

Mindfulness and Teacher Stress, Burnout, and Depression among K-12 Teachers

Macy Alexandra Woods

A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2024

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

Brianne Friberg, Ph.D
Thesis Chair

Carrie Wilmouth, Ph.D
Committee Member

Marilyn Peyton, Ph.D
Honors Assistant Director

Date

Abstract

Across school districts, teachers face high stress levels, inhibiting their ability to engage effectively with and teach students. Teachers can learn and utilize effective strategies to offset the difficulties of the profession. School districts often encourage and provide stress-reduction training for teachers; a new stress-reduction technique is known as mindfulness. Mindfulness is a cognitive skill that encourages internal and external awareness of emotions, feelings, and surroundings; it presents to be a beneficial strategy for increasing well-being in many professions. The present study, conducted among K-12 teachers in East Tennessee, will investigate the relationship between teacher mindfulness and each factor of stress, burnout, and depression. Participants will complete a series of online surveys to measure these components; the correlations drawn from these data will be utilized to examine the relationships between teacher mindfulness and each measure of stress, burnout, and depression. From these findings, school districts can better understand how to serve and support teachers, benefitting both educators and students.

Mindfulness and Teacher Stress, Burnout, and Depression among K-12 Teachers

Across the globe, teachers of all levels are facing challenging circumstances. The profession alone requires extensive time, effort, and energy, even before consideration of behavioral issues, paperwork, and personal lives. The teaching profession reaches a variety of students, differing in age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background. Not only do teachers educate future generations about cells and the quadratic formula, but they also help students develop socially and emotionally (Flook et al., 2013). The teaching profession ranks as one of the highest in occupational stress. Today, teachers report high stress, anxiety, burnout, and depression rates. In fact, some polls indicate that 46% of teachers suffer from high daily stress (DiCarlo et al., 2020). The negative implications of job distress often result in lower job performance and satisfaction. When teachers are not adequately supported mentally, emotionally, and physically, education professionals cannot efficiently perform their tasks, inhibiting the growth of teachers, administrators, and students.

Teachers and administrators need practical techniques to improve stress, burnout, and depression. One theory of recent research is the practice of mindfulness. Mindfulness is the process and set of strategies that encourage internal and external awareness of one's feelings, emotions, and surroundings (Sharma & Kumra, 2022). These techniques incorporate yoga, breath awareness, and meditation into daily life and have been shown as effective strategies in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression; these techniques also increase well-being and empathy (Sharp & Jennings, 2015). Short-term effects of mindfulness interventions show decreases in depersonalization and exhaustion, and increases in well-being, self-compassion, and emotional regulation competencies (de Carvalho et al., 2021). Many mindfulness training programs teach

mindfulness practices, and although one specific method has not been deemed the most successful, each program has unique benefits (Neumann & Tillott, 2022).

Mindfulness Theory

Mindfulness, a concept rooted in Buddhist psychology, Greek philosophy, and Western European thought, centers on the awareness and attention aspects of consciousness. As Brown and his colleagues (2007) noted, awareness includes mind activities, kinesthetic senses, and physical senses to recognize and recount surrounding stimuli. When presented with different circumstances, the brain has certain perceptual reactions. These reactions are discriminative; they are viewed as good, bad, or neutral, conditioned by previous experience, and easily grouped with existing cognitive schemas. Perceptual reactions can be beneficial and efficient, but they also oftentimes result in misshaped and fragmented images of reality. Mindfulness, on the other hand, breaks this habitual way of thinking and promotes processing that is open, present, and aware. Mindfulness is attention and awareness to present experiences and events. The more specific characteristics of mindfulness promote cognizance of thoughts and ways of processing. First, mindfulness promotes clarity of awareness as it relates to inner and outer thoughts, emotions, and surroundings. Not only is mindfulness clear awareness but nondiscriminatory awareness as well. Mindfulness promotes awareness and disengagement of existing prejudices and biases. In addition, mindfulness nurtures flexibility of thought; this is the ability to switch perspectives in situations and regulate attention and awareness. The mindful mode also encourages an empirical, fact-driven stance before the judgment of a situation; it engages the mind in awareness and immersion of experience. In addition to awareness, a key component of mindfulness is being present. The mind tends to wonder about the past or future, but this process highlights the importance of the present for full functioning. Last, it is characteristic of humans to engage in

mindful thinking; the key to mindfulness theory, however, is the promotion of the continuation and stability of awareness and attention across time and situations (Brown et al., 2007).

