what's stressful cause I would bring stuff home.”

Denise

Denise originally went to college as a nursing student, but as she worked part-time in a child-care center, she realized that she enjoyed working with children. She eventually earned a degree in early childhood education and later a master's degree in educational leadership. Denise did not feel that teaching in the southern states was a good fit for her, so she applied to teach in an international school. A former international school student herself, Denise thought that an overseas experience might suit her better. She taught in Southeast Asia for over 10 years in various elementary education and early childhood positions. Denise feels that the reason many teachers want to leave the field of education is because “of this pressure to defend every step you take...I got tired of that...it's almost hurtful...you question every degree you ever had.”

George

George grew up in a home with parents who worked in education until retirement. He was inspired by good college professors to work in education. George earned a bachelor's degree and teacher certification in elementary education. George's college had partnerships with international schools, which offered him the opportunity to work overseas for 20 years. Ten of those years were in international schools in Southeast Asia. All of George's international school experiences have been within the elementary school setting. He reflected on his 20 years in education, “The burnout is real and every week I found myself looking for new jobs...in order for me to be a lifer, that means I am going to have to sacrifice some things I just can't.”

Hannah

Hannah is a Marine Corps veteran who completed her bachelor's degree in early childhood education after completing her enlistment. She came to Southeast Asia as a military spouse and worked in an international school for seven years as a primary school teacher before returning to the United States. Hannah stated that teachers struggle to meet job expectations: "It's just impossible. There is no possible way that a teacher could be expected to differentiate for every kid, every lesson." Hannah had served in various leadership roles to support her peers during her time in Japan. She reflected on the stress of extra duties: "I think a lot of extra duties that teachers, are expected to do...places more stress on them."

Janet

Janet was a homemaker for 17 years after separating from the army when she decided to start taking college classes part-time. She said there was natural progression to the classroom as she volunteered at her children's schools while attending college. Janet favored high school education but taught middle school science and math at an international school as her husband's job moved them to an overseas area temporarily. Overall, she has spent 15 years in international schools in Europe and Asia. Janet said she enjoyed most of her time working in international schools, but a significant and prolonged situation caused her "temporary frustration" with leadership. Janet thought that leadership sometimes does not allow teachers the freedom to be professionally responsible: "They call all these meetings during planning periods...meetings afterschool....It's counterproductive."

Lana

Lana, a teacher of 19 years, taught in an international school for three years. After receiving a college scholarship, for which she was contracted to teach at a partner school for four

years, Lana's father suggested she travel overseas for work. She worked as a reading specialist and English teacher in the elementary school setting. Lana enjoyed her time being immersed in the cultures of Southeast Asia, however, the whole of her teaching experience did not reflect a similar sentiment. She reflected on her teaching experience: "The parent or guardian would constantly berate me...just to nitpick." She contemplated working in professions where you do not take the work home with you, such as working in a café.

Leslie

Before pursuing a career in education, Leslie was employed in the business sector even though she graduated with a degree in education. Leslie was a veteran teacher of 15 years before teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia. She has completed post-graduate studies and has served as a master and mentor teacher in the United States. After her children graduated high school, Leslie's colleagues suggested she try working in international schools, and she did so for nine years. She worked as a reading specialist and as a lower elementary teacher during her time in Southeast Asia. Leslie explained that the joy and creative aspects of teaching and learning have been removed from the classroom. Leslie reflected, "I feel like there is more and more stress and more and more things being put on classroom teachers...we are going to teach this, and we are going to assess that." She recalled the difficulty of being so far away from her family and how she found some camaraderie with newer teachers.

Mary

Mary, an army veteran, decided to remain overseas after completing her enlistment contract. She volunteered at an international school while serving in the armed forces. Mary wanted to continue teaching English to Japanese children; she found an ad for employment in a local newspaper and was able to work as a full-time employee in an international school for 11

years. She currently owns her own business and has part-time employment to supplement her income. Mary reflected on the physical exhaustion she experienced as an international teacher: “I no longer wanted to volunteer because it was as if I would go there and put on a mask, and as soon as I would get back into my car I would take off that mask.” She hopes that there will be “better ways to support and allow teachers to have a better understanding (of how to have) balance.”

Mia

Mia was a translator for a big corporation before becoming an elementary Spanish teacher. She realized no one was willing to pay her for her skill set so she took some education classes and earned a Spanish-language teaching certificate. First working as a teacher’s aide and then as a high school Spanish teacher, she found the atmosphere and comradery to be less than ideal. Mia decided to put in an application to an international school and received an offer almost immediately. She taught elementary Spanish in an international school for five years before her position was eliminated. She reflected on one of her biggest stressors: “They were constantly trying to cut the program. I guess the assumption was that they...the children should be learning Japanese or some type of Asian language...it was always on the chopping block.”

Shawna

Shawna completed a five-year teaching program in which she earned a master’s degree in elementary education upon graduation. After teaching in her hometown for a few years, she applied to and accepted an international school position for three years in Japan. Spending her time in upper elementary, she found her initial months and years in the international school system the most stressful. A lack of resources and administrative support provided some vivid experiences of stress and burnout. Shawna shared, “I felt like my team was being attacked by

parents, and I felt like we didn't have the support that we needed to get through a situation like that.”

Sheryl

Sheryl has been in the education profession for over 25 years, 10 of which were in international schools in Southeast Asia. She knew early in her life that she wanted to be a teacher. Sheryl loved to play school as a child, found a special interest in special education, and spent her early teaching years working alongside her former high school teachers. Sheryl had been able to teach in several countries due to her husband’s military career and enjoyed immersing herself in various cultures around the world.

Results

The following are the results of this transcendental phenomenological study. Individual interviews, a focus group interview, and documents were analyzed to identify significant statements that were grouped into themes and subthemes. From the data analysis, four major themes and 13 subthemes emerged and are represented in Table 2 below. The major themes were emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, decreased sense of personal accomplishment and stress.. The research questions are answered through the themes and subthemes that emerged through data analysis.

Table 2

Themes

Theme	Subtheme	Code
Emotional Exhaustion	Negative Moods	Frustrated (16) Stressful (16) Forced (3) Didn’t care (2) Began to question (1) Shamed (1)

		No longer wanted to go (1) Tough to deal with (1)
	Feeling Overwhelmed	Figure out (14) Expected to (6) Overwhelmed (5) Exhausted (3) Too much (3) Just can't (2) Consumed (2) Spent a lot of time (1) Limitations of resources (1)
Theme	Subtheme	Code
	Feeling Hopeless	Frustrating (16) Support (16) It's impossible (3) Doesn't matter (2) Guidance (1) Nothing changed (1) Something's got to change (1)
Depersonalization	Negative Attitude	Short (5) Being difficult (2) Seen as a difficult person (1) Stigma (1) Anger (1) Stiff (1)
	Indifferent Behaviors	The love of teaching is not there (1) Lenient (1) Don't care (1) Stopped caring (1) Didn't want to (1) No longer wanted to (1) Ignore it (1) Wasn't talkative (1) Wasn't upbeat (1)
	Neglect	Respect (2) Lack of resources (2) I was drowning (1) Not important (1)

	Communication Barriers	Brushed under the rug (1) Critique (1) Criticism (1) Feel ignored (1) Hurtful (1) Not have the help needed (1) Difficult time being able to express themselves (1) Couldn't even speak English (1) Didn't ask (1) Asking the right questions (1)
Theme	Subtheme	Code
Decreased Sense of Personal Accomplishment	Feeling Overtasked	Hours (6) Deadlines (5) A lot of time (2) Consumed (2) Take so much work home (1) Ready (1) It got to be a lot (1) It was just a lot (1) I'm up until two o'clock (1)
	Feeling a Lack of Control	Rules (4) Defeated (2) Changing the requirements (2) Explaining (2) Overexplain yourself (1) Drowning (1) Take what's dished out (1)
	Feeling Inadequate	Expectations (15) I can't (12) Figure Out (8) Respect (5) Self-Reflect (5) Unrealistic (2) Take what's dished out (1) Never going to be right (1)

Stress	Alarm	Stress (14) Tired (9) Anxiety (8) Irritated (2) Lack of Restful Time (1) Compulsion (1) Anxiety attack (1) Catch hell (1) Second guess myself (1)
	Resistance	Take care (7) Weight (6) Exercise (3) Doctor (3) Talk (3) Staying active (2)
Theme	Subtheme	Code
		Balance (2) Jiu Jitsu (1) Navigate it (1) Camaraderie (1) Mental health days (1) Mental wellness days (1) Keep from being burned out (1)
	Exhaustion	Anxiety (8) Burn out (6) Sleep (5) Weight gain (3) Put on weight (2) Headaches (2) Decompress (2) Emergency room (1) Abused (1) Health problems (1) PTSD (1) Health took a toll (1)

Theme One: Emotional Exhaustion

The first major theme to emerge during data analysis was emotional exhaustion. Through data analysis the subthemes of negative mood, feeling overwhelmed, and feeling hopeless

emerged. Participants shared challenges they faced as they experienced increased workloads with diminished amounts of resources and support. Participants described ways in which their job requirements and commitment to effective teaching and learning contributed to their experiences of emotional exhaustion.

Negative mood. During data analysis, the first subtheme to emerge from the major theme of emotional exhaustion was negative mood. Several participants expressed negative feelings towards stressful circumstances they experienced as international teachers in Southeast Asia. In the 11 interviews, the word “frustration” was mentioned 14 times. The participants shared their experiences of frustration in connection with the amount of time they had to spend tending to their responsibilities. Lana shared these remarks about her frustration with the time commitments: “It is frustrating to spend large amounts of time finding resources and then find out it's not permissible to use the resources. It's very frustrating using outdated materials that bore students and have no real merit.” Mary reflected upon her involuntary extra hours:

So, you were forced in a way to be there, to where when they [the administration] were expecting and asking more of you, like other events that they would have and things like that, I no longer wanted to go there.

Participants further shared negative emotions about the responsibilities and expectations placed upon them as educators. Denise recalled feeling shamed because her bosses “want you to do it their way because that's how they want you to [complete the] task and if we don't meet these then you know we are shamed.”

The changes that are associated with teacher responsibility left many of the participants feeling stressed and frustrated. The following document (Figure 1) from Shawna is a visual representation and description of her lived experience of emotional exhaustion.



Figure 1: A photostory created by Shawna describing her past lived experience of emotional exhaustion as an international school teacher.

