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The Causes of Teacher Burnout and Attrition

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Abstract

Teacher burnout is a reason why teachers leave the teaching profession. Relationships, working conditions, teacher self-efficacy, and years of experience all have an impact on teacher burnout. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies of teachers found that teacher burnout can be developed and be alleviated. Findings suggest that teachers who lack support from their principals and colleagues are more likely to develop teacher burnout. Results also indicate that new and veteran teachers develop burnout and work to relieve their burnout in different ways. Working in an environment where teachers feel supported can lead to teacher fulfillment and the prevention of burnout.

Keywords: burnout, Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment

The Causes of Teacher Burnout and Attrition

Chapter One: Introduction

Every year in the United States, 8% of all teachers leave the profession (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, Darling- Hammond, 2016). Family and personal reasons, compensation, and working conditions are the three main factors that contribute to a teacher's decision to stay or leave the workforce (Podolsky et al., 2016, p. 1). Educational leaders do not have control over the family and personal reasons for a teacher leaving, but leaders have some control over teacher compensation, and they can have an impact on a teacher's working conditions. Teacher burnout occurs in schools across the world (Glazer, 2018; Lambersky, 2016; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Uzum, 2018. Understanding the antecedents to burnout can prevent teachers from leaving schools and the profession.

Understanding the causes of occupational burnout began with research in the 1970s. In 1981, Maslach and Jackson authored the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The landmark inventory was created to diagnose job burnout and is still widely used today. There are now assessments specific to careers, and this literature review includes studies that utilize the Maslach Burnout Inventory- Educator Survey (MBI-ES). The MBI-ES gives insight as to what causes burnout in teachers and gives researchers data on the three characteristics of burnout in order of burnout progression: emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and reduced personal accomplishment (PA) (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). When a teacher shows any of these symptoms, an intervention is necessary because burnout symptoms lead to teachers leaving the profession.

Teacher burnout correlated with principal leadership (Tickle, Change, & Kim, 2011; Newberry & Allsop, 2017). Teachers who reported being prepared to manage behavior

challenges and were acknowledged and trusted by their principals all showed lower levels of teacher burnout (Lambersky, 2016; O'Brennan Pas, & Bradshaw, 2017; Van Maele &Van Houtte, 2015). Not only did principal leadership prevent and relieve burnout, but so did teacher relationships with colleagues (Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Richards, Hemphill, & Templin, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2015, Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015) and students impacted burnout levels (Benita, Butler, & Shibaz, 2018). In addition to relationships, working conditions also correlated with teacher burnout (Richards, Hemphill, & Templin, 2018).

Over 70% of burnout variance was related to school working conditions (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). The sense of community perceived in a school was one part of working conditions that impacted teacher burnout levels (Richards et al., 2018). In addition to a sense of community, school contextual factors, resources, physical isolation, salary, accountability, and workload all related to teacher burnout. Understanding how teacher burnout manifests helps educational leaders prevent teachers from leaving the profession.

Scope of Research

The research used for this study focused on the causes of teacher burnout. Specifically, how relationships, working conditions, self-efficacy, and years of experience impacted teacher burnout. The majority of the research for the capstone was related to high school teachers. Teachers were the main people researched in the studies found. Additional studies included data on paraprofessionals and students, student teachers, teachers that left the profession before retirement, and teachers that were retired. The teachers studied taught a wide variety of subjects. The research was conducted all over the world: the United States, Turkey, Israel, Canada, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, and Finland.

The research represented qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies, which gave researchers valuable data. Most quantitative data was gathered through surveys, while interviews were the method used most to gain qualitative data. The selection of research highlighted the universal themes of burnout causation from relationships, working conditions, self-efficacy and motivation, and years of teaching experience.

Importance of the Study

Increased class sizes, a decrease in pay, unstable government policy around education, and increased pressure for students to perform were all examples of how much the world of education changed and caused stress to teachers (Podolsky et al., 2016). Without teachers acknowledging or reversing their burnout, they may not be as effective teachers. A study by Kunter and Holzberger (2014) suggested that teachers who enjoyed and genuinely valued their job were more productive and had highly-motivated students. Not only did preventing and alleviating teacher burnout improve student learning, but it improved a teacher's overall well-being.

With the stresses of teaching impacting teachers, building leaders have the responsibility to be mindful and purposeful of the type of leadership style they are utilizing within their building. Teacher attrition occurs if teachers do not feel valued, and heard, or are overworked. The research used in this capstone informs educational leaders of the antecedents and causations of teacher burnout, and what they can do to best support their staff.

Research Questions

Research related to the consequence of teacher burnout addresses the questions: How do relationships impact teacher burnout? What working conditions affect teacher burnout? How does teacher burnout manifest in new teachers and veteran teachers?