Mindfulness practices can yield many benefits for those who utilize its techniques. First, mindfulness improves mental health and psychological well-being. As seen throughout many studies, mindfulness training correlates with lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, and higher levels of positive affect, life satisfaction, and self-actualization (Braun et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2007; Franco et al., 2010). Second, mindfulness correlates with physical health benefits as well. Some research shows improved medical conditions and immune system functioning for those who received mindfulness therapy. Next, mindfulness training is shown to play an important role in behavioral regulation. Behavioral regulation applies to self-control, task completion, and responses to situations. Last, the mindful mode is shown to promote better-connected relationships through attentiveness and awareness of the other person. The nature of mindfulness allows for and enhances these benefits for a variety of reasons; these include insight into one's thoughts and feelings, exposure to challenging experiences, nonattachment, enhanced mind-body interaction, and unified functioning (Brown et al., 2007).

Regarding teachers, mindfulness techniques have also demonstrated success in reducing teacher stress, depression, and anxiety, and improving well-being, classroom management, and teacher-student interactions. For example, one specific program conducive for teachers is the Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) program. Teacher mindfulness techniques can decrease job turnover and absenteeism and improve occupational health and classroom environments (Roeser et al., 2012). Classroom environments and teachers' mental, emotional, and physical health are crucial to students' academic and social development. Ensuring that teachers have access to resources to promote mental and physical health is

essential for the success of future generations. By offering different mindfulness training opportunities, school districts can better support their employees and, in turn, better support their students' experiences. In general, studies have focused on small sample sizes specific to certain geographic locations. To better understand this theory and its benefits to teachers specifically, more research must be completed to propose efficient mindfulness techniques to teachers and people in general.

Teacher Stress

The increase in teacher psychological distress in recent years has brought attention to the need for research and intervention in schools. The teaching profession is socially and emotionally demanding and is oftentimes seen as stressful. Teacher stress results in negative physical and psychological responses due to work-related factors. High-stress teaching environments lead to feelings of exhaustion, inadequacy, decreased job satisfaction, high attrition, and decreased emotional and physical health (Haydon et al., 2019). How teachers cope with this stress impacts their well-being, job performance, and classroom success. Teacher psychological distress includes heightened levels of anxiety and depression, low self-esteem, decreased job performance and satisfaction, and more. Teacher education curriculum often excludes learning of stress management techniques and therefore does not adequately prepare teachers for classroom settings (Franco et al., 2010).

Mindfulness and Teacher Stress

Research has made great strides in technique and training programs to enhance teacher well-being. Mindfulness techniques, which focus on self-awareness and regulation of thoughts and sensations in nonjudgmental ways, have been shown to be successful in reducing teacher stress, depression, and anxiety (Taylor et al., 2016). The goal of these techniques is to decrease

distress, worry, and tension and instead practice calmness and relaxation. Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) have recently been incorporated into teacher training to better assist and support them in personal well-being and foster more positive classroom environments. In many studies, teachers are separated into training groups and waitlist control training groups; their levels of stress, depression, burnout, and more are measured before and after training (or no training).

There are many aspects of teacher stress and burnout, including coping, distress, and resilience (Roeser et al., 2013). Coping refers to regulation processes and resources available to and used by those experiencing stress. Resiliency refers to one's ability to successfully utilize psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources to maintain a sense of well-being. A large portion of well-being involves proper stress management. Resiliency is impacted by many factors, spanning from biological to environmental and cultural factors.