Feeling overwhelmed. The second subtheme to emerge from the major theme of emotional exhaustion was feeling overwhelmed. Participants revealed experiences of being overwhelmed by their roles and responsibilities as international teachers. Some participants reflected on what they perceived as the daunting task of trying to provide a quality education with limited resources. Mary said, “It [teaching quality lessons] consumed me because I was trying to figure out many times how to make things happen without the resources and the support that I felt that we [fellow teachers] were needing.” Mary talked about how she worked at an international school where the tuition and the pay were quite low. The school heavily depended upon the teachers to make curriculum decisions with limited budgets. In the focus group discussion, Shawna also addressed the effects of resources on her workload: “The fact that resources were already scarce, then having limitations of resources made planning for authentic lessons more stressful. I spent a lot of time trying to find alternative resources as well.” Shawna further discussed using her own funds at times to ensure students were receiving quality

instruction and completing real-world activities. This is not uncommon amongst teachers worldwide (“9 in 10 teachers,” 2018; Jones, 2015).

Bethan expressed mixed emotions of being overwhelmed and subsequently exhausted by the requirements of her role as an international teacher: “I just think just being overwhelmed with all the expectations, my mind didn't ever shut off. So, I got emotionally exhausted and I noticed I don't sleep well.” Bethan admitted to taking her work home with her and spending off-duty hours at the school trying to prepare engaging lessons and activities. Reflecting on the extra time teachers are expected to put into their jobs, Hannah added, “I think a lot of the extra duties that teachers are expected to do, such as being team leader or having a club after school...All of those extra duties that teachers are expected to do, places more stress on them.” Hannah served as a teacher representative and a curriculum leader during her time as an international school teacher.

Teachers seemed to be willing to spend the time necessary to complete the requirements of the job and ensure students were receiving a quality education. Some participants admitted to overwhelming themselves by working extra hours to prepare for their classes. However, the participants believed that the tasks they were asked to complete, which seemed additional, caused them to feel overwhelmed and stressed.

Feeling hopeless. The third subtheme to emerge from the major theme of emotional exhaustion was feeling hopeless. Many significant phrases were presented in the data analysis that reflected a feeling of hopelessness. Participants expressed their attempts to meet the goals and expectations of an overseas teacher and expressed feeling defeated, and that certain aspects of the job seemed impossible to manage.

Mary and Janet tried to connect with administration during meetings and other appropriate times to gain support and clarity concerning expectations, misunderstandings, and tasks concerning their employment. Mary recalled going to meetings and experiencing little if any change as a result of those meetings. Janet shared a similar sentiment: “extreme disappointment and frustration at the lack of support.” Mia reflected on her experiences at several meetings in which she began to feel as though she had to defend her concerns and try to reach a common understanding with people who could effect change:

It's just frustrating because you know they [administration] just don't get it. It doesn't matter how much you explain, they don't get it, they think you're just making up excuses of why you don't want to do it their way and it's not that, it's just their way doesn't work for your content.

Hannah expressed frustration trying to learn to use new teaching materials on her own. Hannah said that she wanted to “throw the whole curriculum out the window.” This describes a sense of hopelessness, as if there were nothing more she could do to be successful. Shawna mirrored a similar sentiment as she compared her overseas experience to her stateside teaching experience:

I felt like I didn't have as much guidance as I've had in the past. So, there was a lot of trying to figure things out on my own, or just having to put the puzzle pieces together because, like I said, things were just really different, and I wasn't used to that, so I think a lot of stress came from that aspect.

Although Hannah wanted to meet the expectations set forth by her employers, she expressed that she didn't care about the outcomes of not succeeding anymore. She shared,

I didn't care what the data said anymore. I didn't care. I wasn't going to teach to a test. It's just impossible. One teacher cannot do that. But that seems to be what teachers are being expected to do now.



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With all the assessments that teachers are required to give, most times I feel that I am barely hanging on and barely getting by. The stress of constantly having to test is daunting. There are times that I don't feel like I am doing my job to the best of my ability. It's stressful with the amount of testing that we do and that the children must endure.

Figure 2: Bethan's photostory expresses her feelings of hopelessness with testing requirements.

Hannah's final thoughts were that the number of responsibilities placed on international teachers was growing and that it was unfortunate. She feels that more teachers will leave the profession. George's final comments were similar, in that he feels he may not retire as a teacher. Although participants discussed a variety of experiences in teaching, many of them experienced different aspects of emotional exhaustion that led to feelings of stress and burnout.

Theme Two: Depersonalization

The second major theme to emerge during data analysis was depersonalization. Depersonalization is a component of burnout and is characterized by disconnection between people and environments. The subthemes of negative attitudes, indifferent behaviors, neglect, and communication barriers represent indicators of severed relationships between people and

their environment. The theme of depersonalization emerged as participants shared their experiences of feeling emotionally and socially detached from their peers, students, and workplace responsibilities. Participants described how their attitudes and behaviors began to change as job demand and support fluctuated.

Negative attitudes. During data analysis, the first subtheme to emerge from the major theme of depersonalization was negative attitudes. Having a negative attitude in the workplace caused employees to display cynicism and detachment from their jobs. The participants reflected on their experiences as teachers when they recalled having negative attitudes. They reflected on being irritable, angry, and perceived as difficult, ultimately limiting the quality of social relationships at the workplace.

Reflecting on her experience as an international teacher, Denise described her perception of her own experiences of having a negative attitude as resulting from the stress she associated with her job workload. As a teacher, Denise understood how important it was for her to be patient and lenient with her students and staff members. She expressed her actions when she was feeling overstressed: “Well, first thing that I can tell when I’m really like pissed off or like it’s becoming too much is I am very stiff, I get really short with students or I’ll get short with answers.” Denise revealed that her negative feelings often followed her home and affected her interactions with her family, causing her sometimes to become exasperated.

Mia recalled developing a negative attitude because of her past experiences in staff meetings and other collaborative situations where teachers were permitted to speak upon agenda topics. Mia often wanted to offer suggestions and opinions on practices that she perceived as ineffective for the teaching and learning. She stated, “If you speak up, you’re looked at as a difficult person. I feel like that is something that you have to avoid too. You don’t want the

stigma of being that teacher, Oh, she's got an opinion.” Reluctant to be seen negatively, Mia developed a negative attitude towards group norms in meetings, because she couldn’t speak her mind. She said she was stressed because she could not find a balance between what she wanted to say and the norms of the meetings.

Indifferent behaviors. The second subtheme to emerge from the major theme of depersonalization was indifferent behaviors. “It is what it is,” Bethan lamented as her way to deal with frustrations with communication. Participants spoke about their indifferent behaviors, ways they detached emotionally from their jobs, as they tried to cope with obligations that were out of their control. Shawna talked about how her personality changed as a result of negative situations related to the job in which she had little or no support. “I felt like I kind of just stopped caring altogether, wasn't really as talkative or upbeat as I normally would be, just because there was no support for that situation at all.”

Mary was a longtime volunteer at her place of employment before actually being hired. She enjoyed being able to spend her free time, during her active military service, providing time and essential items to local children in need of assistance. However, her memories of teaching at an international school included extended obligatory hours with no extra pay and little relief. She described her indifferent behaviors as a mask she wore. Mary and many of her coworkers were obligated to coordinate field trips, teach summer school, plan end-of-year ceremonies, and arrive at work early to assist with before-school care for students whose parents needed to drop them off early for a small fee. Mary said, “I no longer wanted to volunteer, because it was as if I would go there and put on a mask, and as soon as I would get back into my car I would take off that mask.”

Standards for student achievement seem to continue to be a point of contention for all stakeholders. Parents, teachers, administration, and the community want to know how the students are doing academically. Often teachers are faced with increased pressure to ensure that students are able to perform well and achieve scores that show proficiency in tested academic areas. Hannah recalled the mounting pressure of tracking her students' progress throughout the year while struggling to use curriculum that did not meet the needs of her students. Hannah stated,

The increased emphasis on differentiation to meet all students' needs using these overly rigorous, not developmentally appropriate curriculums. The amount of time needed to actually differentiate for every single child. There just was not enough time in the day to do that. And the increased pressure for collaboration and data analysis and documentation, it felt like my team and I were spending more time documenting what we were doing rather than actually doing what we needed to do for kids.

Hannah admitted that she no longer cared how her students scored on tests. "Oh gosh. When you get to the point where you just don't even care what your data looks like anymore because you're so tired of hearing about data and you're so tired of teaching a curriculum that's not appropriate for kids."

Leslie summarized her overall perception of teachers' passion for education:

I feel like the love of teaching is not there because you don't get to do fun, creative things with kids. You don't get to see them shine in ways that just 10 years ago, I was able to see children shine. I mean, you never know when a child is going to be really good at something.

Neglect. The third subtheme to emerge from the major theme of depersonalization was neglect. Teachers, like any employee, expect to have the resources, tools, and support they need to accurately perform their assigned job requirements. If teachers need more materials, they expect that those materials will be provided within reason. When there are consistent experiences of feeling ignored, feelings of neglect start to have negative impacts on the connections between teachers and the people they depend on for support, parents, other teachers, and especially administration. The participants described experiences in which their needs – material, physical, and professional – were neglected during their employment as international teachers. There was little indication that the participants had someone to turn to that would willingly and consistently assist them to ensure their success and wellbeing in the school setting. Not only did many participants feel neglected, but they revealed that they neglected their own needs and emotions to complete their obligations.

Bethan and Denise vividly recall struggling to obtain the resources they needed to be able to provide teaching and learning opportunities. During the focus group, Bethan described how the lack of resources and professional development in her school ultimately caused her to feel stress and reduced her feelings of capability to provide high-quality instruction. Ultimately, a feeling of neglect that her needs were not being met had negative consequences. Bethan remarked, “the lack of resources I feel inadequate and not able to teach what needs to be taught to the best of my ability, therefore it’s stressful, especially when I was not familiar with the curriculum.”

Assessments are a large component of teacher obligation and stress as a teacher. Although testing expectations may vary between schools, states, and countries, ensuring student progress and success is always an expectation. Teachers are just as concerned about seeing their

students grow and succeed as parents and administrators are. However, not having the support and guidance appropriate to ensure teachers are prepared has caused some of the participants to feel they were overlooked during their time as international teachers. Bethan stated,

When it becomes time to do the assessments, just preparing for those and just the deadlines and not have the help needed, the expectation of assessing and doing it all in a classroom and things like that, it was very overwhelming at times. Just it got to be a lot.

Mia also discussed being overwhelmed, as a large group specialist, with the task of testing several hundred students with inadequate support, resources, and understanding. Mary did not realize that she was overwhelmed, and when she did, she was hesitant to reach out because she did not want a negative perception of her to be developed. Mary explained,

I didn't realize that I needed help in the way that I did until I felt like I was drowning without asking the right questions, because I thought it would affect the way that I was perceived or like I was being evaluated as a teacher or as a person.

