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Burnt Out Educators: A Phenomenological Study of Minnesota Teachers

Hannah Frink-Levenhagen

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Burnt Out Educators: A Phenomenological Study of Minnesota Teachers

by

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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May 5, 2021

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Dedication

To my children, Tessany and Troy, and husband, Alex – may we always persevere through life’s challenges and chase our dreams. I love you.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation was a labor of love that came into fruition with the help of many individuals. First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Michael Coquyt for his support, patience, encouragement, and constructive criticism as my dissertation chair. As a student of Minnesota State University Moorhead since 2010, I am incredibly proud to be a Dragon and grateful for the professors I have had in my tenure as a student. Dr. Boyd Bradbury, Dr. Michael Coquyt, and Dr. Ximena Suarez-Sousa are among the best of the best. They have played an integral role in my education and growth as a leader. Without these individuals, this dream would have never become a reality.

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of how Minnesota teachers have experienced and define teacher burnout. Prior to the study, the most current data on the subject was last collected in 1984 (Farber, 1991). Moreover, the researcher sought to better understand the impact professional learning networks can have on teacher well-being in relation to burnout status.

In order to understand how the phenomenon is experienced and viewed by Minnesota teachers, the researcher conducted a phenomenological study that was comprised of seven in-depth interviews. Participants reflected on and defined their experience with teacher burnout, determined their sense of self-efficacy, discussed the impact professional learning networks can have on well-being, and provided recommendations for change. All data was coded to formulate themes to fit each of the three research questions.

The study found a loss of passion and motivation, lack of support, and expectations of the teaching profession to be the main factors of teacher burnout for Minnesota teachers. If utilized, professional learning networks provide teachers with support, connect them with other like-minded teachers, provide them with an abundance of resources that are efficient, and have the ability to make educators more efficient in the classroom. Lastly, the study fills a large gap in academic research and provides school districts, teacher preparation programs, and the state with a series of recommendations for change.

KEY WORDS: Teacher burnout, well-being, teacher self-efficacy, resilience, professional learning networks, phenomenology.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of Study

Minnesota loses approximately 30% of teachers within the first five years of their careers (Minnesota Department of Education, 2015). While this comes in below the national average of 41% (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2018), students, classrooms, and school districts are impacted all the same by high teacher attrition rates. Within the world of academia high-quality teachers are the backbone of well-functioning institutes (Dworkin, 1987). Unfortunately, the exodus of teachers is beginning to crumble our nation's educational foundation (Ingersoll, 2016; Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2018). Their departure can be attributed to a variety of factors; however, the one worthy of the most attention is teacher burnout.

The phenomenon of teacher burnout has historically proven to be a concern within the educational profession (Alschuler, 1980; Dworkin, 1987; Farber, 1991, H.E.P., 1884; Hunt, 1969; *Journal of Education*, 1881 & 1904; Kellog, 1885; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Tyson, 1951). Despite these historical roots, teacher burnout was not specifically addressed until Alschuler (1980) published an Analysis and Action Series for the *National Education Association*. However, Maslach (1981), is credited with laying the foundation for understanding and assessing teacher burnout (Farber, 1991)

Teacher burnout is a prolonged response to emotional and interpersonal stressors from work and “is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and professional inefficacy” (Maslach & Leiter, 2016, p. 103). While a majority of educators will enter the profession for altruistic reasons, few will remain when they feel mistreated, undervalued, and are emotionally exhausted. (Fiereck et al., 2019). Those willing to try

and overcome burnout are driven by personal commitment, values, identity, interests, and moral obligation (Acker, 1995; Nias, 1984). An integral component of burnout often overlooked is teacher well-being. Literature posits teacher well-being to be a multidimensional construct that is hard to define, yet it is the psychological driving force behind teacher burnout (Acton & Glasgow, 2015).

In order to alleviate burnout and improve well-being, teachers must be willing to participate in interventions at both the professional and personal levels (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Meaningful and effective professional development can be costly. Dan Weisberg, CEO of *The New Teacher Project*, estimated the average yearly cost of professional development to be roughly \$18,000 per teacher (Layton, 2015). Seeing as this can account for a large portion of a budget, school districts and educators struggle to financially invest in improving teacher well-being in relation to burnout.

One potential solution to this financial barrier is to utilize existing social media platforms for professional development opportunities. Platforms such as Pinterest, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook allow educators to expand their professional learning networks, share resources and ideas, gain exposure to diverse viewpoints, engage in education-focused conversations, and establish professional relationships. Learning networks are a non-traditional form of professional development that are cost effective, efficient, customizable, interactive, and educational (Trust, Krutka, & Carpenter, 2016).

This research explored the phenomenon of teacher burnout and the impact professional learning networks have had on improving teacher well-being in relation to burnout status. Admittedly, the final study design and reported data does not fit the initial research proposal. The author originally intended to study the impact of a Facebook

group, Burnt-Out Teachers, on participant well-being in relation to teacher burnout. Participants were provided the opportunity to collaborate with peers, share educational resources, join a mentorship program, and encouraged network activity. The impact of the group was to be assessed through informal means (i.e. polls and discussions) and conclude with interviews of at least six active participants. Unfortunately, following the creation and promotion of Burnt-Out Teachers, less than two dozen individuals sporadically participated in the study. Given the lack of participation, the author decided to focus the study solely on phenomenological interviews.

The final study was guided by the theoretical frameworks of teacher self-efficacy (Cherniss, 1993; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007, 2010) and learning as a connected professional (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019). In 1993, Cherniss linked teacher burnout with self-efficacy, and argued for the establishment of three domains: task, interpersonal, and organization. Over a decade later, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) expanded upon Cherniss' (1993) three domains of teacher self-efficacy and established six dimensions of the theory. These dimensions include: "instruction, adapting education to individual students' needs, motivating students, keeping discipline, cooperating with colleagues and parents, and coping with changes and challenges" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007, p. 613). The theoretical concept of teacher self-efficacy is considered a component of teacher burnout in that a lack of self-efficacy can cause emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of accomplishment - the defining characteristics of teacher burnout (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008).

Professional learning networks allow educators to connect with one another, establish relationships, provide support, and learn autonomously (Warlick, 2009). The

theoretical framework of learning as a connected professional combines networked learning, connectivism, and connected learning through the analysis of professional learning network(s), teacher as learner, and the arenas of professional learning (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019). Although this framework is new to academia, it promotes learning that is active, interest driven, and autonomous – characteristics of effective professional learning networks. Through the utilization of the two frameworks, the author has provided an alternative means to improving burnout status for teachers who are devoted to the profession and their students and have no desire to leave the field of education.

Statement of Need

The present study fills a substantial gap in the literature on the topics Minnesota teachers enduring teacher burnout and the impact of professional learning networks on their status of the phenomenon. A majority of the studies on teacher burnout and lack of well-being have been conducted outside the United States (Bermejo, Hernández-Franco, & Prieto-Ursúa, 2013; Fiorilli, Albanese, Gabola, & Pepe, 2017; Gholamitooranposhti, 2012; Gozzoli, Frascaroli, & D'Angelo, 2015; Ju, Lan, Li, Feng, & You, 2015; Klussman, Kunter, Trautwein, Ludtke, & Baumert, 2008; Naemi, 2018; Olsen, 2017; Parker, Martin, Colmar, & Liem, 2012; Wessels, & Wood, 2019). Within Minnesota, teacher burnout and job satisfaction have not been researched since Birmingham's 1984 doctoral dissertation study (Farber, 1991); and, the unitization and impact of professional learning networks on Minnesota teachers have not been researched.

Given the lack of research on Minnesota teachers, the author collaborated with *Education Minnesota* at the end of the 2019-2020 school year to determine if the

phenomenon of teacher burnout was still prevalent within the state. Field representatives from *Education Minnesota* shared a survey link with various school districts, helping fetch 509 responses. The survey (Appendix A) contained ten questions and found 83% of respondents have had or are currently experiencing teacher burnout. When asked to reflect on their current job satisfaction, only 21% of respondents were extremely satisfied with their job. If given the opportunity to choose a different career, 18% of respondents would leave education altogether, and 42% would consider a career change. Data collected through the aforementioned survey fills a substantial gap in literature and research on Minnesota teachers while also confirming the phenomenon's existence.

Professional learning networks, though well defined, lack literature and research of their impact on teachers enduring burnout (Ranieri, Manca, & Fini, 2012; Trust, 2012; Trust, Krutka, & Carpenter, 2016). Through phenomenological interviews, the researcher was able to connect the themes of teacher burnout to those of professional learning networks. Thus, proving the positive impact professional learning networks have on teacher well-being in relation to burnout status.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Teacher burnout and attrition are pervasive to the American education system (Dworkin, 1987). While a plethora of literature exists on professional learning networks, well-being, and teacher burnout, very little, if any, simultaneously include all three variables. Darling-Hammond and Sykes (2003) believe teacher retention is a greater problem than training new ones. Unfortunately, not all school districts provide the proper support needed to guide teachers through the early years of their career. The author believes this lack of support is a main contributor to developing teacher burnout. The

Minnesota Department of Education has recognized the need for more attention on teacher well-being; but has not found a working solution (Fiereck et al., 2019). As such, the utilization of professional learning networks have the potential to be a solution, or, at the very least, a step in the right direction.

Fiereck et al. (2019), acknowledged Minnesota's current lack of support for teacher well-being and suggests the implementation of a program that has the ability to enhance well-being while lowering burnout and retention rates. Formal and informal mentorship programs are often available to probationary teachers, but rarely does a support program exist for veteran teachers. As such, teachers are turning to social media with upwards of 44% using Facebook for professional purposes (Johansen, 2016). Professional learning networks have the ability to reach probationary and veteran teachers while providing them with the tools needed to improve their sense of teacher self-efficacy and emotional resilience; ultimately, improving their well-being and lessening the likelihood for teacher burnout.

Upon completion of student teaching, new teachers are often thrust into the profession and left to navigate the complexities of the field. In time, this can wear on their emotional resiliency and potentially lead to burnout or an overall lack of well-being. Rather than creating a system or series of programs to support those enduring burnout, our country's education system acknowledges the problem, but rarely offers a solution (Butler, 2017; Ill, Martin, & Bender, 2002; Sparks, 1983). The purpose of this research is to provide a potential solution to teacher burnout by exploring the impact professional learning networks have on teacher well-being in relation to burnout status.

On a personal level, this research has fulfilled a goal while contributing to the world of academia. The author endured a strong case of burnout during their fourth year of teaching. Had the author not been forced to spend nearly half of their fifth year of teaching out of the classroom for pregnancy complications, they may be in an alternative profession at this time. Time away from the classroom, paired with education, collaboration, and encouragement in a doctoral program was rejuvenating and inspired the author to look for an opportunity of change. As someone who is deeply committed to education, the author wishes to provide well-being support to others in order to assure academia retains quality educators for our nation's students.

Phenomenological interviews further explored the impact learning networks can have on teacher well-being and burnout status. More specifically, interview participants provided basic demographic and professional data, reflected on their definition and experience of teacher burnout, defined teacher self-efficacy, provided insight on the challenges of pandemic teaching, discussed the impact their professional learning network has had on their career and well-being, and provided recommendations for change that can be implemented throughout academia. Throughout the duration of the interviews, six of the seven participants were able to share and discuss the positive, negative, or neutral impact of learning networks on their overall sense of well-being and burnout status.

The information gathered from the present study has the ability to further guide school districts, universities, and *Education Minnesota* on effective means for improving teacher well-being in relation to burnout status. Moreover, the study fills a large gap in academic research both at the state and national level, while also supporting Oddone,

Hughes, and Lupton's (2019) theoretical framework of learning as a connected professional. Most importantly, the data gathered from the phenomenological interviews provide insight on the phenomenon of burnout among Minnesota teachers.

Research Design

The original goal of the present study was to determine the effectiveness of a Facebook professional learning network, Burnt-Out Teachers, on participant's well-being in relation to their burnout. Despite the failure of the initial study, the author persevered and conducted a phenomenological study under the paradigm of constructivism. Rather than focusing on the impact of the created group, interview participants reflected on their experiences with professional learning networks as a whole.

The interviews aligned with the design of a phenomenological study as they allowed for a better understanding of teacher burnout and "described the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). In taking on the role of phenomenologist, the author "focus[ed] on describing what all participants have in common as they experience[ed] the phenomenon" of teacher burnout (Creswell & Poth, 2018 p. 75). During the interview process, participants were asked to define and reflect on their experience with teacher burnout, identify their sense of teacher self-efficacy, discuss pandemic teaching, provide insight on their experience with professional learning networks, and make recommendations for change.

Through the present study, the researcher wished to gain insight on the current burnout status of participating Minnesota teachers and discover how professional learning networks can affect the overall perception of well-being in relation to teacher burnout

status. While the researcher's wishes were met, the study also documented the lived experiences of Minnesota educators and drew conclusions on how teacher preparation programs, the state, and school districts can better meet the needs of teachers.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to conduct a phenomenological study. The research was three-fold in that it gained insight on teacher burnout within Minnesota, further investigated the impact of professional learning networks on teacher well-being in relation to the phenomenon, and provided suggestions on how teacher preparation programs, the state, and schools districts can improve the well-being of teachers. The present study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors have led to teacher burnout in Minnesota?
2. What is the impact of professional learning networks on the well-being of teachers enduring burnout?
3. What can Minnesota, schools districts, and teacher preparation programs do to fight the burnout phenomenon?

Research questions were framed around other categorical questions. A list of all interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Assumptions

This qualitative study involved the use of interviews to gather information related to participant experience with teacher burnout. In evaluating the findings, an understanding of ontology, epistemology, and axiology was critical. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "when researchers conduct qualitative research, they are embracing the idea of multiple realities" (p. 20). Ontologically speaking, there is no

single reality or truth to the individual perception of teacher burnout. Rather, it is assumed each told the truth and expressed their perception of reality.

This left the researcher to interpret lived experiences of the participants and acknowledge the role they, the researchers, played in influencing conversations surrounding these experiences. Through epistemological assumption, the author discovered thematic beliefs of the research participants by “getting as close as possible to the participants being studied” and using subjective evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). This was achieved by conducting informal interviews with research participants. An axiological perspective was assumed throughout this research as the author later report her beliefs and biases along with the “value-laden nature of information” gathered through participant research. (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21; Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012).

Limitations

Beyond the failed Facebook group, Burnt-Out Teachers, the greatest limitation to this research was finding individuals to willingly participate in the interview process and the time available to complete the study. According to Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012), phenomenological studies are not the easiest to conduct as the research will prompt the participants to relive their experiences, and perceived realities will vary. Had the timeline of the study been extended, the researcher would have increased the number of participants.

Phenomenological research typically results in data collection that focuses on in-depth interviews (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). This allows the researcher to find commonalities, or themes, among the participants. Once the themes were identified, the

researcher compiled their findings into “a narrative description of the phenomenon” (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012, p. 433). Seeing as the researcher has endured teacher burnout and experienced a positive impact from professional learning networks, it was critical she kept her experiences and opinions separate from the participants. By suspending her judgement, the phenomenological narrative was not convoluted.

Definition of Terms

Burnout status: Is characterized by symptoms of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

Professional Learning Networks: An ever-changing group to which teachers go to share and learn. Professional Learning Networks reflect passions, values, and areas of expertise (Crowley, 2014).

Teacher well-being: While this variable contains various definitions, well-being, when related to the teaching profession, revolves around the concepts of personal development, fulfillment, and community contribution (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012). In a psychological sense, well-being is broken into three domains: social, emotional, and physical.

Conclusions

Educators struggle to maintain a sense of well-being given the various demands of the profession. Within a short period of time, this can lead to burnout which directly impacts retention rates and student success. As retention rates continue to decrease, the teaching shortage becomes more of a concern, and the impact it has on students becomes more apparent.

Few educators have taken the steps needed to maintain a healthy sense of well-being (Kipps-Vaughan, 2013). This research study sought to better understand the factors that lead to teacher burnout, the impact of professional learning networks, and educator opinion on recommendations for change. During the interview process, the researcher provided participants the opportunity to describe their experiences and voice their concerns, frustrations, and successes of the education profession. The study fulfilled what it was intended to do and provides recommendations for future research and changes that can be made within the varying bodies of academia.

The current chapter briefly discussed the purpose, research design, and research questions of the study at hand. Additionally, assumptions, limitations, and definition of terms were addressed. Chapter Two will summarize the literature related to teacher burnout, well-being, and professional learning networks, and provides a theoretical framework for the study; and Chapter Three details the methodological procedures of the research study. The heart of the study, Chapter Four, will present the research findings and results of the data analysis, and the conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations of the study will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review is intended to provide clarity and an in-depth literary analysis of teacher burnout and professional learning networks. The study at hand focuses on the phenomenon of burnout and the impact professional learning networks can have on teacher well-being. In order to understand the opinions and experience of the research participants, the academic community must understand the history behind, causes of, and successful practice for eliminating teacher burnout. In order to educate others on the aforementioned topics, we must first educate ourselves.

Methods of Searching and Criteria for Inclusion

There is a vast amount of research that exists on burnout. In order to understand recent studies, it was essential that the initial search methods focused on the history and evolution of burnout. To do so, a variety of primary source texts were collected from Livingston Lord Library located at Minnesota State University Moorhead. The most valuable of these texts are those published throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, as burnout went from being viewed as a medical service phenomenon, to a plague of the public service sector, to a legitimate concern within the world of education. Teacher burnout remains a concern within academia; however, new literature often focuses on specific areas of education and improving overall well-being (Kim, 2019; Reynolds, Bruno, Ross, Hall, & Reynolds, 2020; Wessels & Wood, 2019).

When searching for journal articles to assist in the literature review, the author utilized a variety of research databases: Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Education Research Complete (Ebsco), Academic Search Complete, JSTOR, and GaleOne File. Articles used within the literature review support primary source research,

the beliefs and/or assumptions of the author, and the perceived experience of research participants.

Theoretical Orientations

Teacher burnout is a theoretical construct in itself as it is not directly observable, but can be inferred from data collected by the MBI-ES. The burnout construct is unique as it contains both internal and external resources. The theoretical orientation of the present study contains the theories of self-efficacy and learning as a connected professional. While vastly different, when the aforementioned theories are combined they create a solid foundation for understanding the author's point of view throughout this dissertation and will connect the internal and external resources of teacher burnout. Most importantly, the theories lead to a greater understanding of the causes behind teacher burnout and the effective means of a professional learning network.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the ability to meet challenges, overcome barriers, and/or recover from setbacks. According to literature, this concept is grounded in the theoretical framework of Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Wang, Hall, & Rahimi, 2015). Over the years, self-efficacy has adapted and evolved within the world of academia in order to fit the characteristics of educators. Teacher self-efficacy is often "conceptualized as individual teachers' beliefs in their own ability to plan, organize, and carry out activities that are required to attain given educational goals" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010, p. 1059). More specifically, Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, and Hoy (1998) and Guskey and Passaro (1994) define teacher self-efficacy as one's personal

belief in their ability to teach, motivate students to learn, regulate classroom behavior, and any other challenge teachers face in their everyday work.

In relation to burnout, self-efficacy has evolved beyond Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and intertwines with the personal experiences of educators. The theoretical concept of teacher self-efficacy is arguably the greatest component of burnout in that a lack of self-efficacy can cause emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of accomplishment - the defining characteristics of teacher burnout (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). In linking burnout with self-efficacy, new directions for research and theory can be and have been developed (Cherniss, 1993).

Cherniss (1993) argues burnout to be a reaction to adverse, stressful situations, therefore creating a link between the phenomenon, stress, and self-efficacy. In order to better understand the complexity of teacher self-efficacy, Cherniss (1993) argued for the establishment of three domains: task, interpersonal, and organization. The task domain focuses on a teacher's ability to prepare and deliver lessons, improve student performance, and motivate student effort; interpersonal focus on developing rapport with students and colleagues; and the organizational domain influences the social and political forces of an institution (Cherniss, 1993).

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) used Cherniss' (1993) domains of teacher self-efficacy to further establish six dimensions of the theory. These dimensions include: "instruction, adapting education to individual students' needs, motivating students, keeping discipline, cooperating with colleagues and parents, and coping with changes and challenges" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007, p. 613). The aforementioned dimensions were identified as strengths and weaknesses by the present study's research participants.

Teacher self-efficacy has a central etiological role in teacher burnout as “self-efficacy theory explains why certain job characteristics are conducive to burnout” (Cherniss, 1993, p.139). By strengthening teachers’ optimistic self-beliefs and allowing them the opportunity to improve their teaching and communication skills, a professional learning network would be taking preventative measures to avoid the downward spiral of teacher burnout (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). In fostering a high level of professional self-efficacy, teachers will be better suited to foster high levels of self-efficacy within their students.

