

FEELING THE BURN: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON BURNOUT AMONG
ADJUNCT PROFESSORS AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

by

Janette B. Whitmore

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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APPROVED BY:

Andrea M. Bruce, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Meredith J. Park, Ed.D., Committee Member

Abstract

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. The central research question guiding this study was what are the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions? This study found that adjunct professors burned-out due to their higher education institutions' unreasonable work expectations, tight deadlines, and lack of resources. Using the guiding theory of job demands and resources (JD-R) developed by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli, the phenomenon's essence was discovered as it highlighted how excessive work demands and a lack of resources lead to burnout experiences. The snowballing method was used to recruit 11 adjunct professors who provided rich and thick accounts of their lived experiences using three types of data collection: an open-ended survey, a reflective journal, and a semi-structured interview. The data were analyzed using Moustakas' modified version of van Kaam's phenomenological analysis approach, which discovered four main themes, six sub-themes, and contextual data, then coded using Delve's coding guidelines for qualitative researchers. Data were triangulated to synthesize the descriptions to detail the essence of the adjunct professors' lived experiences of burnout. Burnout among adjunct professors affects students and institutions. The implications of this study revealed the potential need to optimize job demands, job resources, and personal resources for adjunct professors. Because adjunct professors make up a significant portion of the higher education sector, it is vital to understand their specific concerns. Adjunct professors are essential to higher education institutions and should be honored for their contributions.

Keywords: burnout, adjunct professor, higher education institutions, excessive workloads, lack of resources, exhaustion, time pressure, effects of burnout

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Darek A. Whitmore, of 30 years. While three years in this doctoral program, you unselfishly believed in, supported, and encouraged me when writing became difficult. Honey, your constant love and support will continue to motivate me in everything I do. You have shown yourself to be the man God created just for me. This dissertation is also dedicated to our beautiful daughters, Jaliyah (college graduate) and Diarra (future college graduate). I hope I have exemplified to you ladies that you can achieve even the most distant goals by dedicating yourself, working hard, overcoming difficulties, and, most of all, crying unto the Lord in prayer. My beautiful babies, this Ph.D. is for you! Thank you, Diesel, my favorite little guy (West Highland White Terrier dog), for making me break from writing to feed you, play, and take you for a walk.

Last but not least, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and thanks to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who is the source of all blessings. Nine years ago, I was told I have breast cancer and would die. Jesus heard my cry and healed me (Psalm 30:2) of breast cancer and subsequent ovarian cancer and colon disease. Despite that, I am still here because God is not done with me yet.

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

(English Standard Version Bible, 2022, Jeremiah 29:11).

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List of Abbreviations

American Association of University Professors (AAUP)

American Sociological Association Task Force on Contingent Faculty (ASATF)

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Conservation of Resources (COR)

Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C)

Delta Cost Project at American Institutes for Research (AIR)

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

English Standard Version (ESV)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

Job Demands-Resources (JD-R)

Mental Health America (MHA)

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM)

National Adjunct Walkout Day (NAWD)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES)

National Union of Teachers (NUT)

Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI)

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA)

Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America-College Retirement Equities (TIAA-CREF)

The World Health Organization (WHO)

United States (U.S.)

Western Governors University (WGU)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

In higher education institutions, adjunct professors are educators recruited on a part-time, temporary, seasonal, or contractual basis rather than receiving tenure and a long-term position and are ranked lower than the top level of a professorship (Carlton, 2021; Diehl, 2016; Meier, 2019; Simmons, 2020). The problem is that adjunct professors at higher education institutions are increasingly experiencing work-related burnout (Carroll, 2002; de Onis, 2021; García-Rivera et al., 2022; Mitchell, 2020). Burnout syndrome is one of the most severe health problems in the workplace today, and it is getting worse (García-Rivera et al., 2022; Gómez-Urquiza et al., 2017). The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. This chapter was devoted to laying out a theoretical framework for the investigation that underpins this study. Contextual material relevant from a historical, sociological, and theoretical perspective was presented. The statement of the problem and the purpose gave both the background and the primary focus of the research. The significance of the study, research questions, keywords, and definitions pertinent to the study, and a summary were included in the last portion of this chapter.

Background

This section includes a summary of the most relevant research that has been conducted on the topic of adjunct professors and burnout. In addition, it explained the historical backdrop of how burnout among adjunct professors has grown throughout higher education institutions. Additionally, the social context of problems impacting society, communities, educational

system, and other areas was summarized, as was the theoretical context that has led to the development of the concept being examined and the principles supporting the research.

Historical Context

Higher education institutions in the United States (U.S.) are not only historical (Thelin, 2011) but are also the world's largest and most diverse system of postsecondary education (Trow, 1989). In 1947, shortly after World War II, 2.3 million students were enrolled in 1800 American colleges and universities, almost half of whom were in public institutions and the other half private (Trow, 1989). Higher education institutions in the U.S. are unusual in their scope, diversity, and accessibility to everyone with a high school education (Trow, 1989). Higher education institutions rose rapidly to promote community social mobility and economic progress (Mintz, 2017). Even though higher education institutions have increased over the last 40 years, public institutions, both four-year and two-year colleges, absorbed most of the massive enrollment growth in the 1960s and 1970s (Trow, 1989).

The changing growth patterns of higher education institutions have demonstrated tremendous growth in the 1900s, with enrolment increasing at rates far faster than the country's population growth during the same 50-year period (Lucas, 2016). For example, since the 1949-50 academic year, higher education institutions issued 29,000 degrees; by the following year, the amount had risen to half a million (Lucas, 2016) and has gradually increased each academic year. Government and business participation in the expanding American higher education institutions have determined the character and the direction or thrust of much of that growth (Lucas, 2016). The entrance of the 21st century and the continuously changing work environment pushed higher education institutions to compete worldwide, posing numerous challenges in academia (Salimzadeh et al., 2021; Sharma, 2014; Shrivastava & Shukla, 2017).

Global competitiveness, an open market, the privatization of higher education institutions, and technological improvements are only a few challenges academics must face in today's global education industry (Shrivastava & Shukla, 2017). Organizational structure, organizational atmosphere, policies, leadership, position description, compensation, and feedback have been identified as additional challenges (Shrivastava & Shukla, 2017). Higher education institutions have evolved into entrepreneurial capitalist institutions that are highly individualistic and fiercely competitive with one another (Lucas, 2016). According to Padilla and Thompson (2016), higher education institutions are said to have undergone a notable change from a teacher-led model that focuses on the needs of students to a business model that concentrates on generating revenue.

According to Hiltzik (2016), for instance, higher education institutions are embracing a profit-loss business model at the expense of students. Higher education institutions are cutting back on unprofitable humanities and social science courses in favor of science, engineering, and technology programs that are anticipated to attract lucrative grants and offer the possibility of more significant revenue from patentable inventions that attract heavily funded outside grants (Hiltzik, 2016). The business model of higher education institutions also hinders the role of administration; instead of being able to promote innovative technologies in both online and traditional classrooms, deans and other administrative faculty must concentrate on revenue generation through student retention and recruitment (Curran, 2014). According to Curran (2014), this recruiting business model encourages administrators to pressure enrollment personnel to let students who are not prepared for college start courses so that the institution may collect their revenue.

Lucas (2016) states that this shift in higher education institutions has increased

academic pressure. The government has always played a key role in higher education institutions; nevertheless, this business model shift has transformed institutions into corporations or marketplaces that perceive education as a product and students as customers (Lucas, 2016). In higher education institutions, adjusting to new management paradigms has been lengthy and arduous (Polster, 2016). Today's higher education institutions aim to generate or sustain income while cutting expenditures, much like numerous business strategies used by corporations. Thus, many higher education institutions have opted to hire adjunct professors instead of tenured professors when they need to expand programs, save money, or have higher-than-anticipated student enrollment (Henkel & Haley, 2020; Hill, 2021; Inside Scholar Community, 2022; Mitchell, 2020; Stenerson et al., 2010).

It is becoming more common for higher education institutions to hire adjunct professors rather than full-time tenured faculty members since they are less expensive to maintain (Bettinger & Long, 2010; Diehl, 2016; Fjortoft et al., 2011; Henkel & Haley, 2020; Hyer et al., 2020; Levin et al., 2011; Liu & Zhang, 2013; Lucas, 2016; Selingo, 2013; Wagoner, 2019). On the campuses of higher education institutions, the number of tenured professor posts has declined over the last several decades, while the number of adjunct professor positions has climbed (Schwartz, 2014; Stenerson et al., 2010). According to Manternach (2020), the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) reported that the proportion of adjunct professors, also known as nontenured or nontenured track employees, has increased from 55% in 1975 to 73% in 2016. Manternach (2020) explains higher education institution's trend toward adjunct professors:

A movement has been underway in academia to get more work from adjunct labor...the word "adjunct" in Dictionary. Com is "Something added to another thing but not

essential to it.” Therefore...”adjunct” would seem to be a misnomer, considering it would be challenging to describe 73% of an institution’s teaching workforce as “not essential.” (p. 460)

AAUP estimated that adjunct professors would make up 40% of all faculty members in 2018 (Brennan & Magness, 2018). In recent literature, the percentage of adjunct professors at higher education institutions has risen to 75% (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2021; Weingarten et al., 2020).

Kinman and Johnson (2019) and Kinman and Wray (2014) underscore the fast changes in higher education institutions over the previous two decades, such as increased student numbers and pressure to generate external revenue have resulted in an onerous workload for adjunct professors, putting them at greater risk of chronic burnout (Urbina-Garcia, 2020). These changes suggest that higher education institutions overburden adjunct professors’ psychological and physiological well-being. Environmental concerns include teaching demands, administrative overload, and poor leadership and management (Kinman & Johnson, 2019; Urbina-Garcia, 2020). In addition to the challenges mentioned above, adjunct professors’ psychological and physiological health is affected by their lack of recognition (Urbina-Garcia, 2020), position on the academic ladder, the amount of work they are expected to complete, and the number of hours they work per week. Moreover, the uncertainty of their employment (Darabi et al., 2017a), the nature of their contracts, the need for professional growth (Ishaq & Mahmood, 2017), the number of students they teach, and the resources they have available (Bakker et al., 2004; Demerouti et al., 2001; Salami, 2011).

Burnout is characterized similarly by Maslach (1976) and Selye (1956): it is the outcome of a chronic and sustained response to unresolved interpersonal and occupational

stress. Professional burnout among adjunct professors has been documented in recent studies by Lever et al. (2017), Maslach (1976), and Urbina-Garcia (2020), all of whom claimed that recent developments in higher education institutions have contributed to this phenomenon. These developments include expectations that adjunct professors meet academic and non-academic goals, adhere to strict deadlines, and fulfill other curricular commitments (Teles et al., 2020) while fulfilling professional obligations under constant pressure (Adom et al., 2020; Lashuel, 2020). Despite the personal effects, both psychologically and physiologically, that burnout has on adjunct professors, the social impact of burnout has been a focus of attention in recent years (Urbina-Garcia, 2020).

Social Context

According to Padilla and Thompson (2016), Isoard-Gauthier et al. (2019), and Urbina-Garcia (2020), there is a rising interest in the detrimental influence that the atmosphere of higher education institutions have on the psychological and physiological health of adjunct professors, with an increasing tendency for chronic burnout. Isoard-Gauthier et al. (2019) found a link between work-related burnout and 62% of the 369 university faculty members who participated in the study. Employee burnout is a condition that affects more than just the person who is experiencing it. Because of the nature of the situation, the individual's employer and colleagues within the work environment may be negatively impacted (Stowe, 2022). The adverse effects of chronic burnout include elevated levels of job dissatisfaction (Barkhuizen et al., 2014), high levels of work-life conflict (Hogan et al., 2016), inadequate psychological and physiological health (Tummers & Bakker, 2021; Wu et al., 2020), and low levels of productivity (Urbina-Garcia, 2020).

Záborská et al. (2018) found that high work expectations cause burnout, which leads

to poor organizational commitment and disengagement (Barkhuizen et al., 2014; Bezuidenhout & Cilliers, 2010). Disengagement is a psychological effect of burnout that causes adjunct professors to withdraw, isolate, or alienate themselves from students, colleagues, administrators, and the academic community (Herman et al., 2018; Schnaider-Levi et al., 2017; Suh, 2019). Cynicism, a lack of enthusiasm, and a negative attitude and behavior toward one's work, the content of one's work, and the objects of one's work are the hallmarks of disengagement (Alves et al., 2019; Bakker, 2011; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2004; Bakker et al., 2014; Maslach, 1976, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017; Maslach et al., 2001; Suh, 2019; Yao et al., 2015).

In addition to adjunct professors' psychological and physiological well-being, disengagement creates a societal problem that negatively impacts students and the higher education institution in which adjunct professors work (Bakker, 2011; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Sabagh et al., 2018). Adjunct professor burnout and disengagement reduce the sense of camaraderie on campus (Flaherty, 2020a), which harms student learning. A whopping 75% of adjunct professors stated that their interactions with coworkers and students had severely reduced (Flaherty, 2020a). Henkel and Haley (2020) and Holliman and Daniels (2018) argue that adjunct professors' participation is critical to attaining instructional effectiveness and educational excellence. Pedersen and Minnotte (2017) argued that the lack of interest in student learning and skills might emerge from the disengagement of adjunct professors.

As McClure and Fryar (2022) point out, emotionally unattached adjunct professors negatively impact the higher education institutions where they work. As a result of their disengagement, adjunct professors are only physiologically there, but their minds are elsewhere

(McClure & Fryar, 2022). While this is happening, adjunct professors are still performing their duties but are just doing what is necessary. Many adjunct professors are doing much work, but there is little enthusiasm about it, according to McClure and Fryar (2022). They no longer feel a sense of devotion to the institutions where they work since their relationships with higher education institutions have been so damaged (McClure & Fryar, 2022).

Theoretical Context

In recent decades, researchers have studied burnout (Chen et al., 2019; Jamaludin & You, 2019; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; West et al., 2018). Measures, theoretical models, and research from several places have helped understand the causes and implications of occupational dysphoria (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Freudenberger (1974) compared burnout to a chronic drug overdose owing to emotional exhaustion and lack of drive and commitment. Maslach and Leiter (2016) argued that burnout is a psychological disorder caused by continuous work pressures. Social cognitive theory by Bandura (1986) suggested burnout is caused by self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-concept. In other words, burnout occurs when an individual doubts their efficacy or ability to achieve professional objectives (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). Theories of burnout, such as the conservation of resources (COR), argued that burnout is the consequence of continuous risks, loss, or failure to obtain or preserve vital resources. These resources include health, well-being, family, self-esteem, and a feeling of purpose and meaning in life (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

According to the job demand-resources (JD-R) theory, which differs from prior views on burnout, people experience burnout when there is an imbalance between the demands placed on them by their jobs and the resources they may draw from them (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001; Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). Demerouti et al. (2001)

and Edú-Valsania et al. (2022) defined job demands as those employment aspects that require prolonged psychological or physiological effort and are related to physiological or psychological costs. The term job resources, however, refers to a variety of components of work that may help lessen the psychological and physiological demands of a job while also decreasing the related physiological and psychological costs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001; Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). Researchers Bakker and Demerouti (2007), Bakker and Demerouti (2017), as well as Demerouti et al. (2001) discovered that even the most demanding occupations might be made more bearable for workers if their employers give appropriate resources to support them. JD-R theory also suggests that rising burnout and a lack of resources at work go hand in hand (Bakker et al., 2014).

Problem Statement

The problem is that adjunct professors at higher education institutions are increasingly experiencing work-related burnout symptoms (Carroll, 2002; de Onis, 2021; García-Rivera et al., 2022; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Mitchell, 2020). The disparity between the grand expectations placed on people by their jobs and the limited resources available to those individuals causes burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). Since academic burnout is becoming more common, it is of the utmost importance for higher education institutions to provide enough support for adjunct professors so that they can fulfill their professional responsibilities (Bowen et al., 2016; Court & Kinman, 2009; Kinman & Wray, 2014; Villeneuve-Smith et al., 2008). In higher education, far too little study has been done on how adjunct professors experience burnout (Bowen et al., 2016; Woods, 2010). However, those who have studied the phenomenon of burnout among adjunct professors have found that at least 75% of adjunct professors blamed their job as the cause of their constant

exhaustion (Bowen et al., 2016; Johnson et al., 2006; Kinman & Wray, 2014). Another study found that 56% of novice adjunct professors view their teaching profession as exhausting, 61% of senior adjunct professors are often or always exhausted, and 47% are contemplating abandoning the field of education (Bowen et al., 2016; ComRes, 2015; Kinman & Wray, 2014). YouGov conducted a study on behalf of the National Union of Teachers (NUT), which found that 53% of adjunct professors contemplated quitting the teaching profession over the next two years (Malik et al., 2017).

Working as an educator is one of the most exhausting professions for psychological health (Fako, 2010; Halim et al., 2006; Johnson et al., 2006; Kinman & Jones, 2004; Papastylianou et al., 2009). According to García-Rivera et al. (2022) and Gómez-Urquiza et al. (2017), burnout syndrome is one of the most important occupational health challenges of our day. There is a correlation between employee burnout and a deterioration in their psychological and physiological well-being (Martínez et al., 2020; Salvagioni et al., 2017). There is also a correlation between burnout and a decline in productivity and institutional commitment, high turnover rates, as well as a desire to quit one's employment, and disengagement from students, faculty members, administrators, and the rest of the academic community (Bakker, 2011; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Maslach et al., 1996; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Záborská et al., 2018).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. At this stage in the research, burnout was defined as a symptom of persistent emotional exhaustion brought

on by extreme job demands and a lack of resources (Demerouti et al., 2001). The theory guiding this study is job demands-resources (JD-R) (Demerouti et al., 2001). According to the JD-R theory, the onset of burnout results from a combination of two different processes (Demerouti et al., 2001). In the first stage of the process, demanding features of the job (also known as excessive job demands) cause frequent overtaking, which results in exhaustion. The second process involves a lack of resources, which makes it more challenging to satisfy the expectations of the work, which in turn leads to more withdrawn behavior. The disengagement from work that results from this withdrawal is the long-term effect.

Significance of the Study

This study will add to the body of knowledge by helping researchers understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. The findings of this study hope to benefit adjunct professors, administrators, faculty members, students, and the higher education institution in general by shedding light on the perceived role, responsibilities, lack of resources, and effects related to the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. This section describes this work's theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions.

The theoretical significance of this study was used to contribute to the theoretical underpinnings of the JD-R theory of burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001) by studying and analyzing the experiences of adjunct professors at higher education institutions. This study was used to contribute to the problem of burnout by confirming if there is a relationship between heavy job demands, lack of resources, and burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. By exploring the experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions, common themes were collected, which led to a theoretical

understanding of burnout's psychological, physiological, and social impact as theorized by Demerouti et al. (2001) that adjunct professors face.

This study's empirical significance was comparable to prior research on burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2018; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach, 2019; Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017). This study sought to illustrate that adjunct professor burnout is a severe risk at higher education institutions, which results in poor psychological and physiological health and well-being. Moreover, the findings of this research produced data that was critical in emphasizing the unfortunate losses of staffing and resources that higher education institutions suffer due to the burnout experienced by adjunct professors (Alves et al., 2019; Flaherty, 2020b; Hakanen et al., 2006; Henkel & Haley, 2020; Herman et al., 2018; Kahu & Nelson, 2018; McClure & Fryar, 2022; Schnaider-Levi et al., 2017; Suh, 2019; Umpierrez, 2021). Lastly, because there has not been much qualitative phenomenological research on adjunct professor burnout at higher education institutions, this study hoped to fill in the gaps by using the results of open-ended surveys, reflective journals, and semi-structured individual interviews.

The practical significance of this study sought to contribute to advancing the understanding of burnout, precisely, job demands, burnout symptoms, lack of resources, and disengagement (Demerouti et al., 2001; Guntupalli et al., 2014; Herman et al., 2018; Schnaider-Levi et al., 2017; Suh, 2019) among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. Finally, the study sought to help adjunct professors and higher education officials make structural and environmental changes that will benefit adjunct professors' psychological and physiological well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach, 2019; Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017).

Research Questions

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. A research question is a statement that is free of ambiguity and should describe the phenomena the researcher intends to study clearly and concisely (Kivunja, 2016). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the goal of a research question is to limit the purpose to several questions addressed throughout the study and provide a structure to the research (Kross & Giust, 2019). The central and sub-questions include:

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of adjunct professors experiencing burnout at higher education institutions?

Sub-Question One

How do adjunct professors at higher education institutions describe the job demands contributing to their burnout?

Sub-Question Two

How do adjunct professors at higher education institutions describe the lack of resources contributing to their burnout?

Sub-Question Three

How do adjunct professors at higher education institutions describe their experience with burnout and its symptoms?

Sub-Question Four

How do adjunct professors at higher education institutions describe their experience with disengagement?

Definitions

This section clarifies the research by providing key terms and definitions of the phenomenon under examination.

1. Adjunct Professor- An adjunct professor is a non-tenure-track, seasonal, temporary, or part-time paid per course (Boysen, 2020; Carlton, 2021; Snook et al., 2019). According to Boysen (2020), adjunct professors are not considered full-time faculty members in terms of pay, benefits, support, or professional development opportunities. Adjunct professors have no job security and might be unemployed after the semester (Carlton, 2021).
2. Administration- Administration or administrators refers to individuals in a management, supervisory, or leadership position (Bowles, 2022) who works closely with faculty members. Administrators give people ways to effectively question decisions, challenge assumptions, and bring about change (Bowles, 2022).
3. Burnout- Burnout is a state of mental exhaustion caused by an excessive effort to meet unrealistic expectations, a sense of psychological and physiological resource depletion, and fatigue (Freudenberger, 1974). Moreover, burnout results from prolonged responses to chronic interpersonal stressors at the workplace (Maslach, 1976).
4. Disengagement- Disengagement (isolation, withdrawal, separation from others) is a chronic element of burnout resulting in cynicism, lack of enthusiasm, and a negative attitude and behavior toward one's work, work content, and work objects (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; 2018; Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Schaufeli, 2017).

5. Exhaustion is characterized by feeling emotionally drained, frustrated, overextended, and used up (Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017; McClure, 2020; Schaufeli, 2017).
6. Faculty-Faculty or faculty members refers to a school or higher education institution's professors, lecturers, researchers, and academic or teaching staff (Sharma, 2017).
7. Job demands are psychological, physiological, social, or organizational characteristics, such as work pressure and emotional demands that need sustained psychological and physiological effort or skills (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).
8. Job resources are psychological, physiological, social, or organizational components that contribute to achieving work goals; reducing job demands and the associated physiological cost; stimulating personal growth; and learning and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job resources potentiate employee psychological and physiological wellness (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).
9. Tenured professors: Tenured professors typically enter the academic job market after acquiring the highest degree, typically a Ph.D., and occupy positions such as assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor (Carlton, 2021). According to Carlton (2021), tenured professors at higher education institutions possess full-time positions with job security. Professors with tenure receive more excellent pay, perform field-specific research, attend academic conferences, and serve on committees (Carlton, 2021).

Summary

Adjunct professors are educators hired part-time, temporary, seasonal, or contractual rather than gaining tenure and long-term employment at higher education institutions. They are ranked lower than the highest professorship level (Carlton, 2021; Diehl, 2016; Meier, 2019;

Simmons, 2020). Within the context of historical, social, and theoretical foundations, the background of this research detailed the most important literature about burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. The problem is that adjunct professors at higher education institutions are increasingly experiencing work-related burnout symptoms (Carroll, 2002; de Onis, 2021; García-Rivera et al., 2022; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Mitchell, 2020). The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions.

The importance of this research lies in the fact that it contributed to the existing body of knowledge to better understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions from a practical (Demerouti et al., 2001), theoretical (Demerouti et al., 2001), and empirical (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach, 2019; Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017) perspective. Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that the objective of a research question is to restrict the purpose of the study to a few questions answered throughout the research and to offer a framework for the examination (Kross & Giust, 2019). This study was guided by the problem and purpose statements, which both influenced the research questions. Lastly, definitions clarified the study and gave readers context for the terms used.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The work of seminal authors on burnout, notably for adjunct professors in higher education institutions, was systematically reviewed and critically argued in a synthesized manner. The review began with the theoretical framework that guided the central research and sub-research questions and examined the well-being of adjunct professors at higher education institutions. Additionally, the literature review included an analysis of the growing problem of burnout in many professional sectors, an understanding of the nature of burnout, definitions of burnout and its antecedents, causes, and effects, and burnout at higher education institutions. Finally, this chapter concluded with a discussion on burnout among adjunct professors, their roles and responsibilities as higher education educators, the lack of resources they face, and the critical effect on them, the students, and the institutions where they work.

Theoretical Framework

This transcendental phenomenological study investigated the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions using the job demands-resource (JD-R) theory (Demerouti et al., 2001). In 2001, Demerouti et al. (2001) developed what is known as the JD-R model (which later became the JD-R theory) to understand burnout. JD-R theory is a versatile theoretical framework for identifying critical aspects of the work environment, as well as explaining and predicting a wide variety of work-related outcomes, most notably employee stress, burnout, work engagement, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and productivity (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Zábrodská et al., 2018).

Demerouti et al. (2001) suggest the JD-R theory and postulate that any job demand is primarily responsible for health impairment, while any job resource (see Appendix E for an overview) (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). lead to increased motivation and commitment to work and the organization (Demerouti et al., 2001; Lesener et al., 2020). JD-R theory proposes two broad job processes (see Figure 1) that influence employee well-being: job demands and job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Lesener et al., 2019; Mudrak et al., 2018; Schaufeli, 2017). Job demands may wreak havoc on one's health. For example, an intense workload leads to continual overtaking and burnout (Tummers & Bakker, 2021). In contrast, employment resources result in a motivational process: high resources lead to higher motivation, culminating in more work engagement and no burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001; Tummers & Bakker, 2021).

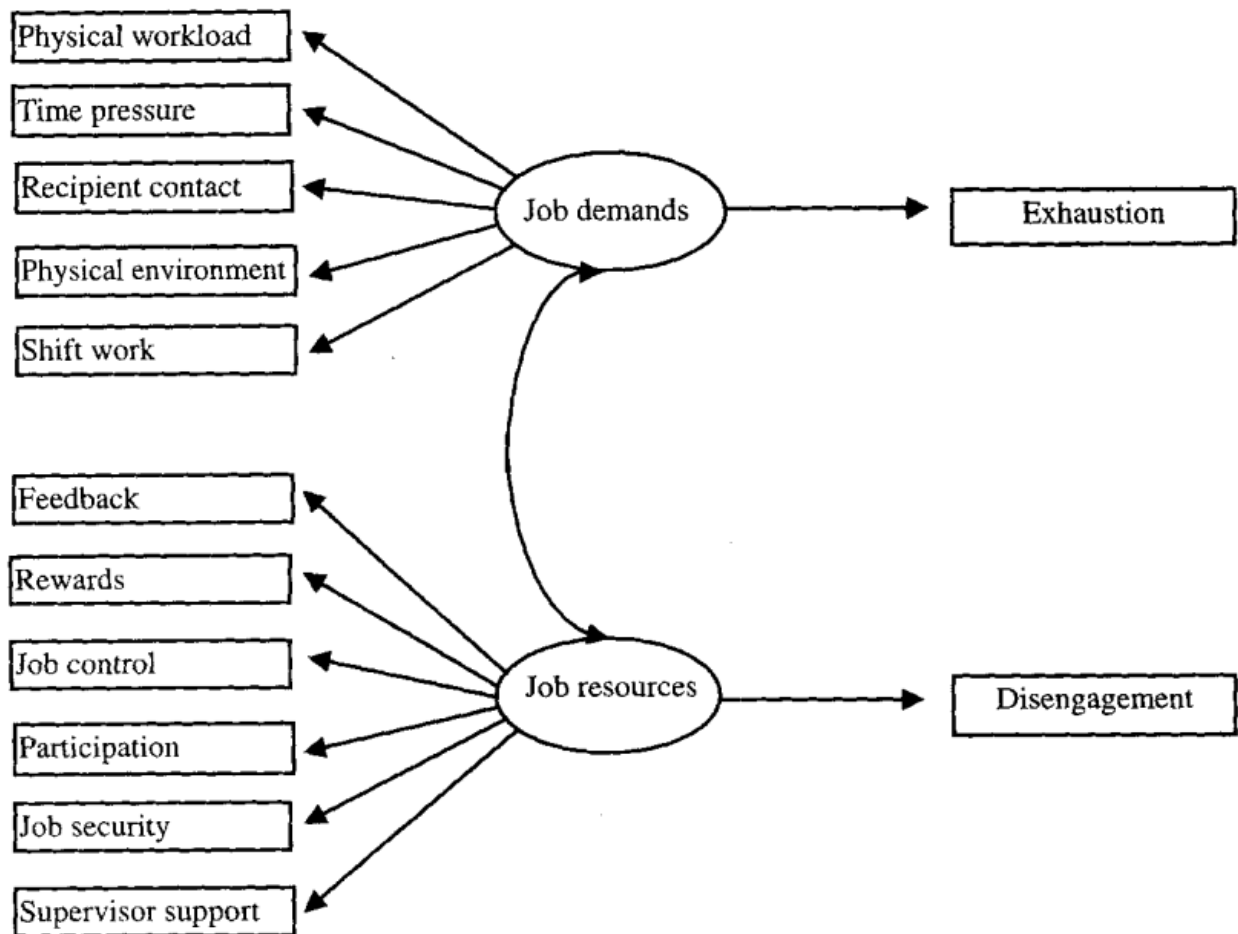
In the first process, job demands are those parts of a job that are psychological, physiological, social, or organizational and necessitate continual exertion on the part of the employee, as well as the attendant psychological and physiological toll (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli, 2017). Psychological, physiological, social, or organizational are the negative aspects of one's job that drain energy, such as overwork, disagreement with colleagues, and a lack of job security for the future (Schaufeli, 2017). Pressure at work and challenging contacts with clients or customers are two examples of this (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In the following process (see Figure 1), researchers such as Bakker and Demerouti (2018) and Demerouti et al. (2001) define job resources as those components of the job that are effective in attaining work goals, lower job demands, and accompanying physiological costs, or foster personal growth and

learning. Autonomy, skill, variety, feedback on performance, and opportunity for advancement are examples of job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In sum, demanding characteristics of work (i.e., excessive job demands) result in persistent burden and exhaustion. In contrast, a lack of resources makes it more challenging to satisfy work requirements, leading to withdrawal behavior. Consequently, disengagement from employment is the long-term result of this withdrawal.

According to JD-R theory, Bakker and Demerouti (2007) found that even highly demanding jobs can be more tolerable for employees if their employers provide adequate resources to assist them. JD-R theory shows a direct correlation between increased stress and burnout and a lack of resources at the workplace (Bakker et al., 2014). In contrast, adequate job resources can counteract the adverse effects of high work demands and promote employee engagement and motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Demerouti et al., 2001).

Figure 1.

Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) Theory of Burnout



Note. This figure demonstrates the two processes of the jobs demands-resources (JD-R) theory of burnout (job demands) and (job resources). From “The Job Demands-Resources Model of Burnout,” by E. Demerouti, A. B. Bakker, F. Nachreiner, and W. B. Schaufeli, 2001, The job demands-resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 499-512. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.499>. Copyright 2001 by the American Psychological Association. Figure reprinted with permission (see Appendix J).