Mary talked about a lack of support when she was hurt completing obligatory activities with her school without extra pay. Mary reflected, "I got hurt at a function, that I noticed that there was no one to cover down for me, and so I had to continue to come to work, even though I wasn't at my best."

Communication barriers. The last subtheme to emerge from the major theme of depersonalization was communication barriers. Some participants stated that the communication struggles they experienced had to do with working with parents, peers and employers. Mary explained her experience of trying to figure out how to navigate job expectations and resources during her employment as an international-school teacher. Mary stated,

Most of the parents had a really difficult time being able to express themselves and the fact that the cultures are so different, they didn't feel the need to come and share with me a lot of the situations that were happening in the home that were also affecting their students on an everyday basis.

Mary further reflected that teaching was difficult because the students and parents were not able to fully express, in English, classroom concerns and needs for academic support. Hannah's communication with parents were negative because she was harassed by some dissatisfied parents. She remembered the escalating amount of stress she experienced. "The mother was just awful. It was nonstop. It was nonstop complaining, nonstop trying to pop into my classroom. Nonstop harassment." On the other hand, Mary noticed that she also had to reach out to new teachers after she gained a level of comfort at her job site. She said that "I also needed to be the one to lend out the hand to the new people that came it, because it's just hard to ask."



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My first year as a teacher, a few weeks in and I felt like I was drowning. In my class half of my students couldn't even speak English. I felt I had lost all sense of control. My support system did not have the skills, knowledge, nor credentials. I felt very uncomfortable at the school, like everyone was judging me and finding me lacking. I tried to reach out to other teachers and they

tried to be helpful, but they were also busy with their own classrooms. I never wanted to allow myself to be a quitter. I noticed that the pressure and stress were affecting my health and I dreaded going into school every morning. I would work on my lessons for long periods of time. Never felt like I was able to teach what I really wanted to. The lack of resources hindered my teaching. I was working every day until late at night and I felt like my life just didn't belong to me anymore. All I've ever wanted to do was teach instead my days consumed me, and I just wanted to allow myself to go lifeless let the current take complete control and just drown.

Figure 3: A photostory created by Mary explaining her experiences with communication barriers as a first-year teacher.

Mia experienced communication barriers between herself and the administration. She believed they did not understand the difference between teaching foreign languages and first languages. There was a constant wall in their communication because they were both seeking different outcomes. Mia said, “Every time with me, in particular, never really was the students. It's mostly administrators that would come into my room and don't understand what teaching a foreign language looks like.” Sheryl said she could not communicate with others. She found that miscommunication and misunderstandings led to mistrust and a feeling of vulnerability. Sheryl shared her experience of separating from her peers:

A couple of years back I can remember feeling attacked, like nothing you do is right. I felt attacked at all angles. These people were supposedly your coworkers, your friends and these are the ones that are turning on you. I had shut down and started thinking, ok, who do you trust? Just stay to yourself. I said, nope I'm done, I'm not communicating.

Many participants reflected on the idea of being disconnected from people and relationships. They mostly recalled trying to stay connected to students but being disconnected

from peers, administration, or duties that participants believed were causing more harm than good. Bethan reflected on emotionally separating herself from her students when she knew that she would be leaving her job as a teacher. Bethan reflected on her departure:

I kind of disconnected myself a little bit, so I wouldn't get attached to the kids or anything around me. So, it just made it easier to leave, not that it was. So, I tried not to get too attached and so I felt like that kind of was a big experience for me as far as disconnection.

Overall, Bethan experienced frustration with the lack of communication between staff members and administration. She had learned to accept communication barriers as normal and stated, “It is what it is.”

Theme Three: Decreased Sense of Personal Accomplishment

The third major theme to emerge during data analysis was decreased sense of personal accomplishment. The subthemes of feeling overwhelmed, feeling a lack of control, and feeling inadequate emerged during data analysis. Decreased sense of personal accomplishment is a component of burnout that can be described as having feelings of ineffectiveness and inadequacy. Participants perceived having a lack of control in the workplace and experienced demanding workloads. The participants described their experiences as they tried to reach and maintain job success.

Feeling overtasked. During data analysis, the first subtheme to emerge from the major theme of decreased sense of personal accomplishment was feeling overwhelmed. Many of the participants in this study described the workload and demands of their employment as teachers as overwhelming. They discussed the amount of testing, data, overtime, and emotional load that they had to bear in order to perform their jobs proficiently and professionally. Mia’s perception

of her experience as an international teacher was marked by her struggles with trying to manage her job expectations, which she said were unrealistic with the number of students she saw throughout the week. She reflected, “I saw about 400 kids, and they were expecting handwritten rubrics for all their assessments. For each child there were three rubrics for each assessment, so it was six units....It was just a lot.”

Denise spent many hours after school trying to keep up with the demands of her job. She was also trying to maintain a grasp of the information she collected from mandatory tests to better support and instruct her students. Denise expressed the following about her late nights as an elementary teacher: “I mean there have been nights when I'm like up until two o'clock grading papers or... at the time when I was doing data stuff looking at data and then there would be times when I'd get home and sit down on the couch and at five thirty I'm knocked out.” Mary also found her evening hours filled with work-related tasks.

Weekends were always consumed of thinking about your kids, or getting ready for the next week, or getting ready for something, some assessment. You would end up having to take so much work home and having to make sure that so many deadlines as far as those projects and events were taking place.

Hannah and her peers stated they felt overwhelmed with deadlines and work expectations.

There just was not enough time in the day to do that. And the increased pressure for collaboration and data analysis and documentation, it felt like my team and I were spending more time documenting what we were doing rather than actually doing what we needed to do for kids.”

She stressed that she might not meet those deadlines and worried about the perception of her peers. George sighed as he reflected on the effort he put forth to accomplish the goals of the

school and his personal expectations. “I spent a lot of time preparing and I spent a lot of care and effort you know doing these things.”

Participants admitted that some of their experiences of feeling overwhelmed came from the expectations they had for themselves as professionals. Mary admitted to ensuring that she input grades and studied data within days of grading and assessments so that she could use the results to improve her instruction.

I was proud of myself for one of things that I stuck to was grades are, where input into the system forty-eight hours after it was turned in. I wanted it off my desk first of all, but second of all I learned very quickly it was a very quick formative assessment for me because I can then judge anything that I caught based off how they did homework or how they wrote papers and I could reteach as soon as. I would reteach as soon as I knew what they understood or what they didn't understand based off of what they turned in. But if I waited too long, then I would miss that opportunity and so self-inflicted [being overwhelmed with work] yes, but still at the same time it really met the needs of my job. Mary sighed as she recalled how she lamented over her successes and needed improvements from each day. She spent time questioning herself: “Did you do something incorrectly? Did you not teach well enough? Was there a better strategy?”

Feeling a lack of control. The second subtheme to emerge from the major theme of decreased sense of personal accomplishment was feeling a lack of control. Many of the participants noticed that their voices were not being heard in the decision-making processes at their schools. When Mia tried to speak up for herself and the needs of her students, she perceived that she was received negatively by her peers and the administration. She struggled to find a way to be heard and receive the support she sought to do her job well. One of her peers commented,

“Oh, well don't anger her. Don't stir her up. Don't get her going.” She also heard these negative comments about others who wanted to speak up.

Leslie recalled feeling like giving up when she tried to take control over a hostile situation at the workplace. “I thought I can't do this, I'm just not going to be able to do this and that was coming from 15 years of experience,” Leslie reflected. Janet reflected on the difficulties she experienced: “Even if it's an unjust accusation, you're to absorb all the critique, all the criticism, all the failing things, somehow you're supposed to take it and turn it into magic and make it work regardless.” Janet said that she and other teachers were not given respect and that they just had to accept what happens and continue to move forward. She stated,

I feel that you're not given the respect as a human being and individual. Simply because you're the teacher, somehow there's becoming an understanding that, "So what." Well, you just have to take what's dished out, no matter if it's unjust or not. That's the negative part of the job.

Leslie shared her perception on the lack of control she experienced as a teacher. “I think it is all of the top-down directives that don't seem to have anything to do with decisions in the classroom.” Curriculum choices made by higher authorities caused participants to feel as if they did not have control over their instruction, causing stress and frustration. George believed that the creators of the curriculum are seldom experienced educators, thus creating a hardship for teachers. George and Shawna saw the administrative choices as stressors. George stated, “A stressor would be new curriculum and the fact that it is being created by people who are usually not in education and so it is very often not good, for lack of better wording.” Shawna further added her perceptions of the appropriateness of the resources and the lack of choices she was given to provide instruction:

The resources that they were providing us, I just felt like they were kind of outdated. I know all the places are phasing them out, so it didn't make sense why we were using them. You have kind of like no choice but to deal with that because you are overseas. I just felt like it wasn't clear of what they wanted us to do with it, and that went from teachers not understanding what they were supposed to do with it, all the way up to admin not really understanding how it should be laid out in the classroom.

Sheryl expressed her experiences of having no instructional control, as a veteran teacher who was constantly required to adjust to the nuances in protocol as implemented by her supervisors. “I am standing here looking crazy and I have been doing this for years. So, they make their own notes, and not use the regulations, that’s frustrating because I am never going to be right.” Sheryl wished her supervisors had trusted her years of experience and worked with her to implement changes or solidify protocol in the preschool and special education settings. Mia also expressed that she had no control over her instruction and had to constantly provide justifications for her teaching. She said, “You would have to overly explain yourself and it turns into, and I don't know if I'm explaining myself now, but it turns into when you have to over-explain yourself it's almost like you're justifying because you're not doing it.”

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For me, burnout is related to little or no sense of accomplishment in the job. Diminishing resources, lack of respect by parents, students, and system policy makers as well as increased responsibility and negative PR [public relations] make teaching more challenging than it ever has been.

Figure 4: Lana's photostory describes her experiences as a teacher that caused her to feel burned out.

Feeling inadequate. The third subtheme to emerge from the major theme of decreased sense of personal accomplishment was feeling inadequate. Feelings of inadequacy ran deeply with many participants. Questioning their abilities to teach, communicate, and keep up with job demands caused participants to feel defensive, at a loss, and frustrated with trying to appease peers, administrators, and their surrounding communities. Hannah stressed when she realized that neither she nor her students were prepared to handle the curriculum. She believed that she was not properly trained and did not feel equal to the task of instruction using the given materials. Hannah stated,

So, both as a teacher and as a parent of a child who was dealing with this curriculum, it was exceptionally stressful, because your class is not understanding it, your child is not understanding it, and then all the trainings that we had to go through as teachers. It felt like the training was just there to brainwash us.

Denise, Mia, and Shawna began to feel defeated as time passed by and they were not feeling as if they were being seen as capable, successful teachers. They began to question themselves and their futures in education.

