School Leadership Support: Understanding the Experiences of Elementary-Level Teachers During a Global Health Pandemic

Kathleen M. Crawford
Georgia Southern University, kcrawford@georgiasouthern.edu

Pamela Wells
Georgia Southern University, pwells@georgiasouthern.edu

Juliann Sergi McBrayer
Georgia Southern University, jmcbrayer@georgiasouthern.edu

Kristen N. Dickens
Georgia Southern University, kdickens@georgiasouthern.edu

Katherine Fallon
Georgia Southern University, kf10548@georgiasouthern.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/slr

Part of the Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons, Educational Leadership Commons, Educational Technology Commons, Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons, Elementary Education Commons, Elementary Education and Teaching Commons, and the Online and Distance Education Commons

Tell us how this article helped you.

School Leadership Support: Understanding the Experiences of Elementary-Level Teachers

During a Global Health Pandemic

Introduction

As the COVID-19 global health pandemic continues, it is unknown if we will be able to return to traditional in-person instruction soon (Hailey et al., 2020). The immediate shift to fully online or hybrid teaching models led to an outcry from educators who did not feel equipped for the abrupt change. The scramble for educators to connect curriculum to practical application through an online or hybrid learning environment instead of a traditional in-person classroom was a considerable challenge laden with uncertainties (Hughes et al., 2020). Although the transition to online education was universal and efforts were made to optimize resources and respond positively to the situation, it is critical for school leaders to consider the numerous issues that have impacted teaching and learning during this health crisis. These issues included the health, wellness, and safety of teachers, students, and their families; concerns about job stability; the ongoing public debate about crisis management; and uncertainty regarding the unknowns of this global health emergency.

With an estimated 80% of school-aged children worldwide suddenly out of school during the pandemic, the impact on children's education and well-being remains a major concern (Dayal & Tiko, 2020). Challenges continue despite many students returning to in-person learning environments. The quality of in-person, hybrid, and online instruction is in question and may not be at a satisfactory level, leaving room for improvement. With these considerations in mind, to best support teachers, school leaders must go beyond the technical and academic aspects of teaching and address the emotional dimensions of their employees who strive to create an impactful learning environment for students (Crawford et al., 2021).

Considering the call from educators for emotional support needed from their school leaders (Alverez, 2020), our university-based research team designed a qualitative study to answer the research question, "How has the COVID-19 pandemic professionally and emotionally impacted elementary-level teachers currently in the classroom?" Our goal was to better understand the experiences of elementary-level education teachers as they transitioned from their traditional classroom experience to address unavoidable obstacles while navigating varied teaching modes. Our findings are aimed at validating educators' experiences with pandemic teaching and offering examples of how school leaders can address the multilayered concerns of their staff.

Review of the Literature

Teaching in a Global Health Pandemic

Serving as an educator in a global health pandemic resulted in the need to navigate teaching and learning from an entirely different vantage point due to new challenges at work including shifting in-person learning to online and software compatible with virtual learning (Collie, 2021). Educators and students experienced difficulties maintaining a work-home distinction and adapting pedagogical techniques to an online or hybrid format. These specific challenges require teachers to navigate competing demands of school leaders and learners with an unfamiliar high workload (Collie, 2021). Furthermore, 84% of educators shared that teaching expectations and varying workload demands led to increased stress and burn-out than prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Gewertz, 2021). Plans to exit the teaching profession are on the rise related to the persisting pandemic, specifically a nine to 16% increase from summer of 2021 to summer of 2025 (Fullard, 2021).

Varied Teaching Modes during a Global Health Pandemic

Online

Through this shift to online learning incorporating a focus on web-based teaching, learning, and instructional design, educators are tasked with a variety of new expectations of competency in technology operation, teaching skills, and management of online systems (Zhang, 2020). With a shift to online learning, teachers were asked to rate aspects of their professional work including lesson planning, assessing student learning, engaging with parents, and differentiating instruction, respondents rated all these job functions to be more challenging remotely (Marshall et al., 2020). Additionally, teachers encountered diverse challenges with the rapid shift from in-person learning to online settings and these include issues such as making online software available for teaching and learning and modifying learning for diverse students, specifically underrepresented and vulnerable populations (Collie, 2021). Teachers also noted feeling challenged to maintain ongoing personal contact with their students while facilitating their learning and attending to their emotional needs (Shamir-Inbal & Blau, 2021). With insufficient training in navigating the challenges of online teaching, teachers were not prepared to provide effective guidance and support to their students, which hinders students' abilities to navigate online learning independently. Furthermore, there are still many schools not participating in online learning with the largest barrier being a lack of adequate infrastructure or internet-accessible computers available for students at home (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2020). Moreover, many students do not have access to a quiet location to study or complete school assignments in their homes, further compounding their ability to effectively manage online learning.