Mindfulness is an effective strategy for reducing many negative experiences; mindfulness techniques are also related to resiliency and coping. These practices include awareness of one's internal thoughts and feelings as well as surrounding environmental factors. In fact, those who employ mindfulness strategies are less reactive to emotional stimuli, as evident in functional magnetic resonance imaging. These skills help users to connect with themselves and experience more openness, calmness, and compassion. To support teachers' mental and physical well-being, these strategies can be employed throughout the day, bringing teachers back to the present rather than worrying about the past or future. The awareness and stress reduction that results from mindfulness practices in turn improves resiliency. Beyond that, this personal reflection improves self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-confidence, strengthening one's core self. Mindfulness training incorporated into teacher education has also been established as an effective strategy for

increasing student clarity and reducing student stress. Practical implications of these findings for teachers include mindfulness-resilience training, breath and body scan exercises, encouragement of mindfulness-based practices at school and home, and the use of mindfulness apps (Neumann & Tillott, 2022). Mindfulness practices greatly enhance teacher well-being and reduce stress, overall improving teacher resilience and the education experience.

Mindfulness training recipients report a greater reduction in psychological distress following training as well as after a four-month follow-up. Significant improvements are also seen in somatization, hostility, depression, and anxiety levels among the mindfulness groups (Franco et al., 2010). Those who participate in training display improvements in emotional regulation and prosocial tendencies; emotional regulation aids in reducing teacher job stress. MBIs also aid teachers in coping strategy efficacy, giving them confidence that they can properly handle stressful situations. In addition, teachers with mindfulness training feel and show greater tendencies to forgive others, specifically students (Taylor et al., 2016).

How teachers conceptualize and respond to stress impacts overall workplace well-being. One teacher could be experiencing more stressful situations but have less stress because of his or her ability to properly respond. Protective factors, such as emotional regulation, a personal mission to help students, and the ability to productively respond to stressors, aid teachers in resiliency. Efficacy and distress tolerance are also key to teacher success. These aspects help teachers navigate and organize negative emotions and situations; they also help teachers connect and empathize with students, increasing their compassion. These attributes, techniques, and ways of thinking are all taught in mindfulness training, but to gain their full benefit, teachers must capitalize on their MBI training (Schussler et al., 2018).

Effective techniques can be utilized to reduce teacher stress, promote personal well-being, and enhance classroom environments. These techniques include the Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) program, Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques (SMART), Inner Resilience, Mindfulness, Courage, and Reflection for Educators, and more (Roeser et al., 2012). These techniques often display decreases in burnout, stress, and absenteeism, and increases in occupational health and well-being. The positive outcomes of mindfulness training for teachers should also result in positive classroom outcomes, further reinforcing teacher well-being and satisfaction (Roeser et al., 2012).

To battle teacher stress, researchers have conducted studies to create a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) model and have found it to be effective in lowering teacher stress. This model includes four steps that include body scanning, breathing, focused attention, and relaxation. The first portion of MBSR is to set an intention or a desired outcome from the session. Next, scanning the body includes sitting in an upright, relaxed position and increasing awareness of bodily sensations. After scanning the body, focusing attention on breathing reinstates a sense of calmness and awareness in the body. Last, observing thoughts and feelings allows focus on the present moment rather than feeling the emotions of the past and future. These mindfulness practices posit many benefits; the most beneficial times for teachers to practice such strategies include before the students' arrival, during lunch, and during planning periods (Haydon et al., 2019).

The MBSR model can further aid in teacher development, continually creating positive classroom environments for themselves and their students and remaining in the profession longer. In addition to mindfulness interventions, research has studied the impacts of teacher support groups. Stress Prevention and Mindfulness (SPAM) groups aim to encourage teachers to

take advantage of their stress reduction resources through mindfulness training, the expansion and improvement of their support networks, and the sharing of stress process knowledge. The results of such studies suggest positive implications for the teacher community, teacher-student interactions, and stress management abilities. The group aspect of SPAM training was also found to be beneficial for teachers (Reiser et al., 2016). In all, teaching is a stressful profession. Not only do teachers benefit from mindfulness training, but they also benefit from a strong teacher and administration community.

In light of the negative implications of stress in the teaching profession, students and classroom environments are also negatively impacted. Children spend much of their upbringing in education, so positive classroom climates are imperative for development. Teachers play vital roles in the success of their students and the health of their school systems; although indirectly related, teacher well-being has a great impact on students' social, emotional, and academic development (Beshai et al., 2015). Not only are teacher resiliency and positive classroom climate correlated with academic results but also with the social-emotional learning of students (DiCarlo et al., 2020).