It's just that I got tired of that [being told that you are not performing well] and it's almost hurtful...you question every degree you ever had, or any college class you took or any experience you may have had, and I don't know. (Denise)

Mia realized she was constantly looking for affirmation that she was doing an acceptable job. “You're always trying to prove yourself and trying to do better so that you can get that little pat on the back saying, Hey, you're valid. You're worth it. I see what you do. I see you.” Shawna was on a committee to bring the school and community together for academic events at the school. She was determined to have the maximum amount of positive participation possible. The difficulties of bringing people together changed Shawna’s perception of her personal accomplishments.

I kind of felt a little defeated because I didn't know how to mesh them together, because I felt like that needed to happen to, I guess, strengthen the school's morale and the entire mission in itself. I tried, and I don't think I really got anywhere with that.

Theme Four: Stress

The fourth major theme to emerge during data analysis was stress. Alarm, resistance/adaptation, and exhaustion, which are component of General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS), emerged during data analysis. Participants described their mental and physical responses to stress. The participants in this study shared their experiences of attempting to manage work-related stress and what happened to them when their bodies became exhausted in the process.

Alarm. During data analysis, the first subtheme to emerge from the major theme of stress was alarm. Alarm is the initial state of stress in which the body decides whether to fight the stressor or take flight from it. Participants described their lived experiences of reacting to job-related stressors. Merely walking into the classroom on a vacation day caused Bethan to have an anxiety attack. “I remember one time walking into the classroom over winter break and I had, I literally had an anxiety attack, but I knew it was coming.” This stress response was familiar to Bethan, as she was aware of its onset. Bethan wanted to give her students the best education she

could but found herself bringing work home or staying at work late. She felt her stress was self-inflicted.

Shawna experienced long-term pay issues during her first year teaching at an international school. She said that no one was assisting her in understanding her pay issues. She said, “I would definitely get very irritated when I would try to ask others for help and I wasn't really getting a good response with it.” Shawna’s irritation was a response to the stress of trying to understand pay issues. Leslie also had difficulties getting the assistance and support she needed her first year at an international school. She found her first year “extremely difficult” and felt tense because her peers were not friendly with one another, which was a lonely feeling.

The parental issues that Denise experienced as an international teacher caused her to be short when communicating with adults and easily irritable during impromptu interactions. She said she would get overstressed and “everyone would catch hell.” Similarly, George was stressed by miscommunications and misunderstandings concerning parental expectations of student achievement. George’s initial reactions would be to try to communicate clearly with parents, but over time he grew impatient and irritable. Hannah had an exceptionally challenging year with a parent and stressed about the effects of her actions each day. “It [the parental confrontation] affected how I dealt with the child. Because I was always second guessing myself. Okay. If I do this, what's this mother going to do? If I say this, what's this mother going to do?” Lana described as emotional her response to the stress of parents and students not respecting her effort. She perceived their thought process as, “Oh, my parents don't like the teacher and they don't respect her. So, then that puts the child in the same position of, ‘Well, I shouldn't listen to my teacher because my parents don't respect her. I won't either.’” She said she was often berated and questioned by parents and she took the criticism to heart.

Frustration was the stress response Hannah described as she and her students struggled to complete difficult tasks using a new curriculum. She said that watching high achieving students break down caused her to want to throw the books out of the window. Additionally, she was quite concerned that she would have to deal with upset parents.

Janet reacted to the stress of her experiencing an abuse of power by an administrator by confronting her supervisor. "Initially, that [expecting her concerns to be addressed] got me through because I was just waiting for the time when I knew justice was going to happen. But then as time went on, I had to recognize that that was not happening." Her initial reactions to stress were met by resistance and opened her up to more confrontation. Although Janet was being attacked by people she thought should be on her side, she did not take flight.

Resistance. The second subtheme to emerge from the major theme of stress was resistance. Over time, the participants developed strategies to adapt to the effects of stress. George believed that developing a tolerance for criticism is necessary to survive the stress of being an educator. He also revealed that extracurricular activities were key to managing the stressors that affected him at work. George stated,

Well after so long you have a thick skin, but I do a lot of extracurricular activities. I enjoy going out and I am an avid martial artist. That helped tremendously, especially the martial arts. I was able to take out that stress. I don't know how I'd navigate it without that extracurricular activity though.

Hannah and Denise both used exercise and extracurricular activities to resist the negative effects of stress. Hannah said she tried to stay active, which helped her relieve stress. Although she continued to gain weight she believed, that "Staying active in that aspect and just being mindful of my stress and strain to start to say no and to cut back even though I might have a deadline,

there's times where I just have to walk away and then come back again later.” As Mia reflected on time spent exercising to relieve stress, she thought about how schools could accommodate teachers in the area of stress relief strategies.

The exercise helps immensely, and I wish, as an educator, that we had in our day, instead of adding more collaboration time, in that collaboration time I wish we had physical activity that we could do that would get us outside, fresh air, and just to let ... I feel that it counters the anxiety a lot.

The more social participants leaned on family and friends for support during their time as international schoolteachers. Some participants met with friends socially while others preferred to relax and decompress with loved ones at home. Sheryl reflected on the importance of self-care. “Talk it out at home. Decompress. Get a massage. Try to relax. And that’s the thing. Always take care of myself. If I don’t take care of myself first, I can’t take care of anybody else.” Hannah talked about the positive relationships she had with her peers: “Well, I think my team, us being a close team and being able to laugh, and having that camaraderie was really helpful.” Bethan admitted that she still does not know how to quite balance work and home life.

Taking care of personal needs became a challenge for some participants as they dealt with the emotional and physical effects of stress. George responded to the years of stress by preparing to be sick.

You know you start to use sick days and these sick days are more like mental health days. You know? Mental wellness days. They pile up. I mean I start to do lesson plans just in case I feel sick.

Hannah and Denise both admitted feeling rundown by the challenges of teaching and their efforts to meet their own expectations as teachers in international schools. Finding healthy ways to respond to stress required a constant effort on their parts.

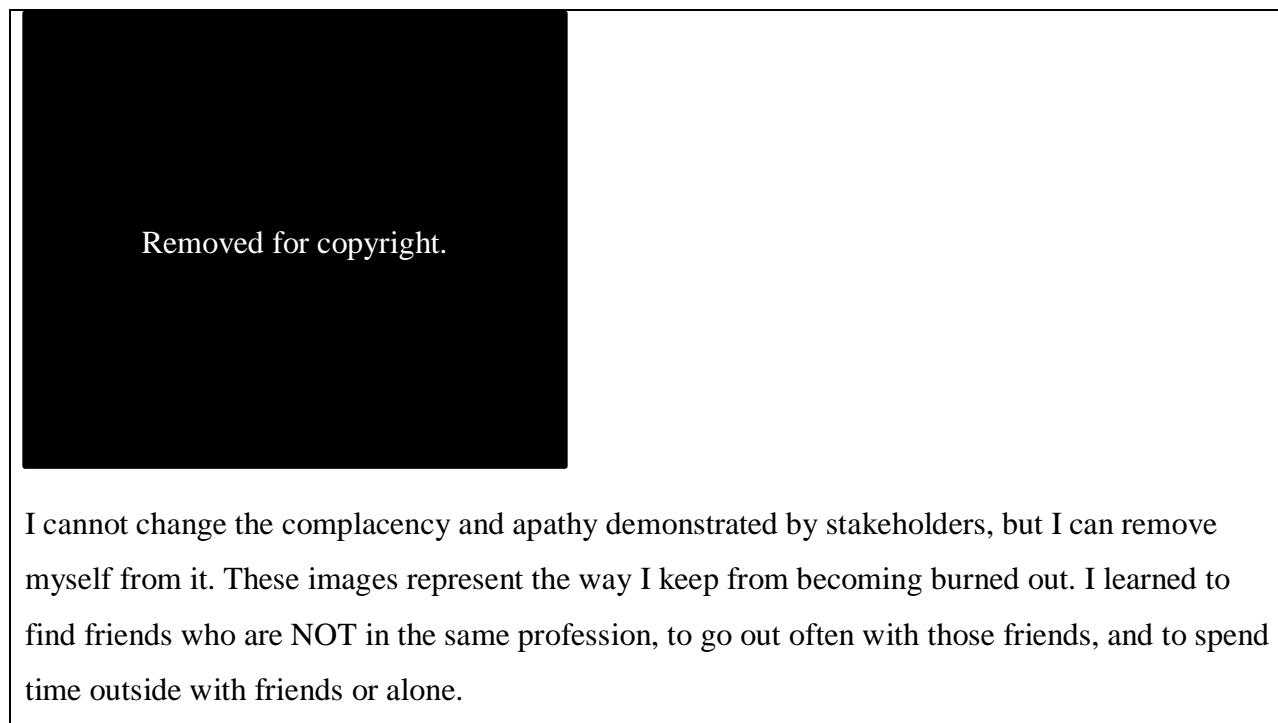


Figure 5: Lana's photostory describing her experiences of responding to stress and burnout as an international teacher.

Exhaustion. The third subtheme to emerge from the major theme of stress was exhaustion. When the participants' reached the point of exhaustion as international teachers, they described experiencing mild to severe outcomes as the result of unhealthy eating habits, lack of exercise, mental health decline, and isolation. Weight gain was a common stress response to experiencing exhaustion. Some of the participants admitted that the exhaustion they experienced caused their mental health to decline. Leslie said that she remembered, "eating crap food because you were too tired to cook, weight gain, headaches, lots of insomnia" as a result of exhaustion. Mia would not eat much at work each day due to stress. When she got home, she would overeat and ended up gaining weight.

Well, I gained a lot of weight. My anxiety caused me to...I'm kind of a compulsive eater when I'm at my house. I'm at school I don't eat at all, pretty much, but when I finally get to unwind, my compulsion and my anxiety tend to express itself into nibbling, so I'm a nibbler.

Four participants expressed their perceived experiences of anxiety as a response to stress. Bethan expressed that the stress from work “caused anxiety, long hours and constantly re-inventing the wheel when teaching. I was constantly re-evaluating my work and struggling to find something that will work.” Mia’s anxiety resulted in compulsive eating behaviors. Janet’s prolonged stressful experience as an educator led her to a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

I never went to the doctor, ever, besides having my children and doing yearly check-ups. I didn't even realize when I started not feeling well, and I thought I was actually getting sick with something and did not realize until I went in [to see a doctor]. Then they brought in different people and start questioning me. They just blatantly asked me, which totally blew me away, because I did not even think of that, that could be connected when the doctor asked me was I being abused, and I looked, and I thought right away it was from home. "Well, no, I'm not." "You sure? Are you being abused? Not necessarily at home, but anywhere else?" That's when I was in shock because, then realization hit me that that was what was going on. I had to focus on that [the difficulties as work] because I never thought about that was connected to my health problems. It was a lot of stress and a lot of anxiety. Then later, diagnosed with PTSD from the situation and from another individual situation that led into an assault by the very same person.