Conversely, it is critical to note benefits for students and teachers in online learning that may exist if implemented effectively as this can encourage overall changes in education, such as

increasing motivation for student engagement in online learning activities, expanding access to education, and encouraging student development of self-regulation and independent learning skills (Shamir-Inbal & Blau, 2021). Furthermore, students may be afforded more choices, convenience, and personalization in their learning experience that support effective online teaching methods. Alternatively, while some students may excel in this increased autonomy over their learning, others may be impeded by additional expectations from determining if they have made adequate progress, choosing appropriate learning techniques, and managing healthy emotions and behaviors during learning.

Hybrid

Many educators are teaching in a hybrid model. For example, distance education can be synchronous that happens in real-time, involving online students, with the aid of virtual chat rooms as well as asynchronous occurring entirely through online channels without real-time interaction. This hybrid delivery results in a traditional face-to-face classroom being supported by this accompanying online classroom component (either synchronous or asynchronous) and often, hybrid learning using both the face-to-face and online setting can be much more effective and easier to use (Kaup, 2020). Researchers found support for this integration of teaching modes as this can be an effective format for increasing student engagement and active participation throughout the learning process (Allen & Seaman, 2017). Specifically, this combined format provides teachers with more opportunities to monitor the well-being of their students while maintaining a teaching and learning routine, as opposed to online-only learning (Shamir-Inbal & Blau, 2021). The importance of caregiver involvement and support for online or hybrid learning further aids in preserving learning routines and ongoing communication with educators (Shamir-Inbal & Blau, 2021; Xie & Yang, 2020). Specifically, for the purposes of this study hybrid was

denoted by alternating between days with face-to-face instruction and days in a fully online setting throughout the week and semester.

In-Person

Several schools conducted business as usual in a fully in-person format with safety and sanitary measures in place, and in some cases, void of these measures. Despite the uncertainties arising from COVID-19 and pressure from parents, some school leaders believed it was important to keep students in classrooms for as long as possible, not just for their learning, but also for their social-emotional well-being (Ho & Tay, 2020). Despite schools' success in bringing physical classrooms into the digital world, problems such as the knowledge and skills needed in managing remote learning environments pose an enormous disadvantage for learners, as those teaching them are mostly products of the traditional learning environment (Besser et al., 2020).

Teachers' Emotional Experiences in a Global Health Pandemic

Online learning was perceived as overwhelming, both in terms of the workload balance and the challenges impacting motivational, emotional, and psychological factors that hinder students' productivity and engagement within their online courses (Literat, 2021). Students' physical and mental health can be negatively affected by school closures that contribute to elongated home confinement and peer isolation (Brazendale et al., 2017; Brooks et al., 2020). In a recent study examining levels of stress and anxiety of educators teaching in the pandemic, current levels were reported as medium to high (Klapproth et al., 2020). Related to overwhelming stress, teachers also noted feelings of isolation during the pandemic. Furthermore, teachers utilized functional coping strategies, such as planning or seeking social support as well as dysfunctional coping strategies including giving up on goals or drinking alcohol, and watching

more television (Klapproth et al., 2020). Lastly, more than half of all participating teachers spent over four hours a day on online teaching and experienced increased stress compared to teachers who spent less time a day teaching online. Researchers noted a lack of information about the level of stress before the lockdown, which admittedly could be high with the current demands in the educational arena (Klapproth et al., 2020). Results from recent studies indicate that the shift to distance learning contributed to greater stress for teachers regardless of the pre-existing levels of stress pre-COVID-19 (Anderson et al., 2021; Klapproth et al., 2020; Literat, 2021).

Pedagogy Over Pupils? Pennies and Pedagogy?

Educators voiced concerns about student equity of access to resources because of the pandemic (Martinez & Broemmel, 2021). Students from diverse backgrounds, such as low-income households, single-parent families, ethnic minorities, diverse gender identities, sexual orientations, and students with disabilities experience additional hardships through the lack of physical learning opportunities, social and emotional support, and meal assistance available from attending school (OECD, 2020). These hardships are known to impair students' educational and developmental progress, leading them to be at higher risk of falling behind academically or experiencing mental health issues due to heightened social isolation. Educators straddled the line between presenting necessary educational content in an online or hybrid format and addressing their students' mental health and well-being (Kaden, 2020).