Connection to Grand Tour Question

The purpose of the research questions is to answer the essential questions presented by the program: In light of what is known about how children learn and educational policy and practice, how shall educators' best lead in educational settings today in order to impact student learning? The correlation between leadership style and teacher burnout cannot be ignored. Leadership can affect a teacher's mental health and lead to teacher burnout. Leaders must be purposeful in the way they lead to ensure teacher and student success.

Definition of Terms

Burnout is a psychological state related to prolonged workplace stress. Three interrelated stages accounted for characteristics of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). The MBI-ES was created to identify symptoms of burnout in teachers (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab 1986).

Emotional exhaustion (EE) is the first symptom of teacher burnout. Emotional exhaustion is due to workplace fatigue (Maslach et al., 1996). Teachers who report decreased trust in their principal show increased levels of emotional exhaustion (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015).

Depersonalization (DE) is the second characteristic that develops if burnout progresses. Depersonalization is assessed utilizing the MBI-ES and identified when a person becomes distant or indifferent towards their work (Maslach et al., 1996). Depersonalization within the teaching profession has been linked to increased negative student behavior (Benita et al., 2018).

Personal accomplishment (PA) is reduced in the third stage of burnout. Reduced personal accomplishment is characterized when a person experiencing burnout reported feelings of inadequacy regarding their performance at work (Maslach et al., 1996). When teachers showed a

reduction in personal accomplishment, they felt less prepared to meet all the responsibilities within their job (Hultell, Melin, & Gustavsson, 2013).

Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Survey (MBI-ES) is a landmark Likert-type survey. The MBI-ES measures characteristics of burnout in educators. The 22-item survey measures educator's levels of depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and personal accomplishment with teachers rating each item on a zero to six scale (Maslach et al., 1986).

Summary

Understanding the causes of teacher burnout is essential to retaining and developing effective teachers. The research selected shows teacher burnout was not only a problem in the United States but in other countries as well. The research explains the connections between characteristics of burnout despite location.

Chapter Two discusses the characteristics of burnout. The characteristics include: 1) relationships, 2) working conditions, 3) teacher self-efficacy, and 4) years of experience. The literature review addresses symptoms of high and low burnout and highlights examples that educational leaders can look for within their staff. Chapter Two informs leaders of the importance of this topic to prevent teachers from developing burnout.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The literature review addresses the factors that cause teacher burnout. The research for the literature review finds that there is not just one cause for burnout in teachers. Relationships, working conditions, teacher's self-efficacy, and years of experience all play a part in the causes of teacher burnout. The first section introduces the importance of relationships in causing or preventing burnout in teachers.

Relationships

Relationships influenced teacher burnout levels. The relationships discussed include teacher relationships with principals, coworkers, students, and their parents. Relationships or the lack thereof with administrators and other teachers led a teacher to leave the profession (Newberry & Allsop, 2017). Students caused teachers stress, which led to depersonalization (Benita et al., 2018).

Principals. Teachers reported that principals influenced their emotions (Lambersky, 2016). The support given to teachers by their principal was a critical determiner of burnout in teachers. Effective leadership diminished teacher burnout, while ineffective leadership caused teacher burnout (Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Tickle et al., 2011; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015).

Low burnout. Many characteristics had the potential to lead to decreased burnout amongst teachers. The three critical attributes of a principal that led to reduced burnout amongst teachers were engagement, trust, and support (Lambersky, 2016; Richards et al., 2018; Tickle et al., 2011; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015). When principals showed engagement with their teachers, it was found to decrease teacher burnout (Lambersky, 2016; Richards et al., 2018).

Lambersky (2016) conducted a qualitative research study on principal behavior and teacher emotion in Ontario, Canada. The researcher wanted to understand how principals impacted teacher emotions and the consequences of those emotions. Twenty teachers from sixteen different schools participated in the study. Thirteen teachers were women, while seven were males. The participants in Ontario represented a wide variety of years of experience, disciplines, and socioeconomic status conditions, and sizes of schools.

The teachers participated in a forty-five to sixty-minute, semi-structured interview, which started with basic questions that were used to start the conversation. The questions included

teachers experiences with principals and teacher emotions related to those experiences, both positive and negative. The interviews were transcribed and then coded into the categories: job satisfaction and morale; stress, anxiety, burnout; self and collective efficacy; organizational commitment and engagement (Lambersky, 2016).

The findings of Lambersky's (2016) work confirmed that principal leadership did impact a teacher's emotions. Lambersky wrote, "This study argues that, unless teacher emotion has a central place in understanding school operation improvement, and change, any proposed initiative might suffer. This study places teacher emotions at the heart of school leadership" (2016, p. 400). The research concluded that teachers wanted their principals engaged. Even though the study was conducted in Canada, similar findings arose in the Midwest of the United States (Richards et al., 2018).