The JD-R theory is now the most often used framework in occupational health psychology for examining the association between job characteristics and employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Kaiser et al., 2020; Lesener et al., 2019; Lesener et al., 2020). JD-

R also explains how an organization's environment affects employees' well-being and performance (Tummers & Bakker, 2021). Lesener et al. (2020) observed that a simple Google Scholar search in April 2020 revealed over 20,000 results for the JD-R theory, compared to 4,200 hits for a comparable model known as the Job Demand-Control Model (JD-C).

The JD-R theory of burnout, precisely how job demands and lack of job resources can lead to burnout of adjunct professors at higher education institutions, guided the central research question and sub-questions and be used to understand the lived experiences of burnout of adjunct professors at higher education institutions. As part of organizational development, JD-R is well-equipped to serve as a guide for improving employee engagement and preventing work burnout because it is comprehensive, as it includes both a positive focus (work engagement) as well as a negative focus (burnout), according to Schaufeli (2017). As an added benefit, the JD-R theory can also be used in various settings, including higher education institutions, due to its flexibility and ability to incorporate a wide range of occupational and personal characteristics and outcomes (Schaufeli, 2017).

The job demands-resource theory was utilized to understand and analyze burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. Still, it was also used to direct this phenomenological research study to contribute current information to the existing literature. To accomplish this, JD-R guided the research questions. In addition, JD-R served as a guide for the data collection and analysis throughout the open-ended surveys, reflective journals, and semi-structured individual interviews.

Related Literature

The problem is that adjunct professors at higher education institutions are increasingly experiencing work-related burnout symptoms (Carroll, 2002; de Onis, 2021; García-Rivera et

al., 2022; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Mitchell, 2020). Adjunct professors are educators at higher education institutions who are hired on a part-time, temporary, or contractual basis rather than being given tenure and a permanent post and are ranked below the highest level of a professorship (Diehl, 2016; Meier, 2019; Simmons, 2020). In most higher education institutions, hiring adjunct professors has become the standard (Fjortoft et al., 2011; Lee, 2019; Manternach, 2020; Selingo, 2013) because they are less expensive to retain than full-time tenured professors, and they provide greater fiscal flexibility (Bettinger & Long, 2010; Diehl, 2016; Fjortoft et al., 2011; Selingo, 2013). Nevertheless, with the trend of hiring adjunct professors comes plenty of job demands, creating burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017). Burnout among these professors can be brought on by the demands of the job and a lack of resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014; Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Demerouti et al., 2001).

Lever et al. (2017), Maslach (1976), and Urbina-Garcia (2020) postulate that professors have become burned-out in recent years because of recent developments at higher education institutions, such as expectations to achieve academic and non-academic goals, adhere to strict deadlines and fulfill other curricular commitments (Teles et al., 2020). Adjunct professors experience burnout as a result of being overworked (Drozdowski, 2021; Mintz, 2019; Mohamed and Abed, 2017; Nica, 2018; Williams, 1997), underappreciated (Doane Student Media, 2013; Rodrigues, 2020; Thomas, 2018), and overcommitted (Administrator, 2015; Douglas-Gabriel, 2019; Mintz, 2019) to their jobs.

Conversely, low income, little social recognition, disagreements among colleagues, huge class sizes, ambiguity, learning challenges, and negative student behaviors have

contributed to burnout among adjunct professors (Diehl, 2016; Fiorilli et al., 2015; Rocha et al., 2020). There is a dearth of research on adjunct professor burnout (Danaei, 2019; LaBree, 2017; Makarenko & Andrews, 2017; Pyram, 2016), which presents a problem, given the substantial number of adjunct professors employed to teach at higher education institutions. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions.

Increasing Problem of Burnout Across Professions

Burnout syndrome is among the most severe occupational health concerns in various occupations requiring interaction with others, and it is on the rise (García-Rivera et al., 2022; Gómez-Urquiza et al., 2017). Some communities have reported burnout prevalence rates as high as 69% (Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017). According to Della Valle et al. (2006), work-related burnout is becoming increasingly popular. Burnout has become a common occurrence at the workplace as a result of organizational factors that necessitate constant psychological, physiological, or emotional effort on the part of employees (Demerouti et al., 2001; García-Rivera et al., 2022; Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Rocha et al., 2020). Among susceptible jobs, physicians, mental health practitioners, chief executive officers (CEOs), nurses, and educators are the most prone to experience burnout (Gómez-Urquiza et al., 2017; Kelly, 2021; Patel et al., 2019; Posluns & Gall, 2020).

Physician burnout is a growing problem that can potentially harm modern medicine (Patel et al., 2019). This growing problem affects doctors, patients, and the healthcare system (Patel et al., 2018; Patel et al., 2019). There is a growing awareness of the mental well-being of physicians and the effects of burnout in the healthcare system, according to researchers Patel et al. (2019). As an example, Shanafelt et al. (2015) performed a countrywide study in 2014 and

found that 54.4% of US physicians experienced at least one symptom of burnout, compared to 45.5% in 2011, along with a decrease in satisfaction with work-life balance at (48.5% vs. 40.9 %) from 2011 to 2014 (Patel et al., 2018; Patel et al., 2019; Shanafelt et al., 2015).

Burnout is common in mental health practitioners and can severely impact their clinical practice (Posluns & Gall, 2020). According to a recent study, 49% of 443 clinical and counseling psychologists worldwide experienced moderate-to-high burnout in their work (Simionato et al., 2019; Simpson et al., 2019). Thirteen percent of behavioral health workers are at risk of compassion fatigue or burnout, while 50% of counseling or clinical trainees report having burnout (Posluns & Gall, 2020; Sprang et al., 2007).

CEOs may be more susceptible to burnout in the age of globalization, growing competitiveness, increasingly complex government rules, and repeating economic downturns (Sirén et al., 2018). Burnout among CEOs is a new pandemic, according to Kelly (2021). Some 37% of CEOs are now working more significant hours than before the pandemic, according to FlexJobs and Mental Health America (MHA) research (Kelly, 2021; Reynolds, 2022). The constant expectations may exacerbate CEOs' emotional weariness and depersonalization from the strategy process from varied stakeholders to improve performance and the continuous, intense, and unanticipated interactions with aspects of the task environment.

Regarding health care, nurses are most likely to suffer from burnout (Cañadas-De la Fuente et al., 2015; Gómez-Urquiza et al., 2017). Many psychological and physiological demands are placed on nurses, which can be summed up as long shifts and emotional stress (Chen & Chen, 2018; Jarzynkowski et al., 2021). For example, Bagozzi (1992) used the structural equation model and hierarchical regression analysis to examine data from a survey of 807 Taiwanese nurses working in one of the country's largest hospitals (Chen & Chen, 2018).

The findings explained that job pressures have a direct effect on nurses' levels of burnout, and it has also been empirically shown that the JD-R theory supports this finding, which indicates that when individuals view their jobs as demanding, undesirable effects such as burnout are likely to occur (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Chen & Chen, 2018; Demerouti et al., 2001).

This transcendental phenomenological study sought to understand how this same burnout pattern holds for an often overlooked professional: the adjunct professor at higher education institutions. A burnout study in 1998 among 73 adjunct professors working at higher education institutions indicated that 93% were burned-out (Byrne, 1998; Hubbard-Jackson & Boyer, 2019). A similar study by Brown (2009) found that 59.4% of adjunct professors had experienced burnout (Hubbard-Jackson & Boyer, 2019). The Chronicle of Higher Education surveyed adjunct professors at four-year and two-year higher education institutions around the country, and it was discovered that 55% of them were feeling significant levels of emotional exhaustion (Mitchell, 2020). Compared to 2019, the proportion of adjunct professors who reported feeling burned-out doubled. Adjunct professors reported burnout at 69%, compared to 32% in 2019, according to a poll (Fidelity Investments, 2021; Mitchell, 2020).

Understanding the Nature of Burnout

The early research on burnout was experimental (Cherniss, 1980; Edelwich & Brodsky, 1980; Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980; Maslach & Leiter, 2016), highly bottom-up (Maslach, 2015; Maslach et al., 2012), and grounded in individuals' experiences, relying heavily on qualitative methodologies (Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Pines & Aronson, 1981). Burnout at the workplace is a common phenomenon. As evidence that the burnout phenomena became commonplace, Bakker and Demerouti (2017) and Demerouti et al. (2001) postulated that it became possible to establish it as a sustained response to persistent interpersonal

pressures the work. Burnout has long been recognized as an occupational hazard in various people-oriented professions, including human services, medicine, and education (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The World Health Organization (WHO) included burnout in the International Classification of Diseases in 2019 due to persistent work-related stress that had not been addressed (Demerouti et al., 2021; García-Rivera et al., 2022; WHO, 2019). It causes emotional exhaustion estimated to affect up to 50% of public and service sector workers (García-Rivera et al., 2022; Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

What is Burnout?

As with stress, experts have not agreed on a definitive definition of burnout (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2019). Because the terms stress and burnout are often used interchangeably, researchers (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Pines & Aronson, 1988) identified burnout as distinguishable. However, stress may be the primary factor contributing to burnout. Like Selye (1956), in 1976, Maslach defined burnout because of a chronic and prolonged reaction to unresolved interpersonal and occupational stress. That is why the concept of burnout has prompted studies into occupational stress and burnout disorders (Schaufeli et al., 2009).

In the early 1970s and 1980s, Herbert Freudenberger, a psychologist, popularized the term burnout in mainstream culture. Freudenberger (1974) investigated burnout due to his colleagues' exhaustion and lack of motivation at the workplace (Fontes, 2020; Freudenberger, 1974; NASEM, 2019). Burnout was coined by Freudenberger (1974) to refer to psychological symptoms that can manifest as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished accomplishment (Fontes, 2020; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Schaufeli et al., 2009). Consequently,

Freudenberger (1974) defined burnout as exhaustion caused by an excessive effort to meet unrealistic expectations, a sense of psychological and physiological resource depletion, and fatigue. Freudenberger (1974) described burnout as a feeling of mental stress, violent abuse, exhaustion, or failure. Additionally, Freudenberger (1974) suggests that these elements result from an individual's unrealistic expectations by which an individual defines him or herself or the expectations imposed by society's values.

Christina Maslach suggested the most influential description of burnout, a social psychologist who studied workers in demanding occupations to determine how they dealt with disappointments and frustrations on the job using learned defense strategies such as detached concern and dehumanizing (Maslach, 1982; Maslach et al., 2001). Workplace burnout is a long-term psychological condition resulting from a long-term response to chronic interpersonal stressors (Maslach, 2019; Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017). So, the long-term mismatch between job demands and employee resources leads to burnout. Burnout was first studied in an exploratory fashion, utilizing primarily qualitative methods (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). This process began with in-depth semi-structured individual interviews with human and health care professionals, including physicians, nurses, psychiatrists, and hospice counselors, and derived three themes from this qualitative approach (Farber, 1991; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2009).

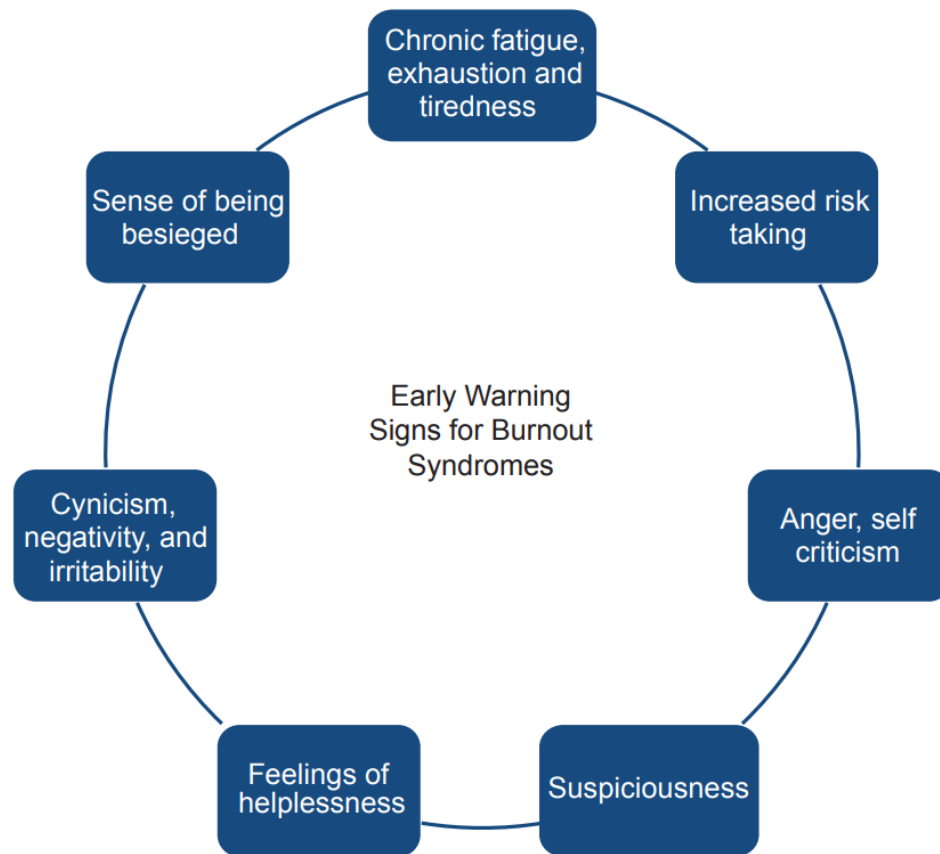
Numerous practitioners interviewed experienced negative attitudes and perceptions toward their patients and described themselves as beyond emotionally exhausted and drained during the semi-structured individual interviews (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Maslach et al., 1996; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2009). Smothering or extinguishment are metaphors used by Schaufeli et al. (2009) to describe burnout. For instance, when a fire is

started, it can only continue to burn if there are enough resources to keep it going. Overall, burned-out employees lose the ability to make significant contributions (Schaufeli et al., 2009).

In their book *Banishing Burnout*, Maslach and Leiter (2005) propose that burnout is much more than feeling down or having a dreadful day. It is a chronic state of being uncoordinated with one's job, which can result in a life-altering crisis. From their research (El-Ibiary et al., 2017; Guntupalli et al., 2014; Maslach, 1976, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017; Maslach et al., 2001; McClure, 2020; Schaufeli, 2017) discovers three overlapping elements of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or withdrawal, and reduced personal accomplishment, which can occur among individuals who work in the service industry with other individuals. Figure 2 illustrates some early warning signals of burnout syndrome (Guntupalli et al., 2014). As a result of workplace experiences, burnout causes employees to feel ineffective, exhausted, and disconnected from work and individuals, resulting in an unproductive relationship with work (Leiter & Maslach, 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017).

Figure 2.

Early Warning Signs of Burnout



Note. Early warning signals of burnout syndrome as a result of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or withdrawal, and reduced personal accomplishment. From “Burnout in the Intensive Care Unit Professionals” by K. K. Guntupalli, S. Wachtel, A. Mallampalli, and S. Surani, 2014, *Indian Society of Critical Care Medicine*, 18(3), 139–143.

<https://doi.org/10.4103/0972-5229.128703>. Figure reprinted with permission by Creative Commons. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

Antecedents of Burnout

The literature suggested significant work-related burnout issues among employees (Bayes et al., 2021; Gavelin et al., 2021; Spiller et al., 2021). Clinical work with burned-out professionals indicates that workplace stressors like time pressure, long workdays, interpersonal conflicts, and excessive workloads have been connected with an increased risk of

burnout in a wide range of professions and industries (Alsalhe et al., 2021; da Costa & Pinto, 2017; Pines & Keinan, 2005). For example, an excessive workload contributes to burnout by draining an individual's capacity to meet job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). Maslach and Leiter (2016) argued that the employee has few opportunities to rest, recover, rebalance, and restore when work overload becomes a chronic job situation.

Consequences of Burnout

Employees' health is recognized to be influenced by their working environment, which may be either beneficial or detrimental (Salvagioni et al., 2017; Seidler et al., 2014). Burnout has been linked to a variety of negative feelings toward one's work, such as job withdrawal, poor organizational commitment, high employee turnover, the intention to leave the job, and a decrease in productivity within the organization (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach, 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Maslach et al., 1996, Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Zábrodská et al., 2018). The consequences of burnout have also been associated with damaging the employee's psychological and physiological health (Martínez et al., 2020; Salvagioni et al., 2017). Employees who exhibit signs of exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment may negatively influence themselves and the organization they are employed at (Maslach, 1976, 2001, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017).

Organizational Impact. Work-related burnout can affect an organization's bottom line by forcing employees to miss deadlines and quotas or accomplish tasks at an unacceptable rate (Coplan et al., 2018; Deguchi et al., 2017; Fgi, 2011; Leitão et al., 2021). Because of this, it should be no surprise that burned-out workers produce work of poorer quality. Their concentration may be impaired, they may commit more errors, or they may show less pride in

their work. Burnout costs businesses and the government billions in lost productivity due to increasing absences (Khan et al., 2016; Simionato et al., 2019). Absenteeism contributes to burnout by causing employees to take more sick and personal days with or without justification. As a result, an organization's profitability and productivity suffer because there are additional expenses in hiring temporary laborers, and its employees' trust in the company plummets (Khan et al., 2016; Salvagioni et al., 2017; Vignoli et al., 2016). Presenteeism refers to physiologically present employees at work but not necessarily psychologically or spiritually. Most of the time, they are either late, out of the office, or taking many breaks, making it challenging to accomplish their jobs well. The JD-R theory suggests that presenteeism is a result of burnout caused by excessive job demands, as well as a lack of resources at the workplace that reduces work engagement and increases burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; McGregor et al., 2016; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Maslach (1976) notes that burnout affects a person's perception of themselves and others, resulting in a lack of concern and feelings for coworkers, implying that burnout has a social context. Employees experiencing burnout are frequently more pessimistic, cynical, irritable, unpleasant, and socially inept (Fgi, 2011; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Mayo Clinic, 2021). They may complain frequently or tell those around them how much they dislike their job. Burnout can have a significant effect on the overall work environment, team, and organization overall.

Personal Impact. Work-related burnout can harm the employees' psychological and physiological health. The indications of burnout are unique to each person. Alves et al. (2019) posit that when work expectations are high, and job resources are low, burnout manifests in a negative quality of life, decreased focus and memory, a decline in physiological appearance,

and poor work quality. When individuals are emotionally exhausted due to various circumstances, Schulz et al. (2019) assert that they worry and ruminate, exacerbating burnout symptoms. Burnout has also been linked to life-threatening diseases like hypercholesterolemia, type 2 diabetes, and coronary heart disease (Martínez et al., 2020; Salvagioni et al., 2017).

Burnout may harm the immune system, increasing the likelihood of contracting viral and bacterial illnesses (Leiter & Maslach, 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Other physiological symptoms may include neck and shoulder pain, high blood pressure, ulcer, nausea, respiratory problems, and musculoskeletal pain, excessive weariness (Aronsson et al., 2017; da Costa & Pinto, 2017; Human Resource, 2021; Mohamed & Abed, 2017; Rožman et al., 2019; Selye, 1956). Leiter (2005) asserts that burnout leads to headaches, gastrointestinal disorders, and sleep disorders. Sleep disorders like insomnia are strongly linked to burnout, according to research. Insomnia affects 55% of public service employees, followed by nightmares at 40% (Barello et al., 2020; Deguchi et al., 2017). Several cross-sectional studies have found a link between burnout and alcohol abuse and a lack of physiological activity, mainly when burnout is severe (Ahola et al., 2005, 2006; Salvagioni et al., 2017).

Employees' mental and emotional well-being is adversely impacted by burnout. An absence of enthusiasm and motivation, dissatisfaction, ineffectiveness, a loss of humor, eating disorders, indifference, insecurity, low self-esteem, indecision, emotional outburst, and negativity may be seen over time (Aronsson et al., 2017; da Costa & Pinto, 2017; Human Resource, 2021; Mohamed & Abed, 2017; Rožman et al., 2019; Selye, 1956). Sabagh et al. (2018) also identify depression, anxiety, poor mental health, and disengagement from professors in higher education institutions as burnout symptoms.

Over time, burnout at the workplace tends to take hold gradually, impacting the individual in a manner that they may not even be aware of (Western Governors University [WGU], 2019). WGU (2019) states that depression is one of several symptoms of burnout impacting workers' psychological health. In a meta-analysis of 14 studies that examined the impact of personal burnout and depression involving data from 12,417 participants from six countries, Bianchi et al. (2021) found a significant correlation between workplace burnout and depression. On the other hand, some researchers have noted that burnout may be seen as both work-related and depressive without any inherent contradiction (Bianchi et al., 2015). Research literature proposes that workplace insurmountable chronic stress can lead to burnout and depression symptoms (Bianchi et al., 2015; Bianchi et al., 2021; Rydmark et al., 2006; Schonfeld & Chang, 2017). There is also strong evidence that working conditions that are stressful psychologically can cause depression and related disorders (Madsen et al., 2017; Melchior et al., 2007; Schonfeld et al., 2018), such as weariness and lack of energy, outward irritation and rage, paranoid thinking, cynical hostility, loss of emotional connection, diminished empathy, and interpersonal disengagement (Bianchi et al., 2021).

According to Bayram et al. (2010), burnout has been correlated to depression, although several authors have expressed doubt as to whether burnout causes depression or depression causes burnout (Schonfeld et al., 2019; Soares et al., 2007). One's mental health is negatively impacted by work-related burnout, which increases the likelihood of depression. Moreover, burnout is a depression brought on by excessive job demands, and over the last several years, it has become more common in higher education institutions. Depression has a similar impact on a person's day-to-day life as burnout does; when it does so, the individual will experience harmful symptoms that adversely affect them personally and professionally.

Burnout in Higher Education

Higher education institutions in the U.S. are becoming increasingly burned-out (Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017). Due to the prevalence of symptoms among professors, burnout has become the most discussed mental health issue in societies today (Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017). Many are experiencing symptoms described in the JD-R theory of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). A significant level of burnout is plaguing higher education professors across the country. In an online survey of 1,122 professors from two-and four-year higher education institutions across the U.S., 70% of participants indicated they felt stressed in 2020, more than double the number of participants in 2019 at 39%, while 35% of professors felt irritated in 2020, compared with only 12% in 2019 (Fidelity Investments, 2021; Mitchell, 2020). In addition, 70% of participants said they were exhausted, compared to 32% in 2019; (Gewin, 2021; Shamrell, 2021; Umpierrez, 2021).

Professors are dissatisfied with their jobs, and a majority (55%) have considered changing occupations or retiring early (Gewin, 2021; Malesic, 2021; Mitchell, 2020). Tenured professors contemplating a career change make up a third (35%) of this group. According to Mitchell (2020), at a state university, a tenured professor in his 50s admitted that daily he has considered retiring due to burnout. In addition, this tenured professor feels envious of colleagues who have already retired or are nearing retirement age.

Tenured and non-tenured professors also reported low levels of career satisfaction: 40% of tenured professors and 33% of non-tenured professors (Mitchell, 2020). However, they commend their institution for its reaction to the pandemic. Mitchell (2020) emphasizes that

over half (53%) of professors reported that their institution places a premium on their safety, and many indicated that their institution attempted to assist their work and personal lives during the pandemic. Around 50% said their institution's efforts to help professors in their career and personal life during the COVID-19 outbreak were excellent (Shamrell, 2021). These poll findings demonstrate a problem with burnout at higher education institutions, which has left professors questioning whether they even want to continue as educators (Mitchell, 2020).

Adjunct Professors Experience Burnout

Adjunct professors are overworked, stressed, and exhausted at higher education institutions (Carroll, 2002; de Onis, 2021; García-Rivera et al., 2022; Mitchell, 2020). In recent years, many higher education institutions have become more reliant on adjunct professors (Nica, 2018), increasing the likelihood that they will experience burnout (Ericksen, 2021). To keep up with the constantly changing challenges higher education institutions face, adjunct professors have been shifting, adjusting, and working tirelessly and faster than ever before (Mitchell, 2020; Nica, 2018). Consequently, according to Alves et al. (2019), Flaherty (2020b), and Umpierrez (2021), adjunct professor burnout is a real threat at higher education institutions, resulting in a potentially significant loss of personnel and resources.

Who are Adjunct Professors?

W. Norton Grubb refers to an adjunct professor as the invisible professor (Grubb & Associates, 1999). Adjunct professors are credentialed higher education professors hired on a part-time contractual basis rather than given tenure and a permanent post (Diehl, 2016; Meier, 2019; Simmons, 2020). Although the AAUP has a long-standing contingent faculty policy that seeks to advance academic freedom and shared governance, improve working conditions, and promote economic security for adjunct professors who teach in higher education institutions.

Many higher education institutions still refer to adjunct professors as contingent faculty, part-time or full-time faculty appointed off the tenure track, clinical faculty, lecturers, non-senate faculty, teacher's assistants, or instructional assistants (AAUP, 2003; AAUP, 2021). Those job titles all have in common: uncertain jobs that do not get enough support, have a low job security rate and provide minimal safeguards for academic freedom (AAUP, 2003).

Cuyahoga Community College [Tri-C] (2018) defines adjunct professors as part-time educational counselors recruited for one or two semesters or one academic year. Unless specified in a contract, adjunct professors are not eligible to rank advancement, professional development leave, tenure, seniority, special consideration or credit toward eventual employment, or any other college employment privilege or benefit. Adjunct professors working at higher education institutions indicate the uncertainty of their status and position of being undervalued and overlooked (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Wagoner, 2019). Snook et al. (2019) describe adjunct professors as sessional (temporary part-time) faculty with minimal pedagogy training. Being overlooked, undervalued, and invisible is critical to understanding how adjunct professors at higher education institutions experience burnout (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Grubb & Associates, 1999; Wagoner, 2019).

The Trend Toward Adjunct Professor

Adjunct professors make up the majority of faculty at higher education institutions (Childress, 2019) and have been on a steady upswing over the last 40 years (Danaei, 2019; Drozdowski, 2021). Adjunct professors accounted for around 30% of adjunct faculty members in 1975; however, other polls show that the proportion has increased to up to 70% in recent years (Anthony et al., 2020; Brennan & Magness, 2018; Childress, 2019; Douglas-Gabriel, 2019; Drozdowski, 2021; Henkel & Haley, 2020; Lumpkin, 2022; McKenna, 2015; Weingarten

et al., 2020). When tuition and fees at higher education institutions started to rise faster than the inflation rate, private loans became the principal source of financial support for students from middle-and lower-class families (Mitchell et al., 2019). As a result, governmental financing for higher education institutions began to be reduced. Consequently, to save money, such institutions replaced tenured professors with a less expensive alternative: adjunct professors (Henkel & Haley, 2020; Hill, 2021; Inside Scholar Community, 2022; Mitchell, 2020).

Increasingly, higher education institutions are hiring adjunct professors because they are less expensive to keep than tenured faculty members as they provide more economic freedom and a more flexible way to staff courses (Bettinger & Long, 2010; Diehl, 2016; Fjortoft et al., 2011; Henkel & Haley, 2020; Hyer et al., 2020; Levin et al., 2011; Liu & Zhang, 2013; Lucas, 2016; Selingo, 2013; Wagoner, 2019). For several years, the goal in academia has been to get more work from adjunct professors at a low cost (Manternach, 2020). Higher education institutions place a high premium on adjunct professors and have become the standard (Fjortoft et al., 2011; Henkel & Haley, 2020; Hyer et al., 2020; Kaiser Health News, 2020; Lee, 2019). When higher education institutions are forced to choose between hiring full-time professors and discontinuing a program, they frequently see hiring more adjunct professors as a viable alternative to teaching courses (Diehl, 2016; Henkel & Haley, 2020; Inside Scholar Community, 2022).

Advantages of Being an Adjunct Professor

Adjunct professors are significant at higher education institutions (Henkel & Haley, 2020). Being an adjunct has several advantages, such as the opportunity to work at numerous higher education institutions, not having to publish research, having other employment at the same time, spending more time with family, and assisting students in achieving their academic

goals (Henkel & Haley, 2020; Manternach, 2020). Adjunct professors can devote their time to teaching and curriculum development rather than committee or department work. Therefore, adjunct professors can positively affect the students they teach (Henkel & Haley, 2020; The Editorial Team, 2020).

In recent years, adjunct professors' flexibility has shown to be particularly well-suited to online programs, as they are not constrained by classroom space or faculty availability (Starcher & Mandernach, 2016). Since 2000, enrollment in U.S. higher education institutions has more than tripled, with 1.6 million students enrolled in 2014 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016). In 2020, around 18.99 million students were in higher education institutions throughout the U.S. (Duffin, 2022). This increased enrollment, combined with the growth of online education, has increased the demand for classes taught entirely online (Allen & Seaman, 2016; Barnett, 2017); therefore, creating a need for adjunct professors to facilitate these classes (Barnett, 2017; Starcher & Mandernach, 2016).

Adjunct Professor's Responsibilities

Adjunct professors have heavier teaching responsibilities and larger course sections than tenured professors, yet they are paid less (AAUP, 2003; Nica, 2018). Excessive workloads, unreasonable deadlines, and a lack of time to grade and provide feedback to students have led to burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions during the last several years (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Gillett-Swan, 2017; Glass, 2017; Kaiser Health News, 2020; Kelliher, 2022). From basic writing to graduate seminars, adjunct professors teach at all higher education levels and are responsible for similar instructional obligations as tenured professors, such as creating and managing syllabi, ordering textbooks, writing lectures, and grading exams, papers, and quizzes (McKenna, 2015).

Adjunct professors' responsibilities may include research, outreach, and administration duties (Alves et al., 2019); preparation of lectures, discussions, and assignments; teaching graduate and undergraduate students in a particular field of expertise (in person or online); tracking student progress; writing class evaluations; and conducting statistical analyses of student data (Alves et al., 2019; The Editorial Team, 2020). Additionally, providing guidance on how students can be successful and meet their goals; and staying current on developments and changes within the course field are additional responsibilities that come with being an adjunct professor (Alves et al., 2019; The Editorial Team, 2020). Adjunct professors help to fill all higher education institution's course sections, and without them to cover a substantial portion of the institution's courses, institutions would be unable to serve all the students that apply to open-admission institutions (Anthony et al., 2020).

According to Tri-C (2018), a community college maintains that adjunct professors' duties may include developing and delivering tailored courses, assisting students with academic concerns, and participating in college-sponsored conferences and departmental meetings. For the time and effort adjunct professors devote to helping students achieve their goals, adjunct professors often get wages much below what their experience and degree would suggest (Flaherty, 2018; Kelliher, 2022; Nica, 2018; Ryan et al., 2017). Additionally, adjunct professors often do not have the resources they need to do their jobs well, which could be because they do not have enough pedagogical training. They have responsibilities outside the classroom, do not have a clearly defined support system, or they must avoid student complaints to keep their jobs or be considered for a full-time position (Danaei, 2019; Kezar et al., 2018). As if the lack of resources was not bad enough, developmental and remedial courses are often given without enough information about their importance or priority in higher education

placement, which means that adjunct professors start teaching students without knowing the right way to do it or how important it is to learn how to engage the at-risk population (Danaei, 2019; Smith, 2016).

Lack of Resources for Adjunct Professors

Many higher education institutions have yet to devote the time, money, and communication channels essential to support the work of adjunct professors (Dailey-Hebert et al., 2014; Elfman, 2021). They make up the fastest-growing segment of higher education professors, and this trend is expected to continue as the economy's effects on educational institutions worsen (Childress, 2019; Dailey-Hebert et al., 2014; Drozdowski, 2021; Gappa et al., 2007; NCES, 2011). However, many higher education institutions do not sufficiently support adjunct professors; for example, adjunct professors do not receive employee benefits or raises, have limited job security, and have few opportunities for advancement to tenured status (Barnett, 2017; Drozdowski, 2021; Kezar, 2013).