Financial concerns from school leaders added to concerns of teachers that themselves and their students' well-being were being overlooked by administration. The shift to immediate online learning that later became longer-term, placed additional demands on school systems. School administrators had to rewrite budgets and identify potential new funding sources due to the initial strain from the economic fallout of COVID-19 (Reber & Gordon, 2020).

Unfortunately, federal funding stalled and became politicized along partisan lines, thus failing to materialize into a much-needed lifeline for schools and students alike. Research has repeatedly shown that the level of funding affects student outcomes, particularly for vulnerable or disadvantaged students (Literat, 2021; Reber & Gordon, 2020). What remains is a dearth of attention and tangible resources given to address the needs of students and the educators who serve them.

Methodology

We used Photovoice, an action research methodology for this study with roots in health promotion research. Participants were instructed to take photographs that would answer the research question, "How has the COVID-19 pandemic professionally and emotionally impacted elementary-level teachers currently in the classroom?" Photovoice was developed by Wang and Burris (1997) to give voice to community members who may not have a voice or needed a more powerful voice. With Photovoice, participants use photographs that they have taken as data points to help answer a research question. Participants were instructed to not take photographs of themselves, of children in their classrooms, or of anything that may identify them or their school. We chose to use Photovoice to encourage participants to highlight strengths and opportunities in their schools, as well as capture representations, positive or negative, of what it is like teaching in a pandemic. By utilizing Photovoice, we intended to ensure a rich set of data with photographs coupled with the analysis of focus group discussions, as well as elicit data to gather knowledge and information from the voice of teachers working in a pandemic.

Participants

Participants were recruited through an alumni email distribution list. Participants were in the southeastern United States. Fifteen participants, all elementary-level teachers, participated in

the study and each was given a pseudonym to maintain anonymity. Of these, 12 identified as

female and 3 identified as male. Additionally, three of those participants identified themselves as

Black and the remaining 12 identified themselves as White. The teachers ranged in age from 23

to 40, and their years of experience teaching ranged between two years to 19 years. Additionally,

five of the teachers were teaching fully in person, three of the teachers were teaching fully

online, and seven teachers were teaching in a hybrid model, meaning they were alternating

between days with face-to-face instruction and days in a fully online setting (Table 1). We

created informed consent outlining the purpose of the study, participation criteria, potential risks

and benefits, confidentiality, significance of the study, information regarding the format and

recording of the focus groups, and the option to withdraw free of penalty from the study at any

time.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Years of Teaching Experience	Current Grades Teaching	Teaching Modality*
Jane	Female	White	7	2nd	Hybrid
Laurie	Female	White	8	5th	IP
Angie	Female	White	4	5th	Hybrid
Wendy	Female	White	6	1st	Hybrid
Ashley	Female	White	3	1st	Online
Parker	Male	White	9	3rd	IP
Ariel	Female	Black	2	2nd	Online
Jessica	Female	White	9	2nd	IP
Susan	Female	White	7	5th	Hybrid
Brandy	Female	White	19	4th	IP
William	Male	White	10	2nd/3rd	Hybrid
David	Male	Black	6	PreK	IP
Marcia	Female	Black	12	5th	IP
Danielle	Female	White	2	3rd	Hybrid

| Charlotte | Female | White | 16 | 1st | Online |

*Teaching modality options include: In person (IP), Online, and Hybrid. Hybrid indicated participants were required to teach in IP and Online formats.

Data Collection and Analysis

The participants were instructed to take original photographs that represented their experiences teaching during the pandemic. They were then asked to select one or two photographs they believed best represented their challenges and successes teaching during the pandemic. After each participant selected their photographs, they were invited to an online focus group. The participants shared these photos through screen sharing during one of the three scheduled focus groups; all meetings were recorded and photographs were uploaded to a protected file folder to which only research team members had access. Each of the three focus groups lasted one and a half hours and was dedicated to the participants taking turns sharing their photographs and providing their rationale for sharing the photograph. The guiding focus group question was, "How do the photographs represent your experiences during this health pandemic?" The 'SHOWeD' reflection model (Powers et al., 2012) was used to guide our focus group discussions. Before describing their photograph, the researcher asked other participants to describe what they saw in each photograph and the participants described not only what was physically visible in the photograph, but also voiced inferences they could make about the photograph itself. This answered the question: What do you See here? After the discussion, the photographer then explained their intentionality behind the photograph, leading to the prompt: What is Happening here? Then the photographer shared what the photo shows about their teaching experiences in the pandemic, specifically, answering the prompts: How does this relate

to Our lives?, as well as the prompt: Why does this problem exist? The participants then considered the prompt: What can we Do about it?