Classroom climates are largely cultivated by teachers, evidenced by teacher resiliency and stress levels. A positive classroom climate correlates to better academic, social, and emotional success among students. To create this positive classroom environment, many programs have been implemented in school systems, including mindfulness practices. These mindfulness strategies include practicing yoga, breathing techniques, and guided meditation (DiCarlo et al., 2020). To ensure their influences are positive, educators should focus on and promote healthy teacher-child interactions. Positive interactions among educators and students have been shown effective in social competence and prosocial behavior. Job-related stress

greatly impacts the caliber of these interactions; the higher the amount of stress, the lower the quality of the relationship. Because of their intertwined relationships, resilience and mindfulness play key mediating roles between work stress and teacher-child interactions (Seo & Yuh, 2022).

Emotional supportiveness can be identified through the creation of positive classroom climates, promoting enthusiasm, sensitivity, and connection, and avoiding anger and hostility. This type of classroom climate correlates with higher student cognitive, social, and emotional engagement levels. Teacher social and emotional competence (SEC) is key to creating a positive classroom environment as well as reducing teacher stress and burnout. Beyond this, low SEC can foster negative student-teacher interactions, ineffective stress management demonstration, and poor classroom organization (Molloy Elreda et al., 2018). Research shows that the implementation of mindfulness techniques results in an increase in positive classroom climates and a decrease in negative classroom climates, as measured by behaviors examined within specific classrooms (DiCarlo et al., 2020). Mindfulness training and techniques pose benefits for reducing teacher stress and improving classroom environments and student performance.

Teacher Burnout

Teachers across the country are faced with a wide variety of demands, which can ultimately lead to physical and emotional exhaustion, otherwise known as burnout. Like a virus damaging its host environment and its surrounding cells, teachers experiencing burnout can negatively impact themselves, their students, and their colleagues. Burnout consists of three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion refers to both the physical and emotional distress one faces due to work. Depersonalization refers to a decrease in empathy and an increase in detachment from students and coworkers. Finally, personal accomplishment refers to work-related self-efficacy (Sharp &

Jennings, 2015). Feelings of burnout lead to decreased job satisfaction, exiting the teaching profession, cynicism, and more.

Teachers face a variety of stressors, so research is aiming to find strategies to increase teacher well-being. Much of this research points to mindfulness techniques as successful; the results of these studies, however, often focus on teacher-only results rather than teacher and student results. Recent research that has furthered mindfulness studies to include student benefits has found promising results. In a study of two groups of teachers and students who either underwent training (experimental group) or did not (waitlist control group), positive results of teacher mindfulness for both teachers and students were evident. After teachers were trained in mindfulness, results showed a decrease in exhaustion and depersonalization and an increase in self-compassion, emotional regulation, well-being, self-efficacy, behavioral interactions, and classroom engagement. The students of these teachers were found to perceive higher teacher involvement in affection, dependability, and dedication of resources. Parents of these students also reported higher emotional regulation and well-being among students (de Carvalho et al., 2021). The benefits of mindfulness training extend far beyond decreasing teacher burnout and increasing teacher well-being, enhancing classroom environments and students' development.

Mindfulness and Teacher Burnout

To reduce teacher burnout, educators should be equipped with mindfulness practices. Research shows that mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are associated with stress reduction, lower anxiety and depression, greater well-being, and higher empathy. To specifically target the teaching profession and burnout, the Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) program utilizes MBI strategies to equip teachers with strategies to manage the negative effects of burnout. As mentioned previously, the CARE program consists of training

in emotional regulation, mindfulness practices management, and caring and listening practices. They also include normal MBI practices such as breathing techniques, body scanning, and sensation awareness. In a study aiming to discover the benefits of CARE training in educators, this MBI training resulted in three major themes. First, CARE training resulted in an integration of CARE metaphors in everyday teacher language. Phrases such as “elevator going up” were utilized by CARE graduates (Sharp & Jennings, 2015, p. 213). Second, CARE programming has been shown to effectively train participants in present-centered awareness and reappraisal; teachers are mindful of their ability to analyze their current situation before reacting. Last, CARE training can also aid in the emotional regulation of participating teachers (Sharp & Jennings, 2015). As a result of CARE training implementation, teachers reported higher rapport and compassion with students. Research among New York City teachers in highly positive areas shows a negative correlation between CARE training and personal distress scores, a positive correlation between CARE training and emotional regulation, and a negative correlation between CARE training and both ache-related symptoms and gastrointestinal-related symptoms (Jennings et al., 2019). This mindfulness program aided in combating teacher burnout. Increasing research shows the plethora of benefits for teachers participating in mindfulness practices, specifically the CARE program. The benefits of CARE programming are evident among teachers and their students.