Pay. Adjunct professor salaries are a significant concern (Brennan & Magness, 2018). Data from the American Community Survey published in the Atlantic states that 31% of adjunct professors are on public assistance, such as Medicaid or food stamps, and live on or near the poverty line (Anthony et al., 2020; Fredrickson, 2015; McKenna, 2015). Adjunct professors earn meager pay, estimated at \$20,000 and \$25,000 a year (Flaherty, 2020c; Zippia Expert, 2022), and many are among the poorest professionals in the U.S. (Reevy, 2015). Compared to tenured professors, adjunct professors are typically paid a fraction of what they are worth for doing the same job (Harris, 2019; Reevy, 2015; The Editorial Team, 2020). While American institutions rely significantly on adjunct professors, they are paid poorly, have few or no health or disability benefits, and have no job security (AAUP, 2021; Culver & Kezar, 2020).

Adjunct professors can be up to 80% less expensive than full-time tenured professors (Bettinger & Long, 2010). Since contracts for adjunct positions do not usually have the exact requirements as contracts for tenure-track positions (like serving on committees, developing curriculum, recruiting, doing research, and creative work), contracts are set up to pay adjunct professors only for the time they spend teaching (Brennan & Magness, 2018; Manternach, 2020).

According to the AAUP (2020-2021) annual report on the Economic Status of the Profession, tenured professors earn between \$60,000 and \$160,000 annually (AAUP, 2021; Elfman, 2021; Salary.com, 2022). The average pay for adjunct professors is from \$2,600 to \$5,800 for each course section (AAUP, 2021; Elfman, 2021; Salary.com, 2022), which averages between \$20,000 and \$25,000 yearly (Flaherty, 2020c; Spitalniak, 2022). As a result, when given a choice between paying a salary plus benefits or a cost per course with no help, higher education institutions prefer to have classes taught by adjunct professors rather than tenured or tenure-track professors (Anthony et al., 2020; Brennan & Magness, 2018). Unfortunately, this forces adjunct professors to live the life of a gypsy academic, as Hechinger (1982) defined it: professors who wander from one campus to another to teach whatever crumbs of the college course calendar are leftover that higher-paid full-time professors are not teaching (Anthony et al., 2020; Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018).

Benefits. Adjunct professors are not eligible for employer-sponsored benefits such as health insurance or retirement because of their part-time status or restricted teaching load (Manternach, 2020; Reevy, 2015). Adjunct professors must purchase insurance through third-party marketplaces such as HealthCare.gov (Brennan & Magness, 2018). The economic circumstances for adjunct professors at higher education institutions are notably deplorable:

most of them who are paid on a per-course section basis do not earn retirement or medical benefits, and in most states, adjunct professors do not have rights to unemployment coverage (AAUP, 2021; Drozdowski, 2021; Reevy, 2015; The Editorial Team, 2020). The universal availability rule mandates that all employees must be allowed to participate in and make deferrals to an existing 403(b) plan, except for those employees who fall into one of the five categories that are entitled to be excluded from participation (Diehl, 2016; Internal Revenue Service [IRS], 2021).

As higher education institutions' employees, it has long been standard practice for them to exclude adjunct professors as a class of employees from their 403(b) plans (Diehl, 2016). Doing anything like this goes against the universal availability rule specific to 403(b) plans. For example, one of the exclusions from the elective deferral portion of a 403(b) plan is employees who typically work fewer than 20 hours per week or 1000 hours per year. Thus, adjunct professors' pension benefits, eligibility issues, and the universal availability rule have all become issues at higher education (Diehl, 2016). According to Diehl (2016), higher education institutions have not included adjunct professors as a class of employees in their 403(b) plan for a long time. While adjunct professors are considered part-time or contingent faculty members, they are employees of higher education institutions. As such, they should not be excluded from classes allowed in a 403(b) for elective deferrals (Diehl, 2016).

In February 2015, according to Diehl (2016) found that the IRS issued final regulations regarding employers' 403(b) plan and Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) shared responsibility provisions. Those regulations mandated using a reasonable method to determine hours of service worked rather than simply considering time spent teaching a course at a college or university (Diehl, 2016). One approach would credit 2.25 hours of service per

week for each hour of grading papers, teaching, or classroom time, plus 1.0 hours of service per week for each additional hour of service outside of the classroom performing required duties (e.g., office hours, department meetings) (Diehl, 2016; IRS, 2021). Based on eight hours of classroom time and five hours of office time, this method will credit adjunct professors with work hours that exceed 20 per week, making them eligible for the 403(b) plans offered by many higher education institutions (Diehl, 2016; IRS, 2021). Many educational establishments of higher learning have decided not to include adjunct professors as a class of employees in their 403(b) plan (Diehl, 2016). However, based on the conditions mentioned in the universal availability rule regarding allowed exclusions, adjunct professors work the required hours to be eligible for the 403(b) plan.

Professional Development. While adjunct professors are crucial at higher education institutions, they are not always well-prepared for success (Anthony et al., 2020; Kezar & Maxey, 2016; Page, 2018). Professional growth is hampered by technology (Gillett-Swan, 2017; Jaques & Salmon, 2007; Kirkwood & Price, 2014). Gillett-Swan (2017) argues that there is no one-size-fits-all strategy for teaching with technology since it depends on current technology and the curriculum's content. The lack of professional development and direction needed for effective online course planning and instruction is a crucial problem for adjunct professors teaching online (Albrahim, 2020). Even though 79.9% of adjunct professors teach online, just 57% believe they are professionally qualified, and 20% thought they were given clear instructions on what was required for their online courses (Ross, 2022). A mere 15% of adjunct professors in April 2020 had access to on-campus hardware for teaching online, which meant that the other 85% had to rely on personal devices. While higher education institutions do their best, many adjunct professors remain apprehensive and underprepared since they may

still be learning how to utilize some of the platforms that are available for online education (Culver & Kezar, 2020; Gillett-Swan, 2017; Ross, 2022). Although this component is developing, the literature suggests that higher education institutions should provide opportunities for professional development and divisions that may aid with technology usage (Culver & Kezar, 2020; McMurtrie, 2020; Nash, 2015; Neben, 2014).

Job Security. According to the AAUP (2018), adjunct professors' teaching roles are among the least secure and unsupported employment, with limited job security and poor due process protection. Adjunct work can be erratic and inconsistent from semester to semester, leaving them with little job stability from year to year (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Brennan & Magness, 2018; Manternach, 2020), and courses may be canceled at the last minute for several reasons, such as low enrollment and economic issues (Drozdowski, 2021; Reevy, 2015). Adjunct professors, for example, were the most severely affected by the Covid-19 outbreak, with a 5% decline in the number of adjunct professors employed (Hoeller, 2021). To make matters worse, Hoeller (2021) pointed out that many higher education institutions discharged adjunct professors without considering them laid off to avoid offering them unemployment benefits.

Competition among professors hired at higher education institutions influences job security (Woolston, 2021). According to Woolston (2021), American graduate schools award many Doctor of Philosophy (PhDs) degrees even in fields with few job opportunities. About ten times as many PhDs are conferred as jobs are made available at higher education institutions (Woolston, 2021). Because of this rate, there are not enough permanent jobs in academia, so plenty of fixed-term contracts do not provide long-term job security (Woolston, 2021), which makes it harder for adjunct professors to get tenure in higher education

institutions. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES), 8,773 doctorates were presented by accredited U.S. institutions in 1958, and that figure had increased to 55,283 in 2020 (Gross, 2017; Manternach, 2020; NCES, 2016; NCSES, 2020).

Communication. Communication research at higher education institutions is not a new concept. Communication research at higher education institutions examines the organization's efficiency level. Articles in peer-reviewed journals that address communication barriers in higher education institutions include a wide range of recommendations for improvement, including the following: publish policy manuals, show up and chat, utilize social media, compose professional emails, inclusion, put news items on bulletin boards, and mentorship (Cooper, 2012; Hekelman et al., 1992; Jacobson, 2016; Minich & Sipes, 1997). Roueche et al. (1996) and Page (2018) argue that increased connections and communication between administration, tenured professors, and adjunct professors result in adjunct professors feeling more included and satisfied with their jobs at higher education institutions. Similarly, another research study found that confidence improved when adjunct professors, like tenured professors and students, recognized the institutions' difficulties (Goldhaber, 1972; Page, 2018). Another barrier is that adjunct professors need someone with whom they can have continuous contact, such as full-time professors who can answer questions and provide informal mentorship (Diegel, 2013; Eagan et al., 2015; Spaniel & Scott, 2013).

Professional Exclusion. Adjunct professors' burnout is also influenced by their professional exclusion. Adjunct professors' professional exclusion is being separated from others in their respective departments as active and contributing faculty members (Andrianarivo & Gómez-Montoya, 2020; Kezar & Sam, 2013). Adjunct professors, particularly

those working in online learning environments, face significant hurdles in communication due to professional and social exclusion (Mandernach et al., 2015). Adjunct professors often report a lack of support and feelings of exclusion whenever they perceive they are not part of the teaching community (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Mandernach et al., 2015; Pons et al., 2017).

Adjunct professors have reported low job satisfaction, a negative attitude, stress, and burnout because of being frequently excluded from faculty events and opportunities and receiving minimal support at the departmental and institutional levels (Hu, 2016; Nordin & Anthony, 2014). If we look at adjunct professors in an online learning setting, they often work from home, with little face-to-face interaction (Albrahim, 2020; Dailey-Hebert et al., 2014). Adjunct professors may feel excluded because of these circumstances and lack face-to-face connection with their colleagues (Dailey-Hebert et al., 2014; Gamdi & Samarji, 2016; Nordin & Anthony, 2014). Unfortunately, administrators' actions are frequently connected to online adjunct professors' experiences of exclusion, and only a small amount of research has been conducted on experiences of exclusion among online adjunct professors (Hu, 2016). Administrators are responsible for keeping communication channels open and ensuring adjunct faculty members have a sense of belonging to the institution (Mandernach et al., 2015).

Mentoring. Mentoring is one of the most significant components of incorporating adjunct professors in higher education institutions, supporting their work, and keeping them as educators for the long term (Datray et al., 2014; Diegel, 2013; Kezar & Sam, 2013). Adopting best practices, higher education institutions offer adjunct professors the opportunity to get mentorship from their faculty (Boylan, 2002; Datray et al., 2014). To help new adjunct professors adjust at higher education institutions, assigning them to mentors is the most

straightforward and cost-effective approach, according to the literature (Datray et al., 2014). Boylan (2002) supports Datray et al. (2014), who argue that senior professors and administrators should be assigned to serve as mentors to adjunct professors, which would help adjunct professors integrate into the institution and assist them in finding solutions to problems that may arise in the classroom or with instructional methods. By using the knowledge and experience of their faculty members, higher educational institutions could find that providing mentorship is the most effective and least expensive technique they could undertake (Datray et al., 2014).

Administration. Administrators working at higher education institutions are responsible for employing adjunct professors. Consequently, the perception of adjunct professors by administrators at higher education institutions might influence the lack of resources that adjunct professors face (Bleuher, 2015; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Ditmyer, 2015). For instance, are adjunct professors regarded as a cost-cutting measure, or are they seen as a benefit that helps improve the overall education quality (Moser, 2014)? Administrators must be aware of their interactions to create accurate views and make choices regarding the hiring, placement, and treatment of adjunct professors at their institutions that are in the best interests of their students and result in a high-quality education (Dorfeld, 2015; Jackson et al., 2013; Kezar & Sam, 2013; Kezar et al., 2018). Adjunct professors must also be provided with the support they need to be effective educators in the institution's in-person or online classrooms, and administrators must make intelligent commitments of their time and resources to ensure that this occurs (Kezar & Sam, 2013; Khan et al., 2016).

Tenure Status. Studies have been conducted in recent years on the difficulties adjunct professors face while teaching at higher education institutions, but little has been done to

improve the issue (Anthony et al., 2020; Delta Cost Project at American Institutes for Research [AIR], 2014; Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America-College Retirement Equities [TIAA-CREF], 2015). According to TIAA-CREF (2015), adjunct professors on a non-tenure track make up half of today's higher education academic workforce (Anthony et al., 2020; Drozdowski, 2021; The Editorial Team, 2020). AIR (2014) reported that adjunct professor employment increased by 121% between 1990 and 2012, which helps to explain the heavy reliance on adjunct professors. Tenured professor employment rates increased by only 41% (Anthony et al., 2020). Despite a lack of data, in 2015, The Washington Post claimed that hundreds of thousands of adjunct professors are awaiting the same equity as tenured professors (Svrluga, 2015).

According to Anthony et al. (2020), adjunct professors have a long way to go at higher education institutions before this is achieved. For starters, tenure-track professors are a dying breed at several institutions of higher education (Drozdowski, 2021). Another reason is that some higher education institutions do not provide a platform for adjunct professors to have an authentic voice in matters relating to the classroom, their pedagogy, training, or decisions affecting the department in which they teach, leaving this population of adjunct professors with little influence over issues that affect them or the institutions in which they work (Anthony et al., 2020). On the other hand, tenured professors are paid well, have full benefits, are eligible to participate in university governance, and have job security (Culver & Kezar, 2020).

Furthermore, adjunct professors who teach online are often isolated from their tenured colleagues (Benton & Li, 2015) and must rely on other adjunct professors for assistance (Rich, 2015). Despite their importance in academic settings, they are underserved (Barnett, 2017; Brennan & Magness, 2018).

Well-being. Adjunct professors hired by higher education institutions face a system of employment that is institutionalized and detrimental to their professional well-being (Zitko & Schultz, 2020). According to researchers, adjunct professors are routinely excluded and face professional inequity across all higher education levels, jeopardizing their well-being (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Pons et al., 2017; Wagoner, 2019; Yakoboski, 2016). The issue harms higher education institutions, students, and adjunct professors (Maxey & Kezar, 2015). Inadequate working conditions result in a lack of resources for adjunct professors' well-being, partly due to a lack of support supplied by the higher education institution to adjunct professors in the first place (Zitko & Schultz, 2020).

Adversarial relations between tenured professors and adjunct professors, according to Zitko and Schultz (2020), is a fundamental problem for adjunct professors, but it receives less attention because of their exclusion from the academic community. Numerous investigations have shown a tense relationship between the two professors (American Sociological Association Task Force on Contingent Faculty [ASATF], 2017; Eagan et al., 2015; Kezar & Sam, 2013; Maxey & Kezar, 2015; Moorehead et al., 2015; Rhoades, 2017). Among adjunct professors, the institutional culture at some higher education institutions may be a significant barrier to their well-being, as it may foster feelings of isolation, exclusion, expendability, marginalization, or second-class status (Zitko & Schultz, 2020).

According to Reevy (2015), adjunct professors from around the country participated in National Adjunct Walkout Day (NAWD) to raise awareness about adjunct professors in higher education institutions and insist on fair compensation and improved working conditions (see Figure 3). During the protest, adjunct professors, students, and tenured-track professors emphasized the significance of job security, institutional support, and fair compensation for

adjunct professors. One of the protesters said the issue of job security was significant, arguing that "...a human being needs to know what they are doing for work more than a semester ahead...that is just not a tenable way to live" or teach (Flaherty & Mulhere, 2015, para. 4). There was another protester who spoke out, saying, "We know what our teachers are going through, and we want to change that," she said. "We want them to be happy and to get a fair wage... what they deserve, because they work hard for our classes" (Flaherty & Mulhere, 2015, para. 10).

Adjunct professors in the English department at a particular university teach more than 100 courses each semester to 2,500 students, according to a letter from a nontenured faculty member written on behalf of NAWD to the university's president. These professors earn a yearly salary of \$33,050, even though they have full course loads. The Vice Provost of Faculty Affairs sent the following answer to the letter: "We need to invest here. We need to acknowledge that our non-tenure-track faculty are, in some areas, significantly underpaid. In addition, he remarked, "...it is silly at an institution like this... we are not going out of business any time soon. There will always be budget cuts, but we can expect to need these people, and we should be thinking long-term about how we will support their development" (Flaherty & Mulhere, 2015, paras. 15-16).

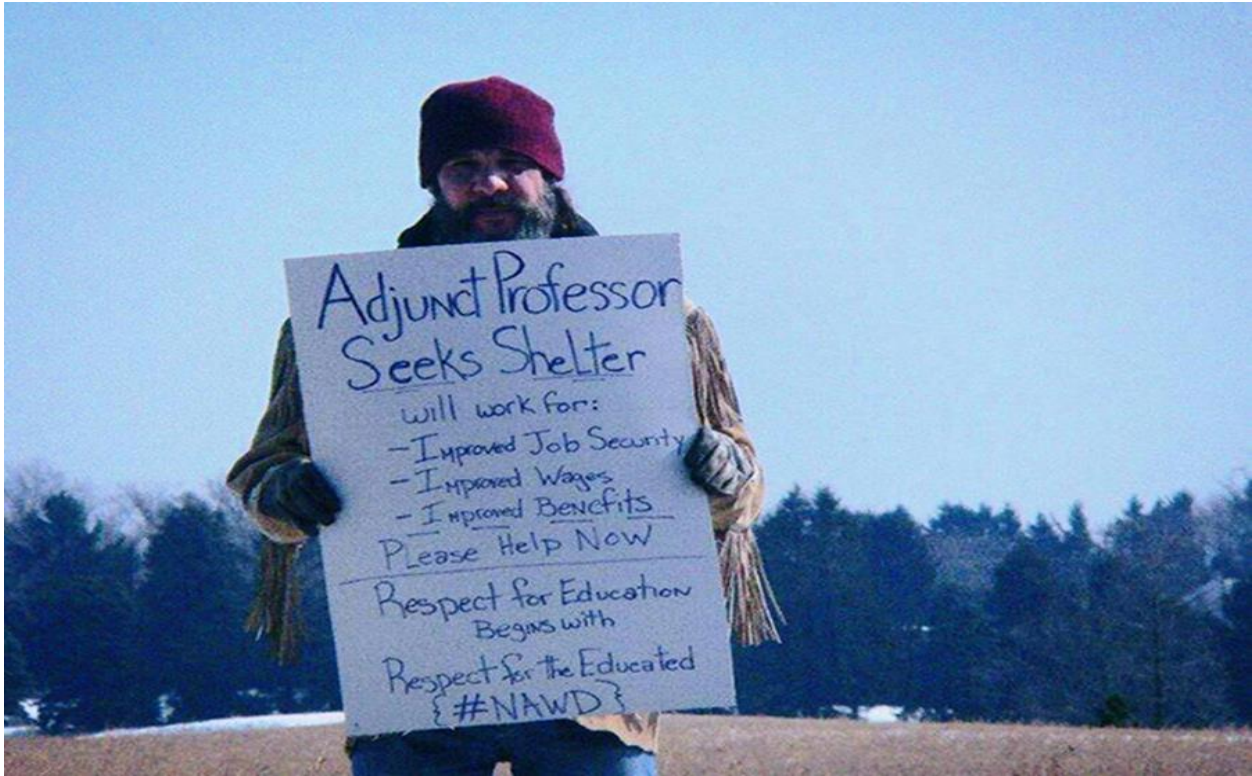
A fourth-year student who participated in NAWD out of concern for his adjunct professors said: "...as a student, it is difficult to form a relationship with your professor when neither of you know if your professor will even be employed next semester. The mistreatment of adjunct faculty is a national problem. Still, we hope by addressing it here we can create an example for other schools to follow" (Flaherty & Mulhere, 2015, para. 18). Flaherty and Mulhere (2015) affirmed, in observance of NAWD, that an associate professor of women's

studies stated, there was widespread consensus among faculty that the “...division between tenured or tenure track and an adjunct is an artificial one, in that we do not see adjunct faculty as the enemy and that we are not immune from some of the problems they face, since tenure as an institution is under a great deal of threat right now” (para. 26).

Other actions taken at NAWD included discussions over improved union contracts, petitions for office space and compensation for course preparation, and the impact of unfair treatment of adjunct professors on students. Recurring themes at NAWD reflect adjunct professors’ experiences around the country. These include incomes below the federal poverty line, a lack of job security from one semester to the next, and no access to health coverage (Dorfeld, 2015; Flaherty & Mulhere, 2015). According to Flaherty and Mulhere (2015), NAWD successfully increased awareness provided a network for adjunct professors to connect from campus to campus, and got allies involved, such as students, faculty, departments, and professional organizations. NAWD’s discussions on job demands and lack of resources were able to draw local and national media attention to the adjunct professor problem and how it impacts higher education institutions, which has helped adjunct professors work together to renew the mission of higher education institutions.

Figure 3.

A Protester During National Adjunct Walkout Day



Note. Adjunct professors from around the country participated in the National Adjunct Walkout Day to raise awareness about adjunct professors at higher education institutions and insist on fair compensation and better working conditions (Reevy, 2015). Photo credit: The protester in the above image was photographed on February 25, 2015, at National Adjunct Walkout Day. The person shown has given permission for the photo to be used (Reevy, 2015).

Effects of Burnout Among Adjunct Professors

As burnout sets in, it does not go away immediately (Greaves et al., 2017). The effects of burnout could last for up to 15 years in some individuals (Greaves et al., 2017; Hakanen et al., 2011). Individuals who are impacted by burnout are drained emotionally by the continual physiological, social, or organizational components of their work that demand prolonged effort and are consequently connected with physiological and psychological costs, according to

Demerouti et al. (2001). Employees endure psychological and physiological symptoms when burnout reaches its apex, as stated by Demerouti et al. (2001).

Disengagement

An essential psychological effect of burnout is the tendency of adjunct professors to isolate themselves from their students, other faculty members, administrators, and the larger academic community (Herman et al., 2018; Schnaider-Levi et al., 2017; Suh, 2019). This kind of isolation experienced among adjunct professors is thought to contribute to disengagement, which is characterized by cynicism, lack of enthusiasm, and a negative attitude and behavior toward one's work, work content, and work objects (Alves et al., 2019; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2004; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Maslach, 1976, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017; Maslach et al., 2001; Suh, 2019; Yao et al., 2015). Regarding emotional, cognitive, and behavioral rejection of work, disengagement is a comprehensive and intense response that denotes occupational disillusionment (Freudenberger, 1974).

Effect on Adjunct Professor. With the JD-R theory, individuals can better understand how adjunct professors are affected by burnout and disengagement because of the lack of employment resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Sabagh et al., 2018). There is a link between burnout and adjunct professors' job engagement, according to Hakanen et al. (2006). To fully engage in one's job, one must be energetic (psychologically, physiologically, emotionally, and cognitively) (Bakker et al., 2005; Bakker et al., 2014; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Engaged people have a solid connection to their job because they regard them as

challenging rather than unpleasant and demanding, like those who suffer from burnout (Bakker et al., 2014; Shuck et al., 2011).

However, according to the JD-R theory, disengagement happens when external environments lack resources, and people, like adjunct professors, cannot deal with the negative impacts of environmental demands (i.e., excessive workload) and fail to achieve their objectives. Some researchers (Demerouti et al., 2001) believe disengaged adjunct professors can use this as a self-protective mechanism to avoid future frustrations of not achieving work-related goals by reducing their organizational citizenship (Bakker et al., 2004), decreasing their motivation, and withdrawing from certain aspects of their jobs (McClure & Fryar, 2022).

Effect on Higher Education Institution. McClure and Fryar (2022) assert that adjunct professors are emotionally disconnected from their institutions (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Moreover, although they are not fleeing in massive numbers, they are waving farewell to established conventions and processes. In other words, adjunct professors may not be physiologically departing, but they have vacated the premises, indicating that their departure is a psychological state (McClure & Fryar, 2022). In the meantime, they are still doing their jobs as professors and advisors and attempting to keep up with the bare minimum. According to McClure and Fryar (2022), much work is being done, but not much excitement exists. Connections to higher education institutions have been strained. For example, a Twitter thread revealed that professors at higher education institutions emphasized doing just what was required. It was also pointed out that professors had previously been profoundly loyal to their institution, but they have now felt so underappreciated that they are reducing their involvement (McClure & Fryar, 2022).

Effect on Student. Learning outcomes for students' future occupations are assessed in curricular courses based on how well individual students perform to satisfy explicit and implicit learning objectives (Henkel & Haley, 2020; Kahu & Nelson, 2018). Consequently, adjunct professor burnout negatively affects the adjunct professors and the quality of education the adjunct can provide (Henkel & Haley, 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Additionally, negative relationships occur when adjunct professors disengage from students (Henkel & Haley, 2020; Shoji et al., 2016; Szempruch, 2018). Students, for example, may feel the consequences, mainly when many have grown to depend on adjunct professors for emotional support to finish their studies (McClure & Fryar, 2022).

According to Henkel and Haley (2020) and Holliman and Daniels (2018), adjunct professors' engagement is a significant aspect of achieving instructional effectiveness and achieving the educational quality objectives of higher education institutions. Pedersen and Minnotte (2017) suggested that adjunct professors' disengagement may result in a loss of interest in student learning and abilities. Additionally, adjunct professors' disengagement could harm higher education institutions' goals for overall student performance, student retention, graduation rates, and sponsored research (Henkel & Haley, 2020; McClure & Fryar, 2022; Pedersen & Minnotte, 2017; Roksa et al., 2017).

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. This literature review investigates research and relevant literature on work-related burnout. An in-depth look was considered regarding burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions, the growing trend toward hiring adjunct professors, the role and responsibilities of

adjunct professors, the benefits of being an adjunct, the lack of resources adjunct professors face in higher education, and the most significant effect of their burnout experience. To understand the goal of this transcendental phenomenological investigation, it is necessary first to grasp the theory of Demerouti et al. (2001). The JD-R theory of burnout is essential for understanding how adjunct professors at higher education institutions experience burnout as a result of increased work demands but limited job resources and how their burnout affects the institutions where they work and their specific role in educating students (Bakker, 2011; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001).

The prevalence of burnout syndrome is increasing across a wide range of vocations that need a superior level of interpersonal engagement (García-Rivera et al., 2022; Gómez-Urquiza et al., 2017). For the first time, burnout was included in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) in 2019 because of a lack of treatment for chronic stress at work (Demerouti et al., 2021; García-Rivera et al., 2022; WHO, 2019). According to academics Heinemann and Heinemann (2017), burnout has become the most talked-about mental health problem in today's culture because of the frequency of symptoms among employees. At a rate as high as 69%, burnout is a severe problem in several industries, as people suffer stress, exhaustion, and tiredness because of their job (Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017). However, there is no universally accepted definition of burnout among professionals (NASEM, 2019). Maslach and Leiter (2016, 2017) and Freudenberger (1974) describe burnout. Excessive exertion to satisfy unreasonable expectations, tiredness, and a sensation of bodily and mental exhaustion contribute to burnout, according to Freudenberger (1974). Maslach defined burnout as a long-term psychological disorder resulting from a long-term reaction to persistent interpersonal stress (Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017).

The research reveals numerous reasons for work-related burnout among workers (Bayes et al., 2021; Gavelin et al., 2021; Spiller et al., 2021). For example, an excessive workload drains people's ability to satisfy job demands, contributing to burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). Maslach and Leiter (2016) believe that chronic overload leaves employees with limited opportunities to relax, recoup, and rebalance. The working environment may affect employee health positively or negatively (Salvagioni et al., 2017; Seidler et al., 2014). According to Della Valle et al. (2006), work-related burnout is becoming increasingly common. Organizational aspects that involve ongoing psychological, physiological, or emotional effort on the part of workers have resulted in burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001; García-Rivera et al., 2022; Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Many professors working at higher education institutions are suffering significant levels of burnout. In higher education institutions, adjunct professors are becoming more ill from exhaustion (Hubbard-Jackson & Boyer, 2019). A 1998 study of burnout among 73 adjunct professors at higher education institutions found that 93% of those surveyed were burned-out (Byrne, 1998; Hubbard-Jackson & Boyer, 2019). Brown (2009) did a similar survey and found that 59.4% of adjunct professors had been burned-out (Hubbard-Jackson & Boyer, 2019). Fifty-five percent of adjunct professors at higher education institutions nationwide were experiencing substantial emotional weariness, according to a poll conducted by the Chronicle of Higher Education (Mitchell, 2020). As of 2019, the percentage of adjunct professors who reported feeling burned-out has increased significantly (Fidelity Investments, 2021; Mitchell, 2020). In 2019, a survey found that just 32% of adjunct professors felt burned-out (Fidelity Investments, 2021; Mitchell, 2020).

It is the purpose of this transcendental phenomenological research to get a better understanding of adjunct professors' lived experiences with burnout. According to researchers (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Gillett-Swan, 2017; Glass, 2017; Kaiser Health News, 2020; Kelliher, 2022), adjunct professors at higher education institutions have been burned-out for several years because of increasing workloads, unreasonable deadlines, and a lack of time to grade and provide feedback to students. Adjunct professors are essential to filling entire class sections at higher education institutions, and these institutions would be unable to accept all the students that apply to open-admission schools without their assistance (Anthony et al., 2020). It is common for adjunct professors to be paid much less than they should for the time and effort they put into helping students accomplish their objectives (Flaherty, 2018; Kelliher, 2022; Nica, 2018; Ryan et al., 2017).

Furthermore, adjunct professors lack resources, making it difficult to fulfill their responsibilities properly (Danaei, 2019; Kezar et al., 2018). In addition, adjunct professors are challenged by a lack of resources as a result of higher education institutions' inability to support them adequately; for example, adjunct professors' lack of resources is in pay (Barnett, 2017; Drozdowski, 2021; Kezar, 2013; Reevy, 2015); in receiving employer-sponsored benefits or raises (Manternach, 2020; Reevy, 2015); in job security (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Brennan & Magness, 2018; Manternach, 2020); in professional development (Anthony et al., 2020; Kezar & Maxey, 2016; Page, 2018); in communication (Cooper, 2012, Hekelman et al., 1992; Jacobson, 2016; Minich & Sipes, 1997), in administration (Danaei, 2019); in well-being (Zitko & Schultz, 2020), and in obtaining tenure (Barnett, 2017; Drozdowski, 2021; Kezar, 2013; Reevy, 2015).

According to Greaves et al. (2017), the effects of burnout do not disappear immediately. Depending on the person, burnout may linger for as long as 15 years (Greaves et al., 2017; Hakanen et al., 2011). Disengagement, characterized by cynicism, lack of enthusiasm, and a negative attitude and behavior toward one's work, work content, and work objects, is one of the main effects of burnout that adjunct professors face. It affects the adjunct professors themselves, the institution where they work, and the students they teach (Alves et al., 2019; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2004; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Maslach, 1976, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017; Maslach et al., 2001; Suh, 2019; Yao et al., 2015).

As a final note, adjunct professor burnout is a debilitating condition marked by a loss of emotional vitality and a lack of engagement in one's work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter 2016, 2017). The nature of burnout, the signs and effects of burnout, the lack of resources that adjunct professors confront, and the impact of burnout on the adjunct themselves, the institutions where they work, and the students they instruct have all been addressed to some extent. Adjunct professors' burnout experiences are the focus of this transcendental phenomenological study, which also sought to fill a gap in the literature. Numerous studies have been conducted to highlight the severity of burnout at the workplace, but these studies do not include the voices and clear understanding of the lived experiences for adjunct professors in higher education institutions who are suffering from burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2004; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Maslach, 1976, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017; Maslach et al., 2001).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. In this chapter, I presented the study's research design and rationalization and the research questions. I next addressed the selection of the setting and participants, the researcher's positionality, interpretative framework, philosophical assumptions, and my role as the researcher. I also outlined the research procedures and data collection plan in detail. Finally, I examined the study's trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical considerations) and offered a concise review of the research design, data collection, and data analysis strategies in the summary section.