Learning as a Connected Professional

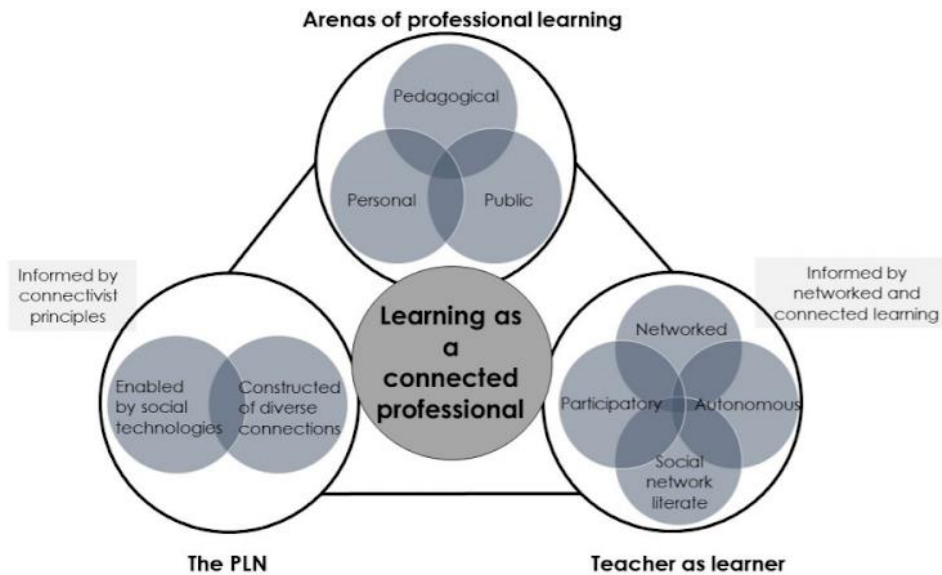
Due to the increasing demands of twenty-first-century education, teachers are in need of ongoing professional learning opportunities (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019). Traditional professional development “has long been an empty exercise in compliance, one that falls short of its objectives and rarely improves professional practice” (Calvert, 2016, p. 2). Social media allows for a nontraditional, free approach to professional development in which teachers are voluntarily networking with one another. These professional learning networks “create opportunities for teachers to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and practice, develop perceptions of themselves and others as teachers, and contribute to the wider teaching profession and beyond” (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019, p. 105). Oddone, Hughes, and Lupton (2019) have conceptualized teacher’s experiences of professional learning networks through the theory of learning as a connected professional.

In order to learn as a connected professional, the theoretical concepts of networked learning, connectivism, and connected learning must intertwine (Oddone,

Hughes, & Lupton, 2019). Networked learning focuses on the connections formed between individuals, technology, and resources (Jones, 2015). Similar to this concept is connectivism, which explains how learning is constructed and functions throughout digital environments (Siemens, 2005). When combined together, “connected learning presents a pedagogical approach to learning within networks” (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019, p. 105). When the aforementioned theoretical concepts conjoin, the foundation for Oddone, Hughes, and Lupton’s (2019) theory, is established and allows networked learning to occur.

Oddone, Hughes, and Lupton’s (2019) visually conceptualize the theory of learning as a connected professional as:

Figure 1: Learning as a Connected Professional



The theory comprises three interrelated elements: the arenas of professional learning, the professional learning network, and the attributes of the teacher as a learner (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019). Learning as a connected professional is driven by the intrinsic motivation of the individual learner.

Professional learning networks provide opportunities for teachers to learn as “connected professionals across pedagogical, personal, and public arenas” (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019, p. 106). Within these arenas, “teachers enhance their pedagogical knowledge and practice (pedagogical), develop perceptions of themselves and others as teachers (personal), and contribute to the wider teaching profession and beyond (public)” (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019, p.106). Teachers interact within the pedagogical, personal, and public arenas as autonomous, participatory, networked, and social network literate learners.

Teachers who participate in professional learning opportunities take on various roles as a learner. Individuals seeking professional growth need to possess some sense of autonomy (the ability and desire to take charge of learning based on personal needs) over their learning. Those driven to improve must openly connect and interact with others as a participatory learner (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019). In time, teachers who learn as connected professionals will become more active, self-directed, and literate participants of professional and social networks (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019).

The professional learning network is an important element of learning as a connected professional. Social technologies, like Facebook and Twitter, provide networks with the structure and ability to establish diverse connections. These connections can be pedagogical, public, or personal in nature. Either way, they “ensure inclusive learning opportunities that extend to learners who are isolated geographically, or who work remotely” (Oddone Hughes, & Lupton, 2019, p. 115). When a professional learning network meets the needs of its participants, genuine learning experiences become available. In the case of the present study, the researcher believes utilizing the six

dimensions of teacher self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007) as the basis for professional learning will increase teacher self-efficacy which consequently leads to an improved sense of well-being in relation to teacher burnout. This will be further supported and detailed within Chapters Four and Five, respectively.

Burnout

In 1974, Herbert J. Freudenberger unveiled the concept of “Staff Burn-Out” in the *Journal of Social Issues*. Freudenberger (1974) argued burnout status to go beyond the existing dictionary definition in that it can occur “for whatever reasons and [the staff member] becomes inoperative to all intents and purposes” (p. 160). While Freudenberger’s (1974) initial unveiling of burnout focused on medical staff, the concept quickly evolved to include multiple professions, including education.

History

Freudenberger may have popularized the term ‘burnout’ in 1974, but others have been writing about teaching workloads and stress for more than a century (H.E.P., 1884; *Journal of Education*, 1881; Kellog, 1885). In 1881, the *Journal of Education* published an article titled “How Hard is a Teacher's Work?” The unknown author discussed the differences between teachers and lecturers, with the main difference being the amount of stress a teacher endures due to student interaction. Historically speaking, this is the earliest documentation describing symptoms of teacher burnout. Three years later, in 1884, Kellog published in the *Journal of Education*:

There is no sadder sight under heaven than to see the slow fading out of the color, the decline in elasticity, the indescribable, weary look in the eyes that follows the

entrance of more than half of our normal graduates upon their work as teachers (p. 116).

Ninety years before Freudenberger had even coined the term “burnout,” Kellog (1884) had already been aware of the phenomenon.

Teacher stress was occasionally discussed throughout literature in the early to mid-twentieth century (Hubbard, 1940; Hunt, 1969; *Journal of Education*, 1903; *Journal of Education*, 1904; Tyson, 1951). It is assumed the concerns painted by these publications were never addressed within academia. If academia had acknowledged the issues behind teacher burnout, the phenomenon may cease to exist if solutions would have been implemented.

While those in the field have been aware of burnout status for decades, modern society did not pay much attention to teacher burnout until the end of the twentieth century. Melendez and Guzman (1983) and Schaufeli, (2017) believe teacher burnout did not exist until three events manifested in the United States’ human service sector: the War on Poverty, the 1950s professionalization and bureaucratization of the human service sector, and the cultural revolution of the 1960s. While burnout is said to have existed before these events (Kellog, 1884), the construct of the phenomenon became popularized and well-studied afterwards.

In 1981, seven years after Freudenberger (1974) coined the term “burn-out,” Maslach and Jackson introduced the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The MBI was “designed to measure hypothesized aspects of the burnout syndrome” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). With this publication, Maslach and Jackson (1981) redefined burn-out as emotional exhaustion paired with an increase in desensitization and a decrease in

personal accomplishment. By the latter part of the twentieth century, Freudenberger (1974), Maslach (1978; 1979), and Jackson (1977; 1978; 1979) had laid the basic foundation for understanding and applying the concept of burnout within a variety of professional fields. Unfortunately, when discussing teacher burnout, the field of education was initially overlooked and not discussed or studied in full-capacity until the 1980s and early 1990s (Alschuler, 1980; Dedrick & Raschke, 1990; Dworkin, 1987; Farber & Wechsler, 1991; Jorde-Bloom, 1982; LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991; Melendez & Guzman, 1983; Seldvin, 1987). Within the past four decades, the working definition of teacher burn-out has evolved to better fit the commonalities experienced by those in the field.

Defining Burnout

As previously mentioned, the definition of burnout has varied throughout academia (Freudenberger, 1974; Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017; Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Schaufeli, 2017). Burnout is most consistently described as being the prolonged response to the interpersonal and emotional stressors of a job (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, 2009). Beyond this working definition, teacher burnout becomes a bit more complex. Since Freudenberger's (1974) unveiling of burnout, teacher specific burnout has evolved to include the following three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Huberman & Vandenberghe, 1999; Maslach, 1999; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001, 2009).

Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion can be caused by a plethora of incidents and becomes most prominent when teachers are “no longer able to give themselves to students as they did earlier in their careers” (Byrne, 1999, p. 15). More often than naught, teachers begin to feel hopeless, helpless, and a sense of entrapment towards their profession (Pines, 1988). Unfortunately, these feelings transcend into other aspects of a teacher’s life, causing them physical exhaustion and mental anguish (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). As emotional exhaustion evolves, teachers feel as though they are no longer able to give themselves to their students (Maslach, 1982).

Depersonalization

As teachers experience a greater sense of emotional exhaustion, they become depersonalized. Depersonalization includes cynicism and insensitivity towards students, parents, colleagues, and administration (Byrne, 1999). The continual sense of negativity not only damages the teacher’s well-being but impacts their ability to work effectively (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Moreover, in time, teachers begin to develop dehumanizing attitudes; meaning, they have decreased awareness of the human attributes of others, particularly their students and coworkers (Byrne, 1999; Maslach, 1982; Pines, 1980, 1988).

Reduced Personal Accomplishment

When teachers experience emotional exhaustion mixed with depersonalization, they perceive themselves as being ineffective and unmotivated (Byrne, 1999). This growing sense of inadequacy causes teachers to feel overwhelmed by various aspects of their careers. Gains, no matter how big or small, seem trivial causing students and

colleagues “to lose confidence in their ability to make a difference” (Maslach & Leiter, 1997, p. 18). In time, teacher burnout embeds itself into various relationships, social experiences, and individual self-perception; ultimately leading to a total loss of energy, enthusiasm, and confidence (Maslach, 1999; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Leiter, & Schaufeli, 2005).

Well-Being in Relation to Burnout

The terms “teacher well-being” and “teacher burnout” often go hand in hand. Literature has struggled to clearly define well-being and “many studies that use the term lack an explicit explanation of the concept” (Acton & Glasgow, 2015, p. 101). Similar to burnout and self-efficacy, well-being is a multidimensional concept made up of various aspects (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). Stable well-being is defined as having “the psychological, social, and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge” (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012, p. 230). When addressing the concept within academia, teacher well-being is specifically defined as “an individual sense of personal professional fulfillment, satisfaction, purposefulness, and happiness, constructed in a collaborative process with colleagues and students (Soini, Pyhältö & Pietarinen, 2010, as cited in Acton & Glasgow, 2015, p. 102). In order to improve teacher well-being in relation to burnout, school districts must be willing to promote well-being in a more holistic way in order to achieve positive outcomes.

Factors of Burnout

According to Freudenberger (1974), burnout does not set in overnight. Instead, it slowly manifests into the daily lives of working professionals. When specifically looking

at teacher burnout, factors that contribute to the phenomenon include lack of control, work-life imbalance, unclear/unrealistic expectations, student behavior, work community, work overload, and classroom climate (Akin, 2019; Collie, Perry, & Martin, 2017; Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017; Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Personal

Gender. According to Maslach (1982), both men and women are similar in their experience with burnout. When looking at the three dimensions of burnout, women tend to experience a greater sense of emotional exhaustion and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment; whereas, men are more likely to endure depersonalization (Anderson & Iwanicki, 1984; Byrne, 1991, 1994; Greenglass & Burke, 1990; Maslach, 1982; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982). These traits are believed to have been caused by gender identity, personal qualities, and assigned or assumed societal roles, (Maslach, 1982).

Age & Years of Experience. Literature suggests there is a relationship between teacher burnout and age as the phenomenon is most prevalent in young teachers (Anderson & Iwanicki, 1984; Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982). While this is often attributed to a lack of work experience, it also relates to the start of their professional career. It is assumed the longer someone has been in the classroom the less likely they are to endure teacher burnout as they have already overcome the phenomenon earlier in their career (Maslach, 1982).

Marital and Family Status. Research posits there is a direct correlation between burnout and marital status (Byrne, 1991; Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1986; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982). Russel, Altmaier, and Van Velzen (1987) discovered single

teachers are more likely to experience burnout compared to their married coworkers. In assessing the three components of burnout, Maslach (1982) found teachers who are divorced tend to fall somewhere in the middle as “they are closer to the singles in terms of higher emotional exhaustion, but closer to the marrieds in terms of lower depersonalization and greater sense of accomplishment” (p. 60). Whether married, single, or divorced, Pierce and Molloy (1990) found those with children are less likely to endure teacher burnout.

Maslach (1982) further supports the aforementioned finding by arguing that those “with families are less vulnerable to burnout” as these individuals are oftentimes older, have more stability, and are psychologically mature (p. 60). Moreover, having a spouse and children has made these individuals more experienced in dealing with emotional conflicts and personal problems. (Maslach, 1982; Pierce & Molloy, 1990; Russel, Altmaier, & Van Velzen, 1987). Above all else, having a family provides educators with an emotional support network and a purpose to persevere through the challenges of teacher burnout.

Self-Concept. Those who struggle with low self-esteem struggle to overcome setbacks and focus on failures rather than success. Additionally, teachers that desire self-validation for their efforts are likely to be emotionally devastated if they do not receive it. When an educator lacks self-worth and needs the opinions of others to fill the void, they make themselves exponentially more vulnerable to burnout (Friedman & Farber, 1992; Maslach, 1982). As such, teachers who are uncertain of who they are will feel full responsibility for the failure of their students.

Personal Needs. Educators have basic psychological needs that must be fulfilled, making Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) applicable within all levels of education. Teacher's physiological needs are met as they receive compensation from their district which allows them to buy food and clothing. Districts must have safety plans in place in order to assure student and teacher safety. "Teachers who do not feel safe and secure in their working environment cannot have confidence or be creative in their teaching" (Rumschlag, 2017, p. 25). Furthermore, the fear and worry caused by the work environment can lead to increased emotional exhaustion - a defining characteristic of burnout. Teachers want to feel cherished, loved, admired, and respected by their students and coworkers. This sense of belonging fulfills a personal need of educators and allows them to focus on their self-esteem and self-actualization as a teaching professional. Unfortunately, "it is becoming difficult for teachers to obtain achievement, creativity, and problem-solving skills when the low levels of Maslow's hierarchy are not achieved" or fulfilled by their district (Rumschlag, 2017, p. 25).

Environmental/Organizational

While a teacher may personally be predestined to endure teacher burnout, there are contributing environmental and/or organizational factors that can lead to the phenomenon. Factors may vary from one district to another; however, Durr (2008) believes the following six factors are most consistent across academia: role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, classroom climate, decision making, and social support.

Role Ambiguity. Within education, schools are dependent on the roles of their educators. Unfortunately, teachers struggle with issues of role ambiguity, conflict, and overload (Farber, 1991; Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993; Maslach, 1982; Pines & Aronson,

1988). Role ambiguity is associated with a lack of clarity regarding a worker's rights, responsibilities, methods, goals, status, or accountability" (Farber, 1991, p. 68). When teachers are uncertain of what is expected of them, they experience high levels of stress which directly impacts their professional satisfaction (Papakyprianou, Kaila, & Polychronopoulos, 2009). Goal orientated teachers are easily frustrated when there is not a guarantee of payoff (Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993). Furthermore, teachers who struggle with the bureaucratic nature of education are likely to feel trapped and, as a result, fall victim to burnout (Maslach, 1982). For educators, a lack of autonomy is often equated to not having control of the outcomes of their job, more than the process of their work. In time, this lack of autonomy leads to burnout.

Role Conflict. Similar to role ambiguity, role conflict also has a positive correlation to teacher burnout (Farber, 1991; Papakyprianou, Kaila, & Polychronopoulos, 2009). Role conflict occurs when an individual experiences inconsistent and inappropriate work demands (Farber, 1991). Sutton (1984) identified the two most common sources of role conflict for educators: they are expected to provide quality educational experiences for their students, but are not allowed to use the best instructional methods or curriculum.

Role conflict is not limited solely to professional careers. Pines and Aronson (1988) determined role conflict to be most prominent amongst women who combine their personal and professional careers. In trying to find "a sense of meaning from both their domestic roles and their careers, the conflict between the two gives them the feeling that they have failed in both" (Pines & Aronson, 1988, p. 113). In time, the struggle that exists within professional and personal roles will lead to role overload.

Role Overload. Role overload occurs when a teacher's workload becomes too demanding. This is brought on by a variety of factors which include, but are not limited to: overcrowded classrooms, demand for differentiation, schedule inflexibility, underprepared and/or unmotivated students, inadequate facilities, limited supplies and resources, lack of funding, relationships with administration and parents, and maintaining inclusive classrooms. In time, role overload will cause burnout to set in because it puts teachers in situations in which failure is inevitable (Pines & Aronson, 1988).

More often than not, teachers are “guilty of taking on additional roles in which they become stressed, even though they are truly interested and motivated” (Melendez & Guzman, 1983, p.33). According to a study conducted by Anthony (2019) of more than 12,700 teachers, 46% of respondents are working more than 50 hours a week, 57% believe their jobs take up most of their time, and 68% struggle to concentrate at work. Role overload has the ability to reduce a teacher’s autonomous motivation in the classroom, which may lead to greater emotional exhaustion (Fernet, Guay, Senécal, & Austin, 2012).

Classroom Climate. No one classroom is the same. However, this does not mean that stress is variable. Educators are continuously battling with classroom management, student misbehavior and discipline problems, low student achievement, and verbal and physical abuse by students (Byrne, 1994). Class size is another concerning component to classroom climate as a greater number of students is believed to place added stress on educators (Durr, 2008). “In 1990, the average class size in the U.S. public school system was twenty-four...Even lowering the average number to twenty would require 33,500 extra teachers and cost nearly \$23 billion” (Farber, 1991, p.60). According to the 2017

and 2018 National Principal and Teacher Survey, the average classroom size in the United States remains close to the 1990 average of 24.

Decision Making. According to Byrne (1994), “another major stressor for teachers is their lack of involvement in decisions that bear directly on their quality of work-life” (p. 649). When teachers are allowed minimal input in the decision-making process, the “negative cumulative effects lead to job stress and ultimately to burnout” (Byrne, 1994, p. 650). However, in allowing teachers to participate in the organizational decision-making process, districts are encouraging worker morale, motivation, enthusiasm, self-esteem, and overall job satisfaction while minimizing role conflict and ambiguity (Byrne, 1994; Maslach & Jackson, 1984). In time, this leads to organizational and professional commitment through work engagement and bears little to no negative impact on teachers (Hakanen, Bakke, & Schaufeli, 2006).

Social Support. Cobb (1976) defines social support as: “information leading the subject to believe that he/she is cared for and loved, esteemed, and a member of a network of mutual obligations” (p. 300). From this definition, social support is split into four subcategories:

“*emotional support* in the form of esteem, affect, trust, concern and listening; *appraisal support* in the form of affirmation, feedback, and social comparison; *informational support* in the form of advice, suggestion, directives, and information; and *instrumental support* in the form of aid in kind, money, labor and time” (House, 1981, as cited by Kelly & Antonio, 2016, p. 139)

These subcategories can serve as a framework for studying positive outcomes from peer relationships between teachers (Kelly & Antonio, 2016). The aforementioned forms of

social support help to establish, enhance, and maintain a sense of connectivism between teachers and their work environment.

Conceptualizing Burnout with MBI & MBI-ES

Practitioners dealing with burnout on a daily basis, like Freudenberger (1974), were some of the first to study the phenomenon. Burnout is unique in that it was coined to describe a social problem, but has become a scholarly construct with time (Durr, 2008). In 1981, Christina Maslach and Susan Jackson published the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) as a means to measure the phenomenon. The aforementioned tool initially screened 47 items; but, in time, it decreased to 25. Today, the MBI-ES form contains 22 items that assess the three factors/dimensions of teacher burnout: Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA).