Hannah’s mental health declined severely after a year of constant interactions with a parent.

I actually ended up in the emergency room in May of that school year because of all the stress that that mother had put me under. And it was starting to affect me physically. And I was getting zero support from the administration at the time. So that's probably the worst emotional [exhaustion], the stress actually affected me physically, was that year. Because it was just, it was all day, every day with that lady. She was going in the community and spreading things in the community. It was just, it was unreal. It was unreal.

Bethan spent many waking hours contemplating each day's events. "I got emotionally exhausted and I noticed I didn't sleep well. It takes me a while to get to sleep and then when I wake up, my mind just goes on and on and on." Rest was a stress response that Mary also experienced as an international schoolteacher. "The lack of restful time [sick leave] that the teachers were able to take would accumulate over time, to where it caused, I guess, more stress emotionally and physically." Moving away from her family was difficult for Leslie. "I suffered some depression because you move away from your support system, so you don't have anyone that's in the same situation you are that you know well enough to trust."

Physical exhaustion was the stress response Mary described as she experienced exhaustion. She often came to work ill, as many teachers do, and her health declined.

I would get sick, because we were aware that there wasn't a substitute program, that the other teachers would have to sub in for you, and knowing that your colleagues were already burnt out, caused many of the teachers to continue to come to work, even though they were sick. Even though they were past due to having to take care of personal things, having to go to the doctor's appointments, and all of these things.

Mary realized that her engagement in physical activity declined and was replaced with attempts to rest. Some participants left the interview with remarks concerning the decline of teacher retainment because of the toll the job takes on people.

Research Question Responses

This study was guided by a central research question and four subquestions addressing participants' lived experiences with burnout and stress. Subquestions were through three are grounded in Maslach's (1997) burnout theory, which identifies three components of burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased sense of accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion and decreased sense of accomplishment were most often described by participants as experiences of burnout. Subquestion four was grounded in Selye's (1951) stress theory which describes responses to stress. The following section includes participant responses that answered this study's research questions.

Central Research Question

The central research question sought to understand the experiences of American expatriates' past experiences of burnout and stress. The participants provided descriptions that allowed for the development of four themes, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, decreased sense of self-accomplishment, and stress, which all helped to describe participants' perceptions of their past lived experiences of burnout and stress. Also, 13 subthemes were developed that further narrated participants' experiences with burnout and stress. Participants explained the difficulties they experienced, why those experiences were difficult, and how they worked through the negative effects as a result of their experience as educators. Teachers have the best intentions of making positive impacts on students. George stated that teachers find themselves disillusioned about what teaching actually requires. "It does seem inevitable that teachers are

going to feel burnt out...the more you spend time in the classroom, the more you start to realize a few things. Like man, this is not what you signed up for.” Stress from various aspects of teaching, such as workload, expectations, lack of support, and criticism, left participants feeling overwhelmed by their duties. Expectations to make specialized instruction for every student and about parent expectations and student engagement made Hannah feel as if the task of teaching was becoming “impossible.”

Subquestion One

Research subquestion one sought to understand how participants experienced emotional exhaustion while teaching in international schools. Participants shared experiences that led to theme three, emotional exhaustion, and the subthemes negative moods, feeling overwhelmed, and feeling hopeless, which supported responses to research subquestion one. Negative moods were associated with participants’ descriptions of frustration with responsibilities, resources, and support as overseas teachers. Participants expressed how the responsibilities associated with teaching, and the extent to which they cared about their jobs, led them to experiences of emotional exhaustion. As teachers, they often took work home or stayed late to accomplish tasks. Bethan shared, “Being overwhelmed with all the expectations, my mind doesn't ever shut off. So, I get emotionally exhausted.” Further, spending endless hours toiling over ways to improve instruction and searching for resources caused participants to describe experiences of emotional exhaustion.

Subquestion Two

The second research subquestion searched for participants’ descriptions of past lived experiences of depersonalization. Participants shared their experiences of social separation in the workplace and these were utilized to identify the second theme, depersonalization. Three

subthemes, negative attitudes, indifferent behaviors, and neglect emerged as the American expatriates spoke about how they consciously and subconsciously detached from people and responsibilities at work. Participants recognized their intentional detachment from job expectations, students, and peers to maintain their ability to perform through work-related stress. Over time, Mia purposely suppressed her opinions to alleviate the criticism she might face at work:

It gets to a point where you either make a decision to not care what people think or you just kinda start becoming an introvert with your opinions and you just feel like, well, it's not worth me saying anything anymore because nobody's really listening to me.

Due to lack of support, Sheryl and Shawna recognized changes in their interactions with others. Shawna realized she was not upbeat and energetic, and Sheryl looked more critically at whom she confided in. Participants' experiences showed that they recognized changes in their enthusiasm for their work environment.

Subquestion Three

The third research subquestion sought to describe how participants experienced a decreased sense of personal accomplishment as international teachers in Southeast Asia. Participants shared their perceptions of personal accomplishment as international teachers, which led to the development of the theme decreased sense of personal accomplishment and the subthemes of feeling overwhelmed, feeling a lack of control, and feeling inadequate. Participants shared their experiences of being overwhelmed with data, assessments, and best instructional practices. Hannah expressed that the tasks of differentiating instruction for each student and providing constant streams of data were too much and she was frustrated. Hannah said, "There just was not enough time in the day to do that [differentiate instruction]." When

participants developed the perception that they were not performing adequately as teachers, they described feelings of being overwhelmed and not being capable of completing their job requirements. Further, their perceptions of themselves as educators began to diminish, which further illustrates their experiences of a decreased sense of personal accomplishment. George admitted that his self-confidence began to wane as he perceived that his efforts were constantly criticized. George shared, “When you're constantly being told that you are not doing a good job, you know it causes you to self-reflect quite a bit.” Participants described how the workload, lack of control, and self-worth they experienced as international schoolteachers led them to feel stressed and burned out, professionally.

Subquestion Four

Research subquestion four looked to describe how participants responded to stress during their employment as international teachers. The theme stress and subthemes alarm, adaptation, and exhaustion emerged from participants’ descriptions of working through their experiences of stress as international teachers. Participants shared their physical, psychological, and emotional responses to the stress they experienced as international schoolteachers. The stress of meeting overwhelming requirements and spending extended hours on work-related tasks resulted in participants neglecting their personal health and facing physical hardships. Leslie shared, “It [difficulties with work expectations] was so physically draining that I was living off of coffee. I mean, I was drinking two pots of coffee a day because it was just physically exhausting.” Many participants described ways in which they tried to resist the effects of stress by remaining physically active. George and Denise both enjoyed Jiu Jitsu, while Bethan preferred to spend time at the local gym. Although some participants attempted to have positive healthful responses to stress, Denise, Mia, and Leslie ate unhealthy foods to manage stress. The amount of stress

experienced by Hannah and Janet, who are both military veterans, led to visits to the hospital. Hannah did not realize that her body was going into a state of exhaustion until she had to take an urgent trip to the hospital. “I actually ended up in the emergency room in May of that school year because of all the stress that that mother had put me under.” On the whole, most participants mentioned that they knew they needed to take care of their health by using their sick days when needed and finding healthy outlets to support their physical and mental health.

Summary

Chapter Four provided a description of American expatriates’ lived experiences of burnout and stress as international teachers in Southeast Asia. Eleven participants completed individual interviews. Participants also took part in a focus group interview and completed photostories. The subthemes developed during data analysis supported information collected during this research. Using individual interviews, a focus group interview, and photostories, four themes emerged: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, (c) decreased sense of personal accomplishment, and (d) stress.

The first theme, emotional exhaustion, explored participants’ detailed experiences of feeling emotionally burned out by various aspects of teaching in international schools. Subthemes included three common topics that emerged from participant descriptions: negative moods, feeling overwhelmed, and feeling hopeless.

The second theme, depersonalization, described participants’ experiences of detaching emotionally from job responsibilities and connections with staff and students. The subthemes of negative attitude, indifferent behaviors, neglect, and communication barriers emerged as a result of those rich descriptions.

Decreased sense of personal accomplishment, theme three, described how participants explained their thoughts about their self-confidence as educators diminishing over time. The subthemes communication barriers, feeling overwhelmed, lack of control, and feeling inadequate emerged as a result of participants' descriptions of their lived experiences as international teachers.

The fourth theme, stress, emerged as a result of participants' descriptions of their responses to stress as international teachers. The subthemes of alarm, resistance, and exhaustion categorize the general responses to stress participants explained through their perceptions and lived experiences.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe and understand American expatriates' perceptions of their past lived experiences with burnout and stress while teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia. Individual interviews, a focus group interview, and photostories were used to explore participants' experiences. Four themes and 13 subthemes related to the 11 participants' experiences of burnout and stress were identified during data collection and analysis. The results of this study revealed that lack of support from administrators and community, lack of resources, workload and job expectations were major contributors to international teachers' experiences of stress and burnout. Participants described a range of physical, mental, and emotional responses to the stress and burnout they perceived as their lived experiences as teachers. Chapter Five includes a summary of the study findings, a discussion of the research implications, acknowledgment of the delimitations and limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

The present study included data from individual interviews, a focus group interview, and documents in the form of photostories. Participants included 11 American expatriates who had three or more years of experience as international teachers in Southeast Asia. The major themes of this study were emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, decreased sense of accomplishment, and stress.

The central research question guiding this study asked how participants described their past experiences of stress and burnout as international teachers in Southeast Asia. Four major themes were identified through the exploration of question one: emotional exhaustion,

depersonalization, decreased sense of accomplishment, and stress. Throughout data collection, participants described how they experienced the job stressors associated with teaching in international schools. American expatriates identified workload, job expectations, lack of support, and communication as significant sources of jobs stress. They described feeling overwhelmed and often defeated by job stressors. Trying to manage job stressors proved difficult for some participants, while others found healthy ways to reduce stress.

The first subquestion of this study asked how participants experienced emotional exhaustion while teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia. Negative moods was a description of the negative feelings experienced by participants, who spoke of being frustrated and stressed from their workloads and responsibilities during their time as international schoolteachers. Having to figure out how to accomplish tasks and make student learning meaningful without adequate support and resources left many participants feeling overwhelmed and hopeless.

The second subquestion of this study asked how participants experienced depersonalization while teaching in an international school in Southeast Asia. Communication barriers were significant to participants' experiences of depersonalization due to their perceptions of feeling misunderstood and to the language barriers associated with being in a foreign country. Also, participants purposefully detached themselves from their work environment by developing feelings of indifference, such as not caring about meeting work obligations or getting attached to their students.