Richards et al. found that teachers had a low level of burnout when principals were engaged and attentive to their teachers (2018). Informal walkthroughs were one example of principal engagement identified by teachers. The second way principals showed engagement was through having frameworks in place to promote collaboration amongst staff (2016). Lambersky also found that when teachers received small informal acknowledgments from their principal, it reduced the likelihood of burnout (2016).

The second characteristic that led to decreased levels of burnout was through having trusting relationships (Richards et al., 2018; Tickle et al., 2011; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015). Teachers valuing trust from their principal not only was found across the United States but in Belgium as well (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015). Van Maele & Van Houtte found that reduced emotional exhaustion attributed to the amount of trust they had in their principal (2015). This

relation was more pronounced than reduced emotional exhaustion from relationships with staff or students (2015).

The third characteristic found to prevent or alleviate teacher burnout was perceived as principal support (Benita et al., 2018; Lambersky, 2016; Tickle et al., 2011; Uzum, 2018). Principals showed support by helping teachers with discipline issues, assisting teachers with various teaching practices, and helping new teachers settle into a new school environment. Ongoing principal support had shown to prevent teacher burnout over time. Tickle et al. (2011) found that burnout prevention happened when trust occurred between teachers and their principal. Tickle et al. (2011) also found that supportive administrators were a significant predictor of their teacher's job satisfaction and intent to stay in the teaching profession. Also, principal support prevented teachers from showing depersonalization from the beginning of the school year through the end of the school year (Benita et al., 2018). Staff members who participated in the research reported feeling more willing to find their role in the school and help out when their principal supported them (Uzum, 2018).

High burnout. In opposition to low burnout, teachers also experienced high levels of burnout due to their principal. A principal could have thought that using test scores could create motivation for teachers to work harder. Consequently, the competition created burnout. Two studies showed that when leaders generated competition between teachers, the level of burnout amongst teachers increased (Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Richards et al., 2018).

Teachers that did not teach core subjects such as art, music, and physical education showed high burnout levels and felt marginalized (Richards et al., 2018). The teachers believed they were not given as much attention because state test scores did not involve their subjects.

They also felt their subject was the first to be impacted by budget cuts (Newberry & Allsop, 2017).

 Colleagues. Colleagues had an impact on the level of burnout teachers experienced (Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Richards et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015). When teacher relationships were positive (Richards et al., 2018), and teachers trusted each other (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015), teacher burnout was prevented. Richards et al. found that teachers had perceived low levels of burnout due to their colleagues offering professional development help and social opportunities (2018).

 Teachers reported high burnout when they did not have similar philosophies and teaching styles as their colleagues (Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Richards et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Newberry and Allsop (2017) found that teachers had a difficult time creating relationships with peers if they were not similar in age, teaching background, and years of experience. Richards et al. (2018) found that when teachers did not have the same view on subjects and worked closely together, burnout levels increased. Lastly, decreased autonomy occurred when teachers felt as though their professional opinion was not of value to their colleagues (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). When relationships broke down and trust dissolved between staff, depersonalization occurred (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015).

 Students, student behaviors, and parents. Working with students was a reason why teachers chose to stay in the teaching profession (Richards et al., 2018). Regardless of the level of burnout, teachers found value and satisfaction from student connections (O'Brennan et al., 2017; Richards et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015). The research found that even though students were an essential part of keeping a teacher in the

profession, student behavior also had a connection with teacher burnout (Benita et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Student behaviors. In the classroom, teacher burnout was caused by student behaviors. Research by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) uncovered that teachers found their identity in the perceived motivation students exhibited. When students did not show effort and motivation, teachers were found to develop burnout symptoms. Likewise, when students were disruptive, it caused strain and stress on teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Benita et al. (2018) found that when students were disruptive and uncooperative, teachers were more likely to develop depersonalization. Also, Benita et al. (2018) found that students perceived depersonalization through the lack of teacher enthusiasm.

In the school building, teachers that had worked in schools with higher suspension rates were found to have higher levels of burnout symptoms (O'Brennan et al., 2017). Teachers perceptions of administrative support related to student behavior impacted the teachers level of job satisfaction and intent to stay in the teaching profession (Tickle et al., 2011). Teachers who worked in buildings where principals kept order prevented emotional turmoil for teachers (Lambersky, 2016).

Parents. Lack of support from parents caused teachers to show symptoms of high burnout (Richards et al., 2018). Teachers reported feeling frustrated when they spent a great deal of energy on a student, yet the teacher found little support from home. The teachers with high burnout explained they believed that families were apathetic to teachers. The findings reinforced that when parents did not support teachers, it created a stressful work environment for teachers, which led to burnout symptoms (Richards et al., 2018).