Research Design

Research design is the strategy that researchers use to structure their study to address research questions (Cohen et al., 2008). The kind of research questions and the study's objective were critical in deciding the study's design and the guiding methodology used (Cohen et al., 2008). According to Cohen et al. (2008) and Creswell and Poth (2018), there is no one approach to constructing or structuring a research design. However, since this study focused on understanding the 'lived' experience of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions, a qualitative research design was the most appropriate option for this study. Moustakas (1994) recognizes the importance of qualitative research, which emphasizes the fullness of lived experience and behavior as a wholly integrated and unbreakable link between the subject and the object of the study. A qualitative inquiry was employed for this study since quantitative measurements, and statistical analysis is not appropriate for the

problem of burnout being investigated (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Put another way; a qualitative inquiry was selected since I explored a variety of components regarding burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions that were difficult to measure.

Furthermore, for the researcher to gain a comprehensive and detailed understanding and examine the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions with sufficient flexibility, I selected a phenomenological research design (Alase, 2017; Moustakas, 1994). While a case study approach, which is used to construct a complete description and case analysis of a particular case or several instances, was considered, I determined that it was not fit for this study because it did not fulfill the condition of concentrating primarily on lived experiences (Peoples, 2020). Phenomenology originated with German philosopher Edmond Husserl (1931) and significantly influenced Moustakas (1994).

When conducting phenomenological research, the phrase *lived experiences* is used to underline the relevance of participants' experiences as human beings (Moustakas, 1994). The breadth and depth of phenomenology, according to Moustakas (1994), are a consequence of its emphasis on articulating the shared lived experiences of individuals concerning a given phenomenon. Thus, phenomenology seeks to reduce individual encounters with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence or a grasp of the very character of the item itself (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990).

I faced the quandary of determining which phenomenological methodologies are optimal for the research problem. Regardless of the method, Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004) emphasize that all approaches take inspiration from German philosophy, aim to provide a comprehensive picture of human experience, and conclude with a comparable and complementary set of goals. There are two primary approaches in phenomenology:

hermeneutic phenomenology and transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994), which reflect philosophical assumptions about the experience and strategies to organize and evaluate phenomenological information (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). However, only one was suitable for this research study (Peoples, 2020).

Transcendental phenomenology strives to explain the human lived experience and bears promise as a feasible approach for phenomenological study. It is mainly based on the ideas stated by Husserl (1931) and was subsequently transformed into a qualitative method by Moustakas (1994). Transcendental phenomenology based on Moustakas (1994) presented logical, methodical, and unified design aspects that led to essential descriptions of burnout experiences for adjunct professors at higher education institutions. Therefore, it was appropriate for this research design and comprehensive study. Additionally, transcendental phenomenology is suitable for this type of research because it includes systematic steps in the data analysis process and guidelines for compiling textual and structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, meaning is at the heart of transcendental phenomenology, a method for gathering and analyzing data that elucidate the essence of human experience (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). On the other hand, Hermeneutics necessitates a reflective interpretation of a text or historical research to gain a meaningful understanding (Moustakas, 1994).

Transcendental phenomenology was decided to use rather than hermeneutic phenomenology for this study because hermeneutic phenomenology is a biased approach that requires the researcher to become an active participant to comprehend the phenomena using interpretive methods (Moustakas, 1994; Neubauer et al., 2019). Transcendental phenomenology is an unbiased and scientific approach to looking at lived experiences and

attempting to understand a phenomenon's essence without including interpretive (Moustakas, 1994).

Since I desired to use a transcendental phenomenological approach successfully in this study, I had to transcend or go beyond my prejudices and preconceptions to perceive the phenomena "freshly, as if for the first time," and be receptive to its entirety with openness and newness (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). Even though I am well-versed in the causes, symptoms, and effects of work-related burnout, I had put my personal and professional experiences aside to examine the data collected about the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions with curiosity, as if it were the first time I had heard of the phenomenon. Husserl (1931) often used the term *epoché* to allude to the researcher's capacity to abstain from, abstain or leave aside their firsthand experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas (1994) analyzes the philosophical underpinnings of transcendental phenomenology developed by Husserl (1931). When one sets aside any preconceived conceptions (*epoché*) and sees phenomena through unclouded glasses, transcendental phenomenology is born (Moustakas, 1994; Sheehan, 2014), which allows the genuine meaning of the phenomenon to spontaneously emerge within its own identity, which is the foundation of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Subsequently, this transcendental phenomenology evaluated data from a new perspective on the phenomena under investigation and provided insight into the *epoché* (Gearing, 2004; Husserl, 1931, 1973; Moustakas, 1994). While it was unknown to what extent I, the researcher of this study, could legitimately use *epoché* to keep my biases at bay, it is usual practice in transcendental phenomenological studies to try (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions

Developing research questions is the first step in any research project (Yates & Leggett, 2016). The goal of qualitative research questions is to narrow the scope of the study to a few questions addressed (Austin & Sutton, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Research questions should be broad and open to unexpected findings to allow for a thorough, in-depth description, exploration, or explanation of the phenomenon under study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of adjunct professors experiencing burnout at higher education institutions?

Sub-Question One

How do adjunct professors at higher education institutions describe the job demands contributing to their burnout?

Sub-Question Two

How do adjunct professors at higher education institutions describe the lack of resources contributing to their burnout?

Sub-Question Three

How do adjunct professors at higher education institutions describe their experience with burnout and its symptoms?

Sub-Question Four

How do adjunct professors at higher education institutions describe their experience with disengagement?

Setting and Participants

This transcendental phenomenological research study's setting and participants described both the geographical location, the rationale for that location, and the demographic profile of the participants for this transcendental phenomenological study. In addition, according to Creswell and Poth (2018) and Moustakas (1994), participants in transcendental phenomenology research must have a firsthand lived experience with the phenomenon being studied and be able to explain their feelings about it. Consequently, the participants shared characteristics valued in transcendental phenomenological research (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990).

Setting

The setting is essential for the researcher to collect data from the study's participants (Stake, 1995). This transcendental phenomenological study investigated the phenomenon of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. Creswell and Poth (2018) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argue that the location of a research study should not be determined purely by accessibility. However, because of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the setting of this research study was a virtual environment.

Videoconferencing software such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom provided ease, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and flexibility (Hewson, 2008; Horrell et al., 2015). My justification for choosing Microsoft Teams instead of Zoom is that Microsoft Teams has all the features that Zoom does not have (Paterson, 2022). Microsoft Teams provided qualitative characteristics that mainly benefited the study (Namachivayam, 2021). Microsoft Teams supported the semi-structured interviews when sensitive information was anticipated to be shared throughout the conversation (St George's, University of London, 2022). Most

significantly, Microsoft Teams' audio transcription and video-recording features assisted me in preparing for and recording the semi-structured individual interviews (Microsoft, 2022). As an added benefit to the researcher, audio recordings from meetings were available for download through Microsoft Teams and were transcribed in Microsoft Stream (Microsoft, 2022).

Participants

Participants for this transcendental phenomenological research study were chosen using purposeful sampling and snowball sampling approaches, which are explained further below. Sampling should be considered a critical component of study design (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Luciani et al., 2019). Three considerations were made while using the purposeful sampling strategy in qualitative research, which differ based on the approach used (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Peoples, 2020). They are the selection of (1) research participants, (2) the sort of sampling procedure to use, and (3) the size of the sample to be investigated (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Kirchherr and Charles (2018), snowball sampling is a technique that is often used in qualitative research. The use of snowball sampling will make it possible to identify participants of interest by using individuals who know participants as information-rich data sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenological investigations, unlike other qualitative methodologies such as narrative and grounded theory, offer a significantly smaller variety of sample options. In phenomenological research, all participants must have personal experiences with the phenomenon being examined (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, I, the researcher of this study, utilized criterion sampling based on the essential criteria of the phenomenological approach: the research participants have experienced the phenomena being examined (Moustakas, 1994). Criterion sampling works best when all the

participants have experienced the phenomena they are trying to study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Luciani et al., 2019; Palinkas et al., 2015).

Participation in this transcendental phenomenological research study was limited to a participant who is an adjunct professor at a higher education institution and a participant who experienced or is currently experiencing burnout, a state of exhaustion, mental fatigue, or overload caused by excessive stressors as an adjunct professor at a higher education institution. Even though Marshall and Rossman (2015) underline that sampling may change throughout a study; the researcher must be flexible and plan as much as possible to ensure a successful study

A preliminary survey to identify participants who have experienced or are currently experiencing the phenomenon was distributed to all participants with the request that they complete it. The third factor is the size of the study sample. Determining sample size addresses the principle of adequacy in qualitative sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Luciani et al., 2019; Morse & Field, 1996). Enough participants must be sampled to ensure the adequacy and depth of information (Patton, 2015). Therefore, as the researcher of this qualitative phenomenological study, I focused on the lived experiences of 11 (Patton, 2015) adjunct professors from various higher education institutions. While it is considered unethical to sample more participants than necessary (Luciani et al., 2019), choosing a sample is a unique challenge in qualitative research (Luciani et al., 2019). Instead of determining sample sizes based on data saturation, it is suggested that novice researchers follow the sampling guidelines of their chosen research methodology (Luciani et al., 2019; Thorne, 2016).

Researcher Positionality

Researchers' positionality statements are commonly encountered in qualitative research studies or research anchored in an interpretive worldview, in which the researcher strives to

understand and interpret the participants rather than to find a single, quantifiable reality (Smith et al., 2021). Positionality relates to what the researcher knows and thinks about the world around them and is influenced by their experiences in both social and political settings (Holmes, 2020; Smith et al., 2021). The purpose of this section was to express my motivation for conducting the study. This interpretive framework was based on social constructivism, which holds that individuals strive to understand the environment around them and generate subjective interpretations based on their experiences-meanings oriented toward specific objects or things (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, these various and multiple personal interpretations negotiated socially and historically were established by contact with others (Creswell & Poth, 2018). So that readers may have a more detailed understanding of my positionality, this section provided a succinct articulation of my philosophical assumptions, which included ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions.

Interpretive Framework

Social constructivism is the guiding paradigm and interpretative framework for this research, which intends to depend as much as possible on participants' views created via interactions with others and through historical and cultural norms that occur in people's lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Rather than restricting the meaning to a few categories or concepts, I looked for various viewpoints (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to this interpretative paradigm, even when two individuals exist in the same environment, their experiences might differ since they are rooted in distinct circumstances (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). Since I was investigating the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions, I believed they may have had comparable or distinct experiences and perspectives of their lived experiences, which I believed was significant and required

consideration. These individuals' realities, I suppose, contributed to the thematic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, even though they were contextually combined.

Philosophical Assumptions

This section discussed my philosophical assumptions, which form the basis of my worldview, to provide readers with a more comprehensive understanding of my positionality and the methodology I used in conducting my study. Scholars begin their studies with preconceived notions and ideas that serve as the foundation for their research (Neubauer et al., 2019). My Christian belief in God was the foundation for my ontological assumption that truth is discovered in Him only. On the other hand, my epistemological assumptions are rooted in phenomenological ideology, which holds that one's own experiences are the primary source of truth. Finally, I discussed my axiological assumptions and shared my experiences as a burned-out professional.

Ontological Assumption

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), ontology is the study of nature and the characteristics of reality. Ontology, according to these researchers, is the study of being (Bradshaw et al., 2017), and it is concerned with what truth is, what the actual world is, and what could be learned about it (Bradshaw et al., 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). My ontological assumptions, the foundation of this research study, are based on my experiences as a human service professional struggling with work-related burnout. Moreover, the Holy Bible and my traditional Christian background are the underpinnings of my personal beliefs, and I am aware that the results of this phenomenological study might be impacted if these beliefs are not carefully considered.

A fundamental ontological assumption in qualitative research is that reality is a matter

of human perception (Du Plooy, 2001). Considering this ontological philosophical assumption, my primary goal in conducting this transcendental phenomenological research study was to understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. Participants formed themes and patterns by providing their unique lived experiences/realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, God's word supports this endeavor.

God's Word has much to say about getting an understanding: "The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight" (*English Standard Version* [ESV], 2022, Proverbs 4:7); and "An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge" (ESV, 2022, Proverbs 18:15); and "And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (ESV, 2022, John 8:32). While, as a Christian, God's truth is the only reality. To undertake this qualitative research, I must accept that multiple realities exist (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Epistemological Assumption

Understanding how knowledge can be formed, developed, and conveyed is essential, and what it means to know is necessary. Epistemological assumptions include questions concerning the connection between the would-be knower and that which can be known (Bradshaw et al., 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The epistemological assumptions of qualitative research include what constitutes knowledge, how knowledge claims are supported, and, more precisely, the connection between the phenomenon being studied and the researcher (Bleiker et al., 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018). As part of the data collection process, I hope to connect with the research participants during the data collection processes to better capture their lived experiences in line with the epistemological assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

My epistemological assumptions frame my ideas about knowledge. While working as a human service professional for about 27 years, through my firsthand experiences, I have gained a wealth of knowledge relating to burnout, and I have come to realize that what I have learned about burnout may impact my approach to the research process, which Creswell and Poth (2018) refers to as the research process's positioning of an interpretative framework.

I am reminded of the *epoché* by Moustakas (1994) that researchers should leave or set aside their prejudgments, biases, and preconceived beliefs about prior experiences to obtain knowledge of the phenomenon freshly. Establishing a rapport and respecting participants' opinions, viewpoints, and real-life experiences are critical to reaching this goal (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this reason, I hope to put those firsthand experiences and beliefs aside or, at the very least, make every attempt to do so.

Axiological Assumption

Axiological assumptions are the researcher's subjective values, perceptions, and biases and how they influence the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Neesham, 2018; Spencer et al., 2014). Although all researchers contribute to the study in some way, qualitative researchers distinguish themselves by demonstrating their value (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My axiological assumptions were based on being a Christian and a human service professional. So, in this study, I not only respected the values of the participants I am studying, but I also respected my values, such as love, respect, service, integrity, ethics, well-being, self-determination, thankfulness, authenticity, compassion, and impartiality.

Researcher's Role

My primary goal in this transcendental phenomenological research was to understand adjunct professors' lived experiences with burnout. Consequently, my job as a researcher was

to get access to the thoughts and feelings of the study's participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Furthermore, this research used the phenomenological approach, which emphasizes the uniqueness and depth of each participant's experience (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological research is incredibly subjective; therefore, I had no influence and lacked power over the participants. Instead, I focused on accurately analyzing their experiences to derive conclusions methodically.

My role was critical in this qualitative study since it required careful listening to responses, changing questions to create rich data, and comprehending the specific facts pertinent to the research (Yin, 2014). As a novice researcher, I was aware of any biases and experiences I may have brought to the research (Patton, 2014). For this reason, interviewing the participants and analyzing data required epoché on my part because, as the primary data collector (Creswell & Poth, 2018), I needed to set aside or bracket out as much as possible any preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation and see it for the first time (Moustakas, 1994). I understood this was a difficult assignment since it required me to ask participants questions that may be sensitive to their circumstances (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Consequently, I ensured that each participant was comfortable, calm, and free of distractions to be eager to supply relevant information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Every effort was taken to protect the privacy of all participants. The study did not include any identifying information or names. During the study, there was no evidence to suggest that the participants were harmed. The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) certificate of my training for social and behavioral researchers is offered as Appendix B.

Procedures

The lived dimensions of human phenomena are informed by the emphasis on how

situations are experienced by individuals (Peoples, 2020). I avoided using indirect study methods by providing detailed descriptions of lived events (Giorgi, 1985; Peoples, 2020). Here, the steps for conducting the transcendental phenomena research study were described in detail, with significant parts highlighted to the degree that the study may be replicated based on the descriptions provided. Additionally, relevant setting information, including obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission, was included in this explanation. Furthermore, the recruiting strategy, sample size, and rationale for determining the sample size were discussed in further detail. It was briefly discussed how the data collecting strategy and the data analysis plan for each source of evidence were implemented. Finally, a concise description of how the research was accomplished triangulation was provided at the end of this section.

Permissions

Before conducting any research, all candidates who conduct research studies that involve interviewing, testing, surveying, manipulating human participants, or gathering archival data on human participants must obtain permission from the university's IRB (Flamez et al., 2017). This activity intends to demonstrate to the IRB that the researcher's research design fits their rules for conducting ethical research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flamez et al., 2017; Joyner et al., 2018). Accordingly, after completing my proposal defense, I worked with my chair and committee member to get IRB permission for the study's implementation (see Appendix A). This process required submitting an IRB application. Site permissions were unnecessary for this study since no participants or data was collected at a site (University of Nevada Reno, 2020). After receiving approval from IRB, recruitment for participants began. Participants were told the criteria for being included in the study, and before getting any data, all participants were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix D).

Recruitment Plan

Upon receiving IRB approval for this study, participants were emailed a recruitment letter (see Appendix C). There are two fundamental criteria of qualitative sampling: the sample is appropriate and adequate (Luciani et al., 2019). Luciani et al. (2019) state that qualitative research requires a deliberate sampling strategy to ensure appropriateness. Therefore, the sample consisted of 11 participants (Patton, 2015). I employed the snowballing method to obtain this by asking adjunct professors to identify other possible participants. Subsequently, participants were asked to read and sign the informed consent form.

The recruitment email included the following: the purpose of the study, criteria to participate, the role of the participant, and participant rights, including informed consent, confidentiality, the right to withdraw at any time, and instructions for how to return the informed consent form. Included in the recruitment plan, Surmiak (2020) suggested that researchers might utilize rewards as a motivator to recruit volunteers. The use of incentives might be important in determining participation, and this strategy is considered a tool to enhance recruitment while compensating participants for their time and efforts (Kelly et al., 2017; Seidman, 2006; Surmiak, 2020). Therefore, participants received \$100 as a thank-you for participating in the study if all three data collection activities, including an open-ended survey, reflective journaling, and a semi-structured interview, were completed within three weeks of signing the consent form. The \$100 was sent via Cash App, Venmo, Zelle, or Amazon to participants after the data collection process.

Data Collection Plan

Creswell and Poth (2018) see data collection as a series of activities that work together to collect valuable information that can be used to answer new research questions. As seen in

Figure 4, I performed several actions to gather information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ethics is put in the middle of the data collection circle to remind the researcher to think about ethical issues at all stages of collecting data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual material are the primary data-collecting approaches Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended for phenomenological study research. However, this transcendental research study merged three types of data collection: an open-ended survey, a reflective journal, and a semi-structured individual interview to accomplish triangulation and acquire a more profound knowledge of the phenomena.

First, open-ended surveys were administered to collect rich, thick data on participants' burnout and work disengagement. Next, participants engaged in reflective journaling designed to examine and unpack their lived experiences (Lutz & Paretti, 2019) of burnout before the semi-structured individual interviews. Having the participants engage in reflective journaling after the open-ended surveys not only helped me gain a preview into participants' lived experiences but also capture a wide range of lived experiences of burnout that may be challenging to get through semi-structured individual interviews (Lutz & Paretti, 2019; Ryan et al., 2017). Semi-structured individual interviews were the last step in the data-collecting process. They allowed participants to participate actively until data saturation and provide an in-depth description of their lived experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1994) of burnout at higher education institutions. Once data was collected, it was analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) modified version of van Kaam's (1959, 1966) phenomenological analysis approach to find common themes and contextual data and coded using Delve.

Figure 4.

Data Collection Activities



Note. Qualitative researchers collect data through various activities (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Open-Ended Surveys Data Collection Approach

Qualitative surveys can be used to acquire in-depth information about individuals' underlying thoughts and intentions (Braun et al., 2021; Farrell, 2016; Terry & Braun, 2017). After the qualitative survey research, the researcher hoped to achieve an individual viewpoint on a subject, issue, or problem (Braun et al., 2017; Braun et al., 2021; Jansen, 2010). Sharma (2022) asserts that, whether it is a qualitative or quantitative study, a good survey can have anywhere from 25 to 30 items, statements, or questions and should be able to be answered in 30 minutes or less to keep the participants' interest and attention. On the other hand, Taylor

(2018), who does not explicitly state this is true for qualitative studies, suggests that to prevent a high survey dropout rate, the length of a typical online survey should be between 15 and 20 statements, questions, or items, and it should take around three to five minutes to complete. Willits et al. (2016) say that using numerous items will provide a more dependable, valid, and discriminating scale. Furthermore, more items are typically preferable to capture complicated attitude structures and dilute random fluctuations in single items (Willits et al., 2016).

The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) survey was designed by Demerouti and Bakker (2008) to understand burnout, which I used in this study. In general, the OLBI is regarded as a solid and trustworthy indicator of exhaustion (burnout) and work disengagement (Demerouti et al., 2001; Demerouti et al., 2003; Demerouti et al., 2010; Demerouti & Bakker, 2008). For example, Demerouti and Bakker (2008) administered the OLBI to eight distinct groups of Dutch healthcare and white-collar workers as part of routine yearly health evaluations. Since exhaustion and disengagement were modestly connected positively, they concluded that the research findings confirmed using the OLBI as an effective tool for detecting exhaustion (burnout) and disengagement (Burnett, 2019). Regarding test-retest reliability, internal consistency, and factorial, convergent, and discriminant validity, the OLBI shows adequate levels of reliability and validity (Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005). OLBI was used to evaluate and verify the JD-R theory, which showed that job demands are most predictive of exhaustion (burnout) and lack of resources is most predictive of disengagement.

The OLBI is a free 16-item survey that helps determine the degree of exhaustion (burnout) and disengagement (Demerouti et al., 2010; Demerouti & Bakker, 2008). The OLBI has positively and negatively worded items to suggest exhaustion, burnout, and disengagement from work. Exhaustion burnout results from intense psychological, physiological, and

emotional strain or as a long-term effect of being subjected to a particular work requirement for an extended period (Demerouti et al., 2001; Demerouti & Bakker, 2008). The OLBI covers emotional, physiological, and cognitive elements of exhaustion. Disengagement in OLBI is removing oneself from work, work objects, and work content (e.g., uninteresting, no longer challenging, but also disgusting).

Each of the OLBI items determined either Disengagement (D), Exhaustion (E), or Reverse (R). According to Demerouti and Bakker (2008) and Demerouti et al. (2010), eight items are used to ascertain exhaustion (burnout), while the other eight are used to determine disengagement from work. To indicate which statement corresponds to elements of exhaustion burnout and disengagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2003; Demerouti et al., 2010) created the following: disengagement (D) items are 1, 3(R), 6(R), 7, 9(R), 11(R), 13, 15, exhaustion (E) items are 2(R), 4(R), 5, 8(R), 10, 12(R), 14, 16, and reversed (R) exhaustion (burnout) and disengagement items were designed to imply more significant burnout.

While the OLBI has been used in various quantitative and mixed methods studies, it does not appear that it has been used in a strictly qualitative study. Therefore, I used the OLBI (see Appendix G) to collect qualitative data in this study. The OLBI was used to understand the exhaustion (burnout) and disengagement elements of adjunct professors' connection with their professions, especially their identification with work and its effect on them, the student, and the higher education institution. The OLBI meets the requirements of an open-ended qualitative survey, given that it consists of 16 items and will take around 30 minutes to complete. To conduct the OLBI qualitatively, using the exact 16 items from the inventory, I added a column next to the items for the participants to respond to the item using a minimum of two complete

sentences. These open-ended responses to the OLBI items should yield rich, thick data. To do this, after completing all steps outlined in the recruitment section, I emailed the participant instructions and the OLBI attachment.

OLBI Open-Ended Survey

As shown in Table 1 is a series of OLBI open-ended items. Instructions: based on the prompt on the left, please provide a minimum of two complete sentences about how you relate to the item using the “Participant Open-Ended Response” boxes on the right.

Table 1.

Open-Ended Survey Items

OLBI Open-Ended Items		Participant Open-Ended Responses
1.	I always find new and interesting aspects in my work	
2.	There are days when I feel tired before I arrive at work	
3.	It happens more and more often that I talk about my work in a negative way	
4.	After work, I tend to need more time than in the past to relax and feel better	
5.	I can tolerate the pressure of my work very well	
6.	Lately, I tend to think less at work and do my job almost mechanically	
7.	I find my work to be a positive challenge	
8.	During my work, I often feel emotionally drained	
9.	Over time, one can become disconnected from this type of work	
10.	After working, I have enough energy for my leisure activities	
11.	Sometimes I feel sickened by my work tasks	
12.	After my work, I usually feel worn out and weary	

13.	This is the only type of work that I can imagine myself doing	
14.	Usually, I can manage the amount of my work well	
15.	I feel more and more engaged in my work	
16.	When I work, I usually feel energized	

Note. The open-ended items are the original 16-Likert scale items from the English version of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI). From “Burnout And Work Engagement: A Thorough Investigation of The Independency of Both Constructs,” by E. Demerouti, K. Mosert, and A. B. Bakker, 2010, *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 15(3), 209–222. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019408>. Copyright 2010 by the American Psychological Association. OLBI was used qualitatively with permission (see Appendix K).

Open-Ended Survey Data Analysis Plan

After utilizing the OLBI 16-item open-ended survey, I did not use the quantitative scale to assess the level and extent of burnout, as is the traditional OLBI. Instead, I used the rich, thick data from the open-ended responses and applied qualitative analysis procedures. First, the data were analyzed using Moustakas’ (1994) modified version of van Kaam’s (1959, 1966) phenomenological analysis approach to find common themes and contextual data. Following the recommendations made by Moustakas (1994), I excluded from the analysis any responses made by the participants that are either repetitious or do not address the phenomenon in question (Patton, 2014).

Next, I created the first set of codes based on my research questions (Ho, 2020). Then, I reviewed participants’ open-ended responses to the OLBI items multiple times, and critical statements that offered insight into the participants’ experiences were taken (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2014). After that, I chose frequent terms and phrases from the participant’s responses to

identify themes from the data. Next, I decided what to code from the participants' OLBI responses. Utilizing Delve, I collected all coded sections and organized them by code. Finally, I updated the codes after grouping them into themes (Ho, 2020). I incorporated epoché practices to bracket or put aside my experiences to remove my biases during this process. Responses made by each participant were given the same amount of weight (Moustakas, 1994).

Reflective Journal Data Collection Approach

After open-ended surveys had been completed, participants engaged in reflective journaling. When employed as a data collection approach in lived experience research studies, reflective journaling is a type of dialogic communication that gives an exciting and rich opportunity to connect with specific participant groups (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Harris, 2002; Stamper, 2020). Additionally, reflective journals may shed light on their experiences that would not have been revealed through interview questions and answers alone (Choi, 2020; Ryan et al., 2017). Therefore, participants were asked to keep a reflective journal, which helped paint a clearer picture of the participants' lived experiences with burnout (see Appendix H). Participants were given a writing prompt with instructions to journal based on their current or previous experience with burnout in their adjunct professor role. The participants had up to two weeks to finish their journals so that I could start analyzing their responses.

Reflective Journal Instructions

Reflective journaling's anonymity, time, thought, and distance is essential for evoking emotional and self-reflective participant reactions (Stamper, 2020). I am convinced that reflective journaling enhanced the participants' viewpoints in this study. Additionally, reflective journaling allows individuals to open up, reflect, and express their deepest thoughts and emotions in a private, nonjudgmental environment (Stamper, 2020; York-Barr et al.,

2005). Participants will feel empowered by this data-driven approach since they have complete control over the process (Milligan, 2005; Stamper, 2020). As part of this study, I used reflective journals to reflect on the participants' replies, gain a deeper understanding of the lived experience of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions, and develop a richer data collection (Creswell, 2018).

Based on your current or previous lived experiences with burnout as an adjunct professor, please engage in reflective journaling on your current or previous lived experience with burnout in your adjunct professor role. You may find it helpful to utilize the following nine prompts to guide you through the reflective journaling experience:

1. How would you describe your course workload as an adjunct professor at a higher education institution? SQ1
2. What are the job resources (e.g., pay, job security, administrative support, benefits, inclusion) needed for you that are lacking as an adjunct professor at a higher education institution? SQ2
3. Describe the resources in place to help you reach your ultimate goal as an adjunct professor at higher education institutions. SQ2
4. How would you describe your current or previous emotional health as an adjunct professor at a higher education institution? SQ3
5. How would you describe your current or previous physiological health as an adjunct professor at a higher education institution? SQ3
6. How has your psychological and physiological health impacted your relationships with yourself? SQ4

7. How has your psychological and physiological health impacted your relationships with students? SQ4
8. How has your psychological and physiological health impacted your relationships with the higher education institution where you work? SQ4
9. How have your spiritual practices helped with your lived experience of burnout? SQ3

Question one was created to encourage participants to reflect on their roles (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001) as adjunct professors at higher education institutions, as well as to provide a clearer picture of their job demands. Questions two and three were created to assist adjunct professors in reflecting on the job resources or the lack thereof that contributed to their lived experiences of burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Demerouti et al., 2001).

The purpose of questions four and five was to encourage the participants to open up, reflect, express, and describe their lived experiences with burnout, both psychologically and physiologically (Guntupalli et al., 2014; Martínez et al., 2020; Salvagioni et al., 2017; Stamper, 2020; York-Barr et al., 2005). Questions six, seven, and eight were designed to evoke an emotional response (Stamper, 2020) about how their lived experience with burnout has affected them (Alves et al., 2019; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2004; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Maslach, 1976, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017; Maslach et al., 2001; Suh, 2019; Yao et al., 2015). Frederick et al. (2017) discovered that spiritual beliefs and practices help prevent or lessen burnout. Thus, question nine was created to collect data on adjunct professors' burnout and spirituality.

Reflective Journal Data Analysis Plan

Once I had finished collecting the reflective journals through a secure internet password-protected browser, the next step was to schedule a day and time for the interview. Then, I began analyzing the reflective journals (Stamper, 2020). Transcribing reflective journals is unnecessary (Liberty University, 2022). I used Moustakas's (1994) adaptation of van Kaam's (1959, 1966) analysis method to analyze the reflective journals. According to Moustakas (1994), the first phase in phenomenological data analysis is to *bracket* the topic, next go through the reflective journals and identify significant statements, sentences, words, or quotations that offered an understanding of how participants experienced the event, which is known as the *horizontalization* of data. Then, I reduced the data and created themes based on developing cluster meaning units from these significant statements. Next, I used those statements and themes to construct a *textual description* (verbatim examples) of what the participants experienced. Following this step, I created a *structural description* of how the participants experienced the circumstances, situations, or environment.

Finally, I developed a composite of textual and structural descriptions of the noema, noesis or meanings and general essences, and invariant structure of the experiences for each research participant. This last step consisted of a lengthy paragraph that describes *what* the participants experienced concerning the phenomena and *how* they encountered it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, Moustakas (1994) emphasizes that the last step concentrates on the participants' shared experiences (Creswell, 2007). For instance, a possible central theme of the data may be burnout.

After analyzing the data, I developed an initial set of codes based on my research questions (Ho, 2020). Then, I examined participants' reflective journals several times, and statements that gave insight into the participants' experiences were captured (Moustakas, 1994;

Patton, 2014). Subsequently, I chose frequent terms and phrases from the participant's reflective journals to identify themes from the data. Next, I decided what to code from the participants' reflective journals. Then I collected all coded sections and organized them by code using Delve. Finally, after grouping them into themes, I reviewed and updated the codes (Ho, 2020).