The third subquestion of this study asked how participants experienced decreased sense of accomplishment while teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia. Participants described their experiences of feeling overtasked with obligations that required extended work

time throughout the school year and of having little control over decisions about curriculum, data, and professional development. Feelings of inadequacy were described by experiences of constantly being questioned about instructional practices and feeling that tasks assigned the participants were impossible to complete successfully.

The fourth subquestion of this study asked how participants responded to stress while teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia. Participants' responses reflected the three stages of GAS, alarm, adaptation, and exhaustion. Data revealed that many of the participants were often in a state of alarm as they anticipated reactions on a daily basis from administration and parents. Participants shared experiences of anxiety attacks, frustration, and overeating as responses to stress. Some participants attempted to maintain healthy lifestyles, taking personal health days, exercising, and socializing with trusted friends to resist the effects of stress. When all attempts to resist were exhausted, some participants shared that they spent time in the hospital as a result of work-related stress.

Discussion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe and understand American expatriates' perceptions of their past lived experiences with burnout and stress while teaching in international schools in Southeast Asia. This study revealed that participants experienced job-related hardships, such as demanding workloads and lack of support and resources, which resulted in experiences of stress and burnout as international schoolteachers. The results of the present study are supported by Maslach's (1997) Burnout Theory and Selye's (1951) Stress Theory and further support the body of literature concerning teacher attrition.

Empirical Literature

The information presented in Chapter Two was largely supported by participants' experiences of stress and burnout in this study. Participants described experiences of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, decreased sense of accomplishment, and stress as they attempted to manage job demands, lack of autonomy, difficulty communicating with stakeholders, and diminished resources and social and professional support systems. Participants' responses to stress mirrored the research presented in Chapter Two. This section explains how the results of this study support or diverge from previous research about teacher stress and burnout.

The results of this study support previous research that suggests that there are correlations between testing results and teachers' sense of self-efficacy (Gonzales et al., 2016). If students are failing to meet academic expectations, teachers will more than likely develop a sense of failure to effectively teach their students. The participants all expressed a willingness to work diligently to meet the needs of their students. The participants of this study expressed their feelings of stress and burnout attempting to meet the requirements and expectations associated with testing and data results. Hannah described her experience with testing and data as frustrating. "The increased pressure for...data analysis and documentation, it felt like my team and I were spending more time documenting what we were doing rather than actually doing what we needed to do for kids." Mia taught hundreds of students over the course of one week. The testing expectations for her were overwhelming. "I saw about 400 kids, and they were expecting handwritten rubrics for all their assessments. For each child there were three rubrics for each assessment, so it was six units....It was just a lot." This further affirms previous research suggesting that anxiety and stress are associated with testing (Gonzales et al., 2016, von der Embse et al., 2016). Even though no participant directly or indirectly mentioned consequences associated with testing results, data from testing was frequently mentioned during data collection.

Similar to the studies presented in Chapter Two on teacher stress, participants in this study shared experiences of stress and burnout associated with job demand and workload (Collie et al., 2012; Goddard, O'Brien, & Goddard, 2006; Mulholland, McKinlay, & Sproule, 2013; De Simone, Cicotto, & Lampis, 2016). Many of the participants described feelings of frustration, a sense of hopelessness, and anxiety as they reflected on how they tried to keep up with the demand of their jobs as international schoolteachers. As participants discussed their hardships of trying to be heard as professionals, they never wavered in their intent to do whatever they could to ensure student success. Mia recalled, "But just anxiety, there's nights that I wake up with nightmares, like just sweaty palms, sweats, shaking, a lot of teeth clenching, a lot of stress headaches, just stuff like that." Extended work hours were commonly mentioned by participants as a source of the exhaustion due to trying to manage job expectations (Rumschlag, 2017; Williams & Dikes, 2015). Bethan and Denise admitted to working late on many occasions to make preparations for instruction, grade papers, or analyze data so that they could be prepared for the day. Bethan shared,

I just really wanted to do justice for the kids to make sure I was teaching them what they needed to be taught and that they were learning and that at times could have been what's stressful cause I would bring stuff home and I would stay late after school.

Many of the extra hours worked by the participants were voluntary in that they were trying to keep up with job demands. Their experiences support previous research that indicates that job demand is a major source of job stress and burnout (Collie et al., 2012; Mulholland, McKinlay, & Sproule, 2013; De Simone, Cicotto, & Lampis, 2016).

Strained interactions with parents caused some participants to feel job-related stress. George, on the other hand, took to developing a "thick skin." He learned how to minimize the

impact of negative parent encounters by detaching emotionally. This detachment or depersonalization is a component of burnout and is present throughout many of the participants' lived experiences as international schoolteachers. The difficulties of effectively communicating with parents and meeting their expectations were also a source of negative feelings. Lana shared, "I think one of the things that is very stressful is when you have parents who are constantly demeaning you as a teacher and constantly trying to find fault with anything that the teacher does." Lana's perception of negative parent relationships is that students pick up on their parents' feelings and bring negative behaviors to the classroom. Some teachers identified anxiety as a reaction to having to anticipate what each day would bring. This supports previous research that suggests that depersonalization and stress among teachers can be a result of negative parent interactions (Lasater, 2016; Maslach et al., 1997; Skaalvik, & Skaalvik, 2017).

With the exception of one participant, there were no remarks made about teacher salary as a stressor for teachers who had worked in international schools. The participant who had difficulties with salary issues had questions about her earnings and allotments that were not answered by staff members in charge of payroll. Shawna stated, "I'm so used to understanding what I'm getting paid, why I'm getting paid a certain amount, why so much is being taken out. I didn't feel like that was very clear. There was no clear understanding when it came to my paycheck." Finding someone at her school who could support her grievances was also a challenge. Previous research suggests that teachers look to work overseas for financial gain (Appleton, Morgan, & Sives, 2006). However, pay benefits were not discussed explicitly by any participants.

Finally, the participants of this study did not provide data that supported teacher stress associated with class sizes, student behavior, or the relationship between students and teachers.

One participant felt that if parents presented negative attitudes towards teachers, they would not be surprised if students also felt at liberty to do the same. Instead, the participants insisted that they worked late nights to try and create the optimal learning experiences for students. If anything, some of the participants in this study were willing to go against the expectations of their school districts to provide adequate opportunities for students to enjoy their education, instead of teaching to prepare for assessments and data collection.

Theoretical Literature

One theoretical framework guiding this study was Maslach's et al. (1997) Burnout Theory. Teaching should be a rewarding occupation, in which students develop social skills and academic accomplishment during each year of instruction and learning. However, research shows that teachers are dissatisfied with several aspects of the profession and are leaving it (Digest of Education Statistics, 2015). Teachers feel burned out largely due to workload and job expectations. The participants in this study discussed their experiences of burnout by describing feelings that can be interpreted as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased sense of accomplishment.

The American expatriates discussed spending hours trying to prepare and keep up with job demands, and becoming emotionally exhausted and often detached from their responsibilities, peers, and students. Lana, Mary, and Denise shared their frustrations at spending hours trying to locate resources to ensure they gave their students high-quality instruction, which is what was expected on a consistent basis from administration. George shared, "I was trying to figure out many times how to make things happen without the resources and the support that I felt that we were needing." The impossibilities of providing differentiated instruction for potentially every student, every lesson, left participants feeling as if the task were impossible.

Depersonalization, the second component of burnout, was experienced by some participants as they tried to manage their emotions within the workplace. Decreased levels of socialization, negative responses, and attitudes of indifference were described by participants who became detached from their jobs. Negative interactions with parents and a perceived lack of support were reasons why Shawna said, “I felt like I kind of just stopped caring altogether, wasn't really as talkative or upbeat as I normally would be.”

A decreased sense of accomplishment, the third component of burnout, developed within the experiences of almost all participants as they described their teaching experiences as causing them to second guess their abilities to teach. George shared,

I spent a lot of time preparing and I spent a lot of care and effort you know doing these things. Logically, that does not make sense. However, when you're being told this over and over again it does cause you to do a lot of self-reflection.

When teachers do not see results or receive positive recognition for their efforts, their sense of accomplishment may diminish (Maslach et al., 2017; Rumschlag, 2017).

The second theoretical framework guiding this study was Selye's (1951) General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). GAS aligns with the responses to stress that participants described through the data-collection process. The theme of stress emerged as a result of data collected from the international schoolteachers' experiences of stress. Participants described responses of stress that support the alarm phase of GAS, in which the body goes into fight or flight, deciding how to react to a situation (Selye, 1951). Hannah shared the anxiety she felt each day as she anticipated what controversy she might face with parents in her classroom one year. “I'm always second guessing myself. Okay. If I do this, what's this mother going to do? If I say this, what's

this mother going to do?” Janet stated that parents have left the burden of educating children solely to teachers and will spend time ensuring that teachers are doing their jobs.

The second component of GAS, resistance, was apparent throughout the study, as participants discussed trying to find ways to manage their experiences of stress on the job. Some participants used exercise to manage the stress, anxiety, and frustration they experienced while working to meet job demands and satisfy parent and administrative expectations, along with their personal expectations as professionals. Positive social interactions with peers, friends, and family members allowed a few participants to talk through their frustrations, receive comfort and positive feedback, and feel reenergized to face challenges at work. Hannah recalled being revitalized by her grade-level peers and having “an attitude of I’m going to do the best that I can.” Most participants expressed unhealthy actions to cope with stressors, such as eating junk food, working overtime, and separating themselves emotionally and socially from work. George recommended developing a “thick skin.” Resistance for George also included decreasing the workload on his own. He stated, “As time goes on, they ask more and more but get less and less.”

The third component of GAS, exhaustion, was more apparent with some participants than others. Some expatriates discussed their experiences with anxiety, compulsive eating, and hospitalization as a result of prolonged exposure to stress. Janet and Hannah both shared their experiences of becoming ill enough to be seen at local hospitals. Hannah dealt with a confrontational parent for an entire school year, causing her prolonged stress and anxiety. Mary also described being sick and the school not having substitute teachers readily available to relieve her so that she could take care of her health. She also felt the guilt of not wanting to

burden her coworkers, so she came to work sick until she finally hurt herself participating in a physical activity.