Parent and student support was a protective factor for teacher burnout. A study conducted by Hughes (2012) researched the school characteristics, teacher characteristics, and organizational characteristics of teacher efficacy and retention. The study surveyed 782 teachers in Arkansas. Research showed that teachers who were satisfied with the level of student and parent participation and cooperation were 1.6 times more likely to remain in teaching (Hughes, 2012, p. 254). Encouraging parent support and collaboration was shown to prevent burnout symptoms in teachers.

Working Conditions

The literature reviewed in this section examined the impact of working conditions on teacher burnout. Skaalvik and Skaalvik found that over 70% of teacher burnout attributed to working conditions (2017). The working conditions discussed in the literature review were: sense of community, school contextual variables, resources, physical isolation, salary, accountability and educational policy, and workload.

Sense of community. The most discussed contextual factor related to teacher burnout and attrition in the research was associated with the sense of community a school showed. Richards et al. (2018) researched teachers' perceptions of their working environment and how those perceptions influenced their level of burnout with the role socialization theory. The qualitative study utilized a sequential explanatory design with 28 teachers from across the Midwest in the United States. Of those 28, 11 were males and 17 were females. The participants selected were from a group of 415 teachers who took the MBI-ES. Teachers selected had a high level of burnout or a low level of burnout. The years of experience ranged from one to 39 years. Teachers also taught elementary, middle, and at the secondary level in both urban and rural schools across the Midwest.

Teachers interviewed on their perceived level of stress and burnout and how well they thought they coped with their stress and burnout. The interview format was semi-structured. Researchers analyzed interview data through a standard qualitative method grounded in the inductive analysis. Researchers found three first-order themes from the data (Richards et al., 2018). The first order themes included: low burnout teachers perceived nurturing environments, high burnout teachers perceived combative and constraining environments, and all teachers had to manage workplace stress (Richards et al., 2018).

Richards et al. noticed there was a disproportionate number of teachers experiencing burnout from one school district (2018, p. 774). Teachers from that district also experienced a lack of community within the school. Those teachers cited principals and coworkers who were hostile and divisive (Richards et al., 2018, p.777). Also, disagreements between colleagues, competitiveness between teachers, and combative and constraining conditions attributed to teachers high burnout levels (Richards et al., 2018).

In contrast, a positive sense of community alleviated or even prevented teacher burnout (Benita et al., 2018; O'Brennan et al., 2017; Richards et al., 2018). Research supported that when teachers worked in a positive school community, depersonalization was prevented (Benita et al., 2018). Therefore low burnout teachers connected with their school at a high level (O'Brennan et al., 2017). Once teachers knew their identity within a school, they were willing to do more to help their school community thrive (Uzum, 2018).

School contextual variables. School contextual variables impacted the levels of teacher burnout. Some may assume that teachers are more likely to leave a school with lower socioeconomic status (SES), but research by Geiger and Pivovarova (2018) disproved this. Researchers Geiger and Pivovarova collected quantitative teacher retention data and qualitative

working condition surveys over three years (2018). The researchers wanted to know how working conditions related to teacher attrition patterns. Specifically, they wanted to know what working conditions teachers cared about most and how important they were to teachers (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018, p. 605).

The researchers found that teachers were more likely to stay for all three years in a low SES or high poverty school and high native enrollment compared to the low poverty schools and low native enrollment (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018, p. 613). These findings suggested that teachers who taught in high poverty schools built relationships with their students, which prevented their burnout symptoms (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). Additional research by Hughes (2012) and O'Brennan et al. (2017) also supported Geiger and Pivivarova's findings.

Research by Hughes (2012) in Arkansas and O'Brennan et al. (2017) in Maryland also found that teachers were less likely to leave a low SES school. Both uncovered that SES did not motivate teachers to leave the school they were teaching. In addition, O'Brennan et al. found that student-teacher ratio, urbanicity, and free and reduced lunch rates were not significantly related to teacher burnout (2017, p. 171).

Resources. Teachers experienced pressure to provide resources for their students on a dwindling budget. Often teachers used their own money to purchase supplies for their students. A study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics found that 94% of teachers paid for essential classroom school supplies with their own money (2018). The research uncovered the relationship between providing supplies for a classroom and burnout levels (Newberry & Allsop, 2017). Newberry and Allsop (2017) found that teachers experienced stress for having to pay for supplies with their own money.

However, in Hughes' work, it was found that teachers ratings of school facilities and resources were unrelated to teacher retention (2012). Therefore stress could be present, but be not enough of a reason to leave a school or the profession. Both lack of resources and school facilities contributed to teacher burnout (Hughes, 2012; Newberry & Allsop, 2017).