The recording was transcribed verbatim and one primary qualitative researcher was responsible for completing data analysis by codifying the results. As with any participatory action research, the participants helped drive the analysis through their photographs and discussion; the selection and contextualization of the photographs was completed by the participants (Wang, 2005). We utilized Koltz et al.'s (2010) illustrative U-heuristic model for data analysis. Koltz et al.'s (2010) adapted Wang's (2005) model to develop the U-heuristic model. The U-shaped model includes the left side of the letter as the individual participants' sharing photographs and their associated meaning contextualized within their stories. The right side of the letter represents the later collaboration of research team members interpreting and codifying the data. Utilizing this method from Koltz et al.'s (2010) for data analysis allowed for independent evaluation and subsequent collaborative interpretation that resulted in shared collective themes. To ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), we employed credibility (prolonged interaction with the data as well as triangulation of the data), dependability using an audit trail, and reflectivity in the form of individual field notes and journal entries. We engaged in prolonged interaction with the data through listening to focus group recordings, reading participant transcripts, and studying participant photographs. We each kept our own field notes and journal to reflect on our journey and track personal experiences and we each wrote memos that detailed our coding and data analysis processes. Duncan (2004) stressed the importance of keeping a reflective journal and other forms of data (e.g., coding notes) to support reliability in accordance with suggestions made by Yin (1989). As Strauss and Corbin (2008) noted, "Writing

memos should begin with the first analytic session and continue throughout the analytic process"
(p. 119).

Findings

Data analysis produced two overarching themes that were developed and identified
through analyzing the transcripts and participant photographs obtained during the data collection
process in the three focus groups. Each overarching theme also contained one sub-theme.
Participant photographs and quotes were chosen as thematic representations. The two
overarching themes identified from the data were: *abandoning best practices* and *increased
stress and emotional pain.*

Overarching Theme 1: Abandoning best practices

The theme of *abandoning best practices* resulted from our interpretation of the data from
participants highlighting the reliance on technology and the seeming lack of care or awareness
from school leaders about pedagogy, child development, and developmentally appropriate
practices. They described the importance they give to classroom culture and how it did not
appear to be a priority for school leaders. Participants also believed they had very little voice in
decision making and how they were to teach and manage their classroom. The sub-theme
influences of technology also impacted teachers' experiences.

Jane presented her photo of an elementary classroom and explained, "The emphasis has
just totally shifted. What best practices are, what things are important, what's expected...it's been
hard because it's just totally the opposite of what I learned at [name of university]."

Figure 1: Jane's photo of her elementary classroom. Five rows of desks in straight lines are visible, and there is space between each desk to create space between students.

Ashley described her required new classroom setup as part of the shift of pandemic teaching. She felt frustrated that freedom of classroom design was removed in lieu of what administration required.

> Part of me is jealous that [names of other participants] could put your kids in pods, and they could at least look at each other. We begged for that…[Administration] said, 'No. They all have to face the front of the room.' I'm half heartbroken and half jealous.

Figure 2: Ashley's photograph of her elementary school classroom. The desks are set up in eight pods, with three desks in a row.

Ashley continued:

> It's interesting that [name of another participant's school] didn't want y'all to do small groups, whereas...we've been expected to do small groups magically this whole time...I was like...you want [me] to see every kid for guided reading two to three times a week...50 minutes for guided reading, and interventions. What if they're absent, or I need to make up something, or life happens? Then there's the follow-up of just, 'We'll be checking your small group plans. Make sure you get those done.' It feels like an impossible task.