Overall, participants' responses to stress and burnout did not always neatly fit into one description. When a participant explained that having a lack of control over instructional decisions gave them a decreased sense of accomplishment, they may have also said that they felt anxiety or frustration because of that same lack of control over time. Further, when participants described symptoms of emotional exhaustion as a result of their job demands, they also talked about how they worked extra hours to manage those demands, because they wanted to be seen as competent educators. This study supports research that describes the effects of prolonged exposure to stress: teachers become burned out, which includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased sense of accomplishment. Teachers also endure hardships that affect them physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Implications

Current and future teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders in the education community can use the information provided in this study to aid in understanding and improving experiences of teachers in international schools. Additionally, this information may make stakeholders aware of areas in which they can support teachers in resisting and adapting to stressors that are unavoidable in the workplace. Findings of this study show that international teachers in Southeast Asia experience burnout and stress when they are overwhelmed by administrators, parents, job demands, and expectations. They are similar to other studies of burnout and stress. This information adds value to the body of work that informs about teacher attrition, thus supporting efforts for teacher retention around the world.

Theoretical Implications

Burnout is prevalent among jobs that cause employees to experience high levels of stress for significant periods of time. Stressors, which can be positive or negative, are the aggravating factors that initiate GAS; they include states of alarm, resistance and exhaustion (Selye, 1951). Participants associated the stressors they experienced working at international schools with feelings of anxiety, frustration, exhaustion, and unhealthy eating habits. Mary reflected, “All I’ve ever wanted to do was teach, instead my days consumed me, and I just wanted to allow myself to go lifeless, let the current take complete control and just drown.” When teachers are not able to take care of themselves, the effectiveness of their instruction suffers as well. Students are encouraged to stay home or seek medical attention when they are ill. Teachers should be encouraged to take care of their personal needs and reach out for professional support when they are struggling with job demands. Denise and George emphasized that being overextended with work had affected their wellbeing Denise recalled being exhausted and eating unhealthy foods, while George began to think of sick leave as mental health days and would take time off often. Principals and other authorities in education must work to create opportunities for teachers to utilize services (whether medical, mental-health, or physical-health related) that will assist them in managing the stress associated with their jobs.

Prolonged exposure to stress leads to exhaustion, the third component of GAS (Selye, 1951). Stress-related exhaustion can lead to anxiety, depression, and debilitating diseases (Maslach et al., 1997; Turton & Campbell, 2005). Participants of this study discussed some of their experiences with anxiety, PTSD, and visits to the hospital related to prolonged stress from work. Mary shared that she was hurt on the job and did not have the support she needed to take time from work to rehabilitate properly. Implementing stress-resistant practices within the workplace environment is necessary for supporting teacher health and providing a positive work

environment. Participants admitted to neglecting to eat properly on many occasions. While a few participants utilized exercise to manage stress, others spent many of their off-duty hours working on school-related tasks. A few outgoing participants leaned on their friends, family, and coworkers for support. Social and work support can be difficult to find when you are teaching in a new building, and in the case of international teachers, a new country.

Further, allowing for more teacher input on instructional practices, pacing, data collection, and goals may help bring more autonomy to the work site and promote a positive sense of accomplishment and control over educational decisions. Lana expressed frustration because she was not able to collaborate with teachers in her specialty area. She said, “I will not be making effective use of that time because I will just be sitting in a meeting listening to other people plan and organize where I can't work with my own coworkers and co-teachers to make better decisions for our students.” If teachers are saying that their workloads are too heavy and that certain expectations are not appropriate for students, administrators and policymakers should give their input consideration. Teachers are committed to their students and want to feel like they are able to accomplish their goals as professionals. Lana stated,

With students, you're invested in them because you really truly want them to do a good job and have a successful life and be a successful student, but when it gets to the point where I feel like I'm not accomplishing anything then I don't want to do that anymore.

Supporting teacher autonomy and implementing viable suggestions from instructional staff could help reduce experiences of decreased sense of accomplishment and emotional exhaustion that have been described by participants.

The longer teachers stay in their chosen profession the more experience they are likely to gain from teaching and effective mentorship. This experience benefits student learning. If

teachers are feeling burned out within a few years of teaching, there will not be many experienced ones for new teachers to look to for guidance and support. This could possibly perpetuate a cycle of burnout of teachers, as the responsibilities may be more overwhelming to a novice educator than to an experienced teacher. Both George and Lana admitted to considering other job opportunities. George stated that he was quite certain he would not retire as a teacher.

Empirical Implications

Although there is a large body of literature that reflects teachers' experiences of stress and burnout, qualitative studies utilizing American expatriates in Southeast Asia has not been readily available. Studies of teacher burnout often utilize surveys to identify either components of burnout or stressors identified by teachers. The present study fills a gap in research, as the participants represent a unique population in a region of the world that has a recognized American presence. Further, having qualitative data, interviews, and documents provided by this unique population of international teachers fills a gap in the literature.

Interviewing teachers who have spent at least three years in South Korea and/or Japan gave cultural and educational perspectives from two countries in Southeast Asia. The collection of data from the 11 participants in this study, along with previous research, showed that the job workload and lack of control over instructional and assessment decisions experienced by teachers is overwhelming and has a negative effect on teacher enthusiasm, self-perception, professional confidence, and health (Collie et al., 2012; Mulholland, McKinlay, & Sproule, 2013; De Simone, Cicotto, & Lampis, 2016). Mia was quite adamant that the administrators who observed and rated her instructional knowledge had no background or understanding of how to effectively teach a foreign language to students. Mia said that her years of experience were not respected and utilized effectively in the development of foreign language programs, which left

her with a sense of being undervalued. Similarly, Denise and George discussed perceptions that their teaching expertise was undermined by curricular decisions made by administrators and curriculum directors for their students. Hannah was so frustrated by administrative decisions that she wanted to “throw the curriculum out of the window.” Hannah further admitted to omitting testing and data requirements from her lesson plans when she felt like she could not meet job expectations and the information was not valuable to student learning. Sheryl states, “Sometimes it can be an administrator who does not have a grasp of the type of program I work with and they may be in administration but not know much of anything about special ed.” Administrators and other authorities in education need to be aware of the degree to which teacher autonomy exists in their schools and ensure that they are giving teachers the professional independence they need to make decisions about curriculum and instructional practices.

Educational authorities, such as administrators, school board members, and superintendents, should consider alternative or adjusted approaches to curriculum, pacing, and job expectations for teachers. This will support teachers in maintaining positive self-efficacy perceptions and preventing burnout (Brown, 2012; Schwarzer, Smitz, & Tang, 2000).

Participants of this study expressed their dissatisfaction with resources at their jobsites; they were required to teach with a curriculum that was too difficult for students to access, especially with the mandated pacing guides. Shawna said that her frustration was due to

The lack of resources, or the resources that they were providing us, I just felt like they were kind of outdated. I know all the places are phasing them out, so it didn't make sense why we were using them. You have kind of like no choice but to deal with that because you are overseas.

Teachers are professionals with continuous hands-on experience with student learning and educational outcomes. None of the participants in this study discussed, at least with positivity, inclusiveness in decisions that directly impacted schoolwide goals for academic achievement. Teachers' ideas and suggestions should be solicited as often as possible to support student learning and effective instructional practices. In other words, teachers need to feel involved in educational decisions; and their suggestions, those that are feasible and applicable to learning goals, should be reflected in goals, pacing, and student learning expectations.

Practical Implications

This study provided practical implications for all stakeholders associated with education in international schools. Social support is a predictor of teacher burnout (Maslach, 2001; Rajak & Bibhas, 2017). Participants explained their experiences with trying, or not being able, to make connections within their communities to manage their experiences as overseas educators. Bethan stated, "As far as my team goes, I think we all had a great connection to where we leaned on each other." Teachers need more opportunities to seek out social support, which will help reduce the occurrences or severity of stress and burnout (Burke, Greenglass, & Schwarzer, 1996; Yildirim, 2017). Creating a social committee to engage teachers, sponsoring an afterschool fitness class, offering challenges and incentives, regularly checking on the well-being of their staff – these are all ways for administrators to show teachers that their employers care about their physical and mental health. George admitted to seizing any opportunity he had to engage with people he cared about, "Some friends coming to town? I'm going to take off time. My little cousin is having her kid. I'm going to take off time. I have no problem taking off time. It has to be that way."

Educational stakeholders should consider and implement ways to assist teachers in maintaining healthy habits to relieve stress, so that educators can focus on instruction and caring for students throughout the school year. Some participants shared that they had difficulties accessing health and dental care, facilities, and housing because of communication barriers.

Leslie shared,

On top of moving to a new country and having to deal with buying a car, finding a house, getting a telephone, getting your gas hooked up, your power hooked up, all in a country you're not familiar with how to use their services and most often, you need an interpreter, you're supposed to be ready to start teaching day one and there's not a lot of support.

Focusing on a new job is difficult when your household is not settled before you go to work.

Promoting and providing access to services that assist teachers in managing stress symptoms may give teachers a sense of support from administration. For example, learning relaxation techniques, such as breathing exercises, or taking yoga classes can reduce the effects of stress and burnout (Aloe et al., 2014; Feltoe et al., 2016; Yildirim, 2017).

Being valued as experienced educators is important to the self-efficacy of teachers. Teachers need to feel supported by stakeholders, especially administration and parents. In the United States, teachers can join a union, pay fees, and be represented by the union in cases that threaten their rights as a teacher or employee. However, this does not take the place of feeling safe and supported at work. Hannah described her experience of being extremely distressed because of constant confrontations with a parent. She ultimately ended up in the hospital as a result of the prolonged stress and anxiety she felt as she anticipated each encounter. Some hardships that teachers face at work do not require union representation but can be difficult for teachers to handle without someone to support them.

Lastly, teachers need to feel as if they have some input on the resources they feel are necessary to support student success. Educators should be more actively involved in the education process, because their classroom knowledge and instructional expertise should be valued. Denise stated,

They [school officials] want you to do it their way because that's how they want you to and if we don't meet these [expectations] then you know we are shamed, and you know like you throw me in with kids that don't speak the language very well so you need to find people who will provide the right services or the said services or parents that don't understand the said process and so they're not giving their child what they need.

Participants noted being the most closed off from the community when they perceived that parents and administrations viewed them negatively. Communication needs to be improved between teachers and other stakeholders. More effort should be made to ensure language barriers do not magnify communication issues. Thus, resources should reflect the needs of the schools. Changes to the work environment in international schools needs to be improved to ensure that experienced, highly qualified teachers continue to make a positive impact in the field of education.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations to this study included restricting the study to international schools in Southeast Asia in order to focus the scope of cultural and educational experiences of the participants. A transcendental phenomenological approach was chosen for this study because I wanted to separate my own experiences of stress and burnout as an international-school teacher from the past experiences of the participants. Further, the aim of this study was to describe the phenomenon of stress and burnout (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The 11 participants in

this study were purposefully selected in that they were American expatriates, had worked in international schools in Southeast Asia for at least three years and were at least 18 years of age.