Semi-Structured Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach

Semi-structured individual interviews are significant for data collection in a phenomenological investigation because they are an informal, fully interactive process that employs open-ended comments and questions to access the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). In phenomenological studies, researchers avoid forming judgments and constructing questions that concentrate on obtaining data that might serve as the basis for future studies. According to Moustakas (1994), to refrain from forming any judgments or biases that might jeopardize the interview process in this study, I engaged in epoché. Hence, phenomenology is most accurate when the researcher can leave aside preconceived notions (epoché) and perceive things through clear lenses (Moustakas, 1994; Sheehan, 2014).

Once participant open-ended surveys were completed and reflective journals were received, I conducted semi-structured interviews with participants (Patton, 2015) for 45-60 minutes each (see Appendix I). Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that the essential thing to remember is to describe the phenomena to a few people who have experienced it. I used a digital platform such as Microsoft Teams to conduct the interviews. My initial goal was to establish participation with the participants accountable for allowing access through Microsoft Teams and a purposeful sample of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The dissertation committee, Liberty University's IRB, and participants must approve the interview questions

before use. Semi-structured interviews were used to guide me, answer both the central research and sub-research questions, and elicit a comprehensive description of adjunct professors' lived experiences, precisely their emotions, reflections, and judgments (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994) with the phenomena of burnout.

Interviewing, according to Creswell and Poth (2018), is viewed as a conversational social engagement that serves two purposes: (a) raw data collection method concerning participant experiences within the context of the phenomenon, and (b) coordination with other data collection methods to develop a robust and deeper understanding of the participants (Seidman, 2006; van Manen, 1990). For technical redundancy and accurate data transcripts (Patton, 2014), I used a Microsoft Teams video recorder and audio recorder and a hand-held audio recorder to record the interviews. During the individual interview process, the following questions were asked.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please share your age, educational background, how long you have been teaching, what subject (s) you teach, and what led you to work at this community college or university.
CRQ
2. What is your typical work week as an adjunct professor at a higher education institution? CRQ/SQ1
3. Describe the moment when you realized you were burned-out or mentally exhausted.
SQ3
4. What components of your job contributed in the past or are contributing to your burnout or mental exhaustion now? SQ1/SQ2
5. Discuss how long you have been struggling with burnout or mental exhaustion. SQ3

6. Discuss what could amend the components of your job that contributed to burnout or mental exhaustion. SQ1/SQ2
7. Describe the effects of your burnout or mental exhaustion on yourself, your students, your coworkers, and the higher education institutions where they work. SQ3
8. Describe how a lack of resources, such as tenure, compensation, benefits, professional growth, job stability, communication, administration, and well-being, contribute to your experience of burnout or mental exhaustion. SRQ2
9. Describe any issues you have concerning your physiological health. SQ3
10. Describe any issues you have regarding your psychological health. SQ3
11. Describe your feelings about being an adjunct professor at a higher education institution. CRQ
12. Describe how you feel towards the conclusion of the working day or the week. SQ3
13. Please describe any instances in which you became disengaged, withdrew from, or isolated yourself from your students, other faculty members, administrators, or the greater academic community. SQ3
14. Describe a perfect role as an adjunct professor at a higher education institution. SQ1/SQ2
15. Considering our conversation on your burnout as an adjunct professor at higher education institutions, what more would you want to add? CRQ/SQ1/SQ2/SQ3

Questions one and two were written to introduce grand tour questions with the participants being interviewed for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Peoples, 2020). Questions three, four, nine, and ten were created to understand better how participants were made aware of their burnout symptoms, the length of their battle with burnout, and how burnout has affected their

psychological and physiological health (Guntupalli et al., 2014; Martínez et al., 2020; Salvagioni et al., 2017). The purpose of questions five, six, and eight is to elicit the responses of the participants regarding their job demands, resources, or the lack thereof at their respective higher education institutions that have led to or have contributed to their own experiences of burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Lesener et al., 2019; Mudrak et al., 2018; Schaufeli, 2017). The goal of question 11 is to encourage participants to speak up about their experiences as adjunct professors at higher education institutions. I sought a better understanding of how their job demands and lack of resources have influenced their perception of themselves, contributing to their burnout as adjunct professors at higher education institutions (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Questions seven, 12, and 13 were designed to guide the interview toward the participants' lived experiences with the effects of burnout on themselves (Greaves et al., 2017; Hakanen et al., 2011; McClure & Fryar, 2022), their students (Henkel & Haley, 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017), their coworkers (Schaufeli, 2017), and the higher education institutions where they work (Alves et al., 2019; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2004; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Maslach, 1976, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017; Maslach et al., 2001; Suh, 2019; Yao et al., 2015). Question 14 elicits responses that further explore the participants' views on the job demands they would want to be reduced and the available employment resources or support they would like to see available (Barnett, 2017; Drozdowski, 2021; Kezar, 2013). Question 15 was designed to be the concluding question (Patton, 2002). Its purpose is to provide the participants with an additional opportunity to share insightful information about their burnout experiences in higher education institutions while allowing each participant to remain the expert on their own life and narrative (Patton, 2002).

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Every expression relevant to the experience was considered while I sought the essence of the meaning (Moustakas, 1994). Since all interviews were recorded, I used Microsoft Teams and my hand-held recorder to transcribe the data. Next, I ensured that the data were transcribed accurately by cross-referencing the Microsoft Teams' transcription with my hand-held recorder transcription. Afterward, I transferred transcribed data to Delve (2022), coding software with participant pseudonyms, questions, and replies.

Individual interviews were analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) eight-step adaptation of van Kaam's (1959, 1966) approach to processing phenomenal data. Moustakas (1994) suggests that the first phase is horizontalization, where the researcher is equally open to all expressions of the participant's experience. Epoché was used throughout the interview process. As data analysis suggests, understanding the phenomena as its whole, rather than breaking it down into its component pieces, is the purpose of transcendental phenomenology (Peoples, 2020). To avoid bias, I kept a journal to approach the data as if she were a newcomer in an unfamiliar environment (Peoples, 2020). The journal focused on my thoughts as the researcher (metacognition) concerning the phenomena under question (Peoples, 2020).

Horizontalization expressions were minimized and deleted to define horizon components (Moustakas, 1994). Next, I clustered the invariant components and put textual descriptions (Moustakas, 1994) into invariant meanings and themes, highlighting each participant's burnout experience (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). After the data analysis, I generated the first set of codes based on the research questions (Ho, 2020). Next, I examined participants' reflective journals several times, and statements that provided insight into the participants' experiences were captured (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2014). Then, I selected common words

and phrases from the participants' reflective journals to discover themes in the data. After that, I determined what to code and organized them from the participants' reflective journals.

Finally, after categorizing the codes, I updated them (Ho, 2020).

I use Delve's (2022) method of coding for individual interviews. Delve allowed me to characterize and organize the data while finding new patterns to help infer meaning. After the individual interviews were transcribed, I cleaned up the raw data by removing unnecessary words and phrases. Moustakas (1994) calls this process reduction and elimination. Only the necessary and sufficient parts of the experience or expressions were kept while overlapping, repetitive, and vague expressions were thrown out so that horizontalization could happen. Then, I coded each data line using the structural coding method, the best way to index transcribed interview data (Delve, 2022; Saldaña, 2021). Next, structural coding was done by finding segments of transcribed text and using a code word as an initial way to group them (Delve, 2022; Miles et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2021).

Lastly, using pattern coding, I clustered the initial structural codes into summative categories labels (Delve, 2022; Saldaña, 2021). Meta coding or pattern coding integrates dissimilar starting codes into more compact, understandable, and cohesive data units (Saldaña, 2021; Stake, 1995). Stake (1995) claimed that these patterns create a template for qualitative data analysis and may be predicted by research questions or uncovered unexpectedly during the investigation. The researcher should expect the second cycle pattern codes to constitute the foundation for thematic development throughout data synthesis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2016; Saldaña, 2012).

Data Synthesis

Data synthesis seeks to create a new interpretation of the phenomenon being studied (Johnston et al., 2020). Additionally, this study's data synthesis goal is to discover and determine the recurring themes that emerged from the open-ended surveys, reflective journals, and individual interviews. Once I had conducted research, collected all the data, and analyzed each data collection method, I compiled all my findings into a consistent body of evidence (Liberty University, 2022). By analyzing the data, according to Wenzel (2020), I determined commonalities, patterns, and themes, emphasizing common patterns, trends, and recurring themes pertinent to the study.

Synthesizing and triangulating data from numerous sources may improve the research's quality and credibility (National Academies Press, 2014). Dzwigol (2020) proposes that methodological triangulation benefits the research process. Triangulation involves combining data collected from various sources at different times, locations, or from other individuals (Flick, 2004). Triangulation is a method used to develop similar themes from the data collected by the researcher (Jentoft & Olsen, 2019) across multiple data collections. However, Kulkarni (2013), Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Moon (2019) claimed that triangulation helps the researcher identify any discrepancies that may be detrimental to the investigation.

In this study, triangulation was used to combine data from open-ended surveys, reflective journals, and individual interviews to identify common themes and verify my results across different data sources (Guion et al., 2011; Jentoft & Olsen, 2019; Oliver, 2022; Patton, 2015). Consequently, I triangulated the findings by comparing the themes discovered in the three data collection methods to determine how often they appear and how similar they are (Flick, 2004; Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). The results from the open-ended surveys, reflective journals, and individual interviews were consistent and similar themes were discovered,

confirming validity (Guion et al., 2011). I then synthesized the data from the three sources to comprehensively describe the phenomenon, which captured the essence of the participants' lived experiences (Heidegger, 1962).

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the study was explained in this section. In qualitative research, trustworthiness is vital. The degree to which a researcher's data is conceptually sound and considered helpful by other researchers is called trustworthiness (Carcary, 2020; Connelly, 2016). Trustworthiness improves the rigor of a qualitative investigation, which is accomplished via credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Connelly, 2016; Patton, 2015). It has long been argued that qualitative investigations are less dependable or valid than their quantitative counterparts (Carcary, 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) expanded the idea of trustworthiness by including the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to match the usual quantitative evaluation criteria of validity and reliability (Nowell et al., 2017). Consequently, I used the fundamental aspects of trustworthiness outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to provide trustworthy findings, as well as sensitive, perceptive, and rich (Nowell et al., 2017).

Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the credibility of a study may be evaluated based on whether other researchers or readers can identify the experience in question when it is presented to them. Nowell et al. (2017) indicate that credibility concerns the congruence between participants' perspectives and the researcher's portrayal of them. To have faith in the study, I needed to use operationalized methodologies to verify that the findings and interpretations were accurate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Members checking, triangulation of

data collection, peer debriefing, researcher triangulation, and persistent observation are all strategies proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to overcome credibility issues. However, triangulation and member checking were used to establish the validity of the findings in this study.

Triangulation was accomplished via open-ended surveys, reflective journals, and interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After collecting data from the sources mentioned above, I utilized triangulation to bolster the validity and reliability of research results (Noble & Heale, 2019) and compare the data describing the phenomena across sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used member checking to verify the findings and interpretations with the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017). Member checking boosted the study's credibility by allowing participants to give feedback on the findings and protect against misinterpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017).

Transferability

This study's transferability was enhanced by the rich and thick descriptions of the phenomena' setting, themes, participants, and lived experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Peoples, 2020; Rockinson-Szapkiw & Spaulding, 2014). Transferability suggests that the results of this study may apply to other research done in the future, although it was conducted in a completely different environment (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Because the researcher cannot identify the location or context to which the results could be transferred, the researcher will improve transferability by giving thick descriptions of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, the only people who may determine transferability are those interested in applying the results to their site or setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017).

Dependability

Researchers who want to achieve dependability in their study must ensure it is logical, traceable, and well-documented throughout the entire research study process (Nowell et al., 2017; Shenton, 2004). When readers can look at the study, they are better positioned to determine the research's dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One way to determine the research's trustworthiness is by auditing the procedure used in the study (Nowell et al., 2017). A clear rationale must be given for the researcher's decisions on theoretical and methodological concerns throughout the study, which is why auditing is necessary (Koch, 1994; Nowell et al., 2017). Consequently, the dissertation committee at Liberty University and the director of qualitative research will conduct an inquiry audit (Liberty University, 2022; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reviewing the data the researcher collected and examining the study's methods was part of the inquiry audit (Carcary, 2020).

Confirmability

Confirmability concerns that the study's findings result from the participants' experiences and ideas rather than the researcher's personal qualities, interests, biases, or motivations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). To achieve confirmability, I needed to illustrate the steps taken to arrive at their results and interpretations (Nowell et al., 2017). Confirmability also ensures that the data analysis was not biased by the individuals or researchers who reviewed the data (Connelly, 2016; Guba, 1981). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), confirmability is attained when all three of the following are achieved: credibility, transferability, and reliability (Koch, 1994; Nowell et al., 2017). Consequently, I incorporated markers such as rationale for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices

throughout the study so that others may understand how and why decisions were taken, which allowed others to conclude the study (Koch, 1994; Nowell et al., 2017).

Additionally, to establish confirmability, I used the following four methods: confirmability audits, audit trails, triangulation, and reflexivity (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Liberty University, 2022). As part of the confirmability audits, I needed to demonstrate that the data and interpretations of the results were not the product of my imagination but were distinctly drawn from the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the researcher conducting a study should use audit trails to ensure that the correct record-keeping and document correctness will be represented in reporting the study's findings. Triangulation was accomplished due to the use of three distinct data sources (open-ended surveys, reflective journals, and semi-structured individual interviews). A journal or diary allowed me to openly discuss any biases and assumptions I had to achieve the goal of reflexivity (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

For the research to be high-quality, the researcher must do it ethically (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To successfully interact with human participants, a researcher must establish mutual trust and respect and be aware of any power imbalances or sensitive populations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research followed rigorous and precise ethical considerations to restrict the participants' susceptibility. Because some participants may be experiencing acute and chronic psychological and physiological signs of burnout, ethical issues were intensified. The ethical aspects considered throughout this study were IRB approval, informal consent, the approval procedure for the planned research setting, the participant's right to withdraw from the study, pseudonyms, and data storage.

Formal permission was not sought from the individual universities since Microsoft Teams' interviews were conducted upon approval from each participant. I made sure that the IRB of Liberty University gave their permission for the study. The participants were informed that their participation was entirely up to them and voluntary. Considering the sensitive nature of the subject matter and the fact that participants were asked to divulge unpleasant experiences, I made it clear that they were under no obligation to participate in the study and may withdraw at any time.

Surmiak (2020) suggested that researchers might employ rewards as a motivator to recruit volunteers. Therefore, participants in this study who completed all three data collection activities: an open-ended survey, a reflective journaling, and a semi-structured interview within three weeks of signing the consent form received \$100 as a thank-you for their participation. The \$100 was sent via Cash App, Venmo, Zelle, or Amazon to participants after the data collection process.

Participants' privacy was protected, allowing them to participate fully in the study. Thus, to preserve anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for all participants and the setting. Participants were assured that collected data would be carefully maintained in a secure place for three years on a password-locked hard drive computer and locked in a safe to protect against the possibility of personally identifiable information being leaked outside the parameters of this study. After the time limit passes, data, as well as any copies that were created, will be deleted.

Summary

This transcendental phenomenological study examined the description of the lived experience of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. This chapter

explained the research design based on Moustakas (1994), the setting, participants, procedures, data collecting plan (open-ended surveys, reflective journals, and interviews), data analysis, data synthesis, and trustworthiness of the findings. Eleven participants (Patton, 2015) were chosen using snowball sampling to participate in the research. Criterion sampling was employed to check whether or not each participant satisfies the study's prerequisites before being allowed to participate. It was explained in detail how the IRB's permission was obtained, the recruited participants, and the data collected. This qualitative research used three approaches to collecting data: open-ended surveys, reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews. These three approaches to collecting data were needed for triangulation, capturing the essence (Heidegger, 1962), and getting a complete picture of the participants' lived experiences. All three data collection methods were analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) eight-step adaptation of van Kaam's (1959, 1966) approach to processing phenomenal data. Delve's (2022) qualitative software coded the three data sources. These experiences had to go beyond my biases and preconceptions so that I could see the phenomenon like it was the first time and be receptive to it all with openness and newness (Moustakas, 1994).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenology study was to understand burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. Phenomenology is concerned with how the phenomena are experienced by those who take part in it, whereas transcendental phenomenology is an approach that aims to gain insight into the human experience, as postulated by Moustakas (1994). Chapter Four presented the recruiting process and demographics of the eleven participants, followed by significant statements of participants' lived experiences obtained through an open-ended survey, a reflective journal, and a semi-structured interview. This study's results are presented in eight distinct sections, each devoted to a different aspect of data analysis: (1) themes discovered in the data collection; (2) excessive workload; (3) exhaustion; (4) lack of resources; (5) disengagement; (6) outlier data and findings; (7) summary of emerging themes, and (8) research questions and responses. After presenting the participant's responses to the central research questions and each sub-question, the final section concludes with a chapter summary.

Participants

Participation in this transcendental phenomenological research study was limited to a participant who is an adjunct professor at a higher education institution and a participant who experienced or is currently experiencing burnout, a state of exhaustion, mental fatigue, or overload caused by excessive stressors as an adjunct professor at a higher education institution. To recruit participants in this study, four adjunct professors were contacted through email. All four potential adjunct professors consented to participate in the research. Next, I introduced my IRB-approved social media recruitment ad on YouTube (see Appendix F), an online social

media site, to recruit additional participants. As a result of those efforts, two participants agreed to participate in the study. The snowball sampling method was then employed with one of the two participants, resulting in the recruitment of two more participants, and one of those participants was able to get three more participants, bringing the total number of potential participants to twelve. All study participants met the criteria for participation and supplied voluntary permission via the consent form. When consent forms were received, participants were given access to the open-ended online survey (see Appendix G). After completing the open-ended survey, one participant dropped out of the study, leaving eleven participants. Among the participants were four men and seven women. The demographic data about the study participants are summarized in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Participants' Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Institution	Years Taught	Subject/Field
Addison	Female	70	University	9+	Biochemistry
Brian	Male	27	University	4+	Physics
Ciara	Female	29	University x 2	2+	Student Teaching
Denise	Female	47	Community College	19+	Graphic Design
Elliott	Male	34	University	3+	Physics
Frankie	Female	42	Community College/University	6+	Chemistry
Gabriella	Female	29	Community College	3+	English
Henry	Male	42	University	4+	Human Resource
Isaac	Male	36	University	1+	Research Methodology
Jamie	Female	27	Community College/University	4+	Human Resource
Katrina	Female	56	University	2+	Education

Eleven participants openly and honestly shared their significant burnout experiences as adjunct professors at higher education institutions. How each participant experienced burnout was vastly different from one another, yet the core of the phenomena remained the same, which is in line with the JD-R theory proposed by Demerouti et al. (2001). Using an open-ended survey, a reflective journal, and a semi-structured interview question, I developed a composite description of the lived experiences' meanings, reflecting the participants as a

whole, as proposed by Moustakas (1994). The context in a transcendental phenomenology study allows the reader to relate to the participants, understand the reasoning behind the themes, and engage with the phenomenon (Neubauer et al., 2019). Thus, Table 2 provides context through participants' significant meanings from all data sources: open-ended surveys, reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews.

Table 2

Significant Meanings

Participants	Significant Expressions about Main Theme Excessive Workload (Sub-Theme: time pressure)	Significant Expressions about Main Theme Exhaustion (Sub-Theme: psychological and physiological health)	Significant Expressions about Main Theme Lack of Resources (Sub-Theme: pay and job security)	Significant Expressions about Main Theme Disengagement (Sub-Theme: cynicism)
Addison	"I teach two three-hour classes two times per week...four hours a week of office hours...and a lab four hours a week...that's too much for my position."	"I'm exhausted...my feet are killing me...I stand three hours straight lecturing."	"It's not beneficial for the institution...pay me more for the additional work I've undertaken."	"I talk about my work negatively...I'm displeased with the way my supervisor communicates."
Brian	"My course workload is extremely hectic."	"I'm empty...my workload is eating away at my sanity...I need therapy."	"My workload is time-consuming...I'm dissatisfied with my pay."	"I shut out the world...and focus on myself."
Ciara	"I teach over 100 students...that's a huge amount of work."	"My workload gives me anxiety...I also get headaches, backaches, stomach pain, and chest pain."	"My workload is time-consuming...my pay is not equating to minimum wage."	"I force myself to zone out...it's the only way to get through the day."

Participants	Significant Expressions about Main Theme Excessive Workload (Sub-Theme: time pressure)	Significant Expressions about Main Theme Exhaustion (Sub-Theme: psychological and physiological health)	Significant Expressions about Main Theme Lack of Resources (Sub-Theme: pay and job security)	Significant Expressions about Main Theme Disengagement (Sub-Theme: cynicism)
Denise	“Teaching a 16-week course in eight weeks...is a lot of work.”	“I’m very exhausted...I’m too exhausted and irritable to do anything.”	“I’m exhausted...I would love to take a break... without fear of losing my teaching contract.”	“I’m talking more cynically about student struggles.”
Elliott	“I’m drained and worn out...it’s too much work.”	“My work is too exhausting...no time to relax.”	“The future is uncertain...I may not get a contract...but I’ll keep searching for a better position.”	“When I’m exhausted...I’m reluctant to go to work...I want to stay at home to regain my strength.”
Frankie	“My workload is overwhelming and exhausting.”	“My work is very time-consuming...not enough time to relax.”	“Adjuncts work hard...pay us for the stress we go through.”	“When my emotional and physical health isn’t good...I’m less engaged and less productive at work.”
Gabriella	“My workload is too much...I’m just an adjunct professor.”	“I dread grading papers...it gives me anxiety.”	“Money makes you get up and work.”	“It’s easy to become disconnected...I have lost my intrinsic motivation!”
Henry	“It’s difficult to manage and tolerate the pressure of my workload.”	“I’m physically exhausted after work...I get migraine headaches...I	“I need research materials and sufficient pay.”	“I’m working like a robot...I’m disconnected from my body...trying to

Participants	Significant Expressions about Main Theme Excessive Workload (Sub-Theme: time pressure)	Significant Expressions about Main Theme Exhaustion (Sub-Theme: psychological and physiological health)	Significant Expressions about Main Theme Lack of Resources (Sub-Theme: pay and job security)	Significant Expressions about Main Theme Disengagement (Sub-Theme: cynicism)
		need more sleep.”		finish my work.”
Isaac	“It’s too much pressure...grading 100 assignments within a short deadline.”	“I’m drained...I can’t keep pushing myself...I have to muster up the energy to complete my tasks.”	“Adjunct contracts aren’t always renewed...I’m burned-out by my workload... but I’m trying to earn a new contract.”	“Not getting paid enough is one thing...but not getting paid on time has left a negative taste in my mouth.”
Jamie	“It drains me when students are not engaged...the great amount of time and effort I put into the lecture notes.”	“I’m physically drained after work...I can’t cook, shower...or change clothes before bed.”	“My job’s uncertainty drains me mentally.”	“There’s nothing positive to say about my work...my work and colleagues are exhausting.”
Katrina	“I get exhausted...just thinking about Monday’s workload.”	“My workload causes anxiety...my overall emotional health has declined.”	“Job security is lacking...no courses...no work.”	“My frustration leads to negativity...my workload fills me with dread.”

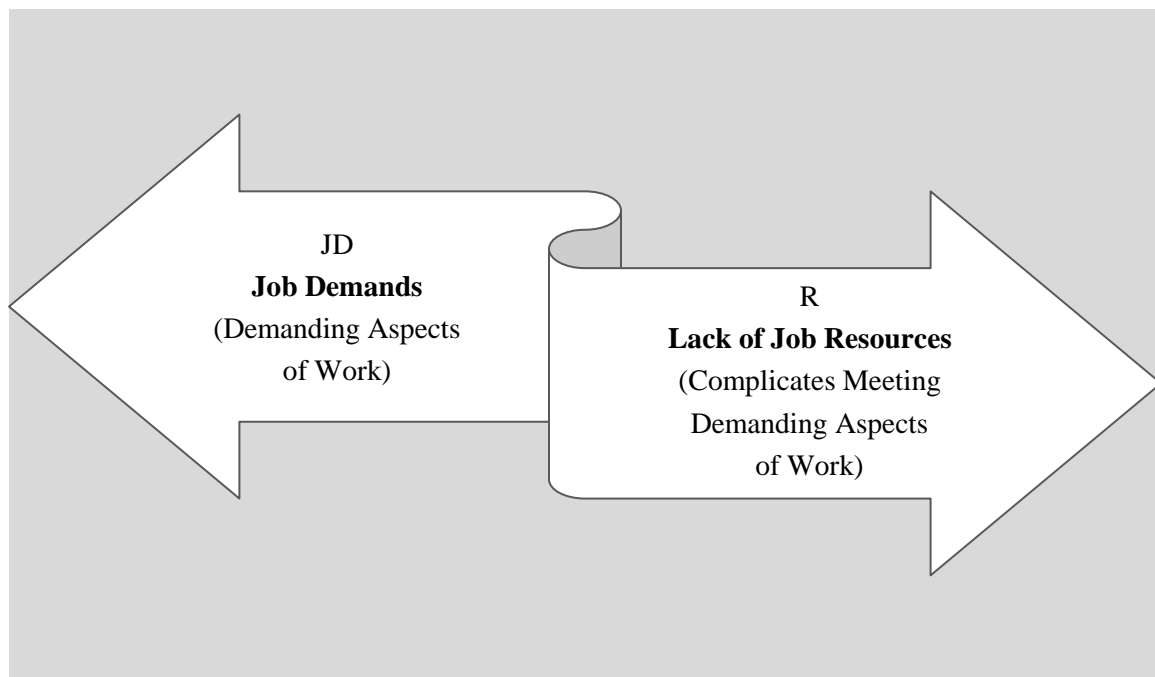
Demerouti et al. (2001) job demand resource (JD-R) theory is the basis of this study.

The JD-R theory suggested two distinct processes that lead to burnout development (see Figure 6). In the first process, Demerouti et al. (2001) postulate that job demands or challenging components of work that require persistent emotional, psychological, physiological, or cognitive effort result in continual overtaking and burnout. Moreover, after extended exposure

to high job demands, employees develop chronic fatigue, other physiological symptoms, and psychological disengagement. In the second process, job resources relate to the workplace's psychological, physiological, social, and organizational components that assist employees in achieving their work objectives and promote their personal growth and development (Demerouti et al., 2001). In contrast, when job resources are insufficient, Demerouti et al. (2001) assert that employees lose interest in their jobs and acquire unfavorable attitudes, intensifying the connection between job demands, burnout, and disengagement, which leads to decreased work productivity.

Figure 6.

Two processes of the JD-R Model



Note. Job Demands-Resources theory (Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Results

Three data sources determined the results and themes: an open-ended survey, a reflective journal, and a semi-structured interview. All participants were given the same OLBI 16-item open-ended survey, eight of which were used to assess exhaustion and burnout and the other eight to assess disengagement from work. The participants were then requested to complete the same reflective journal data method collection, for which they received nine writing prompts and instructions via email. During a 45–60-minute semi-structured interview conducted on Microsoft Teams, they were asked the same 15 open-ended questions. The validity of this study's findings was determined by member checking among all participants. The collected data were analyzed to find words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that characterized the participants' lived experiences with the phenomena. These meaning units were then used to construct themes applicable to the JD-R theory that guided the narrative (Demerouti et al., 2001). These themes offered the basis for comprehending the lived experiences of adjunct professors at higher education institutions.

Themes Discovered in the Data Collection

The revised version of van Kaam's (1959, 1966) phenomenological analysis by Moustakas (1994) was employed, focusing on textual and structural words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs related to the experience with the phenomena and using horizontalization and delineated meanings. To gain an accurate portrayal of the participants' experiences, I had to put aside my preconceptions, prejudices, and prior notions and experiences during the analytical process, following the epoché proposed by Moustakas (1994). According to Moustakas (1994), epoché lets the researcher experience the event as if it were happening for the first time and makes the participants' experiences the focal point of the study.

I organized, identified, analyzed, and developed initial and intermediate codes, filtered out irrelevant data, and then classified them of similar meanings and essences (as shown in Table 2), which enabled me to identify word patterns and common and pertinent themes from the open-ended survey, reflective journal, and semi-structured interviews. Afterward, I reexamined the codes to ensure sufficient evidence for every theme (Delve, 2022) to help understand the participants' lived experiences of burnout at higher education institutions.

Data from the open-ended survey, the reflective journal, and the semi-structured interview were analyzed and triangulated. Strong support for the JD-R theory was found in the main themes of (a) excessive workload, (b) exhaustion, (c) lack of resources, and (d) disengagement that emerged from the analysis and coding process. The findings of main themes, subthemes, and outliers are provided in the narrative format below. Table 3 shows the number of participants whose statements corresponded with the identified themes during data collection, as indicated by an X in the corresponding box.

Table 3.

Main Themes of Data Collection

Themes of Workload, Exhaustion, and Disengagement											
Addison	Brian	Ciara	Denise	Elliott	Frankie	Gabriella	Henry	Isaac	Jamie	Katrina	=(11)
Excessive Workload = refers to participants' workload or job demand that is too excessive, causing overexertion and exhaustion											
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11/11 100%
Exhaustion = refers to one of the critical components of burnout: emotional exhaustion, which is characterized by long-term exposure to emotions of stress, particularly persistent fatigue brought on by overbearing work											
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11/11 100%
Lack of Resources = refers to participants not having adequate resources at work, leading to a loss of interest in their work and the formation of negative attitudes toward it											
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11/11 100%
Disengagement = refers to an employee's natural response to exhaustion leading to disengagement in the form of distancing themselves from the purpose and general substance of their work											
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11/11 100%

The main themes of data collection led to the creation of sub-themes. For example, the first theme, excessive workload, resulted in one sub-theme: time pressure. Second, the main theme of exhaustion led to two sub-themes: psychological and physiological health. While the third theme, lack of resources, developed two sub-themes: pay and job security. Finally, the fourth theme, disengagement, produced one sub-theme of cynicism.

Excessive Workload

The main theme of excessive workload refers to participants' workload that is too excessive, causing overexertion and exhaustion. Additionally, being overexerted and exhausted for a prolonged time harms participants' psychological and physiological health (Demerouti et al., 2001) and has been responsible for lower work productivity (Chen et al., 2017; Druss et al.,

2021). The cornerstone of this theme is Demerouti et al. (2001) job demand resource (JD-R) theory. Although the excessive workload varied from participant to participant, all participants described being overloaded with their tasks across the three data-collection methods. For example, Ciara wrote in her reflective journal, "...I teach over 100 students...that's a huge amount of work." Brian wrote in his reflective journal, "...my course workload is extremely hectic." Addison and Gabriella said that the amount of work they must do as adjunct professors is too much. Addison noted in her reflective journal, "...I teach two three-hour classes two times per week...four hours a week of office hours...and a lab four hours a week...that's too much for my position." Gabriella stated in her interview, "...my workload is too much...I'm just an adjunct professor." Denise noted in her interview, "...teaching a 16-week course in eight weeks...is a lot of work." Jamie puts in a lot of time and effort and feels exhausted at work. Jamie noted in her open-ended survey, "...it drains me when students are not engaged...the great amount of time and effort I put into the lecture notes." Elliott responded in his survey, "...I'm drained and worn out...it's too much work." Frankie stated in her open-ended survey, "...my workload is overwhelming and exhausting." The data indicated that adjunct professors at higher education institutions are expected to accomplish an unreasonable amount of work, which is in line with the findings of Alves et al. (2019), Flaherty (2020b), and Umpierrez (2021), who posited that adjunct professors' workloads have grown increasingly excessive as the years have progressed.