Physical isolation. Researchers found that teachers reported feelings of physically isolation from others (Newberry & Allsop, 2017). The teachers in Newberry and Allsop's (2017) research reported feelings of isolation due to having to meet the demands of the job and students. Even if teachers were not that far away from other classrooms, the lack of interactions with other teachers throughout the day made them feel more physically isolated. Teachers who reported physical isolation made fewer connections with colleagues. Physical isolation caused stress and decreased the sense of community. Physically isolated teachers reported a perceived lack of professional respect from their colleagues and principal (Newberry & Allsop, 2017).

Salary. Podolsky et al. (2016) found that 67% of teachers who left the profession would come back to teaching if they received an increase in salary. Also, Tickle et al. found that teachers who had increased pay showed more support for their administrators, were more satisfied with their teaching position, and intended to stay in the profession (2011, p. 347). The researchers concluded that their findings indicated a vital connection between teacher pay and teacher retention. Hughes (2012) also found that teachers who were satisfied with their pay were found to be more likely to teach until retirement.

Accountability and education policy. The teachers that Richard et al. (2018) researched had high levels of stress over the state level accountability measures. Richards et al. (2018) found that high burnout teachers in the Midwest had increased stress when being evaluated. Their stress was due to feeling like they had no control. That stress led to feelings of decreased

trust for competence in their abilities to do their job. Teachers also looked to retiring early to prevent having to partake in the new accountability measures (Richards et al., 2018). A different study by Newberry and Allsop (2017) researched Utah teachers. The data supported that high burnout level teachers believed there were too many observations conducted (Newberry & Allsop, 2017).

Concerning attrition and retention, a study conducted by Grissom and Bartanen (2019) researched principals in Tennessee. The researchers investigated strategic retention strategies by the principals in Tennessee. The researchers wanted to know how teacher turnover related to principal performance. The state of Tennessee utilized a statewide evaluator system, and teachers were probationary up until their sixth year of teaching. Principals could remove a teacher without cause within their first five years. The researchers analyzed longitudinal administrative data over five years (2011-2012 through 2016-2017 school years). Researchers found, on average, that more effective principals experienced lower teacher turnover (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019, p. 532). High performing teachers measured both by student test scores and observation scores were more likely to stay in a school where there was an effective principal (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019, p. 547). Also, less effective teachers were more likely to leave a school where an effective principal was in place (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019, p. 535). The findings concluded that principals relied more heavily on teacher observations than on test scores to assess a teacher's ability (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019, p. 547).

Workload. Teachers reported feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work they do (Newberry & Allsop, 2017). Paperwork, grading assignments and tests, lesson planning, lack of time, and the number of students were reasons why teachers reported feeling overwhelmed. Teachers reported they received little recognition from their principal (Newberry & Allsop,

2017) for all they do, which in turn caused strain and stress on the job (Skaalvik & Skaalvik,

2015). Principals prevented burnout by acknowledging the amount of work teachers did

(Lambersky, 2016).

This section explained that burnout and consequently, attrition, is not caused by just one

issue. There can be a variety of factors within a teacher's working environment that leads

teachers to feel burned out and want to leave the profession. The next section discusses teacher

self-efficacy and the impact on teacher burnout.

Professionalism. Lack of professional respect for teachers was found to be a reason why

teachers experience burnout symptoms or leave the profession. Teachers experience a lack of

respect from students, parents, building leaders, and even at the state government level (Richards

et al., 2018). A study conducted by Glazer (2018) researched the reasons why invested teachers

left the profession.

Invested leavers was a term coined to identify teachers who had been in the profession

for at least three years, obtained a master's degree or was fully credentialed and certified, and

had chosen to leave the profession (Glazer, 2018, p. 64). Twenty-five teachers from three

different regions of the United States were recruited through word of mouth or postings on

professional message boards. Semi-structured interviews took place to gain information on why

these invested leavers went into teaching, their experiences as a teacher, and why they left. All of

the data analyzed was through the lens of resistance, which was related to not wanting to do what

was asked because it was something that was in opposition to what the teacher thought was right

as a professional (Glazer, 2018).

The data showed that all participants had high self-efficacy for the teaching profession

and believed they were high-performing teachers (Glazer, 2018, p. 65). Three themes emerged as

reasons to leave the teaching profession: imposed curricula, testing and accountability policies, and job insecurity (Glazer, 2018, p. 65). Throughout the three themes, invested leavers were frustrated with the lack of power they had over the art of teaching and the policies that were implemented by their principals. Teachers wanted to be trusted as professionals to make the best decisions for their students (Glazer, 2018).