By 1986, the MBI published a modified educator survey, the MBI-Educator Survey (ES), which specifically measures emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Byrne, 1993). Within the last four decades, the MBI and MBI-ES has been translated into multiple languages and used to measure teacher burnout around the world (Aboagye et al., 2018; Khezerlou, 2013; Thomas, 2012; van Horn, 2004). Additionally, because of the MBI and MBI-ES, published academic research on burnout increased 64% from the 1980s to the 1990s and 150% from the 1990s to the 2000s (McGeary & McGeary, 2012). Unfortunately, the increase in research is limited to international studies, as published MBI-ES studies of classroom teachers within the United States are sparse (Boles, Dean, Ricks, Short, & Wang, 2000; Crosmer, 2009; Dentin, Chaplin, & Wall, 2013).

Consequences of Burnout

Teacher burnout rarely produces a positive outcome. The individuals enduring the phenomenon suffer greatly, and, unfortunately, those involved within their professional and personal lives are impacted, too.

Personal

On a personal level, those who endure teacher burnout experience a variety of effects on their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. The physical ailments felt by those enduring teacher burnout include, but are not limited to: chronic tiredness, weight gain and/or loss due to poor eating habits, the inability to relax, possess a greater susceptibility to illness, and experience physical discomfort (Maslach, 1982; Melendez & Guzman, 1983). In being chronically tired, teachers become inflexible, cynical, impatient, nagging, and/or defensive (Maslach, 1982). As time passes, the physical and emotional consequences of teacher burnout may lead to mental health struggles such as increased anxiety or depression (Jackson & Maslach, 1982; Kahill, 1988).

Organizational

Cordes and Dougherty (1993) remind readers “not only does the individual suffer, but the employee's family and friends, the organization, and the people with whom the employee interacts during the workday all bear the costs of this organizational problem” (p. 639-604). If a school district has a large population of teachers enduring burnout, administration may be faced with low morale, negative remarks against organizational functioning, and will struggle to keep their employees emotionally engaged and fulfilled (Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001). Moreover, districts may face turnover, absenteeism, and a decrease in the quality of job performance (Dworkin, 1987; Kipps-Vaughan, 2013;

Rumschlag, 2017). With the United States spending 2.2 billion dollars a year on teacher turnover, burnout is becoming a financial strain as well as an emotional strain on educational organizations (Alliance for Exceptional Education, 2014).

Students

At the heart of all educational organizations are the students. Teacher burnout, turnover, and absenteeism have a significant impact on this group of individuals. As teachers experience the phenomenon of teacher burnout they are likely to criticize students; and, in return, students will likely change their perception of and feelings towards the teacher, along with their classroom behavior (Huberman & Vandenberghe, 1999). With time, students may experience a “lowered self-perception of competence, intrinsic motivation, and ultimately, less initiative and less depth of learning” (Huberman & Vandenberghe, 1999, p. 5). Those enduring teacher burnout do not intend for their students to be negatively impacted. Unfortunately, students can be both the victims and causes of teacher burnout.

Compassion Fatigue

New teachers often have a sense of idealism when they enter the profession. They learn rather quickly that when their students hurt they hurt, too. In time, their inexperience mixed with the horrific narratives of some of their students can create a sense of helplessness and failure (Fowler, 2015). In time, the emotional exhaustion evolves into, what Charles Figley coined in the late 1990s as, “compassion fatigue” (Elliot et al., 2018).

Compassion fatigue, also known as secondary traumatic stress, is the indirect trauma experienced when helping someone who is distressed. Teachers, principals, and

district administration posit roughly 70% of their students have experienced some form of trauma (Elliot et al., 2018). With exposure being a “key factor in developing compassion fatigue, increased number of students affected by trauma [correlates] directly to the increased number of teachers and administration at risk for developing compassion fatigue” (Elliot et al., 2018, p. 29). Compassion fatigue differs from burnout in that it sets in at a faster pace; sometimes even after one encounter (Bemker, 2016). Educators experiencing continuous compassion fatigue are likely to have an increased sense of emotional exhaustion, the first step in the process of teacher burnout.

Resilience

To date, there is no scientifically proven cure for teacher burnout. Within academia, many teachers focus on improving their professional resilience as a means to enhance their overall well-being in relation to burnout status (Olsen, 2017). Resilience is a complex construct (Beltman, Mansfield, & Price, 2011) best regarded as “the extent to which a teacher is able to maintain a set of positive attributes, professional commitment, and growth while dealing with the broad range of challenges, pressures, and demands that are inherent in [their] everyday work” (Olsen, 2017, p. 119). According to literature, the aforementioned construct has the ability to reduce feelings of teacher burnout and create a positive professional community (de Vera Garcia & Gambarte, 2019; Richards, Levesque-Bristol, Tempin, & Graber, 2016).

Resilience, in both personal and professional regards, is an adaptive behavior that requires cultivation (Aguilar, 2018). Tending to resilience is believed to improve the emotional fatigue characteristics of teacher burnout (Aguilar, 2018) and teacher self-efficacy (de Vera Garcia & Gambarte, 2019); and, in doing so, positively impact teacher

retention and the overall learning community. Above all else, when teachers foster a strong sense of resilience (paired with self-efficacy), their students feel that they belong to a resilient community and are better equipped to handle challenges they face in their personal and academic lives (Aguilar, 2018).

Professional Learning Networks

Professional learning networks were nearly nonexistent less than three decades ago. Before the online technology boom, educators were left to network and learn from their peers during face to face interactions occurring at events such as professional conferences or staff meetings. While many have benefited from this age-old practice, not every educator has been surrounded by the best role models from which to grow professionally. Daniel Tobin (1998) coined the term ‘professional learning networks,’ to describe a network of individuals and resources that support ongoing learning. Tobin (1998) also argued that the evolution of technology further supports the four stages of learning: data, information, knowledge, and wisdom. By having this continuous support network, individuals are less likely to resort back to old habits as they have the ability to ask questions, be coached, and receive reinforcements of learned material (Tobin, 1998). Obtaining information via technology is often done through information aggregation and/or social media connections.

Information aggregation allows educators to follow news, trends, and information through Real Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds (Trust, 2012). RSS feeds allow individuals to follow numerous sources through one platform (i.e. Flipboard, BBC, NPR, etc.). Conversely, social media connections allow educators to share resources, ask questions, and receive support from people around the world. Social media formats include social

networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), affinity-based group sites (Wikispaces), and real-time interaction tools (Skype, Google Hangouts, Zoom, etc.) (Trust, 2012).

Torrey (2012) describes professional learning networks as “a system of interpersonal connections and resources that support informal learning” (p. 133). Within the world of education, professional learning networks are used in many ways which enable educators to “learn about the latest educational trends, collaborate globally, flatten school walls, and try new ideas” (Gonzales, 2017, p.21). Above all else, learning networks provide educators with a safe environment to seek advice and emotional support for challenging classroom and professional experiences (Davis, 2013).

As professional learning networks have evolved within information aggregation and social media connections, they have also become more personal. As educators connect and cultivate within these communities, they are interacting in three distinct ways: personally maintained synchronous connection, personally and socially maintained semi-synchronous, and dynamically maintained asynchronous connections (Warlick, 2009).

Personally maintained synchronous connections is a traditional network “that includes the people and places you consult to answer questions, solve problems, and accomplish goals” (Warlick, 2009, p. 13). Participants are engaged in networking at the same time through online chats, teleconferences, in-person conferences, phone calls, etc. These real-time conversations allow participants to connect different ideas and concepts (Warlick, 2009). Personally and socially maintained semi-synchronous connections also allow participants to collaborate with one another; however, it is not always in real-time.

Instead, participants are able to network and connect when it works best for them. Unlike synchronous learning networks that allow participants to connect with one another through various modalities, dynamically maintained asynchronous learning networks connect participants with information aggregation sources.

Through a cross-sectional survey, Davis (2013) has determined that no matter the connection, teachers view professional/personal learning networks as a group that provides connections, shares common interests, allows for collaboration, and is global, personal, and self-selected. Additionally, when asked to identify top social media sites used for professional learning, teachers were twice as likely to favor Facebook over Twitter (Davis, 2013). Despite this finding, there are more prominent Twitter studies (Colwell & Hutchinson, 2018; Sie, 2013; Trust, Carpenter, & Krutka, 2017, 2018; Visser, Evering, & Barrett, 2014) compared to Facebook (Bergviken, Hillman, & Selwyn, 2018; Da Cunha, van Oers, & Konyopodis, 2016; Lantz-Anderson, Peterson, Hillman, Lundin, & Bergviken-Renfeldt, 2017; Kelly & Antonio, 2016).

Facebook

When used as a social media professional learning network, Facebook has the ability to connect educators from around the world. While the site is asynchronous in nature, it is less demanding on educators because they can post or respond whenever their schedule allows. Facebook, according to Trust (2012), “provides a space for collective knowledge building and sharing where teachers can find support from large groups of individuals that pool their answers to find the best solution to a problem” (p.134). Real-time interaction tools allow educators to receive feedback on ideas, discuss lesson plans, solve problems, ask for support, and collaborate (Trust, 2012).

In many ways, “Facebook is like an extended staff-room where teachers go to be part of teacher-driven professional discussions on pedagogical issues as well as to deal with practical instructional dilemmas” (Lantz-Anderson, Peterson, Hillman, Lundin, & Rensfeldt, 2017, p. 54). While these extended virtual staff-rooms lead to professional development, little attention has been given to the topic. Within the world of academia, research on Facebook use often pertains to higher education (Giannikas, 2019; Hong & Gard, 2019; Peruta & Shields, 2017; Wope & Van Belle, 2018). As such, studies on teacher interaction within, and the impact of Facebook groups are few and far between (Kelly & Antonio, 2016; Mercieca & Kelly, 2018; Ranieri, Manca, & Fini, 2012; - Bergviken-Rensfeldt, Hillman, & Selwyn, 2018).

As previously discussed, social support helps to establish, enhance, and maintain a sense of connectivism between teachers in an online network environment. In a 2012 study, Kennedy and Archambault found that 43% of teachers were using Web 2.0 tools (i.e. Facebook) to communicate with their peers. The large open groups on Facebook allow teachers to connect with one another, socialize, and seek and/or provide practice advice about teaching (Kelly & Antonio, 2016). Moreover, these groups allow for and have the ability to foster an informal means of professional development (Bergviken-Rensfeldt, Hillman, & Sewlyn, 2018). Facebook allows for various forms of communication, providing ample opportunity for educators to collaborate and offer support in improving self-efficacy and resilience with the overall intention of improving teacher burnout.

Synthesis of Research Findings

Undoubtedly, teaching is a challenging profession. So much so, that Minnesota is losing roughly 30% of teachers within the first five years of their career (Minnesota Department of Education, 2015). The exodus of new teachers can be attributed to a variety of factors which may include lack of control, work-life imbalance, unclear/unrealistic expectations, student behavior, work community, work overload, and classroom climate; factors that also contribute to teacher burnout (Akin, 2019; Collie, Perry, & Martin, 2017; Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017; Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Teacher burnout is most consistently described as being the prolonged response to the interpersonal and emotional stressors of a job (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, 2009). The phenomenon is comprised of three dimensions - emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment - which share a relationship with teacher well-being and teacher self-efficacy (Acton & Glasgow, 2015; Cherniss, 1993; Skaalvik & Skaavil, 2007, 2017).

The literature on teacher burnout is vast. Academics began writing on the phenomenon in 1881 (*Journal of Education*) and continue to do so today. Over the course of time, the definition of teacher burnout has evolved and literature has illustrated few issues of this. In reviewing the literature, it is evident that a relationship exists between the constructs of teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy, and the state of well-being. However, existing literature that connects all three theories is limited (Ballantyne & Retell, 2020; Lauerman & Konig, 2016).

While teachers are usually the focus of the aforementioned theories, literature has frequently focused on the negative impact they have had on students (Dworkin, 1987;

Huberman & Vandenberghe, 1999; Kipps-Vaughan, 2013; Reynolds, Bruno, Ross, Hall, & Reynolds, 2020; Rumschlad, 2012). Students have the ability to be both the victims and problem to teacher burnout. However, in focusing on students as victims to the phenomenon, research has failed to provide a means for improving teacher burnout in relation to well-being and teacher self-efficacy.

A probable solution to improving teacher burnout that has been overlooked by literature is the utilization of professional learning networks. Similar to teacher burnout, the literature on professional learning networks is vast. For the sake of the review, the author focused on literature that would connect the appropriate characteristics of a professional learning network to that of a Facebook group (Davis, 2013; Gonzales, 2017; Trust, 2012; Warlick, 2009) as six of the seven research participants have established professional learning networks through this social media platform. While numerous studies of professional learning networks and communities exist, only a handful focus on teacher interaction within, and the impact of, Facebook groups (Kelly & Antonio, 2016; Mercieca & Kelly, 2018; Ranieri, Manca, & Fini, 2012; Bergviken-Rensfeldt, Hillman, & Selwyn, 2018).

Using professional learning networks with the intent of improving teacher burnout in relation to well-being is probable when combining the theoretical orientations of teacher self-efficacy and learning as a connected professional. Within academia, the definition and construct of teacher self-efficacy has evolved over time (Bandura, 1986; Cherniss, 1993; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), and recent research suggests teacher self-efficacy is a contributing factor to teacher burnout (Khezerlou, 2013; Smetackova, 2017; Wang, Hall, & Rahimi,

2015). Unfortunately, there is little research connecting teacher self-efficacy and burnout to professional learning networks (Prestridge, 2019). The author believes there is a definitive relationship between teacher burnout, the dimensions of teacher self-efficacy, and the state of well-being; all of which have the ability to be positively impacted through a professional learning network if participants are willing to follow the theory of learning as a connected professional.

Critique of Previous Research Methods

As previously discussed, there is a plethora of research on the subjects of professional learning networks and teacher burnout. The latter subject has been studied extensively throughout the world and is considered a phenomenon throughout academia. In order to maintain a realistic scope of this research study, the author focused solely on teacher burnout within Minnesota. Unfortunately, the last study conducted on teacher burnout and job satisfaction among Minnesota teachers was completed by Birmingham in 1984 (Farber, 1991). The researcher assumed teacher burnout to still be a phenomenon among Minnesota teachers; however, relying on 34 year old data seemed unreliable. Therefore, the researcher collaborated with *Education Minnesota* to collect data on 509 teachers throughout the state. As mentioned in Chapter One, 83% of respondents have or are currently experiencing teacher burnout.

The Minnesota Department of Education (2015) has acknowledged the state's teacher shortage. However, the Department has failed to recognize that of the 114,000 active teaching licenses, upwards of 57,000 are not currently working in a classroom setting (Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, 2021). The aforementioned statistic does not support the claim of a teacher shortage; rather, it

suggests a possible flaw within the education system that needs to be addressed. This research study has the ability to fill gaps in literature, evaluate the exodus of teachers, and offer working solutions on how to improve teacher well-being in relation to burnout.

Summary

The amount of literature on teacher burnout and professional learning networks is vast. Undoubtedly, teacher burnout negatively impacts academia; yet, despite the awareness, little, if anything has been done to cure the phenomenon. This literature review was designed to draw attention to the construct of teacher burnout in relation to teacher self-efficacy and well-being, while also acknowledging the potential solution that exists within professional learning networks. If implemented correctly, the author believes professional learning networks have the ability to improve teacher burnout by focusing on teacher well-being and the six dimensions of teacher self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Further data and findings of the aforementioned topic will be presented in Chapters Four and Five. Moving forward, Chapter Three will further discuss the proposed research addressing the methodology behind the study, the intended participants, research questions, and the data collecting process.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter One, roughly 30% of Minnesota teachers leave the profession within the first five years of their careers (Minnesota Department of Education, 2015). Teacher attrition not only impacts the Minnesota education system, but the United States' as well. Unfortunately, new educators often find themselves burnt-out and ready to leave academia after a few short years in the field (Maslach, 1982). Teacher turnover costs the United States roughly 2.2 billion dollars a year and has a direct educational impact on students (Alliance for Exceptional Education, 2014; Dworkin, 1987). Synthesized literature from Chapter Two suggests there is no remedy for teacher burnout and those impacted by the phenomenon infrequently put effort towards finding, creating, or establishing positive and healthy coping strategies.

The primary purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of teacher burnout within Minnesota and determine if professional learning networks are a possible solution to improving teacher well-being in relation to burnout status. Upon interviewing research participants, themes related to teacher burnout, professional learning networks, and recommendations for change emerged. In using the literature reviewed in Chapter Two to further dissect the themes identified in the data analysis, the importance of academic environments and organizations became apparent.

In order to better understand the functionality of the study, this chapter will review the purpose of the study, research questions and research design. Additionally, the author will outline how participant selection was determined, the procedures and instruments used to conduct the study, and will discuss the ethical considerations that

were taken into account. In using research from the literature review to guide the purpose, design, and procedures of the present study, the author believes there is the ability to improve burnout status within the education system by focusing on teacher self-efficacy and well-being.

Purpose of the Study

Teacher burnout not only harms individual teachers, but has drastic ramifications on our education system (Dworkin, 1987; Kipps-Vaughan, 2013; Rumschlag, 2017). As stated in Chapter One, Darling-Hammond and Sykes (2003) believe teacher retention is a greater problem than training new ones. Our nation demands highly qualified teachers, requiring state and local districts to ensure a high supply of these individuals (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). More often than naught, school districts lack the support needed to guide teachers through the early years of their career (Fiereck et al., 2019). In time, the lack of support manifests and becomes a main contributor to developing teacher burnout. The phenomenon does not have a cure, causing many teachers to leave the profession early in their career (Maslach, 1982).

Historically, Minnesota's teacher attrition rates have been lower than the national average (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2018; & Minnesota Department of Education, 2015). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a professional and personal disruption in the lives of Minnesota teachers, ultimately deteriorating their overall well-being (Swaggert, Suarez-Sousa, Bradbury, Coquyt & Mills, 2020). Conversely, the pandemic has led to a heightened awareness of teacher well-being and burnout at the national level (Porter, 2020). Despite teaching and living in these unprecedented times, the support available for improving teacher well-being is limited, as a majority of the

support has been focused on the emotional well-being of students (Minnesota Department of Health, 2020).

Improving teacher well-being is costly (Layton, 2015). With educational institutes facing financial crisis, well-being support must be affordable and conducive to district budgets. In using professional learning networks to provide emotional support, teaching resources, and mentorship opportunities, the present study suggests there is a cost effective solution to improving teacher well-being in relation to burnout status.

If supports are not established within the foreseeable future, an increase of teacher burnout and attrition is plausible. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Fiereck, et al. (2019) acknowledged Minnesota's current lack of support for teacher well-being and called for the implementation of a program that would have the ability to enhance well-being while lowering burnout and attrition rates. The present study sought to further support Fiereck, et al's (2019) call to action.

Research Questions

Prior research supports that teacher burnout is a factor causing educators to leave the profession early in their careers (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2018; Minnesota Department of Education, 2015). The researcher has experienced the phenomenon and positive impact of a personal learning network, which prompted the study to be guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors have led to teacher burnout in Minnesota?
2. How can professional learning networks improve the well-being of teachers?

3. What can Minnesota, school districts, and teacher preparation programs do to fight the burnout phenomenon?

A full list of interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Research Design

Under the paradigm of constructivism, this phenomenological study assessed teacher burnout in Minnesota and determined the impact professional learning networks have on teacher well-being. Phenomenological studies are manifested in a constructivist worldview, allowing individuals to describe their experiences while acknowledging there is no single reality or truth behind the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In taking on the role of the phenomenologist, the author described what the participants have in common through the data analysis of interview transcriptions and procurement of themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

At the end of the 2019-2020 school year, the researcher collaborated with *Education Minnesota* to administer a reflective survey on teacher burnout, well-being, and stress. Of the 509 respondents, 419 have endured or are currently experiencing teacher burnout; thus confirming the phenomenon is still applicable within the state and is worthy of being studied. After enduring the failed quasi-experiment, *Burnt-Out Teachers*, the researcher decided to focus the study solely on phenomenological interviews to find commonalities and a means of improvement for those experiencing the phenomenon.

As the seven participant interviews were conducted, the author collected data which described individual experiences with teacher burnout, the impact of professional learning networks on personal well-being, and the suggested recommendations for

change. The organic nature of data collection allowed the researcher to develop a “composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). This description, according to Moustakas (1994), will consist of “what” the participants experienced and “how” they experienced it. The semi-structured interviews were informal in nature and conducted virtually through Google Meets. During the interview process, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018), participants were asked broad, general questions. These questions provided a textual and structural understanding of the common experiences of the participants and allowed additional open-ended questions to be asked (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Using a qualitative research approach allowed the author to partake in naturalistic inquiry and inductive analysis while maintaining a holistic perspective of the phenomenon being studied (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). In regards to the researcher’s personal agenda, a qualitative design allowed for the understanding of “the world in all its complexity...while taking a neutral nonjudgmental stance toward whatever content may emerge” (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012, p. 428). As the research process transcended, the author gained an understanding of the lived experiences of the research participants and was able to draw conclusions on the phenomenon. These conclusions assisted in creating recommendations for individual school districts, mentorship programs, teacher preparation programs, and the state on how to improve the overall well-being of teachers in relation to their burnout status.