The sub-theme of *influences of technology* emerged from participants' sharing about the erratic shift from in-person teaching to online and hybrid teaching for some participants. Participants stated that while technology was incredibly helpful during this pandemic, it also put pressure on them as educators. They were expected to know and use various classroom technology with little to no training and no technology support personnel. Parker shared a photo of a computer screen with multiple data folders, "It makes me feel like my job is not as valuable...the computers are almost replacing me." He described:

> It represents how some people view teachers or how it makes us feel as teachers sometimes...I think a lot of teachers feel this way, like their job isn't valued or we're not as important or treated as equally as other professions. I think with the pandemic...it took a while for teachers to even be recognized as essential workers and frontline workers. Most teachers don't even get the essential pay. Like we're putting ourselves at risk as well, but we do get brushed off as the help...I

definitely think we've been a driving force during this pandemic along with the other essential workers.
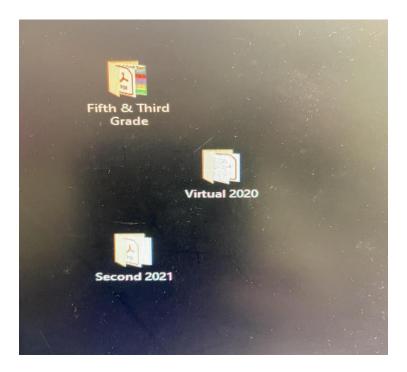

Figure 3: Parker's photo of a computer screen with multiple data folders.

Jessica discussed the pressure from administration's expectation that they must be immediately proficient with various online teaching tools and techniques despite their lack of training or experience using those tools prior to the pandemic teaching shift. Jessica shared:

> I was [teaching] online last semester and things would happen and I automatically was supposed to be the tech liaison too...I literally have no idea *[laughter]* what I'm doing and having to think on the fly and Google all the things, call all the people when...the system was down. I know I'm gonna get 30 emails in five seconds of, 'This isn't working. This is down. What's happening?' It was just very panic-inducing...and we don't always have the resources to fix it or know what to do to fix it.
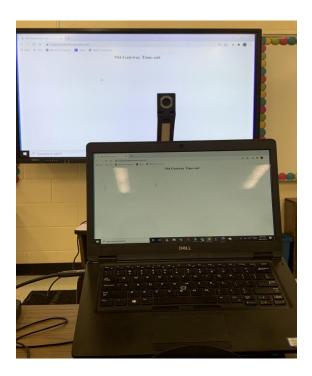
Figure 4: Jessica's photo of a laptop and dual monitor screen representing sentiments of feeling useless and replaceable by computers as so much of the shift in teaching relied on teacher's overuse of technology.

Overarching Theme 2: Increased stress and emotional pain

The theme of *increased stress and emotional pain* resulted from our interpretation of the data from participants' expressions about the overwhelming emotional toll the pandemic was having on them in and outside of the classroom. Participants described fears, frustrations, and the sense that others did not value their work. They also shared feelings of being expendable and underappreciated. The sub-theme is *feeling replaceable and devalued.*

Laurie shared a photograph of her prescription medication to address her mental health needs. She stated:

> I've been on Lexapro for 15 years…[for] anxiety and had it under control. Then
>
> March [2020] hit, and a lot was put on me because...all of the making everything
>
> digital fell on me...All of a sudden I had to make all these digital lessons because I

had all of my team members just breaking down because they didn't know how to use [various technology names] so I was the team expert...then I realized we weren't going back anymore. There was one day that I remember I just crumbled to the ground. I just sat in the fetal position and cried...I was just like, 'I can't do it anymore.' I talked to my doctor who said, 'Oh, you're the 20th teacher I've talked to this month that wants to up their medication.' He said, 'You're a teacher. We're doubling your Lexapro.'

She continued, "I'm not ashamed that I'm on medication because I'm a better teacher, and I'm a better mom when I can keep my panic attacks under control. That's what COVID did to me."

Figure 5: Laurie's photograph of prescribed medication to address her increased mental health stress.

Jane and Ashley strongly related to Laurie's disclosure. Jane responded, "This (emotional pain) is what we spend time talking about, trying to laugh about so that we don't cry about it, so I totally feel this." Ashley added:

I am seeing a therapist...More times than any other point in my teaching career,

I've been asking my therapist, 'Do you think I'm at the point where I need

medicine yet?' Then we go through the checklist...I'm gonna see her again next

week on Wednesday. Maybe I should ask her again 'cause it just—it doesn't stop.