When teachers did not find value in a policy, it created strain and a lack of autonomy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Also, when teachers did not have the opportunity to be trusted as professionals, they showed reduced investment in the profession (Newberry & Allsop, 2017), and eventually left the profession (Glazer, 2018). Glazer's (2018) research showed that not all teachers leave the profession due to lack of ability, but due to a reduced sense of professionalism shown towards teachers.

Teacher Self-Efficacy and Motivation

Another theme found in the research was teacher motivation and self-efficacy. Teachers had high expectations to reach all students, keep up with grading and paperwork, and meet all of the other demands of the job. When teachers reported being prepared to do their job, they experienced fewer burnout symptoms (O'Brennan et al., 2017) than those who did not feel confident in their abilities (Hutell et al., 2013). In addition, teachers who had lower levels of motivation experienced depersonalization and increased student behaviors (Benita et al., 2018). Depersonalization at the beginning of a school year predicted teacher's and student's reports of disruptive behavior at the end of the year (Benita et al., 2018, p. 8).

Years of Experience

Teachers with differing amounts of teaching experience showed burnout symptoms in similar and different ways (Tickle et al., 2011). The research gave insight into what caused

burnout for new and veteran teachers. Research also addressed and how teachers managed their burnout symptoms.

Beginning teachers. A study conducted by Ingersoll, Merril, Stuckey, and Collings (2018) found that 44% of new teachers left within the first five years of their teaching career. Two studies incidentally found that teachers may go into teaching because of the positive experience they had with a teacher when they were a student (Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Richards et al., 2018). Once teachers began their career, they were surprised as to the amount of work that went into their job and the high expectations they had.

Landmark researchers Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) wanted to understand what made teachers satisfied with their teaching job, what made them "stressed out," and what strategies they used to relieve their stress. The researchers gathered data from 30 elementary and middle school teachers and four retired teachers, all who worked in one part of Norway. Teachers selected were from randomly selected schools, and their years of experience organized into three categories: young teacher (27-34 years old), middle-aged teacher (35-50 years old), and senior teacher (51-63 years old). Semi-structured interviews lasted sixty to ninety minutes were conducted to gather data from the teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015).

Researchers found that all teachers experienced stress. The stressor themes that arose included: a) workload and time pressure, b) adapting teaching, c) behavior, d) value conflicts, e) teamwork, and f) lack of status (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015, p. 184). To relieve these stressors, researchers broke down coping styles by age group, as each group coped differently. Young teachers were found to deal with their stress through working hard at their job to meet the demands. Teachers used few sick days, worked longer hours, and on weekends and holidays to accomplish tasks. In the end, young teachers admitted that their strategy did not work to relieve

the emotional exhaustion they felt (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015, p. 187). Even though the research

was conducted in Norway, similar findings were found in other countries, which included the

United States and Sweden (Hutell et al., 2015; Tickle et al., 2011).

In Sweden, Hultell et al. (2015) found that new teachers started their careers with low

levels of burnout, energy, and enthusiasm. By the time they reached their third year of teaching,

their burnout levels had risen (Hultell et al., 2015). In the United States, teachers that were less

experienced positively viewed their principal's support, but their job satisfaction decreased over

three years (Tickle et al., 2011).

Veteran teachers. Researchers found that middle-aged teachers and senior teachers still

had high achieving goals for their classroom, but the teachers took more sick days as a protective

factor against burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015, p. 187). They thought that taking time away

from the job would help them become motivated again. Taking sick leave to relieve burnout

symptoms was not a long-term solution. This group also had increased motivation to leave the

teaching profession for another career and reduced their workload to help their burnout levels

(Skaalvik &Skaalvik, 2015).

Van Maele and Van Houtte (2015) found in their research that the longer a teacher had

taught, the higher burnout level they had. The findings reinforced Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015),

who uncovered the ongoing stress and heavy workload teachers felt year to year. Skaalvik and

Skaalvik (2017) found that building leaders could be expected to retain teachers that had been

teaching in a building for more than ten years, even if they reported less joy or a sense of

investment in the profession. Teacher burnout was a problem for not only new teachers but for

veteran teachers as well.

New teachers did not just experience teacher burnout. Veteran teachers experienced burnout symptoms, and at higher levels than new teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Less experienced teachers may leave the profession because they had less invested than veteran teachers. Veteran teachers developed burnout but continued to teach despite having those feelings (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

In conclusion, Chapter Two addressed research that found the causes of teacher burnout. Relationships with principals, colleagues, and students and their parents were found to be an essential part of teacher burnout. Also, working conditions proved to be a significant contributor to burnout or the prevention of burnout in teachers. Years of experience did prove to contribute to teacher burnout. Chapter Three reviews the findings in the causes of teacher burnout.