Procedures

Participant Selection

Nearly 114,000 individuals hold a valid teaching license in Minnesota; however, less than half are currently working in the classroom (Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, 2021). The 2019-2020 school year saw an exodus of more than 2,300 teachers, of which more than 43% left for personal or unknown reasons (Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, 2021). Due to these disheartening statistics, the author was most interested in analyzing the broad population of Minnesota teachers for this research study.

The researcher procured participants through personal connections and professor and colleague recommendations. Initially, eight Minnesota teachers were contacted to participate in the study. However, only seven were willing to follow through with the entire process. Two of the final participants were members of the failed group, Burnt-Out Teachers. As a whole, active participation in the interview process was at the will of individual participants.

Protection of Participants

Protection of human subjects participating in research was assured. Participants were informed the study was being conducted as part of the researcher's doctoral degree program. Confidentiality was protected through the use of pseudonyms. The choice to participate or withdraw at any time was outlined verbally at the beginning of each recorded interview.

Data Collection & Instrumentation

Prior to data collection, IRB approval was granted by Minnesota State University Moorhead. Participants were contacted through email or Facebook messenger to explain the study. Upon agreement to participate in the study, all formal conversations were conducted through email. Primary data was collected through virtual, recorded, one-on-one interviews held through Google Meets.

As suggested by Miriam (2009), following an interview protocol not only allows the research to gather intended data, but also informs the participant of important information. The interview protocol is outlined in Appendix B. While the interview questions were semi-structured, most questions were open-ended and allowed for follow up questions. The interview questions were generated by the researcher and piloted on a coworker prior to the start of data collection.

The average time of interviews was 56 minutes, with the longest interview running 92 minutes and the shortest lasting 39 minutes. Interviews were voluntary and confidential. As previously mentioned, interviews were conducted and recorded through Google Meets. A transcription extension was added to the researcher's laptop which generated transcripts of each interview.

The informal interviews provided thick and rich professional descriptions and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Collected data addressed the phenomenon of teacher burnout, the impact of professional learning networks on teacher well-being, and analyzed the reflective needs of future, current, and veteran teachers. Through the phenomenological study, the researcher gained a better understanding of the lived experiences of Minnesota teachers and drew conclusions on how school mentorship

programs, individual districts, teacher preparation programs, and the state can tailor to the needs of teachers in relation to their well-being and burnout status.

Data Analysis

Narrative analysis, such as interviews, is the main form of data analysis within phenomenological studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Before analyzing interview transcriptions, the author described her experience with the phenomenon of teacher burnout (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In being upfront with describing past experiences, the author bracketed herself within the research study. Researchers use bracketing to mitigate their preconceptions of the phenomenon being studied and to protect themselves “from the cumulative effects of examining what may be emotionally challenging material” (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Given the emotional challenges of teacher burnout, bracketing is essential when writing a phenomenological study.

Given the qualitative design of the study, data was collected intermittently as per the scheduled interviews. Categorical data previously collected through the researcher’s collaborative survey was analyzed through the Minnesota State University Moorhead Qualtrics program. After the researcher bracketed themselves within the study (noted within Chapter Four), they coded significant statements, meaning units, and textural and structural descriptions, within the interview transcriptions.

To start the process, the researcher open coded all of her data to the topics of the research questions. After open codes and significant statements were sorted, axial coding was conducted in order to create meaning units, or links, between participants and topics within the collected data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Meaning units were clustered to generate a collective group response or observation to each research question. Upon

continual analysis, selective codes were created to summarize the similarities, or themes, of the phenomenological experience and reality of participants.

Instruments

Role of the Researcher

Having overcome teacher burnout and experience an improved sense of well-being from a personal learning network, the researcher believes there is a working solution (i.e. cure) for teacher burnout that does not result in leaving the profession. Given the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher served as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As such, the researcher had to bracket herself within the study and disclose biases that may influence the collection and interpretation of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Previous Knowledge and Bias

On a personal level, the researcher endured a strong case of burnout during her fourth year of teaching. The experience of the phenomenon was brought on by a variety of factors which include but are not limited to workplace demands, student behavior and motivation, perceived expectations, over-commitment, building a solid curriculum, establishing relationships with colleagues and the community, and coping with the changes and challenges of being a young working professional. These factors allowed for the slow manifestation of exhaustion, cynicism, and professional inefficacy - the defining characteristics of teacher burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Professional development combined with an unwarranted medical leave during her fifth year of teaching saved the researcher from permanently leaving the classroom. During her medical leave, the researcher spent a great deal of time exploring Facebook

groups tailored towards her personal experiences and profession. Her experience participating in Facebook groups that offered mentorship opportunities, resources, and educational units on a wide array of topics, slowly improved her sense of well-being and inspired the proposed study. The researcher remains active in learning networks related to her profession and has collected a wide array of resources that may help others.

Ethical Consideration

In order to conduct the present study, the researcher was granted IRB approval which ensured the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects (Mills & Gay, 2019). Protection of human subjects participating in the study has been assured. Participants were informed that the study was conducted as part of the researcher's doctoral degree program and that it was designed to benefit the world of academia. Confidentiality was protected through the use of pseudonyms (Dacia, Sue, Lisa, etc.) without the utilization of any identifying information. The ability to participate or withdraw any time was outlined to all participants through email and at the start of each interview. All data and recordings were kept confidential to ensure participant anonymity.

Trustworthiness

In the past, qualitative research has been criticized for being "subjective, anecdotal, subject to researcher bias, and lacking generalizability by producing large quantities of detailed information about a single, unique phenomenon or setting" (Cope, 2014, p. 89). Despite the disparities between qualitative and quantitative research, one is not inferior to the other. Instead, both research methods are driven by different

perspectives. Rigor and validity guide quantitative studies; whereas, credibility and trustworthiness determine the quality of a qualitative study (Cope, 2014).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness allows researchers to persuade readers of their study's importance. In order to prove trustworthiness within a study, the researcher must establish credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1994). In outlining these components, the researcher ensures a degree of confidence in their data, interpretation of findings, and the methods they used (Connelly, 2016).

Within a phenomenological study, credibility is established when the researcher brackets, or positions, themselves within their research; and, shares the research findings with participants (Cope, 2014). Moreover, "a qualitative study is considered credible if the descriptions of human experience are immediately recognized by individuals that share the same experience" (Cope, 2014, p. 89). In the case of the proposed phenomenological study, the shared experience would be teacher burnout. The researcher further established credibility by providing ample audit trails of data collection, participating in prolonged engagement with participants, and conducting member-checking (Cope, 2014; Connelly, 2016). Member-checking bolsters credibility as it allows research participants to review the findings and clarify meanings before the study is published.

The dependability of the study is intact as there is historical evidence of the phenomenon under study (Alschuker, 1980; Dworkin, 1987; Farber, 1991, H.E.P., 1884; Hunt, 1969; *Journal of Education*, 1881 & 1904; Kellog, 1885; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Tyson, 1951). Additionally, dependability has been assured through proper and in-

depth data collection procedures. While analyzing and reporting data, confirmability was maintained when the researcher bracketed themselves within their research, described how they established their conclusions and interpretations, and utilized triangulation techniques for data collection (Cope, 2014).

The study will maintain a sense of transferability “if the results have meaning to individuals not involved in the study and readers can associate the results with their own experiences” related to teacher burnout (Cope, 2014, pg. 89). Transferability is further supported through rich, detailed descriptions which provide a vivid picture of the phenomenon (Connelly, 2016). Detailed descriptions, along with participant quotes, prove the study’s authenticity by focusing on the different realities of each participant.

As previously stated, trustworthiness determines the worth of a qualitative study. This defining characteristic is proven when the researcher establishes credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and authenticity within their study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1994). In the end, readers will deem a study trustworthy when they are confident with the study’s data, interpretation of findings, and research methods (Cope, 2014).

Summary

As stated in the introduction, the purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of what contributes to teacher burnout within Minnesota and discover a means to improve individual teacher well-being and self-efficacy in relation to professional learning networks, and recommendations for change. To fulfill this purpose, the researcher created an interview protocol and analyzed the various forms of data collection that derived from the phenomenological interview. Past

survey data was analyzed through Qualtrics and interview transcriptions were coded for themes consistent with the three main research questions.

The success of the present study will require ongoing commitment from the researcher. This individual acknowledges that data collected through the study has provided recommendations of change throughout various levels of academia. In time, these recommendations may have the ability to improve the overall experiences of teachers, ultimately improving their well-being in relation to burnout status. The next chapter will include the results of the study, specifically focusing on the presence of teacher burnout within Minnesota teachers and the impact professional learning networks have teacher well-being and burnout.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain a better understanding of how seven Minnesota educators view teacher burnout and gain insight on the impact of professional learning networks - a potential solution to improving or prolonging teacher burnout. Chapters One, Two and Three laid the foundation for what will be revealed in the pages ahead. A detailed description of the study's findings will be revealed within this chapter and provide an answer to the research questions that were proposed within Chapter One.

In 2021, the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board published the *Biennial Report on the Supply and Demand of Teachers in Minnesota* which reported a total of 113,986 actively licensed (Tier 3 and 4) educators within the state. However, only 56,628 are currently on assignment. The publication also noted that a third of new teachers leave the profession within the first three years of their career. Unfortunately, "there is no data on why... teachers leave a position" (Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, 2021, p. 45). While there is a lack of data within academia, the researcher believes teacher burnout to be at the forefront of the state's teacher exodus.

Before presenting data and analyzing results, the author will explain their role as the researcher, provide a brief description of the study's participants, and review the research methodology that was applied to the data analysis. Following these sections, the bulk of this chapter will focus on reviewing the study's data and results of the analysis.

Afterwards, a synthesis will provide an interpretation of the data that segues into the chapter's summary.

Researcher's Role

As discussed within Chapter One, the central topics of the study - teacher burnout and professional learning networks - are personal to the researcher as she has endured the phenomenon and utilized personal learning networks to overcome a handful of life's challenges. The researcher is currently in her seventh year teaching seventh-grade Social Studies. She endured a strong case of burnout during her fourth year of teaching that was relieved by spending time out of the classroom during her fifth year of teaching.

This time away from the classroom was not by choice; the researcher was pregnant and suffered from Preeclampsia and HELLP Syndrome. Hospitalized bed rest, emergency delivery, and a lengthy stay within the hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, led to emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion. The researcher found solace in the Facebook group "Preeclampsia, Eclampsia & HELLP Syndrome Survivors." The ability to network and connect with other mothers allowed the researcher to slowly improve her overall well-being.

In looking back on the dependent variable of the study, teacher burnout is the prolonged response to emotional and interpersonal stressors from work and "is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and professional inefficacy" (Maslach & Leiter, 2016, p. 103). The researcher's experience of healing through a personal learning network inspired the hypothesis that professional learning networks have the ability to improve an individual's sense of teacher burnout and provide the support needed to persevere through the challenges of a professional career within education. Professional

learning networks can provide support to improve emotional exhaustion, establish connections needed to overcome cynicism, and the resources and professional development desired to improve self-efficacy.

The researcher served as the key instrument, collecting data through in-depth interviews guided by open-ended questions. Given the researcher's experience with study's main variables, it was essential she took an objective approach to the interview process. Within phenomenology, there are a handful of philosophical perspectives a researcher can follow. Having experienced teacher burnout and the benefit of learning networks, the researcher had to "suspend all judgements about what is real until they are founded on a more certain basis" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 76). Setting aside prejudgements, biases, and preconceived ideas is referred to as *epoché* (Moustakas, 1994). In practicing *epoché*, the author was able to create a universal description of the phenomenon that best fit the experiences of the study participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Prior to the present study, the researcher had conducted and coded narrative interviews for a qualitative methods course. In order to prepare for the study, the researcher reviewed numerous texts (Cope, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1994; Lope, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; & Tufford & Newman, 2010) on qualitative and phenomenological research methods. After passing the study's proposal and review of texts, the researcher conducted interviews, listened to recordings, reviewed transcripts, coded data, and conducted analysis of her findings. These findings will be discussed throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Description of Sample

The participants of this research project were chosen purposefully, as they were all acquaintances of the researcher and licensed Minnesota teachers. Six of the participants are current classroom teachers and one of the participants is a licensed teacher who is on an approved leave of absence. The teachers were promised anonymity throughout the study and have been provided with pseudonym identifiers for this research project. The table below provides an overview of the participants, the pseudonym used by the researcher to identify each, years of teaching experience, and grades and/or subjects taught.

Table 1: Background of Study Participants

Participant Identified by Pseudonym	Years of Teaching Experience	Grades and/or Subjects Taught
Dacia	21	3, 4, 5, 6
Kim	31	Kindergarten, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6
Tony	17	4-8 SpEd; MS - Math, Science, LA, & Social Studies; 7-12 Gen Ed
Kevin	5	7-12, Math
Lisa	9	4-12, Band/Choir
Josh	7	9-12, Social Studies
Sue	13	Preschool & Kindergarten

Participant A: Dacia

Dacia, a veteran teacher of 21 years, is a Caucasian female in her early 40s. During her professional career, she has taught third, fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade; and, by default, has taught all subjects. She enjoys planning and implementing meaningful, engaging lessons and knows she has excelled when she sees her students have “a-ha”

moments. In her tenure as an educator, Dacia has never seriously considered leaving the profession. Rather, she commented: “In the times I do think about it, I just need to get away from difficult parents or students, and it’s nothing a weekend, summer break, or short vacation can’t fix.” Dacia is quick to remind herself that she is good at what she does and she feels supported by her colleagues and administration.

Participant B: Kim

Kim is a Caucasian female in her mid-50s. She is a veteran elementary teacher of 31 years and currently teaches fifth-grade. Throughout the duration of her professional career, Kim has taught in three states - Alaska, Washington, and Minnesota - and has experience teaching all grades (K-6) with the exception of second. In having held these positions, Kim has taught every core subject (math, science, English, and social studies), along with art, physical education, and music.

Along with many others, Kim’s favorite part of teaching is the kids. “I love watching the lightbulb moments. Their energy. This fifth-grade age is my favorite!” In reflecting on the greatest challenges of her career, Kim struggled the most with moving states and adjusting to new standards. In the last 31 years, the only time she has considered leaving the profession was during her first year of teaching. Kim credits her coworker, who became an informal mentor, for saving her career.

Participant C: Tony

Tony is a Caucasian male in his late 30s. He has 17 years of teaching experience and is a jack of all trades as he is licensed in elementary education (K-6), middle school math, language arts, science, and social studies, 4-8 special education, and 7-12 general education. During his tenure as an educator, Tony has taught in charter schools,

reservation school, ALC, public schools, virtual academy, and a boy's treatment facility.

Tony's favorite part of teaching is watching students experience the "a-ha" moments. In regards to his greatest professional challenges, Tony is currently struggling with a new administration; however, he expressed his overall frustration is caused by the politics that exist within academia and admitted these issues are enough to drive him out of the profession.

Participant D: Kevin

Kevin is a Caucasian male in his late twenties. He is currently in his fifth year of teaching 7-12 Math at a small rural school. As a math teacher, Kevin enjoys the days students are cooperating, putting forth their best effort, and experiencing those "a-ha" moments. Conversely, he was quick to admit that his subject matter can be the most challenging part of his job as math is a struggle for many. Kevin has never considered leaving the teaching profession, but acknowledged that he will need a "change of pace" at some point within his career.

Participant E: Lisa

Lisa is a mixed-race female in her early thirties. She has taught band for nine years, within three different districts, and is currently on a leave of absence after having a baby last spring. While Lisa enjoys watching her students feel connected to and excited about music, she has struggled with the hostility and negativity that can manifest within administration and teachers. This is Lisa's second leave of absence and she is uncertain if she will return to the profession next fall.

Participant F: Josh

Josh is a Caucasian male in his late twenties who has been teaching social studies for seven years. He has taught within two districts and multiple subject areas (psychology, government, geography, world history, economics, etc.). Josh enjoys making connections with his students and sharing what he is passionate about. In regards to the biggest challenges he has faced, Josh struggles with the demands and expectations of teachers which is typically followed with little support. The aforementioned challenges and time commitment of the profession have caused Josh to consider leaving the profession. However, it is not something he has pursued seriously.

Participant G: Sue

Sue is a Caucasian female in her mid-thirties. She has worked within education for thirteen years and has spent a majority of her career teaching preschool, but is now a kindergarten teacher. Sue genuinely enjoys being with her students and watching them experience and learn things for the first time. The struggle of pandemic teaching has been the greatest challenge Sue has endured in her career thus far, and it has caused her to consider leaving the profession.

Research Methodology Applied to the Data Analysis

The researcher used purposeful sampling for the study and was most interested in finding participants with varying professional backgrounds (Table 1). Additionally, as noted by Creswell and Poth (2018), in phenomenological studies “it is essential that all participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied” (p. 157). The researcher purposefully sought individuals who have experienced teacher burnout and/or have utilized professional learning networks.

Participants were contacted through email to procure interest in the study, gather informed consent, share interview questions, and member check the collected data. All interviews were conducted and recorded through Google Meet. The researcher added a transcription extension to this service which automatically generated a transcript of each interview. The extension provided a basic outline of what was discussed; however, many sentences and words were not recorded by the transcription extension service. As a result, the researcher had to listen through interview recordings numerous times to assure a correct and proper transcript.

To begin the analysis process, the researcher, as previously discussed, had to bracket herself from the study. In having to continuously review all interviews, the researcher was able to fully immerse herself within each participant narrative - a key component of phenomenological research and analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994) and the first step of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During the initial review of interview transcripts, open coding was applied and significant statements were highlighted and categorized for each interview question, with the exception of third research question. This portion of the interview was withheld from the initial coding process as the researcher wanted to focus on the topics and comments related to teacher burnout and professional learning networks. The third research question was coded after data analysis and findings had been determined for the first two research questions.

After identifying participants' statements that are of significance to the study, axial coding was conducted in order to create meaning units, or links, between participants and topics within the collected data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Meaning units

were clustered to generate a collective group response or observation to each question. Upon continual analysis, selective codes were created to summarize the similarities, or themes, of the phenomenological experience and reality of participants. These results cross analyzed against participant recommendation for change to determine the best approach for improving teacher burnout. After the data analysis had been completed, a draft of the results was sent to all participants to complete the member checking process in order to assure validity, credibility, and accuracy of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Presentation of Data and Results of the Analysis

The previously described coding process allowed contextual themes to emerge from the data collection. This allowed the researcher to employ thematic analysis within each research question, and categorize data and narrative quotes appropriately. In the pages ahead, the researcher will discuss the purpose of each research question and reveal the themes that were drawn out of the coding process.

Research Question One - What factors have led to teacher burnout in Minnesota?

The first research question was designed to gain insight on participant perspective of teacher burnout. Within this main question, other sub-questions existed which discussed how participants define burnout, their personal experience with the phenomenon, general causes, susceptibility, and potential cures. Results from data analysis allowed for the development of three themes: lack of motivation and passion, lack of support, and expectations. Table 2 summarizes the aforementioned themes identified during the coding process.

Table 2: Participant Definition and Reflection of Teacher Burnout

Participant	Phrase	Theme(s)
Dacia	Not wanting to teach anymore because too much is asked of them	Expectations
Josh	Being driven out of the career because of the stresses and expectation	Expectations
Sue	Having to get our students to a certain point	Expectations
Lisa	When there is high expectations and teachers don't get to be creative	Expectations
Kim	Being so worn out that you don't want to come back	Passion and Motivation
Tony	No longer enjoying the job you once did	Passion and Motivation
Lisa	Hard to find the joy and passion in teaching	Passion and Motivation
Sue	Feeling unmotivated to do your job	Passion and Motivation
Kevin	Being expected to always do 100% and not getting the back-up you need	Support & Expectations
Sue	Asking what they need	Support
Kim	Having strong teams and support systems	Support
Dacia	Admin need to assure all teachers have a network of people they can turn to	Support

Expectations

As noted in Table 2, one of the main themes related to the discussion of teacher burnout was the high expectations placed on educators. These expectations come from a variety of outlets; including but not limited to parents, society, and administration. Generally, though, the expectations referenced by participants, like Dacia and Josh, were straightforward, targeted to the overall profession, and did not identify where the expectation comes from. Sue was the only participant to reference the expectation of

having students reach certain standards and benchmarks. She noted, that while every grade has their own set of standards, the younger grades “have a lot of prep work.”