The sub-theme of *feeling replaceable and devalued* emerged from participants' sharing

that the treatment of teachers during the pandemic left them feeling as if they do not matter and

are interchangeable. Participants spoke of the promise of resources from school leaders (e.g.,

cleaning, technology) with very few coming to fruition. Parker described his photograph and

noted that he did not feel like his job was valued recognizing the time it took to acknowledge

teachers as essential workers and frontline workers; "most teachers don't even get the essential

pay...we're putting ourselves at risk as well, but we do get brushed off as the help of we keep

everything looking, I guess, nice and spic and span in the sense of going with the help."
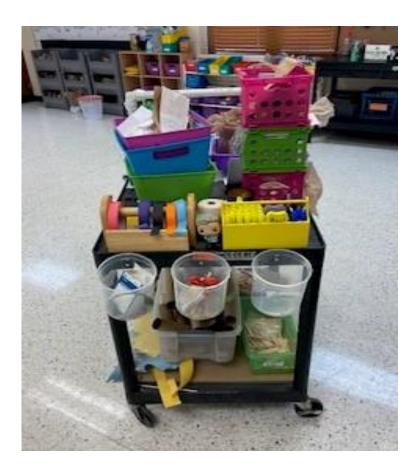
Figure 6. Parker's photograph of a small cart with wheels. There are 13 bins and containers of various sizes and shapes. The cart appears to have different manipulatives and classroom resources on it, many in a haphazard way.

Ariel connected with Parker's image:

> I definitely have those feelings...I don't feel as valued as I have in previous years. I came to the [teaching] profession—[from] the corporate world for five to six years and then decided, you know what? I'm not happy here...I was just so happy for five years. Then this year, I would say that I've totally just fallen apart.

Ariel shared a photograph (Figure 7) of her kitchen table covered with work. She stated:

> The kids and the parents expect the same type of teaching...the same level of education...the same results of what would normally [happen] in a typical year.

> We're not in a typical year. We've had to change everything on a moment's notice. Kids…[and] teachers are rolling with punches. Parents are [expecting] the same results of what would be in past years.

She continued...

> Our hands are tied...I've had to do things that go against my whole teaching philosophy that I can't control...that's what wakes us up at 2:00 in the morning...I'm on one of those running inflatables where you're strapped to something and the bungee cord is gonna pull you back at any minute...every day you're starting it over. At some point during the day that bungee cord is gonna pull you back and you're gonna fall flat on your face.
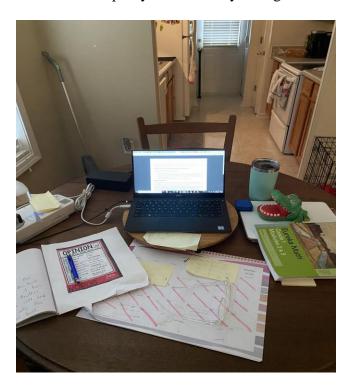

Figure 7. This is Ariel's photograph of a table. On the table is a laptop computer, a calendar, a cup, a notebook, a pen, and a schoolbook. The table is adjacent to a small kitchen area with a refrigerator, oven, and counter space visible.

Overall, the two overarching themes and sub-themes generated from elementary school teachers' responses involving their lived experiences answered the primary research question: How has the COVID-19 pandemic professionally and emotionally impacted elementary-level educators currently in the classroom?

Discussion

Two overarching themes were established from focus groups discussion and analysis of photographs. Information presented by the participants regarding these themes attended to a primary research question addressed in this study. The two overarching themes identified from the focus group data were: *abandoning best practices* and *increased stress and emotional pain.* When reviewing concerns noted for abandoning best practices, participants noted a lack of school leadership support when being expected to handle diverse and consuming responsibilities. Specifically, participants noted a lack of support for areas of high importance to them, such as classroom culture, while attempting to maintain safe and effective classroom management. Participants elaborated on this concern by noting classroom setups that have been enforced for safety concerns of COVID-19; however, these may be hindering students' social connections and interactions with peers and teachers. There was one sub-theme associated with the first overarching theme, *influences of technology*. Specifically, participants acknowledged the assistance technological applications provided in this shift to online learning; however, many participants addressed the additional pressure this shift placed on their role as a teacher. Some of these specific concerns included lack of preparation or training to implement these technological programs, feeling disconnected from students', and feeling undervalued by school leaders in their role as teachers.