Chapter Three: Summary

Chapter Two discusses the literature on teacher burnout to understand its causes and how it can affect teacher attrition. Chapter Three reviews the problem identified in Chapter One, the importance of teacher burnout, and the main points discussed in the literature review. Next, a summary of Chapter Two is discussed.

Review of the Identified Problem

Podolsky et al. (2016) found that every year in the United States, 8% of teachers leave the teaching profession. The research showed that some teachers leave because of their place of employment. The three most significant reasons for teachers choosing to leave the profession included family and personal reasons, compensation, and working conditions (Podolsky et al., 2016).

Educational leaders can analyze their teacher's working conditions to determine if their school is a place where teachers want to work. When a teacher perceives their working

conditions as inadequate, they can develop burnout (Richards et al., 2018). Failing to acknowledge that a workplace has poor working conditions can be detrimental to workplace morale and can lead to teacher burnout.

Importance of the Topic

The teaching profession has evolved, and teachers are more stressed (Podolsky et al., 2016). Educational leaders need to be able to support their staffs as much as they can. Educational leaders should be informed about the causes of teacher burnout to prevent it or help relieve it when their teachers show signs. When teachers feel supported by their principal, they are more likely to be involved (Lambersky, 2016) and teach more motivated students (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Summary of the Main Points of the Literature Review

The literature review in Chapter Two explored the causes of teacher burnout. Relationships, working conditions, teacher self- efficacy, and years of experience had connections to burnout. The studies were both qualitative and quantitative and included mixed-method designed research. Research in Chapter Two was conducted all over the world, but also made connections that applied with teachers in the United States. Newberry and Allsop (2017) found in their research that it was not relationships with students that led to teachers leaving the profession, but a lack of relationships with principals and colleagues.

The literature review discussed the differences between principal characteristics that caused high and low burnout in teachers. The three fundamental characteristics principals that were found to prevent burnout in teachers were engagement, trust, and support. Consequently, when a principal did not show those characteristics, it caused burnout (Lambersky, 2016; Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Richards et al., 2018; Tickle et al., 2011). Also, burnout occurred

when principals created competition between teachers (Richards et al., 2018). Lastly, teachers

that did not teach core subjects had higher burnout levels because they perceived their principal

gave more attention to teachers that were tied to test scores (Richards et al., 2018)

Relationships with colleagues were another critical determiner of creating or preventing

teacher burnout. When teachers developed positive relationships with their peers, they were less

likely to develop burnout symptoms (Richards et al., 2018; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015). On

the other hand, when colleagues were unable to find common ground (Newberry & Allsop, 2017;

Richards et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017) and had to sacrifice their teaching style,

burnout symptoms developed (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015).

The relationships that teachers had with their students were essential to teachers staying

in the teaching profession. Teachers reported developing personal connections with students

(O'Brennan et al., 2017; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015). Students were also reported to be a

reason why teachers chose to stay in the profession (Richards et al., 2018). Parents also were

reported to be a cause of burnout if teachers perceived a lack of support (Richards et al., 2018).

Working conditions had a strong correlation with creating or relieving burnout symptoms

in teachers. The working conditions that were reviewed included: 1) sense of community, 2)

school contextual variables, 3) resources, 4) physical isolation, 5) salary, 6) accountability and

educational policy, 7) workload, and 8) professionalism. Teachers that reported a positive sense

of community showed low burnout symptoms (Benita et al., 2018; O'Brennan et al., 2017;

Richards et al., 2018). School demographics did not have a strong correlation with teacher

attrition (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). Teachers paying out of pocket for supplies for their

students, and physical isolation in their building were characteristics that attributed to burnout in

teachers (Newberry & Allsop, 2017).

Teacher pay and accountability also correlated with teacher burnout symptoms. The research found that teachers reported feeling overwhelmed with all of their job expectations (Newberry & Allsop, 2017). Teacher accountability through observations was another form of stress for teachers. Teachers who were satisfied with their pay were more willing to teach to retirement (Hughes, 2012).

Teacher self-efficacy also linked to teacher burnout. When teachers reported confidence in their abilities, they were found to experience lower burnout symptoms (O'Brennan et al., 2017). Consequently, when teachers showed burnout signs, students were more disruptive (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Research showed that teachers who left the profession were found to leave not because of their ability, but because they were not able to teach how they wanted to teach (Glazer, 2018).

Teacher burnout and attrition happened with new teachers and veteran teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Beginning teachers were found to work hard and take less time to mitigate their stress. As teachers continued in their careers, they were found to take more time to reduce burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Teachers were also found to have higher levels of burnout as their career continued, but burnout continued to increase despite being fulfilled (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015).