In regards to why teachers leave the profession, Josh commented, “The expectations drive people out, making them look for things that might be more realistic for their lives.” He, along with Tony and Lisa, discussed their search for jobs outside of the teaching profession. While money and the responsibility of helping to provide for their family has kept them within education, they all admitted to feeling a natural pull toward education, even when they are frustrated with the profession. Upon further reflection, Josh stated, “I do enjoy the bulk of what I do, but there's just those moments where you get overwhelmed.” Lisa, who is currently on a leave of absence to raise her newborn, also commented: “I miss the kids, I miss teaching, and I miss being in the classroom a lot.” She shared the same sentiment as Kevin, in that neither one believes they are destined to be career educators but they cannot imagine themselves in another profession.

Mentorship programs were frequently discussed throughout all of the interviews. Interestingly, Sue and Josh commented on the expectations of the mentorship programs they have experienced. Sue noted the expectations of the mentorship program she is currently part of and stated, “I'm stressing about it...I need to videotape myself and write a reflection. I just don't have the time to worry about this.” Josh shared a similar sentiment about the paperwork that followed the nine observations he had during the first year in his current district. He also commented on the time commitment of the mentorship program's required meetings and professional development, “sometimes it would be an extra two or three hours of work each week.”

In regards to time commitment, Lisa shared a personal anecdote about a former charter school she taught at: “The demands of the teachers were too much. We were on call all of the time and it was really disheartening.” Kevin, a young teacher who also coaches basketball and baseball, keeping him busy from November to May, shared similar feelings to Lisa, “...that’s usually when I start to feel the burnout because it’s just so much.” The interviews revealed the expectations felt by participants varied. Teachers who are still in the first decade of their career struggle with the expectations of the profession. Conversely, veteran teachers, such as Dacia and Kim, were more likely to discuss the themes of motivation, passion, and support.

Passion & Motivation

Another theme that emerged when discussing teacher burnout was the lack of motivation and passion experienced by educators. Kim defined teacher burnout as “being so worn out that you don’t want to come back.” She admitted to experiencing her definition of the phenomenon during her first year of teaching and provided rich narrative to explain the phenomenon:

I started as a long term sub on the first day of school in a 5th grade class. The teacher left everything set up for me. It was in a neighborhood of Tacoma, Washington that dipped into a rough part of town. Middle class and gangs. I had 34 kids show up on the first day of school and was only equipped for 30. The other teachers helped me, but every day was a struggle. Behaviors were awful...it was bad, bad, bad. The teacher I was subbing for died, and I became the contract teacher. Staff struggled to adjust as they had just lost a coworker. I felt like I couldn’t handle the kids - they were so difficult - unruly, rude. I never told anyone I was struggling. My observations went fine, but I never said anything. It was nothing like student teaching...I would go home and cry every day. I couldn’t handle the kids, I didn’t know what I was doing. I came to find out the teacher I replaced specialized in EBD students - the state at the time didn’t have an EBD program, but the teacher had a knack for those kids...and I inherited those kids.

Josh also noted the lack of motivation he endured towards the end of his first year of teaching, “I know my first year was bad - I had seven preps every single day.” While Josh and Kim share similar experiences, Sue has endured the opposite.

As a new kindergarten teacher, Sue is optimistic, passionate, and positive about her career. She spends every Sunday afternoon in her classroom preparing for the upcoming week. When asked to define burnout, Sue commented: “I think if I was truly burnt out, I would not be here on a Sunday. I would probably be very unmotivated to lesson plan or do anything for my kids.” The motivation she feels towards her current teaching assignment is not a sentiment shared by all participants.

Kevin defined burnout as “reaching the point where you start to question if you’re in the right profession.” Similarly, Lisa defined burnout as “when it’s hard to find the joy in the passion.” Both Kevin and Lisa admitted to enduring their definition of the phenomenon. Conversely, Sue still possesses the motivation and passion for her career, but acknowledged when she would know otherwise.

In reflecting on their own experiences, Tony and Lisa believe teacher burnout is apparent when you no longer enjoy teaching the content you are passionate about. Tony, a current victim of burnout, asserted, “I’m stuck in a position I don’t want to be in;” and he believes, “if I had the ability to return to a general education setting, it would kind of rejump my career again.” Early on in her interview, Lisa noted the importance of being allowed creativity within the profession. Having struggled with passion and motivation in the past, Lisa shared that her district allowed her to design and teach AP Music Theory. She noted the course “added more work but I was excited to teach.” Kevin shared a

similar experience as he is currently teaching a Coding course in addition to his normal workload.

Support

Three themes emerged when discussing teacher burnout with all research participants. The final theme, support, was referenced the most, not only within this research question, but all questions. Participants articulated needing support from administration, coworkers, and family members.

When discussing the causes of teacher burnout, Tony was quick to respond: “Poor administration. Good people leave bad leaders.” Sue shared her belief that “admin should ask us what we need; like, ‘here’s a professional development day - what do you need as a teacher right now?’” Tony also commented: “administration should make all educators feel valued and needed.” Dacia asserted a similar belief that administration, “should ensure their teachers have a safety net or network of people they can turn to for support.” When discussing how she has been able to avoid burnout, Dacia discussed how she feels supported by coworkers and administration, and acknowledged how this can “make it or break it” for new teachers.

Kim admitted without her coworkers, she never would have returned to the classroom after her first year. Kevin shared, “there are other teachers in your building who have probably gone through the same experiences as some point.” Josh reflected, “you need a sounding board otherwise you end up on an island - that’s what happened my first year” In further discussing support systems, Tony and Kevin both commented on the need to avoid negative coworkers. The latter said, “I think that people who are always dwelling on the negative definitely invite it in and keep it around them a little bit more.

You gotta avoid those people.” Tony expounded, “I didn’t even like teacher lounges. I couldn’t stand the venting and negativity - it depletes the ability to move forward.” In time, according to Lisa, this can lead to issues with a school’s culture.

When discussing potential cures to the phenomenon, Kim commented “I think having strong teams and support systems - and for those younger teachers - real mentors.” Dacia shared a similar opinion. To support Kim and Dacia’s claims, Josh, early on in his interview, remarked “teachers leave because of too many expectations and not enough support.” Later, when discussing a cure to teacher burnout, he noted “I think having a support system, whether it’s people in your grade or subject area is important.” When discussing teacher burnout, support was a topic within all interviews and continued to reappear as these conversations evolved to the topics of professional learning networks and recommendations for change.

Research Question Two - How can professional learning networks improve the well-being of teachers?

As hypothesized in Chapter One, the researcher believes professional learning networks have the ability to improve teacher burnout. During interviews, participants defined professional learning networks, discussed their experience with professional learning networks, and identified whether or not professional learning networks have the ability to improve teacher burnout. In regards to the latter statement, five of the seven participants believe professional learning networks can improve teacher burnout, one participant stated “maybe,” and another did not provide a direct opinion or answer. In discussing the impact professional learning networks have on educators, four themes

emerged: support, connection, efficiency, and resources. Table 3 provides a summary of these themes.

Table 3: Participant Reflection of the Impact of Professional Learning Networks

Participant	Phrase	Theme(s)
Lisa	Other people comment and express understanding	Support
Josh	They are a sounding board	Support
Sue	A system of support	Support
Sue	Having other people to connect with is important	Connection
Josh	What they post is relatable	Connection
Kim	When I finished my Masters...I felt connected	Connection
Dacia	Comradery with others	Connection
Sue	The ability to get an immediate response	Efficiency
Kevin	It's quick and you can get a response right away	Efficiency
Kim	You can pick and choose	Efficiency
Tony	Moving best practices forward...see a larger variety of samples	Resources
Kevin	It lets me get a look at new curriculum	Resources
Lisa	Untapped resources	Resources

Support

As previously mentioned, support is a theme that was apparent within all research questions. This theme proves to be more intimate than connection as it focuses on various states of well-being. Kevin summarized this best when he said, “mental and emotional support is a big thing...what people say is relatable and you don’t feel so alone.” He expounded: “If you’re seeing that other teachers are struggling through what you’re struggling through it gives you reassurance that every teacher is going to hit that wall. It

helps you figure out how to get through it.” Sue, nearly word-for-word shared the same sentiment, and added, “I think that helps with burnout, knowing that you’re not alone in your feelings.”

Similar to Kevin and Sue, Lisa, when talking about interactions within professional learning networks, noted, “[it is] some validation when you’re struggling...to have other people comment and express understanding. It makes it feel less isolating.” Josh acknowledged related feelings and described the support found within professional learning networks as a “group of people who are in similar situations - professionally or personally - and they’re a sounding board.” Lisa believes, “it’s easier to admit to a group of people that you’re struggling than coworkers.”

During her interview, Sue discussed the success she has had finding support within social media based professional learning networks and in-person relationships she has established with other teachers outside of her school district. While the support of these relationships are essential, Sue noted, “I think having all sorts of people to connect with are important.” The aforementioned remark highlights the parallel that exists between support and connection.

Connection

When asked to define a professional learning network, Lisa sat quietly for a few seconds and then said, “it’s a useful network of like-minded teachers that kind of lean on each other and share information.” Leaning on one another is an example of the support that exists within professional learning networks. However, the like-mindedness is what connects educators to one another (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019). Dacia argued one

of the most important aspects of a professional learning network to be the comradery that is established between educators when trying to “hone their skills.”

When discussing professional learning networks with research participants, Josh, Tony, and Kim mentioned professional learning communities within their interviews. While learning communities can be beneficial, all three admitted they do not gain much from the ones they have been assigned to. In fact, Tony went as far to call his professional learning community “a joke.” While Josh predominantly uses social media platforms for his learning network, he did comment on the ability to connect with his assigned learning community on a professional and personal level.

In reflecting on her professional learning network, Kim commented, “I wouldn’t count my PLC as my PLN.” She then paused, and went on to say, “When I finished my master’s I was 50 years old. That was networking for me. It was rejuvenating - I felt connected to my classmates...It changed my perspective on a lot of things.” None of the other research participants mentioned graduate coursework when conversing about professional learning communities.

In further discussing networking and connections, Kevin reflected “it first started with my high school math teacher. Then expanded to teachers in the area and some I have never met before. It can be people, or some of the math companies, like Desmos.” Through the utilization of Twitter and Facebook, Kevin follows a wide range of people as what they post is relatable to his profession. Lisa, Sue, Dacia, Kim and Josh also utilize Facebook to connect with educators within their specific content areas.

Efficient

The efficiency behind professional learning networks became an apparent theme within this research question as participants discussed the ease and benefits of social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook. For veteran teachers, like Kim and Dacia, social media professional learning networks have slowly replaced in-person, traditional networking. Younger teachers, like Kevin and Josh, prefer these platforms because of their efficiency.

When discussing this in detail, Kevin commented, “I think Facebook is easy because it is quick and you can get an immediate response.” Sue, when defining professional learning networks, echoed Kevin’s opinion when she said they have “the ability to get an immediate response for your questions and concerns.” She went on to discuss her interactions within a handful of Facebook groups and noted she likes the ability to select the content she reads.

When conversing about social media platforms, particularly Facebook, Kim shared the same sentiment as Sue when she said “Those groups are fun - you can pick and choose what you want to read!” As we further discussed a professional learning network’s impact on teacher burnout, Kim commented that, “if teachers are involved in the planning or choosing of it, it has a greater impact.” Professional learning networks, as noted by Lisa, are most efficient when they are useful.

All participants, except Tony, discussed the usefulness and efficiency of a professional learning network’s ability to provide teachers with resources. During his interview, Kevin stated “If I ever need a quick resource or classroom advice, I look to Twitter, pretty much right away.” Lisa mentioned her professional learning network has

provided her the ability to quickly differentiate for her students. Not only is the network efficient, but it has made Lisa a more efficient educator.

Throughout our discussion of professional learning networks, Josh admitted “Teachers are the best thieves...I have not made a single Quizlet in my life, but I have one for every one of our units. I have stolen and tweaked them for what I need. Why remake the wheel?” Professional learning networks, according to Josh, are efficient because “if you don’t have to go through and create everything from scratch, it eases the burden.” In establishing efficient networks, teachers, like Josh, Kevin, Sue, Kim, Dacia, and Lisa, are discovering endless resources to utilize within their classrooms.

Resources

When conversing about professional learning networks, participants frequently commented on the support, connection, efficiency, and resources gained from these systems. The last theme of this research question - resources - most frequently appeared when discussing the impact professional learning networks have on teacher well-being. As already noted by Josh, the resources gained from professional learning networks have the ability to “ease the burden” commonly felt by educators.

When asked why he has a professional learning network, Josh admitted “it’s an even 50-50 of having a sounding board and gaining resources.” Throughout his interview, Tony had very little to discuss in regards to professional learning networks as he does not have one that is well established. However, he acknowledge, “the ultimate value of a professional learning network would be to provide you with more opportunities to see a larger variety of samples” (i.e. resources). In doing so, Tony believes this gives teachers the ability to “[move] best practices forward.”

In regards to best practice, Lisa relied heavily on her professional learning network during the early years of her career. She sought resources, such as “pieces of music, content for specific kids, or, you know, grabbing worksheets other people have made and adapting them.” Dacia utilizes her professional learning network for similar reasons, and commented, “I get so many ideas!” Kevin, the participant who seems to have the most experience with utilizing professional learning networks, asserted, “you have so many untapped resources just waiting for you out there that it’s almost foolish not to even consider it.”

To inspire his own curriculum, Kevin “likes to see what is being done...what’s new out there.” He also admitted his professional learning network forces him to “get a look at new curriculum” in order to avoid monotony in his lessons. When defining a professional learning network, Kevin identified the system as a resource in and of itself - “it’s using whatever resource that you have that you can reach out to, to develop a lesson plan, work with a difficult student, anything in that nature.”

Sue was the only participant to discuss, in depth, the impact an in-person network can have on her well-being. She provided details on a network of nearby kindergarten teachers that utilize the same reading and math curriculum. Together, they meet up, share resources, connect, provide support, and strive to make each other’s careers more efficient. What started out as sharing resources has turned into “a real friendship.” While Sue admitted to the ease and efficiency of social media networks, she believes personal interactions, no matter the modality, yield the greatest benefit.

Research Question Three - What can Minnesota, schools districts, and teacher preparation programs do to fight the burnout phenomenon?

The final research question produced four themes: Experience, Mentorship, Support, and Voice. These aforementioned themes appeared when discussing varying stages of a teacher's professional career. Themes typically appeared within one stage and did not cross into another. Participant phrases of the differing themes are noted in Table 4.

Table 4: Participant Recommendations for Change

Participant	Phrase	Theme(s)
Josh	The way you learn to be a teacher is by teacher	Experience
Kim	Teaching is a craft. You don't learn in theory	Experience
Kevin	Get future teachers into the classroom and give them more responsibility	Experience
Sue	Once you have a job, being able to go and observe other teachers	Mentorship
Dacia	More info on getting involved at school	Mentorship
Dacia, Josh, Kim, Lisa, Kevin, & Sue	Mentorship program	Mentorship
Josh	Veteran teachers need support too	Support
Kevin & Sue	There could be more offerings of professional development and time to do things	Support
Tony, Kevin, Lisa	Teachers need to have their well-being checked on	Support
Tony	Give everyone the same value of support - consistency	Support
Kim	Give teachers credit and autonomy. Really listen to what they have to say	Voice
Lisa	Administration need to elevate veteran teacher voices	Voice
Tony	The opportunity to voice without reprimand	Voice

Experience

When conversing about what teacher preparation programs could do to fight the burnout phenomenon, six of the seven participants discussed the importance and need for more practical experience (i.e. practicum/internship hours required within a preparation program hours) fulfilled to. In referring to preparation programs, Kim, a veteran teacher of 31 years, stated, “Completely change it - there needs to be a lot more practical. I got out of college and didn’t know how to teach a reading class.” Sue shared similar frustrations, “I wish I had more in class experience. When I started teaching Kindergarten I had never taught a reading lesson before.”

Josh commented on how “lucky” he was to have completed his undergraduate training through Minnesota State University Moorhead. A distant relative of his went to another university and was not in the classroom until the semester before student teaching. “The amount of practicum hours, while bothersome at times, getting there and doing things with cooperating teachers that actually make them teach is so important.” He added, “I think 100% the way you learn how to be a teacher is by teaching.” Kim shared the opinion when she said, “You need to learn Maslow, all that good stuff...It’s a professional degree, but teaching is a craft. You don’t learn in theory.”

Kim, Josh, Sue, and Dacia all believe teachers need more practical experience. Kevin and Lisa individually agreed with this sentiment; however, they both suggested student teaching last longer than the assigned 12 to 14 weeks. Lisa remarked, “I have always wished that student teaching was a whole year. Could you imagine if you had a whole year of student teaching to prepare? You would have been so much better that first year.” In his interview, Kevin noted, “I think teacher prep programs need to get their

future teachers into the classroom more often and give them more responsibility. The student teaching experience is great, but it needs to be a whole year rather than a few months.”

Beyond the practical classroom experience, Kim and Dacia vocalized the need to expose teacher trainees to classroom resources. In her interview, Kim mentioned, “future teachers need to look at resources being used.” Sue, when reflecting on her personal experience noted, “I never had any piece on mental health in college...or special education.” Dacia shared a similar frustration, and also argued for the need of technology integration courses. The need for practical experience and tools were echoed throughout a majority of the interviews.

Mentorship

As teachers graduate from preparation programs and move into their professional career, it is essential they be provided the support needed to find success. When asked what school districts could do to prevent the burnout phenomenon for new teachers, six of the seven research participants discussed the importance of a quality mentorship program. Of these six participants, four of them reside in districts with mentorship programs in place.

Josh is one of these individuals, but noted the demands of the program, “I think having a mentorship program is good, but I think looking at the expectations and intent of the mentorship programs is important.” He recalled the mentorship program leading to nine observations during his first year of teaching, a large quantity of paperwork, numerous meetings, and an entire orientation week. Sue, who has genuinely enjoyed the mentorship program in her school, discussed the added stress of the program during

pandemic teaching. In her interview, Kim was quick to comment “new teachers have so much to worry about, that mentorship programs shouldn’t feel like a burden.” Josh, in further reflecting on his experience with mentorship programs concluded, “we can provide support but not overwhelm [new teachers].”

When discussing the needs of new teachers, Lisa remarked, “mentorship would be really helpful. To have someone to go to in the building for all those little things that just add up.” Kevin shared a similar sentiment when he said, “I think one of the biggest things is having a mentor role established in your schools; just to kinda get through all the small things you don’t always think of.” In helping teachers navigate the early stages of their career, Dacia believes it connects them to their district, which, in time, makes them feel valued.

Support

Support for new teachers would be provided through mentorship programs. However, five of the interview participants discussed the importance of providing veteran teachers with support. While Josh believes, “veteran teachers need support, too.” Lisa specified the “need to have their well-being checked on.”

During their individual interviews, Kevin and Tony described the importance of this support. Kevin stated, “I think offering some kind of counseling options. The administration appreciates everything, but no one ever just comes in to talk with you and check in. We need to check in on the teacher’s emotional well-being.” During his interview, Tony advocated for providing more mental health services to school districts, “once every month teachers need to meet with a counselor for 30 minutes.” He further

remarked, “the state needs to provide every district with a licensed psychologist to service their staff.”

Throughout interviews, varying types of support were addressed. Beyond mental health support, Kevin also commented, “there could be more professional development. Have an offering of more things targeted towards those new teachers or veteran teachers.” Sue discussed the need for time to learn how to do or implement something, and noted, “we don’t have time to do anything.” Tony concluded his interview by saying, “if you were to give everyone the same level of support, it helps people feel more valued.” He paused, then added, “if the consistency of support for a new teacher is the same dedication that the 30 year veteran teacher gets, that helps with the value and appreciation at the job you are doing.” Veteran teachers, according to Kim, though oftentimes well-rehearsed in the trials and tribulations of the profession, desire just as much support and encouragement as new teachers.

Voice

The final theme of the third research question revolved around the voice of veteran teachers. Lisa stated outright, “administrations need to elevate veteran teacher voices. They need to feel listened to.” Kim called for action when she said, “really listen to what teachers have to say - we should be part of the decision making process.” She further detailed, “nothing should be dumped on us. We’re the ones doing it. You have to be willing to listen to those in the trenches.”