Additionally, participants noted experiencing *increased stress and emotional pain* while teaching during the pandemic. Participants discussed how teaching during the pandemic has negatively impacted their mental health, leading to many seeking psychological or medication support. Comparative to previous research, it appeared the participants felt a sense of connection when discussing certain negative emotions, such as stress, anxiety, frustration, nervousness, and sadness (Crawford et al., 2021). In comparison to how the technological advancements made participants feel, participants noted, in general, *feeling replaceable and devalued*, the sub-theme of the second overarching theme. Participants noted not feeling supported, recognized, or valued as other essential workers due to the lack of resources coming to fruition during this online learning shift. This was supported in the research as teachers voiced concerns about student equity of access to resources because of the pandemic (Martinez & Broemmel, 2021). Previous research has shown that perceived level of support by school leaders for new teachers greatly influences their stress levels and emotional experiences (Crawford et al., 2021), and whether these stressors were there before the pandemic or amid the pandemic, schools leaders need to address these concerns.

As discussed by the participants, imperative areas of focus included receiving effective training in technological resources to continue teaching students in an unpredictable health crisis. Participants further addressed needing appropriate support to alleviate emotional burdens or defeating perceptions teachers may hold about themselves and their abilities to fulfill their roles amid heightened expectations for teachers. Previous literature has addressed the importance of functional coping strategies, such as seeking social support, for teachers during strenuous times (Klapproth et al., 2020).

Conclusion

It is our hope that future researchers will engage in additional focus groups and photovoice studies to better understand the experiences of teachers charged with teaching and learning during a health crisis. Assessing the influences that the pandemic has had on elementary-level teachers may provide more insight into the emotional distress teachers and students continue to encounter in this ever-changing, unpredictable time. Additionally, it would be informative for future research to evaluate potential shifts in emotional experiences and teaching and learning approaches post-COVID-19. Specifically, researchers could uncover any additional stressors that may impact teachers and students as we reevaluate and attempt to establish a new sense of normalcy.

School leaders have a vital role to play in the support of teachers and their developmental process, especially during the increasing demands of COVID-19. Although it can be assumed all areas of school personnel are experiencing hardships from the pandemic, it is encouraged for school leaders to evaluate the current level of support being provided to teachers and assess targeted areas needed for professional and emotional growth. Given this acknowledgment, we encourage future research with all educators to better understand how they are experiencing this health pandemic including the school leaders themselves, counselors, and paraprofessionals, to name a few. Engaging in conversations about additional emotional strains being experienced by teachers and their needs was of high importance to participants. We encourage school leaders to develop effective feedback systems for teachers and support staff to have an open discussion of concerns they may be experiencing within their classroom and/or with online/hybrid learning, so the voices of the teachers are recognized, and action happens. These open discussions can lead to implementation of new guidelines or expectations and increase awareness of necessary resources to ensure effective teaching and learning during and following a pandemic.

References

Allen, I. E. & Seaman, J. (2017). Distance education enrollment report 2017. Digital learning compass. https://onlinelearningsurvey.com/highered.html

Anderson, R. C., Bousselot, T., Katz-Buoincontro, J., & Todd, J. (2021). Generating buoyancy in a sea of uncertainty: Teachers creativity and well-being during the covid-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 1–17.

Alvarez, A.V. (2020). The Phenomenon of learning at a distance through emergency remote teaching amidst the pandemic crisis, *Asian Journal of Distance Education, 15*(1), 144–153.

Besser, A., Flett, G. L., & Zeigler-Hill, V. (2020). Adaptability to a sudden transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic: Understanding the challenges for students. *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1037/stl0000198

Brazendale, K., Beets, M. W., Weaver, R. G., Pate, R. R., Turner-mcgrievy, G. M., Kaczynski, A. T., Chandler, J. L., Bohnert, A., & von Hippel, P. T. (2017). Understanding differences between summer vs. school obesogenic behaviors of children: The structured days hypothesis. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, *14*(100), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-017-0555-2

Brooks, S. K., Webster, R. K., Smith, L. E., Woodland, L., Wessely, S., Greenberg, N., & Rubin, G. J. (2020). The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: Rapid review of the evidence. *Lancet*, *395*(10227), 912–920. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30460-8

Collie, R. J. (2021). COVID-19 and teachers' somatic burden, stress, and emotional exhaustion: Examining the role of principal leadership and workplace buoyancy. *AERA Open, 7*(1), 1–15.

Crawford, K. M., McBrayer, J. S., & Fallon, K. (2021). Emotional dimensions of teaching in elementary education preparation. *The Qualitative Report*, *26*(1), 52–68. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4408

Duncan, M. (2004). Autoethnography: Critical appreciation of an emerging art. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 3(*4), Article 3.