Even though participants have excessive workloads, participants have recognized the adverse consequences of this on the students. Ciara shared in her interview, "...I want to support the students...I can't do it...I can't keep up with all of my work." Addison said in her interview, "...students are suffering...when I get behind in my workload." Denise stated in her

interview, "...the last two grading periods have been a struggle...mentally, I'm letting the students down." Isaac said that the amount of work he has to do prevents him from instructing students successfully. Isaac stated in his reflective journal, "...it's unfair to shortchange students due to my workload." Katrina wrote in her reflective journal, "...I'm stressed and overwhelmed...I have to take a deep breath before responding to a student." Frankie said in her open-ended survey, "...it sickens me to teach students the same courses repeatedly." Gabriella stated in her open-ended survey, "...my workload is too much...I give students less feedback on their assignments." Participants believed that their excessive workload has caused them to go above and beyond the scope of their role as adjunct professors, "...that's too much work for my position," which has negatively impacted students (Drozdowski, 2021). There is an excessive workload when job expectations exceed employees' capacity to manage them. In addition, excessive workload refers to the number of hours or intensity, amount of time sacrificed, and effort required to complete a task (Kirch, 2008).

Time Pressure

The sub-theme of time constraints refers to job demands placed on participants who operate in an environment with a large amount of pressure to meet tight work deadlines (see Table 4), thus, having to cope with always competing work priorities (Chen et al., 2022; Demerouti et al., 2001; Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021). Based on the open-ended survey results, all participants indicated that they felt rushed to complete their workload. Gabriella responded in her open-ended survey, "...it's too much work...a week is not enough time to grade 70 papers and give student feedback." Henry stated in his open-ended survey, "...it's difficult to manage and tolerate the pressure of my workload." Ciara said in her open-ended survey, "...the pressure to complete my work...I'm near my breaking point." Isaac stated in his

Exhaustion

The main theme of exhaustion refers to one of the critical components of burnout: emotional exhaustion, which is characterized by long-term exposure to emotions of stress, particularly persistent fatigue brought on by overbearing work (i.e., excessive job demands, time pressure) and drained psychological and physiological resources (Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach et al., 2001). Exhaustion was a common theme across all participants due to the intense psychological, emotional, and physiological pressure they had been under (Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Demerouti et al., 2001). All participants said that their excessive workload leaves them exhausted. Ciara said in her open-ended survey, "...I'm completely exhausted after work...I have nothing left in me...can't decide what's for dinner." Henry stated in his open-ended survey, "...I'm exhausted...there's too much work on my plate." Denise noted in her journal, "...I'm very exhausted...I'm too exhausted and irritable to do anything." Isaac remarked in his journal, "...I'm drained...I can't keep pushing myself...I have to muster up the energy to complete my tasks." Elliott remarked that he does not have time to relax due to his workload. Elliott said in his interview, "...my work is too exhausting...no time to relax." Frankie shared the sentiments expressed by Elliott. Frankie said in her interview, "...my work is very time-consuming...not enough time to relax."

Participants have become exhausted due to their workload, which includes encouraging students, creating, and replying to emails, planning and presenting lectures, grading assignments, offering feedback, and even engaging in administrative duties. Katrina stated in her open-ended survey, "...faculty tasks and meetings exhaust me." Ciara noted in her open-ended survey, "...my workload is too large to deal directly with student issues." Jamie indicated in her interview, "...it's exhausting...when students are slow learners." Isaac said in

his interview, "...I'm burned-out...I'm not staying after class to break down research techniques." Denise said in her reflective journal, "...unmotivated students and pressure from my institution are exhausting." Gabriella noted in her reflective journal, "...I am burned-out...my student's writing frustrates me." Participants indicated that their excessive workloads are causing them to experience a great deal of exhaustion, subsequently keeping them from relaxing after work, "...my work is too exhausting...no time to relax" and engaging with students, "...I'm burned-out...I'm not staying after class." Exhaustion is a significant contributor to burnout, which is characterized by a sense of being drained by one's job, "...I'm drained...I have to muster up the energy to complete my tasks," especially when combined with psychological and physiological depletion from excessive effort (Bakker & Costa, 2014).

Psychological Health

The sub-theme of psychological health refers to aspects of the participant's psychological well-being impacted by exhaustion (see Table 5). Employees under long-term exhaustion from excessive work demands experience various psychological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, lack of motivation, and moodiness, to name a few (Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Demerouti et al., 2001; Guntupalli et al., 2014). These symptoms indicate something is amiss (Bakker & de Vries, 2021). Eleven participants stated how exhaustion had affected their psychological health. Psychological effects like work-related anxiety have been linked to exhaustion (Bakker & de Vries, 2021). For example, Isaac stated in his interview, "...I get anxiety in my stomach...when I'm emotionally burned-out." Denise explained that her anxiety from many years ago has reappeared due to her excessive workload. Denise said in her interview, "...I experienced anxiety back in college...I've been experiencing it again...it's my workload." Gabriella noted in her reflective journal, "...I dread grading papers...it gives me

anxiety.” Katrina said in her reflective journal, “...my workload causes anxiety...my overall emotional health has declined.” Ciara mentioned in her open-ended survey, “...I feel extremely anxious when my workload is not done.” The need for therapy emerged as an additional psychological symptom (Bakker & de Vries, 2021). One of the participants, Brian, mentioned that his workload is affecting him mentally, and he needs help. For example, Brian stated in his open-ended survey, “...I’m empty...my workload is eating away at my sanity...I need therapy.” The excessive workload and time pressure have adversely contributed to the participant’s poor psychological health. Higher rates of burnout are associated with an increased prevalence of psychological problems, such as anxiety, among employees (Bakker & Costa, 2014), “...my workload causes anxiety...my overall emotional health has declined.” Bakker and Costa (2014) asserted that an employee’s psychological symptoms could be linked to increased cognitive demand for work overtime or prolonged mental strain.

Table 5.

Sub-Theme of Psychological Health

Addison	Brian	Ciara	Denise	Elliott	Frankie	Gabriella	Henry	Isaac	Jamie	Katrina	= 11
Psychological Health = refers to aspects of the participants’ psychological well-being impacted by exhaustion											
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11/11 100%

Physiological Health

The subtheme of physiological health refers to aspects of the participant’s physiological well-being affected by exhaustion (see Table 6). Participants with a higher level of burnout resulting from constant fatigue imposed by excessive work-related tasks are more likely to experience a variety of physiological problems, including, but not limited to, the following:

abnormal sleep patterns, extreme tiredness, headaches, muscular aches, and pain, stomach problems, excessive body weakness or feeling physiologically unwell (Bakker & Costa, 2014; Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Young, 2021). Katrina described how her exhaustion led to a decline in her physiological health. For example, Katrina wrote in her journal, "...work has consumed me...I canceled my gym membership...my health is in jeopardy." Ciara responded in her reflective journal, "...my workload gives me headaches, backaches, stomach pain, and chest pain." Participants indicated that they were too physiologically exhausted to do anything after work. Isaac noted in his journal, "...I have no physical energy after work...I want to eat and go right to sleep." Denise stated in her open-ended survey, "...after work, I'm too exhausted...I can't help my daughter with her homework." Henry stated in his open-ended survey, "...I'm physically exhausted after work...I get migraine headaches...I need more sleep." Jamie said in her interview, "...I'm physically drained after work...I can't cook, shower...or change clothes before bed." Brian said in his interview, "...as my workload increases...I worry more and sleep less." Addison and Frankie noted in their interviews that their feet are incredibly sore from standing for lengthy periods while lecturing. The exhaustion that the participants experienced contributed to developing physiological health problems. The participants have put in considerable effort to satisfy their job's excessive demands, resulting in several physiological consequences; for example, Isaac stated, "...my workload gives me headaches, backaches, stomach pain, and chest pain." Bakker and de Vries (2021) posited that the progression of physiological symptoms such as lack of sleep, aches and pains throughout the body, and poor self-care practices could worsen if prolonged exposure to excessive job demands continued.

Table 6.

Sub-Theme of Physiological Health

Addison	Brian	Ciara	Denise	Elliott	Frankie	Gabriella	Henry	Isaac	Jamie	Katrina	= 11
Physiological Health = refers to aspects of the participant's physiological well-being impacted by exhaustion											
	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	10/11 100%

Lack of Resources

The main theme of lack of resources refers to participants not having adequate resources at work, leading to a loss of interest in their work and forming negative attitudes towards it (Demerouti et al., 2001). Bakker and Costa (2014) and Demerouti et al. (2001) asserted that lacking resources relates to higher burnout levels. Inadequate resources to assist with their excessive workloads hindered participants' capacity to satisfy job demands. Participants highlighted a lack of resources like administrative support, training, faculty inclusion, and materials. Denise responded in her open-ended survey, "...it's too hard to lead students without sufficient resources." Katrina said in her open-ended survey, "...I get the grunt work...I am considered lower than my full-time colleagues." Brian stated in his interview, "...there's a lack of training...I don't know enough." Isaac said in his interview, "...research materials and professional development are lacking resources." Addison said in her interview, "...my department has faculty's picture on the wall...none are pictures of adjunct professors." Jamie said in her reflective journal, "...there's a lack of materials...full-time professors get theirs first...adjuncts get the leftovers." Henry stated in his reflective journal, "...research supplies are lacking." Gabriella wrote in her reflective journal, "...community support from the institution is lacking." A lack of resources has exacerbated participants' exhaustion and burnout. According to Demerouti et al. (2021), employment

resources such as rewards, job security, and administrative support may lessen job demands; for example, "...the job demands far exceeds the pay" and the psychological and physiological costs associated with it. In contrast, when there are not enough resources on the job, addressing participants' emotional requirements is challenging, and there is less of a buffer between job pressure and burnout (Bakker & de Vries, 2021).

Pay

The sub-theme of pay refers to the monetary compensation received in exchange for work performed on the job, and it also acts as a motivational tool to show up for work (see Table 7) (Bakker et al., 2014). Gabriella said in her interview, "...money makes you get up and work." Frankie stated in her interview, "...adjuncts work hard....pay us for the stress we go through." Addison noted in her interview, "...it's not beneficial for the institution...pay me more for the additional work I've undertaken." Elliott responded in his open-ended survey, "...I'm depressed...my pay doesn't match my work effort." Brian stated in his open-ended survey, "...my workload is time-consuming...I'm dissatisfied with my pay." Denise wrote in her reflective journal, "...compensate me...I help students outside of class." Ciara wrote in her reflective journal, "...my workload takes too much time...my pay is not equating to minimum wage." Henry said in his reflective journal, "...I need sufficient pay." According to Kohler (2021), the best way to combat burnout is through motivational strategies incorporating rewards. Using pay as an incentive to inspire workers influences job satisfaction, and it may also help prevent burnout or, at the very least, make the workload more bearable (Kohler, 2021).

Table 7.

Sub-Theme of Pay

Addison	Brian	Ciara	Denise	Elliott	Frankie	Gabriella	Henry	Isaac	Jamie	Katrina	= 11
Pay = refers to the monetary compensation received in exchange for work performed on the job, and it also acts as a motivational tool to show up for work											
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11/11 100%

Job Security

The sub-theme of job security refers to the benefit of working and assurance of long-term employment (see Table 8) (Olawole, 2022). Participants must feel secure and satisfied in their occupations and maintain the emotional stability necessary to do their tasks well (Olawole, 2022). The lack of job security, precisely, contract renewal, was a factor in the exhaustion among 100% of the participants. Katrina wrote in her reflective journal, "...job security is lacking...no courses...no work." Denise wrote in her reflective journal, "...I'm exhausted...I would love to take a break...without fear of losing my teaching contract." Isaac stated in his reflective journal, "...adjunct contracts aren't always renewed...I'm burned-out by my workload...but I'm trying to earn a new contract." Jamie reported in her open-ended survey, "...my job's uncertainty drains me mentally." Ciara said in her interview, "...there's a lack in job security...will I get a course...will I make money." Addison said in her interview, "...I heard that higher education institutions are phasing out adjuncts." Elliott said in his interview, "...the future is uncertain...I may not get a contract...but I'll keep searching for a better position." Renewing teaching contracts risks their status as adjunct professors (Aybas et al., 2015). Thus, participants' burnout was exacerbated by the lack of available resources and the fact that they did not believe they could rely on regular revenue from their respective institutions. Workload and time limits, which may threaten the participants' employment stability, have also contributed to their exhaustion (De Angelis et al., 2021).

Table 8.*Sub-Theme of Job Security*

Addison	Brian	Ciara	Denise	Elliott	Frankie	Gabriella	Henry	Isaac	Jamie	Katrina	= 11
Job Security = refers to the benefit of working and assurance of long-term employment											
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11/11 100%

Disengagement

The main theme of disengagement refers to an employee's natural response to exhaustion leading to disengagement in the form of distancing themselves from the purpose and general substance of their work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). Disengagement results in lowered productivity, increased absences from work, reduced passion, diminished quality of work, increased job quitting, and, specifically, cynicism (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). Katrina wrote in her reflective journal, "...I'm exhausted...why am I still doing this?" Frankie said in her reflective journal, "...when my emotional and physical health isn't good...I'm less engaged and less productive at work." Exhausted participants are inclined to withdraw within themselves, an essential psychological aspect of exhaustion. For example, Isaac noted in his reflective journal, "...burnout makes me disengage...I become silent and reserved in class." Brian said in his open-ended survey, "...I shut out the world...and focus on myself." Ciara said in her open-ended survey, "...I force myself to zone out...it's the only way to get through the day." Denise noted in her interview, "...I'm exhausted...I don't want to teach...asking questions in class is off limits." Elliott said in his interview, "...when I'm exhausted...I'm reluctant to go to work...I want to stay at home to regain my strength." Henry stated in his interview, "...I'm working like a robot...I'm disconnected from my body...trying to finish my work." Gabriella indicated in her interview,

“...it’s easy to become disconnected...I have lost my intrinsic motivation!” The participant’s action toward their work, “...I’m exhausted...I don’t want to teach...asking questions in class is off limits,” reflects the withdrawal or reduced motivation from their jobs. According to Schaufeli and Taris (2014), disengagement occurs when employees fail to use and express themselves psychologically, physiologically, cognitively, and emotionally at work due to stress and job demands. Thus, participants disengage from various elements of work to protect themselves from additional energy depletion (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

Cynicism

The sub-theme of cynicism refers to participants’ detached or negative attitudes toward their work in general rather than toward other individuals (Bakker et al., 2014) (see Table 9). Cynicism about work increases when job demands such as work overload, emotional expectations, and poor work circumstances are high (Demerouti et al., 2001; Demerouti et al., 2010). According to Bakker et al. (2014), burnout and cynicism are predictable outcomes for employees in higher education institutions facing excessive workloads and a lack of resources. All participants mentioned that they spoke negatively about adjunct professors’ roles. Katrina said in her open-ended survey, “...my frustration leads to negativity...my workload fills me with dread.” Brian said in his open-ended survey, “...my workload demands a lot of my time...I have negative thoughts about my pay.” Bakker et al. (2014) asserted that cynicism is directed at one’s job, not others, yet Jamie, Denise, and Addison share cynical attitudes about individuals at work. Denise stated in her open-ended survey, “...I’m talking more cynically about student struggles.” Addison said in her open-ended survey, “...I talk about my work negatively...I’m displeased with the way my supervisor communicates.” Jamie stated in her reflective journal, “...there’s nothing positive to say about my work....my work and colleagues

are exhausting.” Isaac noted in his reflective journal, “...not getting paid enough is one thing...but not getting paid on time has left a negative taste in my mouth.” Participants indicated they had been coping with work pressure by grumbling about their jobs’ excessive workload, exhaustion, and lack of resources. For example, Gabriella stated in her interview, “...I complain so much...I do too much as an adjunct professor...and don’t get paid enough.” Elliott said in his interview, “...I’m negative...pay me more...my workload is too much.” Ciara stated in her interview, “...I want to remain an adjunct professor...but the workload is too much...it’s a toxic love-hate relationship.” Participants’ cynicism toward their job was caused by excessive workloads and lack of resources (Bakker et al., 2014). Employees who report psychological and physiological health problems are more likely to experience exhaustion and cynicism from their jobs, “...I dread grading papers...it gives me anxiety,” as Bakker et al. (2014) emphasized. Further, cynicism offers workers an escape route when they lack the emotional or psychological reserves to deal with the stresses of their jobs (Bailey, 2021).

Table 9.

Sub-Theme of Cynicism

Addison	Brian	Ciara	Denise	Elliott	Frankie	Gabriella	Henry	Isaac	Jamie	Katrina	= 11
Cynicism = refers to participants’ detached or negative attitudes toward their work in general rather than toward other individuals											
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11/11 100%

Outlier Data and Findings

This section focuses on some of the findings from the study that came unexpectedly. These discoveries were fascinating and worthy of mention, adding new facets to the research.

Age and retirement were two of the outliers that stood out. The findings of the below outliers could be the basis of future research studies.

Age and Retirement

Addison, a 70-year-old participant, discussed how her overall health directly results from her role as an adjunct professor. Addison said, "...at this stage in my life, my role as an adjunct professor has improved my emotional health. When I retired from my former profession, I was unprepared to do nothing. This position satisfies my desire to continue to serve the community and be significant." Despite her advanced age and highly sore feet after conducting lengthy lectures, Addison maintains that her role as an adjunct professor has had no negative impact on her physiological health or her ability to impart knowledge to the next generation. Addison explains, "...my role as an adjunct hasn't hurt my physiological health in any way. I'm more active two days a week because of it. Age is the only thing that has changed my physiological health. Still, I want to help my students develop a love of science and give them the information they will need for their future careers. I have no other goals except to be a great professor."

Summary of Emerging Themes

The data analysis revised by Moustakas (1994) was applied in this study to investigate and discover the meanings and essences of the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. An understanding of the phenomenon is uncovered in this process through the use of textual and structural words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs related to the lived experience with the phenomena. Although understanding the phenomena is impossible, its essence can be understood (Moustakas, 1994). Following the epoché suggested by Moustakas (1994), I had to set aside my assumptions, prejudices, and past

concepts and experiences during the analytical process to obtain an authentic picture of the participants' experiences. Epoché, in the opinion of Moustakas (1994), puts the participants' experiences as the main focus of the study, allowing the researcher to feel the event as if it were happening at the moment.

Findings from this study revealed four main themes and six sub-themes that reflected and built upon the adjunct professor's shared experiences: excessive workload, exhaustion, lack of resources, and disengagement (see Table 10). Finding the main themes that describe the phenomena's essence and providing the necessary clarification from the data collection was accomplished. In the end, the phenomena were discovered with the help of the themes.

Table 10.

Themes and Sub-Themes Aligned with Job-Demands-Resources (JD-R)

Themes and Sub-Themes Aligned with Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Processes	
Themes (T) and Sub-Themes (ST) and Job Demands-Resources (JD-R)	Descriptions of Themes and Sub-Themes
Job Demands (JD-R) Excessive Workload (T) Time Pressure (ST)	<p>Aspects of a job that are of a physical, psychological, social, or organizational in character that need constant effort from the individual, resulting in mental and physical strain.</p> <p>Participants' workload that is too excessive, causing overexertion and exhaustion.</p> <p>Job demands placed on participants who operate in an environment with a large amount of pressure to meet tight work deadlines.</p>
Exhaustion (JD-R) Exhaustion (T) Psychological Health (ST) Physical Health (ST)	<p>Long-term effect of sustained exposure to particular job demands that cause intense physical, emotional, and cognitive strain.</p> <p>One of the critical components of participants' burnout: emotional exhaustion, which is characterized by long-term exposure to emotions of stress, particularly persistent fatigue brought on by overbearing work.</p> <p>Aspects of the participants' psychological well-being impacted by exhaustion.</p> <p>Aspects of the participants' physical well-being impacted by exhaustion</p>
Resources (JD-R) Lack of Resources (T) Pay (ST) Job Security (ST)	<p>Job components that aid in the success of work objectives, reduce job demands and the associated physiological costs, or promote personal growth and learning.</p> <p>Participants not having adequate resources at work, leading to a loss of interest in their work and the formation of negative attitudes towards it.</p> <p>Participants' monetary compensation received in exchange for work performed on the job; it also acts as a motivational tool to show up for work.</p> <p>Participants' benefit of working and assurance of long-term employment.</p>
Disengagement (JD-R) Disengagement (T) Cynicism (ST)	<p>When workers lack an active and practical connection to many areas of their jobs and lack confidence in their capacity to face the difficulties of their roles.</p> <p>Participants' natural response to exhaustion leading to disengagement in the form of distancing themselves from the purpose and general substance of their work.</p> <p>Participants' detached or negative attitudes toward their work in general rather than toward other individuals.</p>

Note. Job Demands-Resource (JD-R) (Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

Research Question Responses

This study aimed to determine what factors contribute to burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. The main research questions and sub-research questions were answered using data from the participants' open-ended surveys, reflective journals, and semi-structured individual interviews. The alignment between the main themes, sub-themes, central research questions, and sub-questions is shown in Table 7, based on the participants' responses. A detailed explanation of the data in the central research question and the sub-research questions is provided in the following section.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of adjunct professors experiencing burnout at higher education institutions? The responses from the participants resulted in the emergence of four main themes (excessive workload, exhaustion, lack of resources, disengagement) and the subsequent six sub-themes (time pressure, psychological and physiological health, pay, job security, and cynicism). The responses from participants also highlighted the extent of their workload, the negative implications of their workload, the resources that may help lessen those adverse effects, and the personal and professional repercussions of that workload. Although participants' burnout narratives varied based on their own lived experiences, they all experienced the phenomena richly and meaningfully.

Participants' exhaustion and burnout were mostly attributable to their inability to keep up with their workload, including supporting students, grading, sending and answering emails, organizing and giving lectures, holding office hours, offering feedback, and even engaging in administrative activities. In particular, those who had a large number of students reported feeling more emotionally drained. For example, Ciara said, "...the pressure to complete my

work...I'm near my breaking point." Brian stated, "...I'm empty...my workload is eating away at my sanity...I need therapy." Despite the negative experiences of burnout shared by participants, each participant mentioned aspects of their work that they found rewarding, such as their relationships with students and enthusiasm for learning. Jamie stated, "...despite being burned-out...what I share with students is gratifying." Katrina remarked, "...the drawback of adjunct teaching is bureaucracy...but when I have engaged students, that's wonderful and energizing." Similar to Katrina, regardless of their lived experiences with burnout, other participants having the opportunity to impart knowledge to students is satisfying.

Despite job demands, passion gives employees satisfying and fulfilling careers (Esparza, 2014). Henry and Frankie agree that the position of an adjunct professor is challenging, overtaxing, and draining of energy; nonetheless, they think their passion for teaching inspires and pushes them to persevere. Henry said, "...working as an adjunct is exhausting and stressful...it's my passion to pass on knowledge to students is rewarding." Frankie said, "...I'm exhausted and overworked...I love lecturing...my passion pushes me to finish my work." Despite what participants experienced as a result of their excessive workloads, exhaustion, and a lack of resources, working as adjunct professors at higher education institutions offered participants satisfying opportunities to share their expertise with students.

Sub-Question One

How do adjunct professors at higher education institutions describe the job demands contributing to their burnout? Job demands are psychological, physiological, social, or organizational and necessitate continual exertion on the part of the employee, as well as the consequent psychological and physiological (Demerouti et al., 2001). Participants' perceptions

of *excessive workload* resulted in the main theme of this study and, subsequently, the sub-theme of *time pressure*.

Participants must use a great deal of effort to satisfy excessive job demands in a short amount of time. Job demands placed on employees due to growing on-campus and online student recruiting have been a recurrent theme in higher education institutions (Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021). Furthermore, these changes have impacted participants' work as they encounter challenges such as excessive workloads, time pressure, and heightened levels of exhaustion. The overwhelming work that participants like Katrina, Elliott, and Denise are required to do caused them to feel exhausted. For example, Katrina stated, "...thinking about Monday's workload exhausts me." Elliott stated, "...it's too much work...I'm exhausted and depleted." Denise remarked, "...that's a lot of work; cramming a 16-week course into eight weeks is exhausting!"

Participants have been subjected to an excessive workload, leading to exhaustion and burnout. For example, Ciara said, "...it's a great deal of work...I teach up to 100 students at a time." The participant's objective is to support their students, yet the excessive workload and the amount of time required to perform the work have left them feeling overwhelmed and unable to keep up with their job demands. Thus, in addition to their excessive workload, they are under too much *time pressure* to get it done. Time pressure is workplace obligations made on employees who work in an atmosphere with significant pressure to achieve tight deadlines. As a result, these employees are forced to deal with always conflicting work priorities. For example, Gabriella remarked, "...I'm only an adjunct professor...why so much work?" Isaac stated, "...grading 100 assignments in a short time...too much pressure." Jamie said, "...I'm drained...there's pressure to grade papers rapidly." The expectation for participants to grade

100 assignments in a short time frame necessitates exerting substantial energy, eventually leading to exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2001). For example, Gabriella stated, "...quickly grading and providing feedback on nearly a hundred assignments is impossible...and too hard ." Higher education institutions impose unprecedented work pressure on adjunct professors, despite these individuals having limited time to perform their responsibilities (Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021).

Sub-Question Two

How do adjunct professors at higher education institutions describe the lack of resources contributing to their burnout? Lack of resources suggests not having adequate resources at work, leading to a loss of interest in their work and the formation of negative attitudes towards it (Demerouti et al., 2001). This question was addressed deeply by participants' comparable experiences with the third main theme of *lack of resources* at their respective higher education institutions, which consequently helped to establish the sub-themes of *pay* and *job security*.

While adjunct professors' workloads have conventionally been excessive, they have also been under-compensated (McClure & Fryar, 2022). The participants' responses indicated that they were not supplied with sufficient resources such as pay or job security to satisfy the excessive demands of their roles. For example, Addison stated, "...give me more money...my workload has increased." Employees' attitudes about their jobs may be affected by financial rewards, and such rewards like pay may also reduce the risk of burnout and make employees' jobs more manageable (Kohler, 2021). Thus, when avoiding burnout, Kohler (2021) recommends using rewards. For example, Brian said, "...my pay is inadequate...my work

demands a lot of time.” Frankie remarked, “...compensate us for the work and exhaustion we’re under.”

An additional means to protect employees from burnout and keep them engaged when job demands are excessive is to keep them motivated. Therefore, the assurance of receiving a salary equal to an employee’s efforts serves as both a reward and a motivator to work (Bakker et al., 2014). For example, Gabriella said, “...getting paid fairly for my effort motivates me to get up and work.” Elliott stated, “...I need more pay...something that can motivate me.” The lack of resources, such as job security, that participants Katrina and Ciara face and their inability to rely on regular income from their respective institutions is a significant cause of their burnout. For example, Katrina said, “...if the courses aren’t offered...I won’t have a job.” Ciara remarked, “...will I have a class this semester...will I get a paycheck...do I need to find something else?”

The JD-R theory proposes that resources play a central role in preventing psychological and physiological health impairments and places employees’ health at the center. However, when resources are insufficient, employees struggle to meet the demands of their jobs and subsequently incur increased psychological and physiological health problems (Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001). For example, Denise stated, “...can I take a break without losing my job...I’m exhausted?” Isaac said, “...I’m exhausted...working so hard to prove my worth.” Because of a lack of resources such as pay and job security, it is more challenging to meet the emotional needs of employees, which amplifies the impact of work demands on burnout (Bakker & de Vries, 2021). While job resources seem to mitigate burnout in employees, several writers have found that a lack of resources may lead to symptoms of burnout (Bakker et al., 2005; Hakanen et al., 2006; Maslach, 2001). Therefore, it is plausible that some of the

difficulties the participants faced may have served as stressors and contributed to the emergence of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

Sub-Question Three

How do adjunct professors at higher education institutions describe their experience with burnout and its symptoms? Burnout is a state of psychological exhaustion caused by an excessive effort to meet unrealistic expectations, a sense of psychological and physiological resource depletion, and exhaustion (Freudenberger, 1974). Moreover, burnout results from prolonged responses to chronic interpersonal stressors at the workplace (Maslach, 1976). All participants described their experience of burnout as a profound sense of *exhaustion* (the second main theme identified) accompanied by various *psychological and physiological health* (sub-themes) symptoms resulting from immense emotional, psychological, and physiological pressure.

Participants' experiences with burnout suggested a considerable level of burnout, according to the results of the OLBI open-ended survey (Demerouti et al., 2001). For example, Elliott stated, "...it's impossible to rest...too much work to do." Jamie said, "...after work, I'm too exhausted to care for myself." Addison stated, "...I'm definitely worn out after work." Frankie said, "...lecturing is stressful...I want to relax after work." The study's results suggested that the participants' psychological health was significantly influenced by the burnout brought on by an excessive workload. For example, Gabriella said, "...I get anxious and lack focus. I procrastinate...I fear and dread what's to come." Katrina said, "...anxiety is causing my mental health to deteriorate."

Burnout has been shown to harm the physiological health of employees (Leiter & Maslach, 2001). Leiter (2005) expands on the significance of exhaustion in the onset of

burnout-related physiological symptoms. According to the author, exhaustion causes sleeplessness, headaches, and stomach problems, all interfering with rest and recovery. For example, Brian stated, "...I'm concerned...my headaches, dizziness, and insomnia is intensifying." Henry said, "...being physiologically exhausted is causing insomnia, migraines, and headaches."

Participants like Isaac and Ciara have also endured harmful psychological and physiological symptoms from constant exhaustion imposed by their excessive workload, suggesting a considerable burnout level (Leiter, 2005; Young, 2021). For example, Ciara responded, "...my anxiety causes cold sweats, clammy hands...pain in my stomach, chest, back, and head...I'm constantly taking Tylenol or Excedrin X." Isaac remarked, "...I get migraine headaches, pressure in my chest, and difficulty breathing...will I make it through this semester?" The manifestation of exhaustion in participants has affected their psychological and physiological health leading to burnout (Martinez et al., 2020; McClure, 2020; Salvagioni et al., 2017). Overexposure to psychologically and physiologically stressful social settings increases employees' feelings of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Similarly, Maslach et al. (2001) pinpoint interpersonal pressures as the key driver of burnout at the workplace. Consequently, burnout is a psychological condition due to an employee's connection with work.

Sub-Question Four

How do adjunct professors at higher education institutions describe their experience with disengagement? Disengagement describes an employee's natural response to exhaustion leading to distancing themselves from their work's purpose and general substance (Bakker &

Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001); the participants' responses aligned with the fourth main theme, *disengagement*, and the sub-theme of *cynicism*.

Disengagement occurs when employees do not have an active and practical connection to various aspects of their jobs and do not believe in their ability to meet their role's challenges (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Disengagement is considered the motivating component of burnout, which results in employees not being engaged with their job on psychological, physiological, cognitive, and emotional levels (Bakker et al., 2014). For example, Frankie said, "...when I'm exhausted, I tend to withdraw from work emotionally." When employees are disengaged, it does not necessarily mean that they are being lazy or that they are avoiding their primary tasks. However, it does imply that employees are just performing the bare minimum and are not contributing anything else. For example, Isaac said, "...my workload causes exhaustion and disinterest...I'm not doing much reading...responding to emails...or grading papers...besides, I'm not getting paid much." Similarly, Henry stated, "...when I'm stressed, I avoid answering all of the student's emails...it's too much work." Denise said, "...I disconnect from work when I don't feel like lecturing...then I'll schedule hands-on stuff for the students."