Veteran teacher voices matter. Josh mentioned his district's last round of contract negotiations and said, “it has really focused on improving things for new teachers, and I know a lot of veteran teachers feel like they’ve just kind of been left out of that.” He

continued to explain how “there really hasn’t been much for veteran teachers” within his school district. Sue noted that districts, at the very least, “need to ask their veteran teachers ‘what do you not know how to do in your classroom?’” She continued, “ask them what they need help with, *listen*, and then give them the training or help that they need.” Her comment not only exemplifies the current theme of voice, but also that of support for veteran teachers.

As a veteran teacher, Kim desires credit and autonomy. Tony, on the other hand, wishes to be given a voice with his current district:

I think the state needs to develop a rubric for scoring administrators. This would let you weed out bad administration. There is no evaluation from the staff on the administrators, which I think needs to be developed in order to help give teachers the opportunity to voice without reprimand.

Not speaking out due to fear of a reprimand occurs against non-tenured teachers as well. Sue commented, “I feel like because I’m not tenured I do not voice my opinion as much.” Of the four themes noted within this interview question, three have a direct relation to and are oftentimes controlled by a school district’s administration.

Synthesis

Teacher burnout and well-being are multidimensional constructs that vary from one individual to the next (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). Through the phenomenological approach, research participants described their experiences with teacher burnout during individual interviews. Additionally, they discussed the impact professional learning networks have had on their overall well-being. The constructivist paradigm assures there is no single reality to the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, the researcher

took on the role of the phenomenologist and described what the participants have in common.

The presentation of interview findings allowed the voices of the participants to come through in rich, detailed descriptions, a key component of qualitative, phenomenological research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Themes appeared across all data collections as phenomenological reduction was used during the analysis process (Moustakas, 1994). These themes are synthesized within their respective research question below.

Research Question One - What factors have led to teacher burnout in Minnesota?

The first research question focused on the factors that have led to teacher burnout within Minnesota. During their interviews, participants defined the phenomenon and discussed causes, cures, and susceptibility. The definitions of teacher burnout varied from one participant to the next. Three participants, Josh, Sue, and Dacia have not experienced the phenomenon. The latter two, Dacia and Sue, have always felt a strong sense of support from their school districts and spouses. Josh believes he has been able to avoid the phenomenon as he has had to overcome many challenges, like having seven different preps during his first year of teaching.

Similar to Josh, Kim also experienced numerous challenges during her first year of teaching. However, she admitted this is the only time she has felt burnt out in her career. Lisa, another victim of the phenomenon, has taken two different leaves of absence during her teaching career and is uncertain as to whether or not she will return to the classroom. Throughout his career, Kevin has questioned his abilities as an educator and equates this to burnout rather than a lack of self-efficacy. Additionally, Kevin believes

burnout can be temporary and relieved. Lastly, Tony is currently experiencing burnout which he believes was brought on by administrative conflict.

Defining teacher burnout provided insight to the different lived realities of the participants. These individual experiences guided participant response on who they believed to be most susceptible to the phenomenon. Sue and Lisa were the only participants to share a similar opinion - susceptibility is variable and often based on your role within a school district. As discussions on teacher burnout deepened, themes of expectations, motivation, passion, and support became more apparent. Further analysis produced a common response to the first research question: the expectations of the teaching profession combined with the loss of passion, motivation, and lack of support have caused teacher burnout with the research participants.

Research Question Two - How can professional learning networks improve the well-being of teachers?

Participant discussion of professional learning networks focused on definition, personal utilization, and the impact the network has on teacher well-being. Individual definitions of professional learning networks works varied based on participant experiences. However, there were common themes of support and connection. In regards to personal utilization, six of the seven participants use Facebook to network with other educators. Instagram and Twitter were mentioned by two and three teachers respectively, and only Kevin admitted to using Twitter more than Facebook.

Beyond identifying the social media networks participants utilize, they provided details on the type of professional groups they participate in on Facebook. As interviews evolved towards addressing the second research question, themes of support, connection,

efficiency, and resources had already emerged. However, as participants discussed the impact of professional learning networks on their own well-being, the aforementioned themes were solidified within the data. Further analysis confirmed and concluded: professional learning networks have the potential to provide teachers with support, connect them with other like-minded teachers, provide them with an abundance of resources, are efficient, and have the ability to make educators more efficient in the classroom.

Research Question Three - What can Minnesota, schools districts, and teacher preparation programs do to fight the burnout phenomenon?

The final research question specifically addressed three groups - students in teacher preparation programs, new teachers, and veteran teachers. As identified in the data analysis, themes and suggestions were consistent and similar across all interviews. Therefore, the answer to the proposed question is: to improve the phenomenon of teacher burnout, teacher preparation programs should implement more practical experience for their future teachers. Upon exiting a preparation program, new teachers should be provided a quality mentorship program through their new school district. As they continue through their career, teachers should be provided the support needed to succeed and the ability to have their voice heard.

Summary

This chapter reported the findings of the research study at hand. The seven participants of the study provided the researcher with conversation and detailed their experiences with teacher burnout and professional learning networks and offered

suggestions on recommendations for change. The data collected from individual interviews created universal suggestions and conclusions for the three research questions.

The final chapter serves many purposes. First, the researcher will provide an interpretation of the study's findings and then relate them to the theoretical frameworks and literature reviewed in Chapter Two. To conclude, the researcher will provide a critique of the study, discuss limitations, make suggestions for future research, and provide concluding thoughts.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

Introduction

As stated in Chapter Four, the *2021 Biennial Supply and Demand Report on Minnesota Teachers* reported a third of the state's new teachers leave the profession within the first three years of their career (Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, 2021). Unfortunately, "there is no data on why... teachers leave a position" (Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, 2021, p. 45); however, the researcher firmly believes teacher burnout to be the largest contributing factor. Beyond *Education Minnesota's* member survey distributed in the September/October of 2020, teacher burnout and job satisfaction within the state was last studied in a 1984 doctoral dissertation (Farber, 1991).

The present study intends to fill gaps in the literature on teacher burnout within Minnesota and provide suggestions on how to improve teacher well-being. The phenomenon of teacher burnout is not a new concept in academia as it has appeared in publications since 1881 (*Journal of Education*). After a survey of literature, it appears little has been done to address and improve the phenomenon. The present study wished to provide recommendations for change and encourage a call to action within the state.

The following chapter will begin with a brief summary of the study. Afterward, the findings of individual research questions will be discussed and conclusions will be noted. Then the study's limitations and implications will be addressed before the researcher makes recommendations for future research.

Summary of Results

As previously acknowledged, teacher burnout and attrition is pervasive to the American education system (Dworkin, 1987). While there is a large quantity of literature on the phenomenon, professional learning networks, and teacher well-being, very little, if any, include all three variables. Within Minnesota, teacher retention is proving to be a growing concern; and, unfortunately, not all school districts provide the proper support needed to guide teachers through the early years of their career (Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, 2021; Wilder Research, 2019). The Minnesota Department of Education recognized the need for more attention on teacher well-being; but has not found a working solution (Fiereck et al., 2019). Based on this particular research findings, it seems that a utilization of professional learning networks have the potential to be a solution, or, at the very least, a step towards finding a working solution to improving teacher burnout.

The present study is significant because it fills a large gap in literature and it provides working solutions and recommendations that can be implemented throughout varying levels of academia to improve teacher well-being in relation to burnout. The literature reviewed for the present study began with a historical overview of teacher burnout. Despite the roots established in the 1880s (H.E.P., 1884; Journal of Education, 1881; Kellog, 1885), the phenomenon was not popularized until Freudenberg coined the ‘burnout’ in 1974. Seven years later, in 1981, Maslach and Jackson introduced the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) which was designed to measure varying aspects of the phenomenon. The aforementioned authors redefined teacher burnout as emotional

exhaustion paired with an increase in desensitization and a decrease in personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Well-being and burnout often go hand-in-hand, and both are believed to be a multidimensional construct (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Acton & Glasgow, 2015). As these constructs evolved, so too did the functionality and modalities of professional learning networks. Tobin (1998) argued, professional learning networks provide participants with the opportunity to ask questions, be coached, and receive resources. Data findings from the second research question support the aforementioned statement as the seven participants indicated learning networks provide support, connections, efficiency, and resources.

When educators seek support through professional learning networks, they are fulfilling the two theoretical orientations of the study: teacher self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007) and learning as a connected professional (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019). Teacher self-efficacy is the belief teachers have in their abilities as an educator; which can be an underlying component of teacher burnout (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) have broken this theory into six dimensions: instruction, adapting education to individual students' needs, motivating students, keeping discipline, cooperating with colleagues and parents, and coping with changes and challenges. When utilizing professional learning networks, these dimensions subsequently comprise the arenas of professional learning as outlined in Oddone, Hughes, and Lupton's (2019) theory of learning as a connected professional.

Learning as a connected professional is driven by the intrinsic motivation of the individual learner, just as teacher self-efficacy is self-determined. Seeing as the study's

frameworks and topic of study - teacher burnout - vary from one individual to another, a phenomenological methodology was the most appropriate. Phenomenological studies allow individuals to describe their experiences while acknowledging there is no single reality or truth behind the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In taking on the role of the phenomenologist, the author must describe what the participants have in common through their experience with teacher burnout and professional learning networks, and the common opinions they share on how to improve the phenomenon in a broader sense (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The researcher used purposeful sampling for the study and was most interested in finding participants with varying professional backgrounds and experience with the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Seven participants were individually interviewed through Google Meets. Interview transcriptions were coded for themes within individual research questions. Upon continual analysis, selective codes were created to summarize the similarities or themes of the phenomenological experience, opinions, and reality of participants.

The analysis process led to various outcomes within the main interview questions. The suggestive themes insinuate the expectations of the teaching profession combined with the loss of passion, motivation, and lack of support are the contributing factors to teacher burnout. A majority of participants believe professional learning networks have the ability to improve the phenomenon, as they can provide teachers with support, connect them with other like-minded teachers, provide them with an abundance of resources, are efficient, and have the ability to make educators more efficient in the classroom. To improve the phenomenon of teacher burnout, teacher preparation programs

should implement more practical experience for their future teachers. Upon exiting a preparation program, new teachers should be provided a quality mentorship program through their new school district. As they continue through their career, teachers should be provided the support needed to succeed and the ability to have their voice heard.

Discussion of the Results

The study was framed by three open-ended research questions. While these main questions were asked out-right, previous or subsequent questions were also utilized to gain further insight on participant experience and opinions of teacher burnout, professional learning networks, and recommendations for change. Upon completion of transcription analysis and the coding process apparent themes emerged which allowed for universal answers to the research questions. The results of the study indicated a shared outlook on teacher burnout, professional learning networks, and recommendations for change in order to improve the phenomenon.

The findings of the present study answered the research questions and supported the hypotheses of the researcher. It is assumed these results formed as teacher burnout is defined by universal traits and experiences within professional learning networks, whether positive or negative, are guided by Oddone, Hughes, and Luton's (2019) theory of learning as a connected professional. The third research question, which focused on recommendations for change, was not guided by a supportive framework; and, therefore, could have resulted in inconsistent answers. However, participants shared common beliefs which allowed apparent themes to form.

Conclusions Based on the Results

Numerous conclusions can be drawn from the study at hand. To begin this process, conclusions drawn from each research question will be compared to the study's theoretical frameworks. Afterwards, the findings will be further analyzed against the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. To conclude this section, the researcher will further divulge their interpretations of the study's findings.

Comparison of the Findings with the Framework and Previous Literature

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Within Minnesota, the number of actively licensed educators outnumbers those in the classroom (Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, 2021). The reasons behind the exodus of teachers is unclear, though the researcher believes teacher burnout to be a major contributing factor. The present study sought to better understand the teacher burnout phenomenon within Minnesota.

Teacher burnout is identified by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981); and, as previously defined, teacher self-efficacy is the personal belief one has in their ability as an educator. Literature suggests a lack of self-efficacy can cause the aforementioned characteristics to set in, thus linking teacher self-efficacy to teacher burnout (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). Before discussing the phenomenon within individual interviews, participants were asked if they considered themselves to be strong or weak educators. All participants, with the exception of Tony, identified themselves as strong teachers. Tony struggled to provide an outright answer, but noted "I'm a jack of all trades...It has been a huge passion for me to be in education, but I'm stuck in a position I don't want to be in."

After initially defining their sense of teacher self-efficacy, participants reviewed Skaalvik and Skaalvik's (2007) six dimensions of teacher self-efficacy: instruction (I), adapting education to individual students' needs (A), motivating students (M), keeping discipline (D), cooperating with colleagues and parents (PC), and coping with changes and challenges (CC). Kim felt confident within all six dimensions. Other participants were able to identify at least one strength and weakness, or dimension they could improve upon, which is identified within Table 5. Tony argued teacher self-efficacy and its six dimensions to be subjective, thus providing an answer that is not applicable.

Table 5: Participant Perception of the Six Dimensions of Teacher Self-Efficacy

Participant	Years of Teaching Experience	Identified Strengths	Identified Weaknesses
Dacia	21	M, I, CC, D, PC	A
Kim	31	M, I, A, D, CC, PC	
Tony	17	n/a	n/a
Kevin	5	I	M
Lisa	9	I, M, D	CC, PC
Josh	7	A, M, I	D, CC
Sue	13	M, PC	CC

As noted in Table 5, a majority of participants possess a strong sense of confidence with their ability to motivate students and instruct. Kevin, who also coaches a handful of activities, felt torn between the two common dimensions and noted, "according to my strength assessment, I'm actually identified as a 'stimulator,'" but I kind of think of myself as a closet stimulator - I know how to motivate kids, but I don't always have success in the math classroom." Lisa argued for the direction relationship between

instruction, motivating students, and discipline, which can be noted throughout participant responses in Table 5.

According to Cherniss (1993) teacher self-efficacy has a central etiological role in teacher burnout as “self-efficacy theory explains why certain job characteristics are conducive to burnout” (pg.139). Veteran participants, Dacia and Kim, confidently identified themselves as strong educators both outright and when looking at the six dimensions of teacher self-efficacy. As such, they seemingly possess the grit and ability to avoid burnout. While other participants hesitantly identified themselves as strong teachers, they lacked confidence and struggled to identify strengths and weaknesses within the six dimensions; thus, making themselves more likely to endure teacher burnout.

In further reviewing the data outlined in Table 5, the years of teaching experience paired with the educator’s sense of self-efficacy do follow past academic assumptions. As previously discussed, literature suggests there is a relationship between teacher burnout and age as the phenomenon is most prevalent in young teachers (Anderson & Iwanicki, 1984; Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982). While this is often attributed to a lack of work experience, it also relates to the start of their professional career. It is assumed the longer someone has been in the classroom the less likely they are to endure teacher burnout as they have either already overcome the phenomenon earlier in their career (Maslach, 1982), and/or possess a strong sense of teacher self-efficacy.

Learning as a Connected Professional & Professional Learning Networks

More often than not, professional development is implemented with the intent of improving teacher well-being. However, as suggested by Calvert (2016), traditional professional development is an empty exercise that falls short of its objectives and rarely improves professional practice. The evolution of online technology has allowed educators to expand their professional network from traditional in-person interactions to that of online communities. These communities can be established throughout a variety of platforms; however, educators prefer personally maintained semi-synchronous sites, such as Facebook and Twitter (Davis, 2013).

Social media sites, such as those previously listed, allow for nontraditional, free professional development which “creates opportunities for teachers to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and practice, develop perceptions of themselves and others as teachers, contribute to the wider teaching professional and beyond” (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019, p. 105). As stated in Chapter Two, Oddone, Hughes, and Lupton (2019) have conceptualized teacher’s experiences of professional learning networks through the theory of learning as a connected professional.

In combining the concepts of networked learning and connectivism, connected learning is formed and the theory of learning as a connected professional can transpire. As previously reviewed, the theory comprises three interrelated elements: the arenas of professional learning, the professional learning network, and the attributes of teachers as learners (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019). Learning as a connected professional is driven by the intrinsic motivation of the learner (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019),

which was emulated throughout six of the seven interviews conducted in the present study.

Professional learning networks provide teachers with the opportunities to connect with others across professional, pedagogical, and personal arenas (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019). Within these arenas, teachers gain pedagogical skills, develop a sense of self-efficacy, and contribute to the wider teaching profession (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019). Throughout interviews, participants revealed ways in which they participate in these arenas.

As discussed in Chapter Four, six of the seven participants are actively involved within social media professional learning networks. Facebook was the most prominent platform among the participants, which reiterated Davis' (2013) findings. Through Facebook, participants have sought out connections and resources, two of the four themes previously reported. In time, these connections can manifest into continual support and, paired with shared resources, allow participants to be more efficient in the classroom. This is made possible through the efficiency of the professional learning networks.

Oddone, Hughes, and Lupton (2019) posit that teachers who learn as connected professionals will become more active, self-directed, and literate participants of professional and social networks. Throughout interviews, participants discussed the various Facebook groups they are members of. Lisa, Dacia, Kim, Kevin, Josh, and Sue have utilized groups specifically targeted towards their content area. The resources and support gained from these groups have allowed participants to gain confidence in their teacher, thus improving their sense of self-efficacy, specifically the dimensions of instruction and motivation. The Facebook group, "Teaching during COVID-19," was

mentioned by Kim and Sue. Both participants discussed the benefits of the group and how it has allowed them to cope with the changes and challenges of the last year; another dimension of self-efficacy.

Learning as a connected professional is a relatively new theory within academia. Yet, it is necessary for understanding how teachers can successfully utilize professional learning networks. When the theoretical frameworks of teacher self-efficacy and learning as a connected professional are combined, the internal and external factors of, and cure for, teacher burnout become apparent.

Interpretation of the Findings

The researcher believes teacher burnout is a plague on the education system. Admittedly, this sounds extreme, but there is no further information on what has caused the exodus of teachers from the profession. Table 2 (pg. 64) contained themes related to the overall topic of teacher burnout which were confirmed by supporting statements. Table 6, below, reports individual comments on the causes, cures, and susceptibility of the phenomenon.

Table 6: Participant Belief of Cause, Susceptibility, and Cure of Burnout

Participant	Cause(s)	Susceptibility	Cure(s)
Dacia	Not feeling valued, connected, or supported	New teachers, single teachers, Teachers who choose to disconnect from the district they teach in	Mentorship programs, quality administration, teacher prep programs, societal respect
Kim	Variable and subjective	If you have survived trauma and tragedy you are less susceptible	Strong support system
Tony	Poor administration and environment	Those who lack administrative support	Quality leadership within administration
Kevin	Unrealistic expectations and lack of support	Negative personality	Take time off - use your personal days

Lisa	Demands and unrealistic expectations	Varies based on the role held within a school	Change role, address issues within school culture
Josh	Unrealistic expectations and lack of support	Type A individuals	Strong support system, quality administration
Sue	Unrealistic expectations	Varies based on the role held within a school	Focus on the needs of teachers, mentorship program

The causes of teacher burnout were detailed in Chapter Two and separated into two categories: personal and organizational/environmental. Despite the personal nature of phenomenological interviews, the themes that appeared when discussing teacher burnout (expectation, passion and motivation, and support) are related to the environmental and organizational causes of the phenomenon. Durr (2008) argues for six consistent factors across academia: role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, classroom climate, decision making, and social support.

Role ambiguity is associated with a “lack of clarity regarding a worker’s rights, responsibilities, methods, goals, status, or accountability” (Farber, 1991, p. 68). When teachers are uncertain of what is expected of them, they experience high levels of stress which impacts their professional satisfaction (Papakyprianou, Kaila, & Polychronopoulos, 2009). Kim’s rich narrative on her first year of teaching (pg. 66) reviewed the stress, uncertainties, and unknowns she experienced. Moreover, Kim admitted that she considered leaving the profession because of the role ambiguity she struggled with.

The factor of role ambiguity also occurs when teachers struggle with the bureaucratic nature of education and feel trapped within their position; thus, initiating teacher burnout (Maslach, 1982). Tony is a veteran teacher who is passionate about his

students and education. However, the “backdoor politics” of the profession are the biggest challenges he has endured. The bureaucratic structure of education is what has caused his current state of burnout and it is his biggest concern for new teachers as he feels they are blindly led into profession. Similar to the bureaucratic nature of education, the lack of autonomy teachers experience is also equated to not having control of their job which, in time, leads to the phenomenon (Maslach, 1982). Kim was quick to suggest that veteran teachers need autonomy - a freedom she has within her own classroom.