The research in the capstone found that teacher burnout was prevalent in every school, and is complicated to pinpoint a cause. Relationships, working conditions, self-efficacy, and years of experience were found to play a role in creating burnout. Chapter Four uses insight from the research to aid teachers and educational leaders to become informed of the causes of teacher burnout, and how it can be prevented and relieved.

Chapter Four: Discussion and Application

Chapter Three emphasizes the importance and relevance of understanding the connection between teacher burnout and attrition. Additionally, it summarizes the literature on the causes of teacher burnout. Chapter Four gives insights gained from the research, applications for leaders and teachers to use in their profession, and recommendations for future research.

Insights Gained from Research

The first insight gained from research is that there is not a simple explanation for teacher burnout and attrition. The research shows that many factors can lead teachers to developing burnout symptoms. Also, teachers can have burnout symptoms but not leave the profession. The research finds many themes that attribute to burnout, but not all teachers experience similar working relationships or experiences. Therefore, solving teacher burnout and attrition can be difficult to do.

The second insight gained from research is the importance of healthy workplace relationships and their ability to mitigate burnout in teachers. The literature review acknowledges the importance of healthy workplace relationships and the detriment to workplace morale. If not present, effective principal leadership strategies and positive relationships with colleagues can mitigate burnout in teachers (Richards et al., 2018).

The third insight gained from research is that teacher working conditions correlate with burnout levels (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). The literature review finds burnout symptoms correlate with the sense of community, contextual factors, resources available, physical isolation, salary, accountability and education policy, workload, and professionalism (Hughes, 2012; O'Brennan et al., 2017; Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Richards et al., 2018). The working

conditions discussed cover a wide variety of factors that affect teachers in different ways, which make the solution to burnout and attrition challenging to navigate.

Application

The first example of the application of research is educational leaders understanding the importance of developing a leadership style conducive to collaboration with staff. Allowing for professional input from staff, giving teachers responsibility and trusting them professionally, and avoiding competition between staff are ways leaders can be effective to teachers. Additionally, allowing teachers to know the vision a principal has can help prepare teachers for what their responsibilities may be. Having open communication and collaboration between principals and staff can create trust and a sense of community that could prevent teacher burnout (Lambersky, 2016; Richards et al., 2018).

The second example of the application of research is implementing mentor programs. Mentors are veteran teachers who help new teachers get acclimated to a new teaching position. The research shows that mentors mitigate burnout in teachers (Hultell et al., 2013). The relationships created between colleagues within a mentorship program can be powerful for teachers. Teachers in high poverty schools identify mentoring as a reason to stay in their teaching position (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). This research shows leaders that mentorship is a program that builds relationships with colleagues and prevents burnout and attrition.

The third example of the application of research is having adequate working conditions for teachers. Educational leaders need to have an understanding of their staff's working conditions. The research shows that not only are relationships meaningful, but working conditions can increase burnout. Some schools are unable to provide the same resources as other schools, but leaders should provide the best working conditions. One way to improve working

conditions is for principals to check in with staff in their classrooms. This small gesture was found to grow teacher appreciation for their principal (Richards et al., 2018). Leaders acknowledging heavy workloads or relieving teachers from doing unnecessary work can prevent burnout in teachers. Educational leaders can directly utilize this research in the way they lead in their building (Lambersky, 2016).

Recommendations for Future Research

The literature from Chapter Two offers insights into characteristics that can cause burnout in teachers, but certain areas can benefit from further research. The first recommendation for future research is related to principal leadership style and teacher burnout levels. Researchers could compare two or more leadership styles and how behaviors impact burnout symptoms. Research conducted could follow leadership styles with teacher burnout levels and give researchers better information on the most effective leadership styles.

The second recommendation for future research is long-term research on teacher burnout levels throughout careers. Questions for the research study can include how burnout symptoms develop over time between different teachers in the same or different environment. Checking burnout levels multiple times throughout the year can also help researchers understand if there is a connection between the time of year and teacher burnout.

The third recommendation for future research is to study teachers who have high burnout levels. Researchers can interview candidates with burnout symptoms that are interfering with jobs but are able to relieve symptoms. Gaining a better understanding of how burnout symptoms can be relieved can give researchers more information about how to help teachers who are experiencing teacher burnout. Being able to identify ways to relieve teacher burnout can keep teachers in the profession longer and prevent them from leaving altogether.

In conclusion, the results of research thus far inform educational leaders and teachers about the causes and consequences of teacher burnout. Understanding that teacher burnout is specific to each teacher, burnout is a sophisticated threat to the teaching profession. Educational leaders have an opportunity to utilize research to better their schools. Effective leadership practices and creating appropriate working conditions for their staff within their schools can mitigate burnout in teachers. In doing so, effective leaders can be proactive in retaining effective teachers who can make a positive impact on their students.

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