Participants indicated that exhaustion caused them to disengage from their job demands resulting in cynicism toward their job (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). Cynicism refers to participants' detached or negative attitudes toward their work (Bakker et al., 2014). A myriad of unfavorable attitudes may be forecasted based on one's level of cynicism, which originates from feelings of exhaustion and disengagement. For example, Katrina stated, "...I feel more frustrated and negative...a sense of dread about going to work." Ciara said, "...I'm irritable with students...I'm rushed and frustrated by my workload." Gabriella

remarked, "...I'm always complaining about grading student papers...it's too time-consuming for insufficient pay in return."

Due to disengagement and cynicism, employees' inability to satisfy their jobs' excessive demands leads them to contemplate quitting their jobs (Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach et al., 2001). For example, Gabriella remarked, "...I want to quit my job...it's too much to handle as an adjunct professor." Denise stated, "...a complete career shift might be best for my mindset...I could see myself doing other work besides this." Likewise, Katrina said, "...I've become more cynical and anxious...do I want to keep doing this work...I'm not excited anymore." Jamie stated, "...my time in this role winding down my...all I can talk about are the negatives...this job is exhausting." Participants have become disengaged from their work to preserve energy, resulting in job demands being worked on with little effort.

Consequently, disengagement has resulted in cynical attitudes and behaviors about their roles at higher education institutions. Disengagement as an essential psychological effect of burnout is the tendency of employees to isolate themselves from various aspects of their work emotionally (Herman et al., 2018; Schnaider-Levi et al., 2017; Suh, 2019). This kind of isolation experienced by employees is thought to also contribute to cynicism toward one's work, content, and work objects (Bakker et al., 2004; Demerouti et al., 2001; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).

Summary

Chapter Four focused on the data collected from participants' open-ended surveys, reflective journals, and semi-structured individual interviews. After collecting and analyzing data, a detailed account of the participants' lived experiences of burnout at higher education institutions was provided. Consequently, the collected and analyzed from the three data sources

helped establish four main themes: excessive workload, exhaustion, lack of resources, and disengagement. The main themes of data collection led to the creation of six sub-themes. For example, the first theme, excessive workload, resulted in one sub-theme: time pressure. Second, the main theme of exhaustion led to two sub-themes: psychological and physiological health. While the third theme, lack of resources, developed two sub-themes: pay and job security. Finally, the fourth theme, disengagement, produced one sub-theme of cynicism.

The main themes of excessive workload, exhaustion, lack of resources, and disengagement that emerged from each participant's responses supported the central research questions, as well as the sub-questions of the study. Insight into the job demands and lack of resources faced by adjunct professors at higher education institutions was explored in this study. One outlier was discovered due to the aspects of age and retirement. Age and retirement were not the primary foci of this study; instead, they were found as an intriguing and remarkable new dimension to the overall research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. I sought to identify and understand factors that may have contributed to the burnout of adjunct professors. Chapter Five opens with a summary of the findings based on the themes from the data analysis. Next, interpretations of findings and implications for policy and practice consequences are examined. The discussion then moves to the theoretical and empirical implications, limitations, delimitations, and recommendations for further research. Chapter Five concludes with a study's summary, including two significant implications.

Discussion

Growth and development opportunities in the workplace may be incredibly engaging. Nonetheless, work could also be a significant cause of stress. In this study, the JD-R theory served as the theoretical framework to guide the understanding of the job demands and resources (or lack thereof) that exist in higher education institutions and how they have led to adjunct professor burnout. Too many job demands and insufficient resources may severely impact employee well-being (Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021). The findings of this study revealed that having to labor in such a demanding atmosphere caused adjunct professors to experience exhaustion and, ultimately, burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014; Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Demerouti et al., 2001). In this study, adjunct professors experienced anxiety, migraine headaches, withdrawal, and disengagement due to excessive workloads and unreasonable time constraints. In addition, a lack of resources negatively impacted the job of adjunct professors resulting in them becoming disengaged and cynical about their profession.

This study was necessitated by the widely held belief that adjunct professors are paramount to the success of higher education institutions (Henkel & Haley, 2020). However, few studies have examined adjunct professors' experiences at higher education institutions. For example, studies have shown that adjunct professors are essential at higher education institutions (Fjortoft et al., 2011; Henkel & Haley, 2020; Hyer et al., 2020; Kaiser Health News, 2020; Lee, 2019), yet the literature lacks a comprehensive description of their roles. Consequently, these studies revealed a gap in the literature regarding how adjunct professors' roles affect them. Following a thematic analysis of three data sources (open-ended surveys, reflective journals, and semi-structured individual interviews), four main themes emerged that aligned with the JD-R theory. These themes were deemed significant to the adjunct professors' lived experiences. The sections that follow discuss the interpretation of these concepts.

Interpretation of Findings

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. The rationale for using JD-R theory aligns with the four main themes and six sub-themes (see Figure 7) by understanding the job demands and resources process that are differently associated with specific outcomes, as posited by Demerouti et al. (2001). The following subsections discuss the significant interpretations of the implications of this study's four main thematic findings from the analysis of each data source, as discussed in Chapter 4: excessive workload, tiredness, lack of resources, and disengagement. Six sub-themes of time pressure, psychological and physiological health, pay, job security, and cynicism also contributed significantly to the interpretations of this section. The main themes and sub-themes were drawn from participants' lived experiences and are the primary source used in this study to understand burnout and its

repercussions among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. These themes were utilized to generate a set of significant interpretations of the study's implications. Thus, my significant interpretations are as follows: (a) freelancers, (b) lack of personal accomplishments, and (c) adjunct professors feel undervalued and underappreciated.

Summary of Thematic Findings

One of the first main themes to emerge from the data was the prevalence of excessive workloads. The data from this theory revealed that the adjunct professors were overburdened with work. Adjunct professors acknowledged the severe pressure they were under to manage and meet their professions' unreasonable expectations while dealing with conflicting time constraints. The excessive workloads (i.e., meetings, expectations to do more such as providing meaningful feedback, reading and replying to emails, and meeting grading deadlines in a few days) have caused adjunct professors to face unprecedented pressure from their institutions, negatively impacting their psychological and physiological well-being. Excessive workloads have been linked to stress, sluggishness, anxiety, exhaustion, and depression in adjunct professors (Almeida et al., 2018; Bakker & Costa, 2014; Cetrano et al., 2017). On the other hand, sleep problems, high blood pressure, obesity, and substance abuse are all physiological signs of excessive workloads (Almeida et al., 2018; Bakker & Costa, 2014).

The second main theme of the findings was exhaustion from too much work. This theme of exhaustion established that adjunct professors were worn out and near their breaking point. Adjunct professors worked extremely hard, trying to juggle an unreasonable amount of work quickly, which took a toll on their minds and bodies. The adjunct professors reported experiencing emotional distress, such as anxiety, depression, difficulty focusing, and irritability. Some of the adjunct professors' physiological symptoms were migraines,

sleeplessness, extreme fatigue, aches and pain, and weakness. The overwhelming workloads of adjunct professors left them feeling increasingly powerless, miserable, and completely depleted of energy.

The third main theme of the findings was the lack of resources. Based on the findings of this study, adjunct professors are underpaid and worried about losing their teaching positions. They indicated that appropriate compensation and job security played significant roles in allowing them to manage the heavy workload. Every adjunct professor felt that a salary raise was necessary to reflect the considerable time and energy they put into their workload. Lastly, the findings in this study also indicated that the adjunct professors believed their psychological and physiological stress would be reduced and their burnout would be alleviated if they were assured of a new contract each semester.

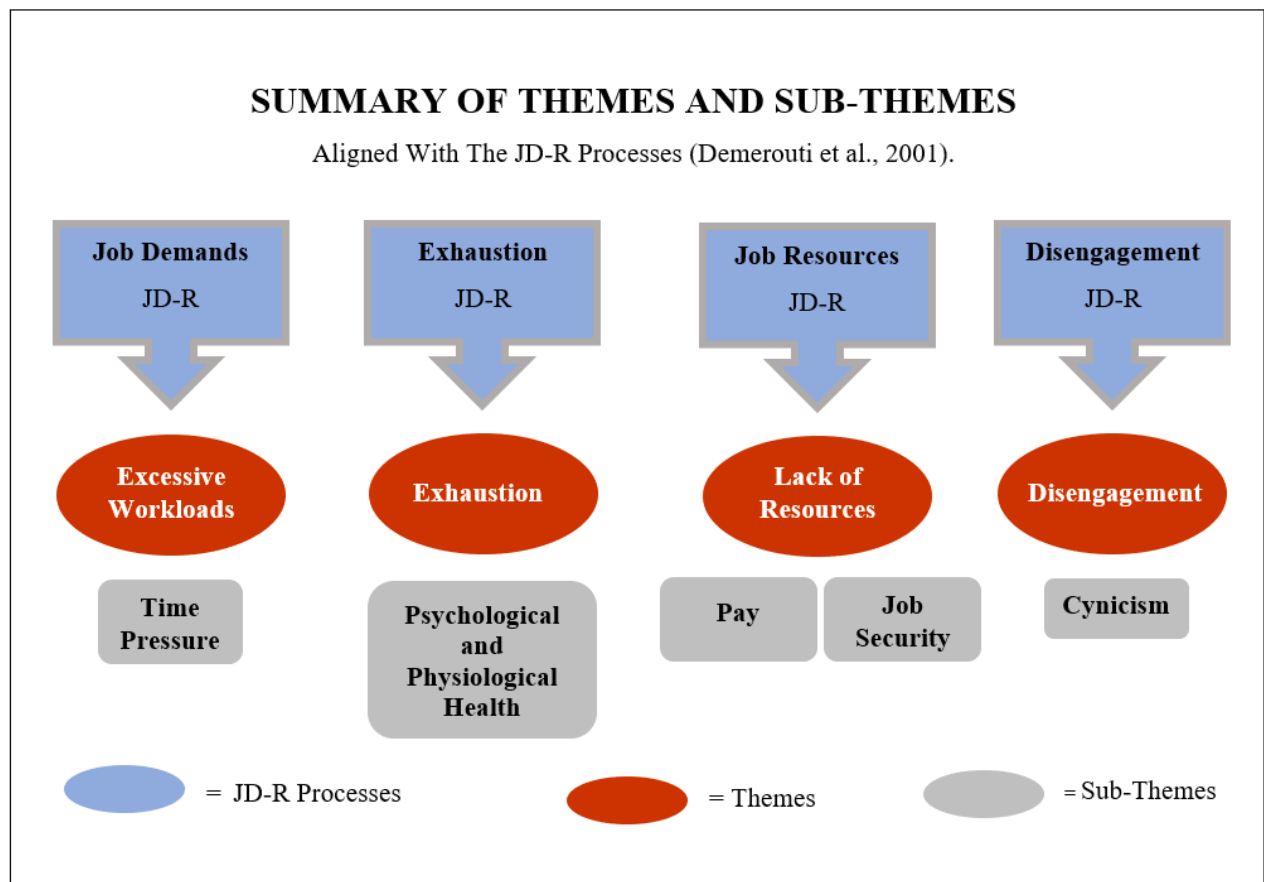
The fourth main theme that emerged was disengagement. This study showed that adjunct professors' enormous workloads, exhaustion, poor compensation, job instability, and other inadequate employment resources drove them to withdraw from and grow cynical of some of their work at higher education institutions. Adjunct professors also indicated that the withdrawal from their work was a measure to prevent further exhaustion (Bailey, 2021; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

According to burnout studies, cynicism indicates having reached the point of exhaustion (Maslach, 1976, 2001, 2019; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Maslach et al., 1996; Schaufeli, 2009). Employees who are overworked and stressed may resort to cynicism as a coping mechanism (Maslach et al., 2001) or an effortless way out when employees lack the mental capacity to cope (Bailey, 2021). Thus, this study showed that being cynical allowed adjunct professors to mentally break free from the suffocating pressures of their work (Bailey,

2021; Demerouti et al., 2001). Furthermore, due to adjunct professors' cynicism, they found it easier to be pessimistic about their workloads and job resources than to organize and make a change (Bailey, 2021; Demerouti et al., 2001).

FIGURE 7.

Summary of Themes and Sub-Themes



Note. Thematic findings aligned with the JD-R processes (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Significant Interpretations

In this study, adjunct professors discussed their firsthand experiences with burnout at higher education institutions. Due to the matter's sensitivity, many adjunct professors may have been unwilling to reveal particular facts about their experiences. After warming up to me,

however, the adjunct professors became pleased about the chance to share their experiences since it might be utilized to raise awareness of adjunct professors' work-related burnout. The sections that follow provide my most significant interpretations of the findings.

Freelancers. The first significant finding of this study was that most adjunct professors self-identified as freelancers with no primary employment outside the higher education institutions where they work and no aspiration to attain full-time status. In addition, freelancers chose to focus their teaching careers on adjunct professorships at different higher education institutions. According to Gappa and Leslie (1993), freelancers build their careers around part-time employment and prefer not to be linked with a specific higher education school or position.

Interestingly, the challenges associated with adjunct professors holding several adjunct professor jobs may have contributed to their burnout (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). Furthermore, adjunct professors managing their heavy workloads and traveling between campuses are high job demands that may have also contributed to their burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach et al., 2001). Several freelancers in this study repeatedly mentioned being mentally and physically exhausted due to their daily back-and-forth commute to other higher education institutions. For instance, Frankie said, "...I'm stressed...I'm shuffling between institutions several times per day." In addition, teaching at different higher education institutions may hinder freelancers from having a sense of community and diminished personal successes, which are additional risk factors for burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2008) and something that several of the freelancers in this study cited as lacking and contributing to their burnout.

According to Gappa and Leslie (1993), some freelancers may be considering a career in teaching. Consequently, these adjunct professors may have less teaching expertise, as found

among the freelancers in this study (see Table 2). Research on burnout has shown that employees with less experience are more likely to suffer its adverse effects than their more seasoned counterparts, who have had more time to acquire the necessary skills and coping mechanisms (Bayram et al., 2010; Goddard et al., 2006; Maslach et al., 2001). Thus this study suggested that some adjunct professors may have experienced burnout due to a lack of teaching experience. Several adjunct professors who lacked teaching experience, for example, attested to their high frustration while learning the mechanics of teaching at the higher education institution level, which typically takes a minimum of three years to become competent (Wickun & Stanley, 2000). During adjunct professors' first semester, those with less teaching experience may be especially prone to exhaustion if required to prepare for many courses. Moreover, adjunct professors with less teaching experience may be at risk for exhaustion in small departments, where adjuncts are likely to teach a maximum course load owing to their lack of primary job income (Gappa & Leslie, 1993).

This study's lack of teaching experience among adjunct professors contributed to poor time management. Louis E. Boone said, "I am definitely going to take a course on time management... just as soon as I can work it into my schedule" (Ailamaki & Gehrke, 2003, p. 1). To prevent exhaustion and burnout, adjunct professors with little teaching experience did not comprehend the need for time management. According to Harman (2023), the planning fallacy makes it difficult for inexperienced adjunct professors to manage their time and complete tasks. A fallacy happens when individuals underestimate how long it will take to complete a job, even if they have completed the work in the past (Harman, 2023).

Due to the adjunct professors' lack of teaching experience, the adjunct professors in this study were unaware of the significance of developing a weekly plan, remaining organized,

minimizing distractions, focusing on one work at a time, and learning to say no to tasks of unequal priority (Yglesias, 2018). (Ailamaki & Gehrke, 2003). Lastly, the adjunct professors thought that the more work they produced, the more devoted they were to their workload and deserving of their adjunct professor position (Ailamaki & Gehrke, 2003).

The freelancers' financial reliance on part-time work in this study may have contributed to the freelancing adjunct professors' exhaustion. The freelancers may have chosen not to work full-time at a single higher education institution for several reasons, but they now rely on their freelancing income to make ends meet. Denise said, "...relying on freelancing gives me anxiety...but I need the money." Adjunct professors who rely heavily on their income from teaching have lower turnover rates than their full-time counterparts, according to research by (Martin & Sinclair, 2007). Despite feeling burned-out, freelancing adjunct professors kept working because they needed the money, according to the study's findings. In contrast, Martin and Sinclair (2007) suggested that when burnout sets in, adjunct professors with reduced financial dependence may find it easier to leave the higher education institution.

Lack of Personal Accomplishments. The second significant finding in this study was that all adjunct professors felt less successful or competent in their roles as adjunct professors at their higher education institutions due to their burnout. Burnout among this study's adjunct professors resulted in a lack of motivation, disengagement, and decreased job performance, all of which harmed their students. For example, Elliott stated, "...my burnout is disappointing...I can't deliver my best to my students." Explanation of the causes and effects of burnout, Demerouti et al. (2001) noted that adjunct professors' unpleasant emotional experiences lie at the heart of the syndrome.

This study also showed that the adjunct professors' inability to manage their heavy workloads and help their students grow made them lose confidence and feel like they were not good enough. Ciara, for example, said, "...I am not good enough...I feel inadequate...I am in over my head with work." Furthermore, indicative of burnout was the adjunct professors' expressions of discontentment and dissatisfaction with themselves, their professional abilities, and their efficacy as higher education professors (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 1996; Maslach et al., 2001; Noushad, 2008). This lack of confidence affected the adjunct professors' capacity to accomplish their duties at the highest level. The adjunct professors' lack of confidence also caused them to dread their work and become emotionally detached (Rakshit, 2020). Moreover, adjunct professors' lack of confidence and inadequacy compounded their burnout as they became more judgmental and cynical of their workload, work environment, students, and colleagues at their higher education institutions (Rakshit, 2020).

Findings from this study indicated that adjunct professors attributed their lack of personal accomplishment to their low pay. Research has shown that burnout is less common at higher education institutions if a balance between work produced and incentives received (Fernández-Suárez et al., 2021). In contrast, Fernández-Suárez et al. (2021) identified low pay as one of the characteristics associated with burnout. In this study, every adjunct professor said their pay does not adequately reflect the time and energy they devote to their adjunct professorships. Intriguingly, every adjunct professor in this study noted that their salaries do not justify the expense, time, and effort they invested in acquiring a Ph. D. (Pittaro, 2023). In addition, adjunct professors ascribed their lack of personal accomplishment to the fact that they had Ph.Ds. However, the adjunct professors did not earn a substantial income. Some adjunct professors reflected that earning a Ph.D. was a waste of time, money, and energy at this stage

in their careers. Consequently, many adjunct professors felt undervalued and underappreciated by the higher education institutions where they worked. In addition, many adjunct professors undervalued themselves since they felt a lack of accomplishment in their careers.

Feeling Undervalued and Underappreciated. The third significant finding in this study was that all adjunct professors felt undervalued and underappreciated by their higher education institutions, and the adjunct professors also undervalued themselves because of their lack of professional accomplishments. In this study, adjunct professors pointed to three ways in which they felt undervalued and underappreciated. First, adjunct professors in this study felt undervalued and underappreciated in their work. According to workplace experts, nothing is worse than putting in much effort while feeling unnoticed and unheard (Knight, 2017; McKee, 2017). All adjunct professors have consistently argued that they are exhausted from teaching and leading students through their courses' curriculum to prove their worth as adjunct professors, only to feel invisible at the end of their workday. For example, Isaac remarked, "...I am exhausted from proving my worth for a tenure position."

Second, adjunct professors felt undervalued and underappreciated by comparing themselves to their full-time counterparts. All of the adjunct professors in this study stressed how inferior they felt compared to their institutions' full-time professors. Apart from low pay, job instability, and benefits, some adjunct professors do not have private offices, cannot engage in some administrative activities, are not identified as faculty on departmental websites, do not get compensation for using their computer or internet services, do not have scheduling preferences, do not have parking privileges, and do not meaningfully participate in institutional governance (Bradner, 2022). For example, Addison stated, "...they don't send me invitations to departmental meetings where decisions are made...there're for full-time faculty."

Third, adjunct professors felt undervalued and underappreciated through student evaluations. Most of the study's adjunct professors dread the end of the semester since that is when their students 'evaluate' them. For adjunct professors, student evaluations are the most crucial aspect in determining whether or not they will be employed for the next semester (Fredrickson, 2015). The adjunct professors in this study saw this kind of evaluation as demeaning since it offered students ammunition to criticize them or circumvent the repercussions of their academic failure. Moreover, adjunct professors think that student evaluations reflect how undervalued and underappreciated they are by their higher education institutions, especially when their ongoing employment is contingent upon the quality of their students' evaluations.

Research studies dispute student assessments' overall utility, despite their continued administration (Kaur, 2019; Schuman, 2014). Nonetheless, some higher education institutions depend on student evaluations to determine whether to rehire an adjunct lecturer (Kaur, 2019). This study's adjunct professors deemed it unfair for their higher education institutions to have students evaluate their performance. This concept is due to adjunct professors attributing their poor work performance to burnout caused by high job expectations and a lack of resources.

Implications for Policy and Practice

In May 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) categorized burnout in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) as an occupational phenomenon understood as the outcome of unmanaged and prolonged chronic job stress (Druss et al., 2021; WHO, 2019). Burnout is when a person can no longer burn or be produced to satisfy excessive job expectations (Adlakha, 2019). Literature supports the psychological and physiological repercussions of excessive job demands and lack of resources that contribute to burnout among

adjunct professors at higher education institutions (Carroll, 2002; de Onis, 2021; García-Rivera et al., 2022; Mitchell, 2020). The literature also supports the relevance of adjunct professors having health benefits to access health and wellness programs and services only available to full-time faculty (AAUP, 2021; Boysen, 2020; Manternach, 2020; Nittle, 2022; Reevy, 2015). However, health and wellness programs and services are difficult for adjunct professors experiencing burnout to get the required help from the different stakeholders at their particular higher education institutions. Therefore, federal and state policies must be implemented, and the practices of higher education institutions must be modified and addressed to provide adjunct professors with support and equitable access. This section will elaborate on the study's policy and practical implications.

Implications for Policy

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has a long-standing contingent professor policy that attempts to increase academic freedom and shared governance, enhance working conditions, and encourage job security for adjunct professors who teach at higher education institutions. The study's findings have policy implications and have determined that this federal and state policy does not ensure equity due to the lack of health benefits among the adjunct professors in this study. The issue may be that some higher education institutions refer to adjunct professors as contingency faculty, part-time or full-time academics assigned outside the tenure track, clinical professors, lecturers, non-senate faculty, or instructional assistants (AAUP, 2003; AAUP, 2021). Subsequently, these job titles have signified adjunct professors' lack of retirement and health care benefits (Flaherty, 2016), unpredictable work with inadequate support, poor job resources, inequity, inadequate income, a low rate of job stability, and weak protections for academic freedom (AAUP, 2003). These

issues also suggested that adjunct professors with burnout may face several obstacles in accessing health benefits (Flaherty, 2016).

To encourage adjunct professors and higher education institutions to work together more effectively, the AAUP should be reformed. At the state and federal levels, further procedures must be established to assure the unambiguous supply of health and wellness programs and services requested and desired by the interested parties. Implementing federal regulations would necessitate penalizing higher education institutions that do not provide adjunct professors with the necessary assistance when they become burned-out. These penalties might result in fines or court punishment for higher education institutions that fail to provide adjunct professors with an equal working environment.

Implications for Practice

Literature has demonstrated that excessive job demands are the most significant precursors of burnout while lacking job resources is the most important antecedent of disengagement (Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001). Although burnout negatively impacts employee well-being and institutional performance, disengagement is undesirable, with adverse outcomes (Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001). Consequently, procedures must seek to avoid burnout and disengagement. Thus, combining particular measures at the institutional and individual levels may be the most successful approach (Bakker et al., 2014).

The findings of this study may have practical significance for stakeholders, including policymakers, administrators, adjunct professors, and other higher education faculty and staff members, to consider in the context of burnout. The findings indicated that the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions were a direct result of excessive job demands placed on them by their higher education institutions to

successfully manage and fulfill with tight time constraints and the lack of much-needed resources (Bakker & de Vries, 2021). Using the JD-R theory, I propose two implications for practice to prevent burnout among adjunct professors and disengagement—namely, higher education institutional- and individual-level practices (Bakker et al., 2014).

Higher Education Institutional-Level Practices. Practices at the higher education institutional level are centered on groups of adjunct professors. These include reducing job demands, job redesigning, and specialized training programs (Bakker et al., 2014). Reflecting on the JD-R theory, I propose three potential practical implications. The first implication for practice is that higher education institutions should *optimize job demands*. Higher education institutions must explore methods to prevent adjunct professors' exhaustion by reducing or restructuring job demands such as excessive workloads and time constraints, which are both mentally and physically taxing (Bakker et al., 2014).

The findings of this study indicated that adjunct professors saw such excessive workloads and time constraints as unpleasant and unnecessary obstacles to their personal development and goal accomplishment (Bakker et al., 2014). In contrast, while the findings suggested that for some adjunct professors, their excessive workloads and time constraints were impediments to proving their value to their particular higher education institutions, disengagement is an obstacle to work engagement and superior work performance (Bakker et al., 2014). Implementing impartial procedures during institutional reform and encouraging educational teams and departments to integrate excessive job demands and time constraints with adequate job resources are practices that higher education institutions may employ to reduce the excessive demands of the job and time constraints (Bakker et al., 2014).

The second implication for practice is for higher education institutions to *optimize job resources*, such as social support, by restructuring the workplace environment or providing adjunct professors with professional development that may increase their engagement. For example, if the work environment is structured such that adjunct professors interact with one another, they may have the opportunity to share information and offer feedback.

This study found that adjunct professors named a lack of resources, such as inclusion and community, as reasons for their disengagement and disinterest in their job. By implementing the optimized job resources practice at higher education institutions, adjunct professors may learn how to derive feedback from their work outcomes, and administrators may become more skilled at providing feedback in an acceptable manner (Bakker et al., 2014). As is known with job demands, higher education institutions must begin the process by assessing essential job resources adjunct professors need (Bakker et al., 2014).

The third implication for practice is for higher education institutions to *optimize personal resources*. Research demonstrates that personal resources such as optimism, resiliency, and self-efficacy could be learned (Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001). Hence, when an institutional review reveals that many adjunct professors lack essential personal resources, higher education institutions may elect to provide on-the-job training, mentorship, or apprenticeship (Bakker et al., 2014).

The findings in this study indicated that adjunct professors received no on-the-job training for their adjunct professorship. Therefore, higher education institutions that encourage and provide adjunct professors with training and development opportunities may successfully keep them from becoming disengaged and uninterested in their work (Ericksen, 2021). In this on-the-job training, adjunct professors would be provided with examples of how to optimize

their resources in their day-to-day work routine, and subsequently, they may gain new skills that may assist them in meeting their daily job demands (Bakker et al., 2014).

Individual-Level Practices. The first implication of practice is for higher education institutions to *optimize questionnaires* with individualized responses to educate adjunct professors on their most pressing job demands and job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker & Sanz-Vergel, 2013; Bakker et al., 2014). Higher education institutions may better influence burnout prevention methods by addressing adjunct professors' unique concerns and individual needs through individualized strategies (Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001). Due to personal circumstances, an adjunct professor's job responsibilities may be particularly demanding. Similarly, adjunct professors may not have access to specific jobs and personal resources due to higher education institutions or personal life changes.

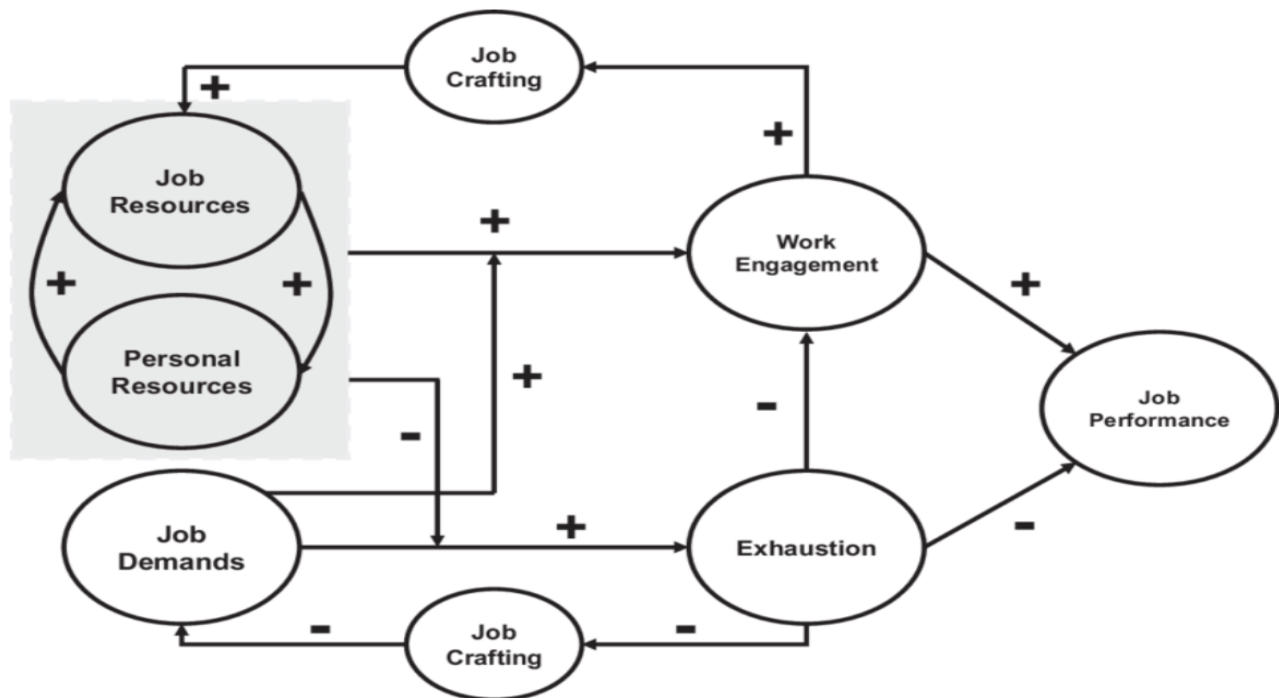
The findings of this study indicated that during the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, all the adjunct professors suffered various COVID-19-related personal difficulties that exacerbated their professional obligations. For example, a face-to-face adjunct professor in this study was sick with the coronavirus during the semester but could not afford to take time off due to low pay and no health benefits. His administrator then offered him a more suitable alternative: online teaching. He taught online despite having an elevated temperature, headache, nausea, sweats and chills, and a cough that made it difficult for him to speak. He needed days off to rest and care for his body but feared losing his job if he did so.

The questionnaires with individualized responses could serve as the launching point for a transformation process facilitated by a professional trainer. Other implications of practice include (a) job crafting (see Figure 8), in which adjunct professors learn how to improve their work environment via psychological and physiological changes proactively; (b) strengths

usage training, in which adjunct professors learn to create personal objectives and apply their strengths in new ways at work; and (c) recovery training, in which adjunct professors learn the activities that best help in their ability to recover from their efforts at work. Recovery training may include relaxation or mindfulness practices (Bakker et al., 2014). These higher education institutional-level and individual-level practices should contribute to reducing job demands and increasing job resources, which might decrease exhaustion, burnout, and disengagement among adjunct professors. It may also promote adjunct professors' work engagement, increase job satisfaction, and enhance job performance (Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001).

Figure 8.

The job demands-resources model of occupational well-being.



Note. The job demands-resources model of occupational well-being (Bakker et al., 2014).

From "Burnout and Work Engagement: The JD-R Approach" by A. Bakker, E. Demerouti, and I. Sanz-Vergel, 2014, *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational*

Behavior, 1(1), 389-411. DOI:10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091235. Figure reprinted with permission from Creative Commons Approved for Free Cultural Works.