Role conflict and role overload share similar demands. Role conflict relates to the varying titles held by educators (spouse, parent, teacher, etc.) (Pines & Aronson, 1988). The stress endured from balancing the demands of each role lead to conflict. Similarly, role overload as an educator occurs when a teacher's workload becomes too demanding. These demands include: overcrowded classrooms, demand for differentiation, schedule inflexibility, underprepared or unmotivated students, inadequate facilities, limited supplies and resources, lack of funding, relationships with parents and administration, and maintaining an inclusive classroom (Pines & Aronson, 1988). The aforementioned demands share a direct relationship to Skaalvik & Skaalvik's (2007) six dimensions of teacher self-efficacy.

Role conflict was mentioned briefly by Josh when discussing the stress of balancing the role of teacher, coach, husband, and father. Interestingly, other participants did not discuss role conflict. However, the interview questions did not allow for such conversation to evolve. Conversely, role overload, and the demands listed within the last paragraph were discussed in-depth by participants (data is available on page X). Dacia, Kevin, Josh, Sue, and Lisa identified demands and expectations as being causes of

teacher burnout and also included these thematic words within their definition of the phenomenon.

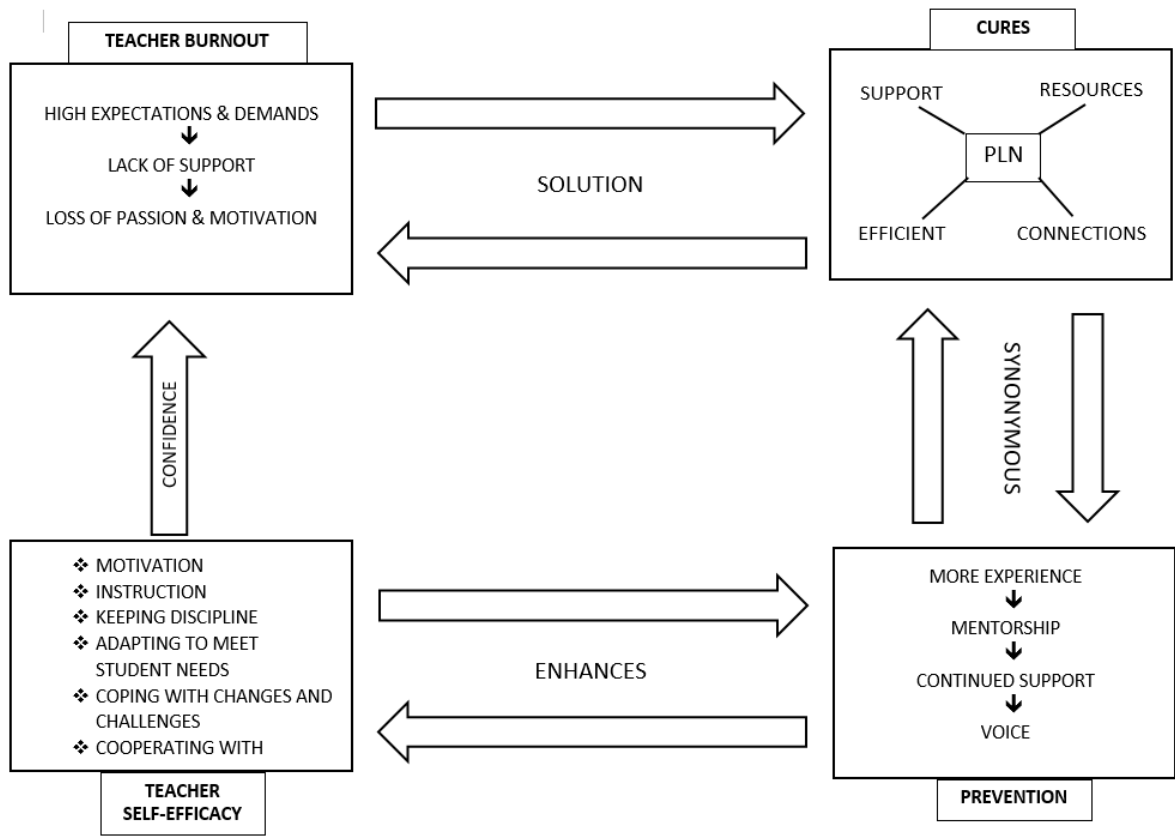
Another environmental/organizational factor of burnout identified by Durr (2008) is decision making. Teachers wish to be involved in this process as the outcomes bear directly on their work-life (Byrne, 1994). As seen within the final research question on recommendations for change, voice was a collective theme that appeared amongst the participants. Kim's suggestion for school districts is to "really listen to what teachers have to say - we should be part of the decision making process." Additionally, Lisa stated outright, "administrations need to elevate veteran teacher voices. They need to feel listened to." In not feeling heard or understood, the demands of the job become too much, opening the door for teacher burnout to manifest. By allowing teachers to participate in the organizational decision-making process, school districts subsequently encourage worker morale, motivation, enthusiasm, self-esteem, and job satisfaction (Byrne, 1994; Maslach & Jackson, 1984).

The final organizational/environmental factor of teacher burnout is social support (Durr, 2008). As identified in Chapter Four, support is a theme that appears across all three research questions. In regards to teacher burnout, participants suggested the lack of support felt by young teachers drives the phenomenon. Yet, as noted in the responses to the second research question, professional learning networks offer the opportunity for teachers to feel supported by others in the profession. Josh commented on the ability of these networks to provide teachers with a sounding board; Sue and Lisa shared similar sentiments.

Professional learning networks may not be the solution to burnout, but the support desired from these networks suggests it is fulfilling a need that is not being met. In reflecting on recommendations for change, support was discussed as a need for all teachers, no matter the stage of their career. Tony believes “if the consistency of support for a new teacher is the same dedication that the 30 year veteran teacher gets, that helps with the value and appreciation at the job you are doing.” In having an established social support system, teachers are able to build, enhance, and maintain a sense of connection to their work environment.

This phenomenological study confirmed teacher burnout is caused by a variety of environmental and organization factors. Educators seek support through professional learning networks. However, changes need to occur within the environmental and organizational structure of education in order to provide teachers with the ability to persevere through burnout and their career. The researcher used data from the study to create Figure Two, below:

Figure 2: A Visual Synthesis of the Present Study



Beginning in the upper left corner, the themes that appeared from research question one suggest teacher burnout is caused by a combination of high expectations and demands, lack of support, and a loss of passion and motivation towards the profession. The present study participants admitted professional learning networks to be either a proactive or reactive strategy to the aforementioned factors of burnout. As hypothesized by the researcher, these networks have the ability to be a proactive strategy if introduced, established, fostered, and maintained within teacher preparation programs and during the early years of one’s career.

While professional learning networks are not the cure for burnout, they are, or should be, synonymous with other preventative strategies that can be implemented

throughout the varying levels of academia. As suggested by the themes found within the study's third research question, teacher burnout may be prevented if future teachers are provided with more practical experience while enrolled in teacher preparation programs. Upon completion of these programs and securing a teaching position, new educators should partake in a mentorship program that is outlined and directed by the state, which guarantees uniformity between school districts. As new teachers evolve into veteran teachers, they deserve continual and consistent support. Moreover, administration should be willing to elevate, acknowledge, and listen to the voices of veteran teachers.

Many of these preventative strategies can enhance the six dimensions of teacher self-efficacy. Conversely, those with a strong sense of teacher self-efficacy have the ability to be a solution or system of support and advocacy for the aforementioned preventative strategies. When teacher self-efficacy is improved, it should foster a confidence within educators; thus, lessening their likelihood of enduring the phenomenon of teacher burnout.

Limitations

Phenomenological studies allow for the use of narrative inquiry. These rich, descriptive stories are the foundation of data collection. Unfortunately, at the time of the present study, the global pandemic limited the modality in which participant interviews could be conducted. Rather than meeting with participants in person, virtual interviews were conducted through Google Meets. Despite the convenience of virtual interviews, meeting in person may have allowed the researcher to build better rapport with individual participants.

In regards to participant selection, the researcher relied on personal connections and referrals from a professor and cohort colleague. Admittedly, due to established relationships, the researcher was able to connect more easily with certain participants. For those that were recommended for the study, it is unknown as to whether or not they disclosed their entire personal experience with teacher burnout. Lastly, due to the adjustments made to the study, the researcher had a limited time line to conduct interviews. Had the study begun solely as a phenomenological study, the researcher would have been able to procure more diversified (years of experience and subject matter) participants.

Pandemic Teaching

Given the chaos of the past year, the researcher wanted to discuss the trial and tribulations interview participants have faced within the profession. It was hypothesized that the pandemic would heighten participant's sense of burnout. However, only Sue admitted to the struggles she has endured. As previously mentioned, the chaos of pandemic teaching has caused Sue to question whether or not she will remain in the teaching profession. Lisa, Josh, and Sue acknowledged their struggle to cope with changes and challenges, especially those endured within this last year. As such, the topic of pandemic teaching was worth further discussion.

Interestingly, six of the participants believe pandemic teaching has improved their ability as an educator. Tony has been an online teacher for a handful of years and determined his ability as an educator is not affected by the pandemic. If anything, his effectiveness as an educator has decreased because of the rapid growth the online academy, and his caseload, have experienced.

Of the six participants with an improved sense of ability, five believe their teaching is less effective because of various learning models (i.e. distance learning, hybrid, etc.) employed during the pandemic. Dacia was the only participant to feel more effective, but reminded the researcher that technology plays an integral role in her curriculum. In regards to the overall study, the researcher believes there is no correlation between teacher ability and effectiveness as the experiences of each participant varied and were subjective in nature. Moreover, while pandemic teaching may heighten burnout within the teaching profession, that was not evident within the present study.

Burnt-Out Teachers

The present study was initially designed to be a quasi-experimental phenomenology. The researcher created a Facebook group, Burnt-Out Teachers, which contained learning units, supports, and resources to improve teacher self-efficacy. After four months of running the group, the researcher intended to interview a select group of participants on their experience within Burnt-Out Teachers and their experience with the phenomenon of teacher burnout.

Unfortunately, Burnt-Out Teachers did not manifest and grow as the researcher intended. Only 19 individuals joined the group, and participation was sporadic. Two group members, Dacia and Sue, remained part of the final phenomenological study. When discussing the group with both women, the researcher received positive feedback. Dacia noted, “the positivity encouraged me to be more positive and would help me focus on the good things.” Sue struggled to recall all of her interactions within the group, but did remember learning about self-efficacy and admitted to becoming more personally aware of how she viewed her strengths and weaknesses. The researcher would suggest

future research focus on the impact of professional learning networks, specifically researching the relationships between network content, teacher self-efficacy, well-being, and burnout.

Recommendations

In the fall of 2020, *Education Minnesota* conducted an educator survey which yielded over 9,000 responses. While a majority of the survey focused on teaching during a global pandemic, teacher stress and well-being was also addressed. After data was released, Denise Sprecht, president of *Education Minnesota*, remarked, “nearly 30 percent say they’re thinking about quitting or retiring. There’s already a teacher shortage in Minnesota. Our public schools won’t function if thousands of educators burn out and leave. It’s time to adjust” (Survey of Educators, 2020). The state, *Education Minnesota*, and schools districts should rise to Sprecht’s call to action. The recommendations below have been separated into two categories: future research and environmental and organizational change.

Future Research

Teacher burnout is a phenomenon worthy of being studied. Literature on the phenomenon peaked in the 1990s as few discoveries have been made since and verbiage (i.e. self-efficacy, well-being, compassion fatigue) has continued to evolve (Cherniss, 1993; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Acton & Glasgow, 2015; Elliot et al., 2018). Similarly, the education profession and implications of teacher burnout have also changed. Maslach and Jackson’s (1981) definition is still applicable; however, teacher burnout needs, and deserves, to be studied through a twenty-first century lens. This could be done at the state

or national level and ought to be overseen by institutions such as *Education Minnesota* or the *National Education Association*.

The present study on teacher burnout discovered themes which revolve around the environmental and organizational factors that contribute to the phenomenon. While additional research on the aforementioned factors is needed, further research must focus on personal factors of the phenomenon. These include but are not limited to: gender, age, marital status, race, and/or socioeconomic status.

Upon gaining a better understanding of teacher burnout, Skaalvik and Skaalvik's (2007) six dimensions of teacher self-efficacy should be further reviewed and studied. The researcher believes the dimensions have not changed. However, additional quantitative and qualitative data would provide academia with insight on common strengths and weaknesses shared among educators. In better understanding the feedback, particularly in the area of common weaknesses, the state and school districts would have guidance on how to better serve their educators.

Lastly, professional learning networks are in need of additional attention and research. These networks are variable and complex; yet, there are similarities and differences in *how* and *why* educators gravitate towards them. Expanding the literature would allow further studies to develop and build off of those in existence (Davis, 2013; Torrey, 2021; Warlick, 2009). Oddone, Hughes, and Lupton's (2019) theory of learning as a connected professional could be employed and researched within varying levels of the education profession (teacher preparation programs, mentorship programs, etc.). This would provide further insight on the success of the networks, and the potential disconnects that occur when learning as a connected professional.

The aforementioned topics may be studied individually or altogether. It is pertinent both quantitative and qualitative studies are conducted as it would provide academia with sound statistics and a true understanding of how teacher burnout, self-efficacy, and professional learning networks manifest, develop, and are utilized, respectively. It is well-known in academia that American students are continuously studied and analyzed. While they are an important piece of our nation's education system, it is arguable that those leading the classrooms are equally as important and worthy of research and attention. A high-quality education is not possible without high-quality, stable, and well cared for educators.

Environment & Organizational Change

Data from the present study suggests the factors of teacher burnout and recommendations for improvement are (and should be) controlled by teacher preparation programs, school districts, and the state. The researcher's recommendations mirror the themes discussed within the third research question and further identified in Figure 2 (pg. 64).

1. Experience: teacher preparation programs should require students to spend more time gaining practical experience in the classroom as student teaching and the few practicums required in these programs are not a sufficient amount of experience. Ideally, students would spend a majority of their "instructive" time within a school, and report to campus only a handful of times throughout the semester. It is worth noting here that Kim identified teaching as a craft, you do not learn in theory.

2. **Mentorship:** upon entering the profession, new teachers should be part of a mentorship program. The program would run within individual districts, but follow guidelines set forth by the state. This would allow for uniformity between school districts.
3. **Veteran Teachers:** As suggested by Lisa, administration must elevate the voices of teachers as they have the ability to provide the insight needed to bring success to a district.
4. **Mental Health:** The present educational climate focuses on the mental well-being of students; conversely, the mental health of educators is sorely neglected (Learning and Skills Bulletin, 2020). The continual exodus of educators indicates a need to provide mental health support (i.e. counselor, psychologist, etc.) to teachers (Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, 2021). Similar to the mentorship program, this recommendation should be overseen by the state, as it would assure *all* educators are provided the same level of support.

The researcher firmly believes teacher preparation programs, schools districts, and the state genuinely care about training, employing, and maintaining the well-being of educators. The aforementioned recommendations are merely a call to action - the education profession is capable of providing greater support to future and current teachers. Until the needs of these individuals are prioritized, academia will continue to lose quality educators.

Researcher Reflection

Teacher burnout has existed within education for more than a century. Yet, there is no cure or working solution for the phenomenon. The conclusions drawn from the

study are not new or profound. Rather, they are universal beliefs held by a majority of educators (Oddone, Hughes, & Lupton, 2019; Durr, 2008; Byrne, 1994; Maslach & Jackson, 1984). Moreover, the education profession, particularly the relationships between teachers, is nothing short of continual camaraderie and support - attributes that are not found in many professions. This was confirmed as throughout the interview process, the researcher felt connected to and inspired by every participant.

Teachers continuously adjust, adapt, modify, and change their lesson plans and role within the classroom. Luckily, the researcher knows that journey all too well and was able to overcome the setback of a failed experiment for the initial study. While the original proposal was incredibly different from the final study, the researcher believes the study has the ability to inspire change throughout all levels of academia.

Conclusion

As discussed within Chapter One, high-quality teachers are the backbone of well-functioning institutes (Dworkin, 1987). Unfortunately, Minnesota continues to lose approximately 30% of teachers within the first five years of their careers (Minnesota Department of Education, 2015). The Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (2021) reported, “there is no data on why... teachers leave a position” (p. 45). While there may be numerous reasons for the exodus of educators, teacher burnout is the most likely explanation. As such, this phenomenological study was designed to investigate the perception of teacher burnout amongst seven Minnesota educators. Beyond leaving the profession, there is no working cure for teacher burnout. Professional development is often employed with the intention of improving well-being. However,

professional development is oftentimes costly and not desired by educators. A cost-effective and individualized alternative is professional learning networks.

Seven phenomenological interviews were conducted to gather data on teacher burnout, professional learning networks, and recommendations for change. Data analysis resulted in a variety of themes for each topic/research question. From which, the study concluded:

1. The expectations of the teaching profession combined with the loss of passion, motivation, and lack of support have caused teacher burnout.
2. Professional learning networks provide teachers with support, connect them with other like-minded teachers, provide them with an abundance of resources, are efficient, and have the ability to make educators more efficient in the classroom.
3. To improve the phenomenon of teacher burnout: teacher preparation programs should implement more practical experience for their future teachers, new teachers should be provided a quality mentorship program through their new school district, and teachers (both new and veteran) should be provided the support needed to succeed and the ability to have their voice heard.

The exodus of educators should be of grave concern to those within academia. These conclusions are suggestive of many recommendations and should inspire a call to action within the varying levels of the education profession.

Teacher burnout could be controlled, manipulated, and cured through the efforts of those within academia. Educators can improve their well-being if they are consciously aware of their sense of self-efficacy and put forth the effort to learn and grow as a connected professional. These efforts are stepping stones to improving individual well-

being, and subsequently inspire and support the need for a campaign to improve the phenomenon of teacher burnout. If academia focuses on improving the well-being of educators, teacher burnout is likely to diminish. This is beneficial throughout all of education, but would be most appreciated by the students who are worthy of high-quality educators.