Limitations of this study included gender, geography, and data collection. Many of the participants of this study were found through snowball sampling, which did not allow for maximum variation by gender or experience. Snowball sampling provided a predominately female participant group. Most of the references for participants came from women and they recommended other women for the study. Of the potential 15 participants for this study, two were men, and one man agreed to participate. Therefore, the male perspective was not equally represented in this study. Further, Asia is comprised of 48 countries; however, the present study utilized participants who lived in Japan and South Korea only, limiting the scope of cultural experiences associated with overseas teaching. All data collected for this study were through participant self-reporting. Each of these aspects further limited the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Teacher stress and burnout is a current and prevalent issue that deserves to be studied further. Teacher attrition is not a phenomenon unique to the United States or its teachers. Therefore, the scope of interest in conducting research about this growing trend should extend beyond Asia and international-school teachers. Education is a universal happenstance that can be examined and studied from many perspectives. Although the results of this study supported many of the findings discussed in the literature review, the delimitations and limitations of this study indicate that there are several opportunities to conduct more research.

According to the National Center of Education Statistics, over 70% of public-school teachers are female (2018). Ten of the 11 participants in this study were female. A phenomenological study that involves an equal representation of male American expatriates may

add further information to studies of teacher stress and burnout. Future studies should consider how male teachers experience stress and burnout, what causes them to feel stressed and burned out, and what strategies they use to manage stressors. Further, quantitative research should be conducted to quantify the experiences of stress and burnout by American expatriates who have taught or currently teach in international schools. Quantitative and qualitative studies providing information about which components of burnout are more prevalent in male participants' experiences, in comparison to female participants, could add to the body of research concerning teacher stress and burnout.

Conducting case studies of international schools in each region or country is recommended for future studies. Many of the participants in this study taught at different school sites, bringing some experiences that were unique to their teaching environments. Two participants experienced significant struggles with language barriers in their first years of teaching at international schools, while the majority of participants stated that they had difficulties with parent interactions without mentioning language barriers. Another participant struggled to connect with other teachers her first year, as she observed that her peers did not get along with one another. A cross-case analysis of various international schools and those teacher experiences of stress and burnout could support teacher retention and add to the body of research on this topic.

Administrators' perceptions of teacher stress and burnout would provide an interesting and informative study to determine whether administrators are aware of the stress that teachers experience during the school year. Many principals were teachers at one point in their careers. Asking about their teaching experiences, the connections they have with staff members, and the decisions they are, and are not, able to make concerning teachers' workload and job expectations

may provide insights to the disconnect between teacher and administrators. There are some studies that examine the effects of principal leadership and communication on teacher motivation, however, more research should be conducted to investigate these issues from the administrative perspective.

Lastly, quantitative or qualitative studies involving international-school teachers should be conducted with participants from countries other than the United States. Perhaps different social and cultural beliefs and upbringing could result in different perspectives and experiences of burnout and stress while teaching in international schools outside of the home country. Furthermore, studying international teachers working in the United States may add to the body of work concerning international schools, as well as help to address the growing concerns surrounding teachers' experiences of burnout in the United States.

Summary

Although the participants described varying degrees of burnout and stress, certain aspects of their jobs as international teachers gave them lasting negative feelings about their experiences in the profession – job workload, lack of teacher autonomy, diminished support from stakeholders, and difficulty attaining resources. Acknowledging that a stress-free occupation may not be likely, participants identified significant stressors that need to be addressed by mentor teachers, administration, and other decision-making entities within each educational system.

In this study, participants described a willingness to put in extra effort to be competent and effective educators. However, their drive to meet the demands of the job was not sufficient to meet the tasks they were obligated to complete, resulting in emotional exhaustion, decreased sense of accomplishment and stress (Maslach et al., 1997; Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016; Richards, Levesque-Bristol, Templin, & Graber, 2016). Realistic goals and expectations that

allow for rigorous, high-quality teaching and learning need to be evaluated to improve teacher work conditions and possibly improve teacher retention. For those rigorous tasks that cannot be avoided or are generally seen as stressful, such as testing and data analysis, support from mentors, administration, and the community would make a positive impact on home-school partnerships and teachers' self-efficacy (Lavian, 2012; Long et al., 2012).

Finally, support services and accessible resources for teachers in overseas areas may be crucial to teacher retention and reducing the effects of job-related stress and burnout (Maslach, 2001; Rajak & Bibhas, 2017). Participants in this study express frustration and dissatisfaction with professional training, resource support, and communication during their employment as international teachers. Participants explained that they spent too much time and energy trying to find resources for themselves and their teachers, often neglecting their own personal needs, which sometimes resulted in severe health consequences. More accessible resources need to be available for this unique population of professionals educating our children. The percentage of teachers leaving the field of education may continue to increase if their voices are not heard and changes are not implemented.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators

Sample Questions

1. I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
3. I don't really care what happens to some students.

Appendix B

IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 15, 2019

Sandra Jackson

IRB Approval 3457.021519: American Expatriates' Experiences of Stress and Burnout while Teaching in International Schools within Southeast Asia: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Sandra Jackson,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. [45 CFR 46.101\(b\)\(2\)](#) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Signature removed.

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

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Appendix C

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
2/15/2019 to 2/14/2020
Protocol # 3457.021519

Consent Form

American Expatriates' Experiences of Stress and Burnout in International Schools within
Southeast Asia: A Phenomenological Study

Sandra N. Jackson
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of international teachers' past experiences of stress and burnout. You were selected as a possible participant because you were a teacher within an international school in southeast Asia and have had experiences of stress and burnout. You were identified as having experienced stress and burnout based on your responses to the Maslach Burnout Inventory for educators (MBI-ES). Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Sandra N. Jackson, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to understand and describe American expatriates' experiences of stress and burnout in international schools within southeast Asia. A central research question guides this study: How do American expatriates who have taught in international schools in southeast Asia describe their experiences with stress and burnout? Answering the central research question may add to the body of research concerning teacher experiences in their field of employment in national and international locations. This information may help support or adjust teachers' needs to facilitate or maintain safe and healthy learning environments as well as support teacher retention.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in a semi-structured interview in which your responses would be recorded with an audio device. The interview will last approximately one hour.
2. Participate in a focus group interview. The estimated time of participation is 30 minutes but could be longer or shorter depending on your level of participation in the study. Your responses will be confidential.
3. Complete a photo narrative. The estimated time of participation is 15-30 minutes.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. As a mandatory reporter, any information such as child abuse, neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others must be reported.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Compensation: Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. After completing all three portions of the study, interview, focus group, and photo narrative, participants will receive a gift card with a \$25 value. Survey participants will be entered into a drawing to win one of three \$10 gift cards.

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
2/15/2019 to 2/14/2020
Protocol # 3457.021519

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted by erasing files and associated data. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings. I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data and survey data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Sandra Jackson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at snadames@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, K.R. Tierce at krtierce@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix D

Semi-structured Individual Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. Briefly describe the journey you took to become a teacher.
3. How did you come to work for an international school within Southeast Asia?
4. How many years did you work for an international school within Southeast Asia before changing employers?
5. What situations or responsibilities most commonly caused you stress as a teacher?
6. What are some of your most vivid or impactful past experiences with stress while working in an international school within Southeast Asia?
7. How do you recall the stress you felt manifested itself physically, mentally, and/or emotionally?
8. How do you recall managing the stressors associated with your job?
9. What situations or responsibilities do you recall caused you to feel like you were burning out (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and/or decreased sense of personal accomplishment) of the teaching profession?
10. Describe your past experiences of teacher burnout as a teacher at an international school within Southeast Asia.
11. Describe past particular instances of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and/or decreased sense of personal accomplishment as a teacher that worked at an international school within Southeast Asia.

12. How do you recall that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and/or decreased sense of personal accomplishment impacted you physically, mentally, or emotionally?
13. What else would you like to share about your past experiences with stress and burnout as a teacher in an international school in Southeast Asia?

Appendix E

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. What are some significant and reoccurring past experiences as an international teacher in Southeast Asia that you perceived as stressful?
2. What caused those previously mentioned past experiences as an international teacher to be stressful to you?
3. What do you feel you experienced most frequently, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, or a decreased sense of accomplishment and how did it manifest itself when you were an international teacher in Southeast Asia?
4. How has your perceptions of job-related stress as an international teacher changed over time?

Appendix F

Sample PhotoStory

After my years of teaching, I still become very uptight when a parent wants to meet with me and I really have no idea why. In my mind, all I see is a future chastisement about some issue that I could not have possibly known without someone communicating with me.



So, living in a small community in which I run into parents often, I try my best to avoid them because being cordial is difficult. All I want to do when I feel this type of stress is find my own peace and quiet, my own bubble.

(Sample Participant, 2018)

Appendix G

Participant Photo-Stories

Lana



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For me, burnout is related to little or no sense of accomplishment in the job. Diminishing resources, lack of respect by parents, students, and system policy makers as well as increased responsibility and negative PR make teaching more challenging than it ever has been.



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I cannot change the complacency and apathy demonstrated by stakeholders, but I can remove myself from it. These images represent the way I keep from becoming burned out. I learned to find friends who are NOT in the same profession, to go out often with those friends, and to spend time outside with friends or alone.

Bethan



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My first-year as a teacher, a few weeks in and I felt like I was drowning. In my class half of my students couldn't even speak English. I felt I had lost all sense of control. My support system did not have the skills, knowledge, nor credentials. I felt very uncomfortable at the school, like everyone was judging me and finding me lacking. I tried to reach out to other teachers and they tried to be helpful, but they were also busy with their own classrooms. I never wanted to allow myself to be a quitter. I noticed that the pressure and stress was affecting my health and I dreaded going into school every morning. I would work on my lessons for long periods of time. Never felt like I was able to teach what I really wanted to. The lack of resources hindered my teaching. I was working everyday until late at night and I felt like my life just didn't belong to me anymore. All I've ever wanted to do was teach instead my days consumed me, and I just wanted to allow myself to go lifeless let the current take complete control and just drown.

Mary

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There was one particular school year when I was teaching overseas that endured a lot of changes. Most of the changes were unexpected, but they left me feeling as if my life went from sunshine to thunderstorms with gray skies. I remember a point of feeling extremely exhausted emotionally and I began to question if I wanted to continue in this profession. I had to remind myself that some of things I was dealing with were nonexistent stateside. Yet, it was still tough to deal with.

Shawna

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With all the assessments that teachers are required to give, most times I feel that I am barely hanging on and barely getting by.

The stress of constantly having to test is daunting. There are times that I don't feel like I am doing my job to the best of my ability. It's stressful with the amount of testing that we do and that the children must endure.