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Theoretical and Empirical Implications

This section explores the theoretical and empirical implications of the findings in this study. From the standpoint of Demerouti et al.'s (2001) JD-R theory, the theoretical implications were examined. This study focused on the interpretation of the data via the two dimensions defined by Demerouti et al. (2001): job demands and lack of resources. This study's empirical implications were evaluated by drawing on the insights gained from the working experiences of adjunct professors suffering from burnout at higher education institutions.

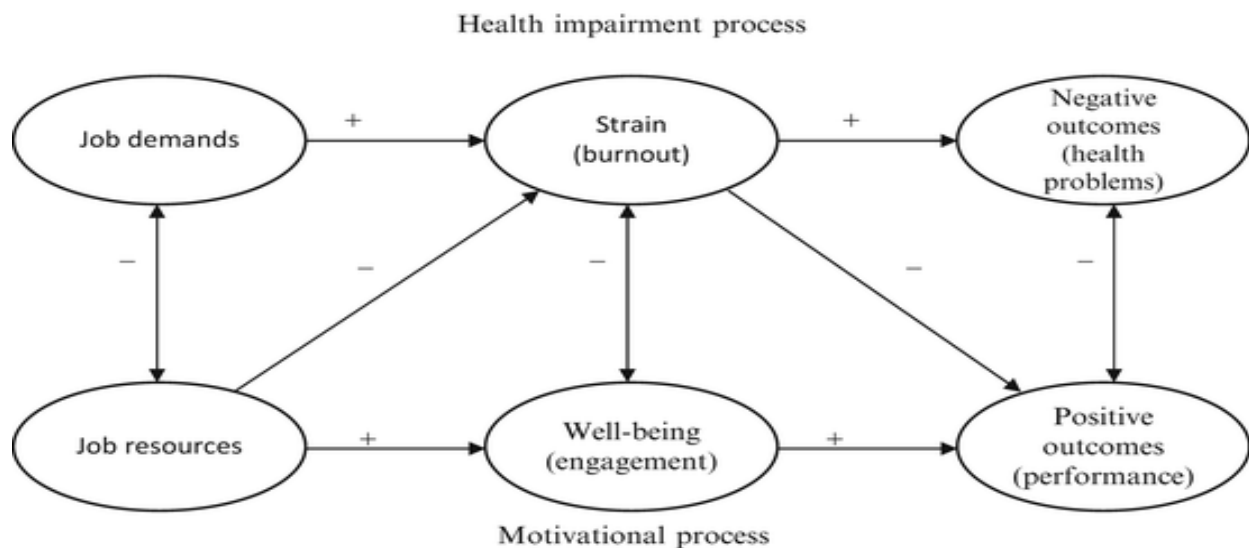
Theoretical Implications

In this transcendental phenomenological study, the JD-R theory offered an optimal framework for understanding how job demands and resources affect adjunct professors' psychological and physiological well-being at higher education institutions. This study specifically examined the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions from the viewpoint that burnout develops as a result of two processes: excessive job demands and a lack of resources. While the JD-R theory proposed that any high job demands lead to burnout, the lack of any job resources (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) (see Appendix E) contributes to disengagement and explains the relationship between burnout and its negative counterpart (i.e., disengagement) (Demerouti et al., 2001). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) revised the JD-R (see Figure 9) and added a positive-psychological edge to the former JD-R (2001) that elucidated burnout and its positive counterpart—work engagement.

In the revised JD-R, burnout mediates job demands and employee health and well-being by gradually depleting psychological resources, whereas work engagement mediates job resources and organizational outcomes and performance (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Hence, work engagement is a positive, rewarding state of mind marked by vitality, commitment, and concentration in the task, while burnout is the reverse (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Conversely, based on the findings of this study, vigor, commitment, and concentration were not included as elements of the adjunct professors' job; instead, it was low energy, apathy, and disengagement.

Figure 9.

The revised Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory (2004)



Note. From “A Critical Review of the Job Demands-Resources Model: Implications for Improving Work and Health” by W. B. Schaufeli and T. W. Taris, 2014, In G. F. Bauer & O. Hämmig (Eds.), *Bridging occupational, organizational and public health: A transdisciplinary approach* (pp. 43–68). Springer Science & Business Media. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94->

007-5640-3 4. Copyright 2001 by the American Psychological Association. Figure reprinted with permission (see Appendix L).

The revised JD-R theory (unlike the former JD-R) postulated that high job demands caused burnout and inadequate job resources; however, now the revised JD-R regards burnout as a unitary rather than two-dimensional entity (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Hence, based on the findings of this study, all adjunct professors burned-out due to excessive workloads and lack of resources, thus, confirming the revised JD-R unitary notion of burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

The use of JD-R theory as the study's theoretical framework has contributed to its remarkable findings. However, incorporating Schaufeli and Bakker's (2004) revised JD-R theory may have made this study's findings more intriguing. The revised JD-R indicated that burnout and work engagement fluctuate daily, allowing employees to witness state-like experiences or within-a-person view (Bakker et al., 2014; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). This theory holds that certain everyday events cause burnout symptoms. In other words, some days, employees are wearier and burned-out than others, making them less engaged (Bakker et al., 2014; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) used journal studies to investigate situational factors of burnout and job engagement using this state-like approach. In Schaufeli and Bakker's (2004) research studies, participants were seen for a few consecutive days. All participants were asked to respond to short journal prompts (usually after the working day) that assessed the study's components at the daily (state) level. Participants responded to a different journal question that accessed the same components' more general characteristic level on day two. This activity

revealed daily changes in burnout and job engagement factors (Bakker et al., 2014; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

In this study, on the other hand, I asked each participant to write in a journal for two weeks about their past actions, explore their experiences, and rate their overall thoughts and feelings about their burnout (Tahmasbi et al., 2022). Perhaps if I had asked participants to write in a journal at the end and beginning of each workday, I would have learned more about what led to their burnout on that day and why they felt more or less burned-out or engaged at work on different days. I could have also given journal prompts that asked about a specific day that caused adjunct professors' burnout symptoms to worsen, how adjunct professors with high overall levels of burnout deal with daily stressful situations or a lack of resources, and if burnout symptoms exacerbate over the week (Bakker et al., 2014). Such topics merit consideration in future studies since they would expand our understanding of burnout and work engagement.

Lastly, the former JD-R's unique adaptability and flexibility made me realize that adjunct professors had too much work, leading to burnout and health problems (Demerouti et al., 2001). The adjunct professors lacked job resources, making them less engaged, motivated, and productive (Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001). Even though the revised JD-R theory is practical, I do not think it would have made a better theoretical framework for this study. However, the revised JD-R would have been interesting to understand how work engagement is linked to motivational outcomes, how it seems to be caused by job resources, and how burnout and job engagement vary depending on the task at hand or the adjunct professors with whom one works (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

Empirical Implications

This study sought to describe the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. The findings of this study supported prior research on adjunct professors' experiences with work-related responsibilities, excessive weariness, burnout, and a lack of resources, as well as withdrawal or disengagement while working at higher education institutions. Carroll (2002), García-Rivera et al. (2022), de Onis (2021), Mitchell (2020), and Nica (2018) discovered that owing to higher education institutions' dependency on adjunct professors has caused them to overexert themselves and work endlessly and quicker than ever before.

While earlier research corroborated this study's findings that excessive workloads caused adjunct professors' burnout at their higher education institutions. Previous research revealed no indication of adjunct professors being burned-out from freelancing as adjunct professors at several higher education institutions. The findings in this study indicated that most adjunct professors (73%) expressed feeling emotionally and physically burned-out due to their daily commute back-and-forth to work as adjunct professors at different higher education institutions and the imposed obligations from performing their adjunct professorships.

This study's findings supported prior studies on the psychological and physiological repercussions of work-related burnout. The empirical literature suggested that the effects of work-related burnout have been linked to adverse psychological and physiological health outcomes for employees (Aronsson et al., 2017; da Costa & Pinto, 2017; Human Resource, 2021; Martnez et al., 2020; Mohamed & Abed, 2017; Roman et al., 2019; Salvagioni et al., 2017; Selye, 1956). In this study, each adjunct professor (100%) indicated how their work-related burnout has led to psychological and physiological health issues (i.e., anxiety,

irritability, loss of mental focus, extreme fatigue, body aches and pain, headaches, nausea, and sleep disorders). Brian stated, "...as my workload increases, I become extremely worried and sleep less."

Following the findings of Bakker et al. (2005), Dailey-Herbert et al. (2014), Elfman (2021), Hakanen et al. (2006), and Maslach (2001), appropriate job resources minimize burnout and disengagement. The failure of adjunct professors' higher education institutions to provide them with enough resources (i.e., income, job security, administrative assistance, and inclusion) resulted in their burnout and disengagement from work, according to the adjunct professors in this study. The literature empirically demonstrated that professions with limited resources result in employees withdrawing or disengaging in various aspects of work to prevent extra psychological and physiological energy depletion (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). According to the findings from this study, adjunct professors disengaged from their job to stop themselves from becoming further exhausted. Ciara, for example, commented, "...I force myself to zone out...it's the only way to survive the day."

According to Aybas et al. (2015), contract renewal threatens adjunct professors' positions at higher education institutions. De Angelis et al. (2021) discovered in their study that adjunct professors' excessive workload and exhaustion may jeopardize their job security and subsequent contract renewal. This study's findings were consistent with this shared threat about the duration of current contracts and the likelihood of future contract renewals. For example, all of the adjunct professors in this study overworked themselves to get their contracts renewed by their academic institutions. Isaac commented, "...adjunct contracts are not always renewed...working this much has left me exhausted, but I am pushing through in the hopes of landing a new contract." Thus, all of the adjunct professors in this study felt burned-out and

disengaged due to their lack of job security, namely the absence of contract renewal.

Limitations

The limitations I could not control may have affected the study's outcomes (Miles, 2019). This study was limited by some adjunct professors' reluctance to divulge sensitive information (Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021). Nevertheless, I was satisfied that enough care was in place to protect the adjunct professors in this study (Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021). This study's second significant limitation was a few adjunct professors' inconsistent responses regarding the words exhaustion and burnout in the open-ended surveys and reflective journals, which I later addressed in the semi-structured individual interviews.

The semi-structured individual interviews enabled me, through probing, to closely investigate the adjunct professors' open-ended surveys and reflective journals' inconsistencies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Probing without leading questions prevented interview bias from compromising the study's validity and integrity (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Subsequently, the semi-structured individual interview revealed that the adjunct professors used exhaustion and burnout interchangeably. Since the literature asserted that there is no definitive definition of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; NASEM, 2019), symptoms such as exhaustion, fatigue, weakness, tiredness, stress, overload, weariness, overexertion, worn-out, and depletion have been used to describe burnout (Bakker & Costa, 2014; Bakker et al., 2014; Bakker & de Vries, 2021). Consequently, the inconsistencies were addressed, and I could extract rich, thick descriptions (Moustakas, 1994) of those adjunct professors' burnout experiences.

Delimitations

Delimitations set this study's boundaries (Miles, 2019). I deliberately restricted the study's scope (Miles, 2019). This study has three delimitations. This study limited its participants to adjunct professors, not instructors, assistant professors, associate professors, or professors. A phenomenological study requires all participants to have firsthand experiences with the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The second delimitation of this study was to adjunct professors at higher education institutions who have had or are experiencing burnout, exhaustion, mental fatigue, or overload due to excessive stressors.

Transcendental phenomenology seeks to understand human experience by focusing on meaning (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). On the other hand, Hermeneutic phenomenology is prejudiced and needs the researcher to actively interpret occurrences (Moustakas, 1994; Neubauer et al., 2019). While I had an apparent personal predisposition about excessive workloads and burnout, I had no firsthand experience as an adjunct professor. Thus, the third delimitation of this study was not to use hermeneutic phenomenology, but transcendental qualitative methodology based on the necessity to understand lived experiences from first-person narratives of the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994).

Recommendations for Future Research

This section offers recommendations for future research. Most higher education professors are adjuncts (Childress, 2019). In recent years, according to researchers, higher education institutions have hired 70% to 75% adjunct professors (Anthony et al., 2020; Brennan & Magness, 2018; Brett, 2021; Childress, 2019; Lumpkin, 2022; McKenna, 2015). Burnout among adjunct professors poses a substantial threat at higher education institutions (Alves et al., 2019; Flaherty, 2020b; Umpierrez, 2021). Based on the findings in Chapter 4, the

study of adjunct professor burnout at higher education institutions must be expanded (Stowe, 2022) to understand better burnout's psychological and physiological aspects and how to deal with or prevent it. Hence, this transcendental phenomenological study explored adjunct professor burnout at higher education. Future research may replicate this study and examine the experiences of *different higher education professors*, including instructors, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors with titles like emeritus, university, clinical, research, or visiting (Boston University, 2021).

In this study, adjunct professors' burnout was assessed using the OLBI. While OLBI is a standard burnout measurement tool (Demerouti et al., 2001), future research should consider different *burnout measurements tools* such as the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators (MBI-ES), Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI), and Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT) to assess professor burnout. These burnout tools may discover more about adjunct professors' burnout than OLBI.

For future research, a *longitudinal qualitative investigation* of professors' job demands and resources is recommended (Derrington, 2019; Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021). This type of investigation requires researchers to conduct many examinations on the same individuals throughout an extended period to identify any changes that may occur (Thomas, 2022). Longitudinal qualitative studies might improve understanding of higher education institutional trends over time (Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021).

Exploring *positive deviance* is another future research recommendation. Positive deviance entails examining areas where burnout is less common in other industries and exploring environmental elements that may contribute to this result, such as higher work engagement (Alzyoud, 2016; Gauche et al., 2017; Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021).

Administrators at higher education institutions could, for example, conduct examinations themselves or recruit a consultant agency to visit government agencies with positive deviations and document any programs, policies, or practices that differ from the standards implemented by higher education institutions. The chosen government agency may offer specialized programs or support systems that reduce the risk of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions (Alpeche & Eads, 2023; Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021).

The last future research recommendation is to examine how *spiritual and religious beliefs and practices* may help higher education professionals cope with burnout induced by excessive job demands and lack of resources (De Diego-Cordero et al., 2022). Several studies implied that spiritual and religious views reduce burnout (Achour et al., 2019; De Diego-Cordero et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2020). For example, the findings of this study indicated that adjunct professors like Jamie were able to “...find some sort of peace amidst the pain and exhaustion” through prayer, meditation, and attending religious services. Future studies on spiritual and religious practices’ effectiveness in reducing burnout among adjunct professors would provide meaningful insight to determine effective stress management methods.

Conclusion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. This study explored adjunct professor burnout and well-being determinants. Extensive research showed that few studies addressed adjunct professors’ struggles to manage and satisfy job demands. JD-R theory guided this study and assumed that high work demands, and low job resources led to exhaustion, burnout, and disengagement (Demerouti et al., 2001). Eleven adjunct professors completed an open-ended survey, reflective journal, and semi-structured individual interviews.

Coding and theme classification followed, and member checking and triangulation made this study trustworthy (Nowell et al., 2017).

The data revealed four main themes: excessive workloads, exhaustion, a lack of resources, and disengagement. The first main theme, excessive workloads, alludes to the high workloads of adjunct professors, which causes overexertion and burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001). The second main theme, exhaustion, is one of the essential components of burnout and is defined by adjunct professors' long-term exposure to stressful emotions, namely continuous exhaustion caused by excessive work. The third main theme, lack of resources, relates to adjunct professors who lack the resources necessary to do their work efficiently (Demerouti et al., 2001). The fourth major topic, disengagement, relates to adjunct instructors' natural response to tiredness, which is to prevent additional overexertion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001).

This study's three most significant findings were the interpretations of freelancers, lack of personal accomplishment, and feeling undervalued and underappreciated. The first interpretation is that adjunct professors self-identified as freelancers with no main job outside their higher education institutions and no desire to become full-time. The second interpretation of lack of accomplishment was that burnout made all adjunct professors feel less successful and competent at their higher education institutions. The third interpretation of feeling undervalued and underappreciated was that all adjunct professors felt undervalued and underappreciated by their higher education institutions and themselves due to their lack of professional accomplishments.

Literature supported that burnout among adjunct professors is a concern at higher education institutions (Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Demerouti et al., 2001; Flaherty, 2020b;

Guntupalli et al., 2014) and the importance of adjunct professors having access to health and wellness programs and services (Flaherty, 2016). Nevertheless, adjunct professors experiencing burnout struggle to get support from their higher education institutions (Alves et al., 2019; Flaherty, 2016, 2020b; Umpierrez, 2021). Federal and state regulations and higher education institutions' policies must be changed to support and promote equality and inclusion for adjunct professors (AAUP, 2003; AAUP, 2021). Practices at the higher education institutional level should prioritize adjunct professors. Thus, I proposed two significant implications for practice. First, higher education institutions should optimize job demands by reducing or redesigning job demands. Second, higher education institutions optimizing job resources is the second implication in redesigning the work environment or providing training that could reduce adjunct professors' disengagement.

As adjunct professors represent a sizable portion of the higher education workforce, it is vital to recognize the unique challenges they face in their current working conditions (Anthony et al., 2020; Flaherty, 2013). Adjunct professors teach most courses at higher education institutions. The literature supported the idea that adjunct professors do not have job security since they only teach courses for as long as needed. In order to acquire the maximum teaching load, adjunct professors are sometimes assigned courses at the last minute and given the least ideal hours, such as teaching both morning and night course portions (Anthony et al., 2020). Adjunct professor burnout affects educational outcomes for both the institution and the student because of job insecurity, the stress of heavy workloads, and the absence of other insufficient support, such as healthcare or retirement, poor compensation, lack of connectivity among teachers, colleagues, and supervisors, lack of professional development training, and

the need to juggle numerous jobs to make ends meet (Anthony et al., 2020; Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Kezar & Maxey, 2016; Reevy & Deason, 2014).

The contributions of adjunct professors to higher education and the academic community cannot be overstated (Anthony et al., 2020). As a result, the achievements of adjunct professors should be recognized. Finding ways to improve the working conditions of adjunct professors is essential, such as enhancing the services and offering that higher education institutions give to their adjunct professors, which may strengthen the adjunct professors' abilities and pedagogical approaches, hence enhancing student achievement (Danaei, 2019; Wallin, 2004, 2005).

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Form For The Use Of Human Research Participants

Date: 12-29-2022

IRB #: IRB-FY22-23-157

Title: A phenomenological study on burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions

Creation Date: 8-5-2022 End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Janette Whitmore

Review Board: Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Limited	Decision	Exempt - Limited IRB
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Key Study Contacts

Member	Janette Whitmore	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	
Member	Janette Whitmore	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	
Member	Andrea Bruce	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	

Appendix B

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)



Completion Date 11-Sep-2021
 Expiration Date 10-Sep-2024
 Record ID 44872800

This is to certify that:

JANETTE WHITMORE

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of
 certification through CME.

Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher

(Curriculum Group)

Social & Behavioral Researchers

(Course Learner Group)

1 - Basic Course

(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Liberty University

CITI

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320

Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US

www.citiprogram.org

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w2047fd61-1a07-4b5b-89a3-0176b492077b-44872800

Appendix C

Adjunct Professor Participant Letter

Dear Recipient,

As a candidate for a Ph.D. in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting qualitative research as part of the requirements for a doctorate. The purpose of my research is to understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions, and I am writing this letter to extend an invitation to qualified individuals to participate in my study.

Participation in this transcendental phenomenological research study was limited to a participant who is or was an adjunct professor at a higher education institution and a participant who experienced or is currently experiencing burnout, a state of exhaustion, mental fatigue, or overload caused by excessive stressors as an adjunct professor in the higher education workplace.

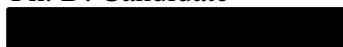
Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete all the following collection steps: first, participants will complete the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory 16-item open-ended survey (30 minutes). Second, participants will engage in reflective journaling on their past or current experiences of exhaustion, mental fatigue, or overload. Third, participants will participate in a video-recorded and audio-recorded interview on Microsoft Teams that will last 45-60 minutes. Participants may be asked to do a follow-up interview if any clarity is needed (15-30 minutes). As part of this study, participants will be asked to review all data collection processes for accuracy (15-30 minutes). Participants will also be asked for their names and other identifying information. All of this information will be kept strictly confidential and subsequently deleted.

If you are interested in participating, please reply to this email expressing your interest. A consent form is attached to this email. The consent form contains additional information about my research. If you opt to participate, you will first need to sign the consent form and return it to me using the email jwhitmore6@liberty.edu. After I receive your consent form, I will email you the open-ended survey with instructions and schedule a time for the interview. Participation in this research is voluntary, and you can withdraw anytime. Please let me know if you have any questions or if you would know of anyone else who could be interested in participating. Thank you for considering participation in my study.

Participants will receive \$100 as a thank-you for participating in the study if all three data collection activities are completed within three weeks of signing the consent form.

Sincerely,

Janette Whitmore
Ph. D. Candidate



Appendix D

Consent Form

Title of the Project: A Phenomenological Study of Burnout Among Adjunct Professors at Higher Education

Principal Investigator: Janette Whitmore, Ph.D. Candidate, Liberty University School of Education

Invitation to be part of a research study.

As a candidate for a Ph.D. in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting qualitative research as part of the requirements for a doctorate. The purpose of my research is to understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions.

Participation in this transcendental phenomenological research study was limited to a participant who is or was an adjunct professor at a higher education institution and a participant who experienced or is currently experiencing burnout, a state of exhaustion, mental fatigue, or overload caused by excessive stressors as an adjunct professor in the higher education workplace.

Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions. At this stage in the research, burnout will be defined as a symptom of persistent emotional exhaustion brought on by extreme job demands and a lack of resources.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Complete a 16-item open-ended burnout open-ended survey (30 minutes).
2. Engage in reflective journaling on their past or current experiences of burnout at a higher education institution. Participants will be given writing prompts to take them through the journaling process.
3. Participate in a video-recorded and audio-recorded interview for 45-60 minutes on Microsoft Teams.

4. Participants may be asked to do a follow-up interview if clarity is needed (15-30 minutes).
5. Review all data collection steps for accuracy (15-30 minutes).

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect a direct benefit from participating in this study.

Benefits to society include adding to the body of knowledge by shedding light on the perceived role, responsibilities, lack of resources, and the effects thereof related to the lived experiences of burnout among adjunct professors at higher education institutions.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data from you may be shared in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant answers will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Semi-structured individual interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. Only the researcher will have access to the participants' names.
- Open-ended surveys and journals will be stored on a password-locked hard drive and locked in a safe. Data may be used in future presentations. Only the researcher will have access to these open-ended s and journals. After three years, all open-ended surveys and journals will be deleted.
- Semi-structured individual interviews will be video-recorded and audio-recorded, and transcribed. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings and transcriptions. After three years, Microsoft Teams' recordings and transcripts, and hand-held recordings will be deleted.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will receive \$100 as a thank-you for participating in the study if all three data collection activities, which include an open-ended survey, reflective journaling, and an interview, are completed within three weeks of signing the consent form. The \$100 will be sent via Cash App, Venmo, or Zelle to participants after the data collection process.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Janette Whitmore. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact h [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Andrea Br [REDACTED]ty.edu

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

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

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered, and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy of the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

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

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

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix E

Any Job Demand and Any Job Resource List (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004)

<p>Job Demands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralization • Cognitive demands • Complexity • Computer problems • Demanding contacts with patients • Downsizing • Emotional demands • Emotional dissonance • Interpersonal conflict • Job insecurity • Negative spillover from family to work • Harassment by patients • Performance demands • Physical demands • Problems planning • Pupils' misbehavior • Qualitative workload • Reorganization • Remuneration • Responsibility • Risks and hazards • Role ambiguity • Role conflict • Sexual harassment • Time pressure • Unfavorable shift work schedule • Unfavorable work conditions • Work pressure • Work-home conflict • Work overload 	<p>Job resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancement • Appreciation • Autonomy • Craftsmanship • Financial rewards • Goal clarity • Information • Innovative climate • Job challenge • Knowledge • Leadership • Opportunities for professional development • Participation in decision making • Performance feedback • Positive spillover from family to work • Professional pride • Procedural fairness • Positive patient contacts • Quality of the relationship with the supervisor • Safety climate • Safety routine violations • Social climate • Social support from colleagues • Social support from supervisor • Skill utilization • Strategic planning • Supervisory coaching • Task variety • Team cohesion • Team harmony • Trust in management
<p>Outcomes (negative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absenteeism (self-report and company registered) • Accidents and injuries • Adverse events • Depression • Determination to continue • Unsafe behaviors • Negative work-home interference • Physical ill health • Psychosomatic health complaints 	<p>Personal resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional and mental competencies • Extraversion • Hope • Intrinsic motivation • Low neuroticism • Need satisfaction (autonomy, belongingness, competence) • Optimism • Organization-based self-esteem • Regulatory focus (prevention and promotion focus)

(continued)

Appendix E (Continued)

(continued)

- Psychological strain (General Health Questionnaire, GHQ)
- Turnover intention
- Resilience
- Self-efficacy
- Value orientation (intrinsic and extrinsic values)

Outcomes (positive)

- Extra-role performance (self- or other-rated)
 - Innovativeness
 - In-role performance (self- or other-rated)
 - Life satisfaction
 - Organizational commitment
 - Perceived health
 - Positive work-home interference
 - Service quality
 - Team sales performance
 - Workability
 - Happiness
-

Appendix F

Social Media Recruitment Ad

MENTAL EXHAUSTION STUDY

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Participate In

- A research study designed to understand the lived experiences of exhaustion, mental fatigue, or overload among adjunct professors at higher education institutions


To Participate You Must

- Participant is/has an adjunct professor at a higher education institution
- Participant has experienced a state of exhaustion, mental fatigue, or overload caused by excessive stressors as an adjunct professor in the higher education workplace

Participation Involves

- Complete an open-ended survey (30-minutes)
- Complete a reflective journal exercise
- Complete a video-recorded and audio-recorded interview via Microsoft Teams (45-60 minutes)
- Participants may be asked to do a follow-up interview for clarity if needed (15-30 minutes)
- Review data/transcripts/findings to ensure accuracy
- Participants will receive \$100 as a thank-you for participating in the study if all three data collection activities are completed within three weeks of signing the consent form

TO LEARN MORE AND/OR SIGN-UP, PLEASE EMAIL:
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Appendix G

Oldenburg Burnout Inventory

Open-Ended Survey For Adjunct Professor Participants

Name:

Date:

Instructions: Below, you will find a series of items. Based on the prompt on the left, please supply a minimum of two complete sentences about how you relate to the item using the “Participant Open-Ended Response” boxes on the right.

OLBI Open-ended Items		Participant’s Open-ended Responses
1.	I always find new and interesting aspects in my work (D)	
2.	There are days when I feel tired before I arrive at work (E.R.)	
3.	It happens more and more often that I talk about my work in a negative way (D.R)	
4.	After work, I tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better (E.R)	
5.	I can tolerate the pressure of my work very well (E)	
6.	Lately, I tend to think less at work and do my job almost mechanically (D.R)	
7.	I find my work to be a positive challenge (D)	
8.	During my work, I often feel emotionally drained (E.R.)	
9.	Over time, one can become disconnected from this type of work (D.R)	

10.	After working, I have enough energy for my leisure activities (<i>E</i>)	
11.	Sometimes I feel sickened by my work tasks (<i>D.R</i>)	
12.	After my work, I usually feel worn out and weary (<i>E.R</i>)	
13.	This is the only type of work that I can imagine myself doing (<i>D</i>)	
14.	Usually, I can manage the amount of my work well (<i>E</i>)	
15.	I feel more and more engaged in my work (<i>D</i>)	
16.	When I work, I usually feel energized (<i>E</i>)	

Disengagement items are 1, 3(R), 6(R), 7, 9(R), 11(R), 13, 15. Exhaustion items are 2(R), 4(R), 5, 8(R), 10, 12(R), 14, 16.

Appendix H

Reflective Journaling Instructions

Based on your current or previous experiences burnout as an adjunct professor, please journal reflecting on your current or previous experience with burnout in your adjunct professor role. You may find it helpful to utilize the following journal prompt to guide you through the reflective journaling experience:

1. How would you describe your course workload as an adjunct professor at a higher education institution? **SQ1**
2. What are the job resources (e. g., pay, job security, administrative support, benefits, inclusion) needed for you that are lacking as an adjunct professor at higher education institutions? **SQ2**
3. What is your ultimate goal as an adjunct professor at higher education institutions, and do you think it can be accomplished? Why or why not? How does that make you feel?
SQ2
4. How would you describe your current or previous emotional health as an adjunct professor at a higher education institution? **SQ3**
5. How would you describe your current or previous physiological health as an adjunct professor at a higher education institution? **SQ3**
6. How has your psychological and physiological health impacted your relationships with yourself? **SQ4**
7. How has your psychological and physiological health impacted your relationships with students? **SQ4**

8. How has your psychological and physiological health impacted your relationships with the higher education institution where you work? **SQ4**
9. How have your spiritual practices helped with your lived experience of burnout? **SQ3**

Appendix I

Semi-Structured Interview

Questions For Adjunct Professor Participant

1. Please share your age, educational background, how long you have been teaching, what subject (s) you teach, and what led you to work at this community college or university.

CRQ

2. What is a typical work week for you as an adjunct professor at a higher education institution? **CRQ/SQ1**
3. Describe the moment when you realized you were burned-out or mentally exhausted.
SQ3
4. What components of your job contributed in the past or are contributing to your burnout or mental exhaustion now? **SQ1/SQ2**
5. Discuss how long you have been struggling with burnout or mental exhaustion. **SQ3**
6. Discuss what could amend the components of your job that contributed to burnout or mental exhaustion. **SQ1/SQ2**
7. Describe the effects of your burnout or mental exhaustion on yourself, your students, your coworkers, and the higher education institutions where they work. **SQ3**
8. Describe how a lack of resources, such as tenure, compensation, benefits, professional growth, job stability, communication, administration, and well-being, contribute to your experience of burnout or mental exhaustion. **SRQ2**
9. Describe any issues you have concerning your physiological health. **SQ3**
10. Describe any issues you have regarding your psychological health. **SQ3**

11. Describe your feelings about being an adjunct professor at a higher education institution. **CRQ**
12. Describe how you feel towards the conclusion of the working day or the week. **SQ3**
13. Please describe any instances in which you became disengaged, withdrew from, or isolated yourself from your students, other faculty members, administrators, or the greater academic community. **SQ3**
14. Describe a perfect role as an adjunct professor at a higher education institution. **SQ1/SQ2**
15. Considering our conversation on your burnout as an adjunct professor at higher education institutions, what more would you want to add? **CRQ/SQ1/SQ2/SQ3**

Appendix J

American Psychological Association

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The job demands-resources model of burnout.

Author: Demerouti, Evangelia; Bakker, Arnold B.; Nachreiner, Friedhelm; Schaufeli, Wilmar B.
 Publication: Journal of Applied Psychology
 Publisher: American Psychological Association
 Date: Jun 1, 2001

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Appendix K

American Psychological Association

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Burnout and work engagement: A thorough investigation of the independency of both constructs.

Author: Demerouti, Evangelia; Mostert, Karina; Bakker, Arnold B.

Publication: Journal of Occupational Health Psychology

Publisher: American Psychological Association

Date: Jul 1, 2010

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Appendix L

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A Critical Review of the Job Demands-Resources Model: Implications for Improving Work and Health

Author: Wilmar B. Schaufeli, Toon W. Taris

Publication: Springer eBook

Publisher: Springer Nature

Date: Jan 1, 2014

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