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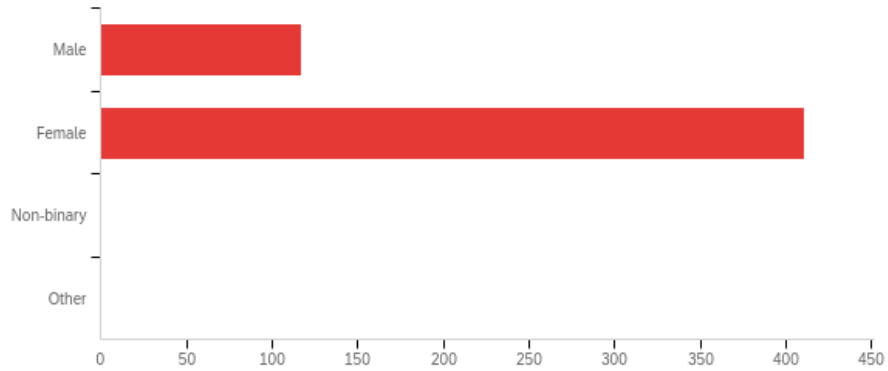
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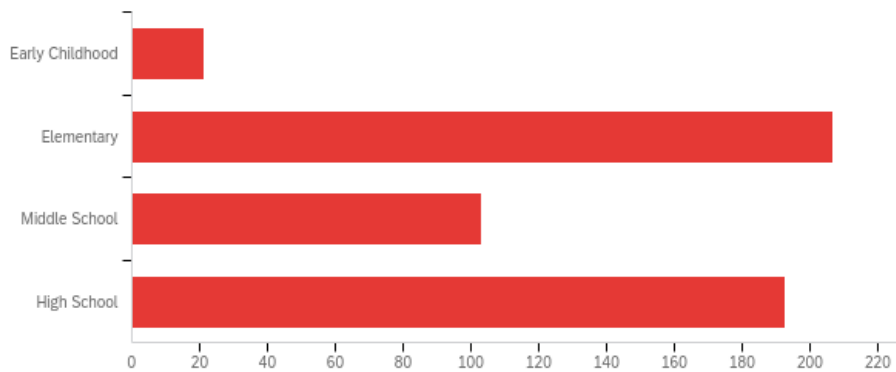
Appendix A: Partnered Outreach Survey with *Education Minnesota*

Q1 - What is your gender?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	22.16%	117
2	Female	77.84%	411
3	Non-binary	0.00%	0
4	Other	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	528

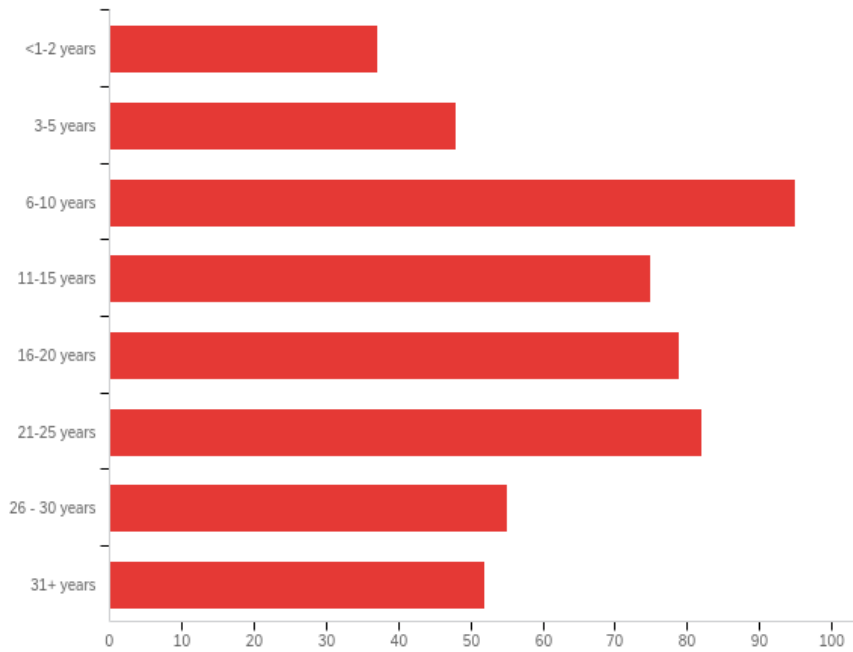
Q2 - What best describes your current teaching level?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Early Childhood	4.01%	21
2	Elementary	39.50%	207

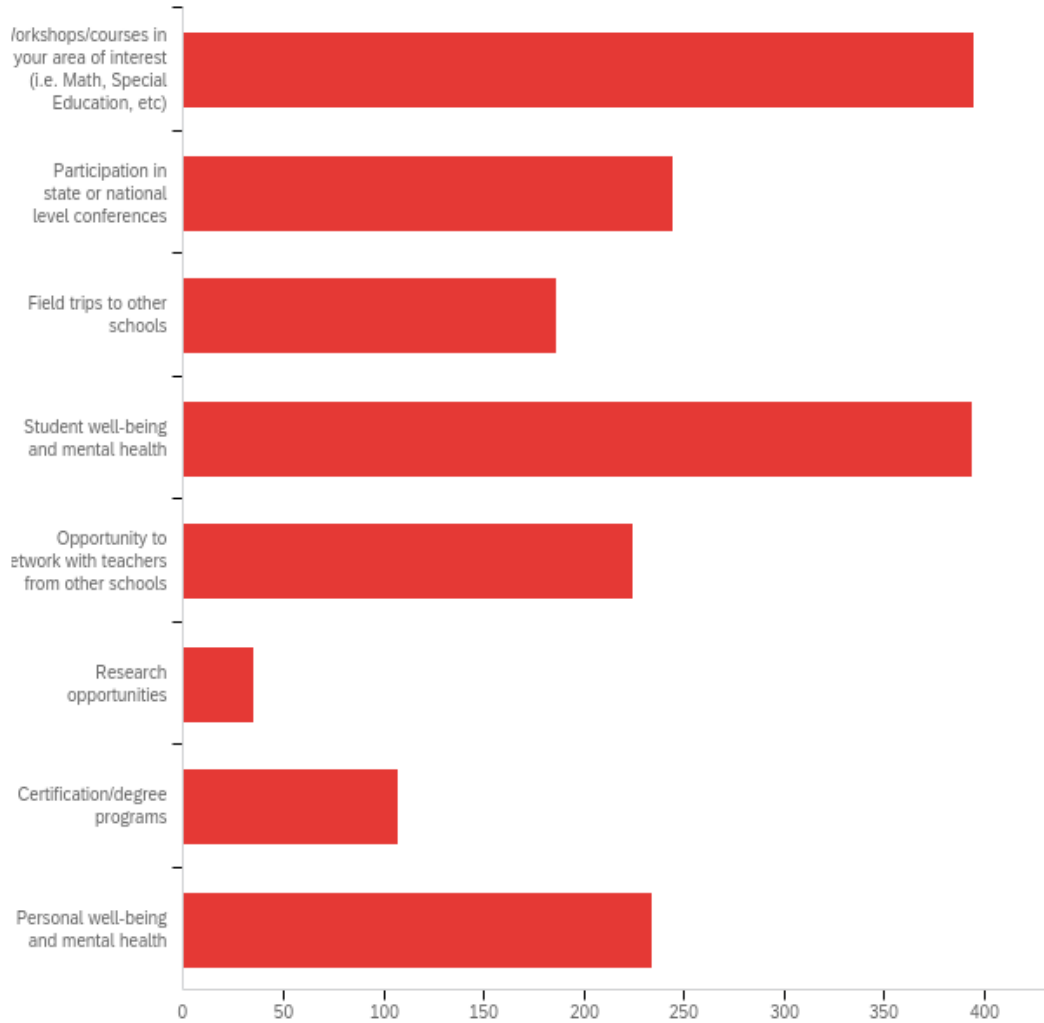
3	Middle School	19.66%	103
4	High School	36.83%	193
	Total	100%	524

Q3 - How long have you been teaching?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	<1-2 years	7.07%	37
2	3-5 years	9.18%	48
3	6-10 years	18.16%	95
4	11-15 years	14.34%	75
5	16-20 years	15.11%	79
6	21-25 years	15.68%	82
7	26 - 30 years	10.52%	55
8	31+ years	9.94%	52
	Total	100%	523

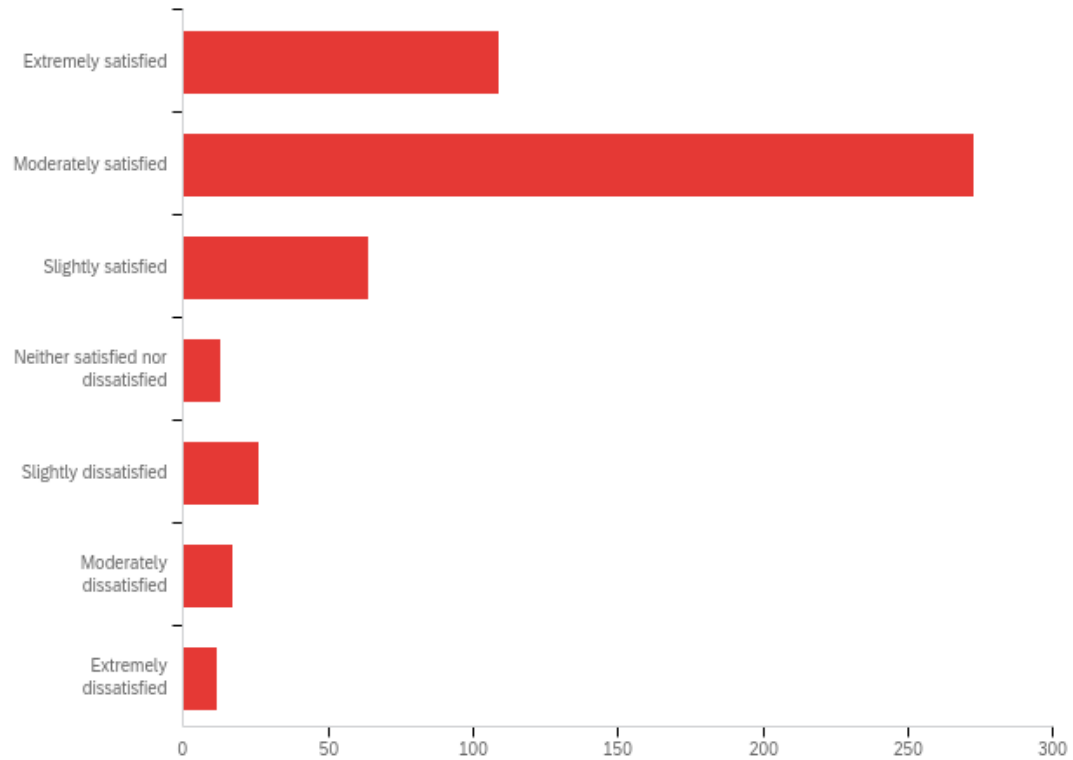
Q4 - What sort of activities and/or professional development has your school district(s) provided you with? Check all that apply.



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Workshops/courses in your area of interest (i.e. Math, Special Education, etc)	21.69%	395
2	Participation in state or national level conferences	13.45%	245
3	Field trips to other schools	10.21%	186
4	Student well-being and mental health	21.64%	394
5	Opportunity to network with teachers from other schools	12.36%	225
6	Research opportunities	1.92%	35

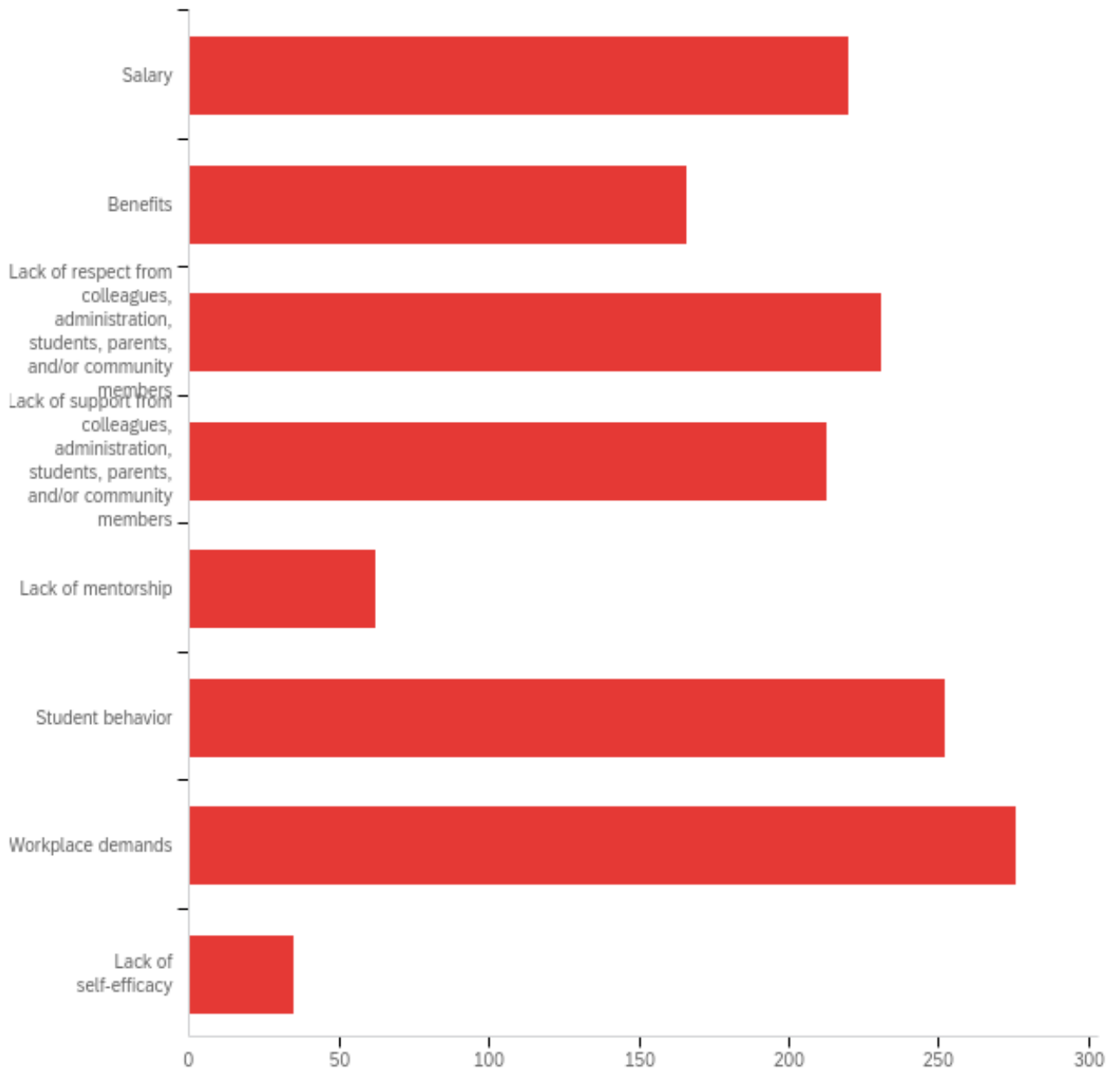
7	Certification/degree programs	5.88%	107
8	Personal well-being and mental health	12.85%	234
	Total	100%	1821

Q5 - How satisfied are you with your job?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Extremely satisfied	21.21%	109
2	Moderately satisfied	53.11%	273
3	Slightly satisfied	12.45%	64
4	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	2.53%	13
5	Slightly dissatisfied	5.06%	26
6	Moderately dissatisfied	3.31%	17
7	Extremely dissatisfied	2.33%	12
	Total	100%	514

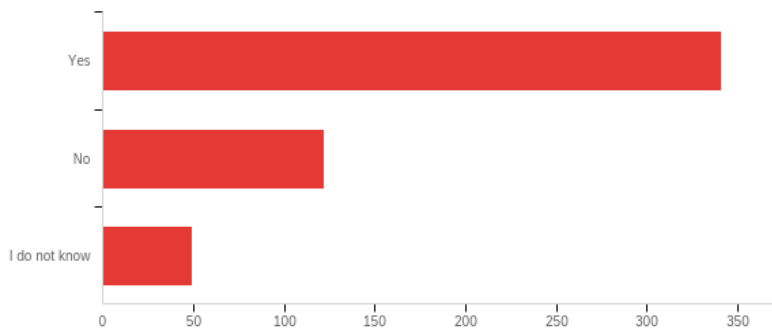
Q6 - What factors negatively impact your job satisfaction? Check all that apply.



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Salary	15.12%	220
2	Benefits	11.41%	166

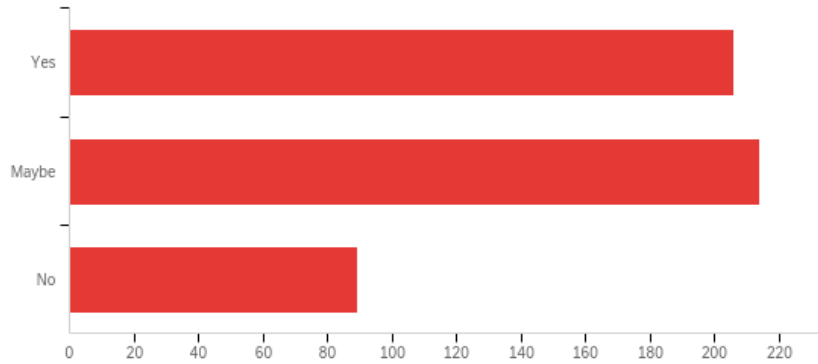
3	Lack of respect from colleagues, administration, students, parents, and/or community members	15.88%	231
4	Lack of support from colleagues, administration, students, parents, and/or community members	14.64%	213
5	Lack of mentorship	4.26%	62
6	Student behavior	17.32%	252
7	Workplace demands	18.97%	276
8	Lack of self-efficacy	2.41%	35
	Total	100%	1455

Q7 - Does your district have a mandatory mentorship program for new teachers?



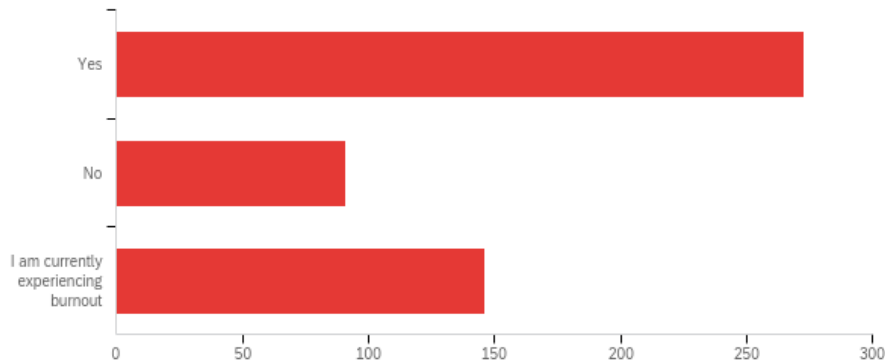
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	66.60%	341
2	No	23.83%	122
3	I do not know	9.57%	49
	Total	100%	512

Q8 - If you had the opportunity to start over in a new career, would you choose to become a teacher?



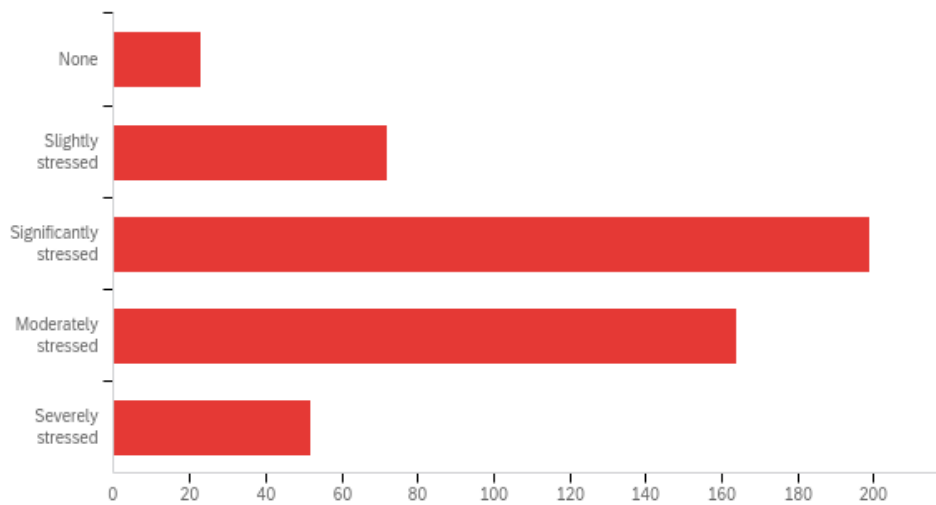
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	40.47%	206
2	Maybe	42.04%	214
3	No	17.49%	89
	Total	100%	509

Q9 - Have you ever experienced teacher burnout?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	53.53%	273
2	No	17.84%	91
3	I am currently experiencing burnout	28.63%	146
	Total	100%	510

Q10 - What is your work-related stress level due to Distance Learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	None	4.51%	23
2	Slightly stressed	14.12%	72
3	Significantly stressed	39.02%	199
4	Moderately stressed	32.16%	164
5	Severely stressed	10.20%	52
	Total	100%	510

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Background

- How many years have you been teaching?
- What grades and/or subjects have you taught?
- What do you enjoy most about teaching?
- What are the greatest challenges you have faced in your career?
- Have you ever thought about leaving the profession?
 - If so, why?
 - What stopped you or changed your mind?

Teacher Self-Efficacy

- How do you perceive your own self-efficacy?
 - Strong or Weak?
- There are six dimensions (components) to self-efficacy: instruction, adapting education to individual students' needs, motivating students, keeping discipline, cooperating with colleagues and parents, and coping with changes and challenges.
 - Which dimension(s) do you excel at or have a strong sense of confidence with? Why?
 - Which dimension(s) would you consider to be a weakness or area for growth? Why?

Pandemic Teaching

- How has pandemic teaching changed your perspective on your ability as a teacher?
- How has pandemic teaching changed your perspective on your effectiveness as a teacher?

Teacher burnout

- How would you define teacher burnout?
 - Have you ever experienced this definition of burnout?
 - If so, please elaborate on your experience.
 - What were the series of events that led to burnout?
 - How did you overcome the phenomenon?
 - If not, how have you been able to avoid the onset of teacher burnout?
- In your opinion, what causes burnout?
 - Reflect on your own experiences
 - Are certain individuals more susceptible to enduring this phenomenon? Why?
- Other than leaving the profession, what are some potential cures to teacher burnout?

Professional Learning Networks

- How do you define a professional learning network?

- Do you have a PLN?
 - If so, can you provide details?
 - Do you favor one platform over another (Ex. Facebook vs. Twitter)? Why?
 - What interventions, topics, or resources did you find most beneficial? Why?
 - How have PLNs impacted your well-being, teacher self-efficacy, and/or career?
- Did you participate in the Facebook group “Burnt-Out Teachers?”
 - What interventions, topics, or resources did you find most beneficial? Why?
- Do you think PLNs have the ability to improve teacher burnout?
 - If so, how?
 - If not, why?

Recommendations for Change

- How could teacher preparation programs (i.e. colleges) help their students avoid teacher burnout?
- How can school districts and/or the state provide support for new teachers?
How can school districts and/or the state provide emotional support and improve the well-being of veteran teachers?