Dayal, H. C. & Tiko L. (2020). When are we going to have the real school? A case study of early childhood education and care teachers' experiences surrounding education during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, *45*(4), 336 –347. https://doi:10.1177/1836939120966085

Fullard, J. (2021, June 16). The pandemic and teacher attrition: an exodus waiting to happen?. Education Policy Institute. https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/the-pandemic-and-teacher-attrition-an--waiting-to-happen/.

Gewertz, G. (2021). Teachers' mental health has suffered in the pandemic. Here's how districts can help. Education Week. https://www.edweek.org/leadership/teachers-mental-health-has-suffered-in-the-pandemic-heres-how-districts-can-help/2021/05

Hailey, R. B., Lesko, H., C., Whitcomb, B., & Kobayashi, L. (2020). Teaching epidemiology online (Pandemic Edition). *American Journal of Epidemiology*, *190*(7), 1183–1189. https://doi.org/10.1093/aje/kwaa285

Ho, J., & Tay, L. Y. (2020). Ensuring learning continues during a pandemic. *International Studies in Educational Administration, 42*(2), 49–55.

Hughes, M. C., Henry, B. W., & Kushnick, M. R. (2020). Teaching during the pandemic? An opportunity to enhance curriculum. *Pedagogy in Health Promotion*, *6*(4), 235–238. https://doi:10.1177/2373379920950179

Kaden, U. (2020). Covid-19 school closure-related changes to the professional life of a k–12 teacher. *Education Sciences*, *10*(6), 165.

Kaup, S., Jain, R., Shivalli, S., Pandey, S., & Kaup, S. (2020). Sustaining academics during COVID-19 pandemic. *Indian Journal of Ophthalmology*, *68*(6), 1220–1221. https://doi: 10.4103/ijo.IJO_1241_20

Klapproth, F., Federkeil, L., Heinschke, F., & Jungmann, T. (2020). Teachers' experiences of stress and their coping strategies during COVID-19 induced distance teaching. *Journal of Pedagogical Research, 4*(4), 444–452.

Koltz, R., Odegard-Koester, M., Provost, K., Smith, T., & Kleist, D. (2010). Picture perfect: Using photo-voice to explore four doctoral students' comprehensive examination experiences. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 5*(4), 389–411.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Sage.

Literat, I. (2021). "Teachers act like we're robots": Tiktok as a window into youth experiences of online learning during covid-19. *AERA Open, 7*(1), 1–15.

Marshall, D. T., Shannon, D. M., & Love, S. M. (2020). How teachers experienced the COVID-19 transition to remote instruction. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *102*(3), 46–50.

Martinez, J. A., & Broemmel, A. D. (2021). Pencils down: Educators respond to the uncertainty amidst COVID-19 school closures. *International Studies in Educational Administration, 49*(1), 109-132.

.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2020), "Learning remotely when schools close: How well are students and schools prepared? Insight from PISA", Tackling Coronavirus (COVID-19): Contributing to a Global Effort, OECD.

Powers, M., Freedman, D., & Pitner, R. (2012). From snapshot to civic action: A photovoice facilitator's manual. Community-Engaged Scholarship for Health (CES4Health).

Reber, S., & Gordon, N. (2020). Supporting students and promoting economic recovery in the time of COVID-19. *The Brookings Institution.* https://www.brookings.edu/blog/browncenter-chalkboard/2020/05/07/supporting-students-andpromoting-economic-recovery-in-the-time-of-covid-19/

Shamir-Inbal, T., & Blau, I. (2021). Facilitating emergency remote K-12 teaching in computing-enhanced virtual learning environments during COVID-19 pandemic-blessing or curse?. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 59(7), 1243–1271.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. K. (2008). Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory. Sage.

Wang, C. (2005). Photovoice: Social change through photography. Retrieved from www.photovoice.com/method/index.html.

Wang, C. & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, *24*(3), 369–387. https://doi:10.1177/109019819702400309

Xie, Z. & Yang, J. (2020). Autonomous learning of elementary students at home during the COVID-19 epidemic: A case study of the second elementary school in Daxie, Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, China. *Best Evidence in Chinese Education, 4*(2), 535–541.

Yin, R. (1989). Case study research: Design and methods (2nd ed.). Sage.

Zhang, X. (2020). Thoughts on large-scale long-distance web-based teaching in colleges and

universities under novel coronavirus pneumonia epidemic: A case of chengdu university.

Semantic Scholar, 416, 1222-1225. https://doi:10.2991/assehr.k.200316.266