Mindfulness-oriented meditation (MOM) is a mindfulness technique that has shown beneficial in reducing burnout. Not only this, but MOM relates to trait personality characteristics as well. The Big Five Personality Inventory includes traits of extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness. Mindfulness training shows a positive impact on teacher well-being, including decreased stress, burnout, and anxiety and improved

performance and emotional regulation. These techniques have also shown success in improving the quality of teacher-student relationships. In a study conducted to test the effectiveness of mindfulness-oriented meditation, teachers who participated in mindfulness training reported higher dispositional mindfulness, higher scores on conscientiousness, lower scores on neuroticism, and lower job-related stress and emotional exhaustion (Fabbro et al., 2020). The cultivation of awareness, compassion, emotional control, and insightfulness from mindfulness training aids not only in teacher burnout but in student-teacher relationships as well, overall improving everyone's educational experience.

The Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program also poses benefits for teacher burnout. In a study among elementary school teachers in the Midwest, those who received MBSR training showed increased mindfulness, self-compassion, and effective teaching behavior. They also showed a decrease in psychological symptoms, burnout, attentional biases, and emotional exhaustion (Flook et al., 2013). The benefits of mindfulness training are clear; teachers who utilize mindfulness techniques have increased well-being, decreased burnout, and effective classroom organization.

Teacher Depression

Recent research has also explored mindfulness and its implications on well-being, specifically depression. Depression is an often-prolonged mood disorder characterized by hopelessness, irritability, difficulty concentrating, decreased energy, and more. Classrooms dominated by teacher depression pose a variety of challenges. Workplace stress, long hours, low pay, and stressful situations are all believed to be influential sources of teacher depression (Roberts et al., 2019). Research indicates that higher levels of depression correlate with more teacher absences and days worked while physically and mentally unhealthy (Whitaker et al.,

2013). Depressive symptoms are also negatively related to teacher-child interactions and fewer social-emotional developments among children (Roberts et al., 2016). To combat teacher depression and improve well-being, many districts are exploring the benefits of mindfulness practices. These techniques incorporate mental reframing and being present in the moment, both of which can lead to happiness. Mindfulness negatively correlates with depression and positively correlates with mood. Mindfulness-based treatments (MBIs) have also been shown to effectively treat some mood disorders (Sharma & Kumra, 2022). Results of mindfulness techniques indicate a reduction in depression, which could overall create a more positive experience and environment for teachers and students when applied.

Mindfulness and Teacher Depression

Professionals in the human services sector often experience a great amount of dissatisfaction; teachers of all ages and in all cities experience these challenges. Mindfulness skills promote regulation of emotions, focused attention, self-kindness, and compassion for others, thereby improving anxiety as well as social relations with others. The nonjudgmental focus on present experiences and sensations is associated with lower levels of teacher turnover and is related to improvements in teacher efficacy, job satisfaction, and job performance. Research examining middle school teachers in America supports these concepts, as shown by the significant negative correlation between mindfulness and depression and anxiety (Braun et al., 2018).

One important aspect of depression is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to successfully execute certain behaviors and actions. An individual's self-efficacy greatly influences his or her accomplishments; it also negatively correlates with depression levels. In a study investigating self-efficacy as a mediator for

mindfulness and depression, research shows that self-efficacy significantly mediates mindfulness and stress, anxiety, and depression. Mindfulness greatly impacts depression, self-efficacy greatly impacts depression, and mindfulness greatly impacts self-efficacy (Sharma & Kumra, 2022).

Because of the self-awareness and calming techniques of mindfulness-based interventions, these techniques aid teachers in emotional management, decreasing depression and anxiety (Zarate et al., 2019). Incorporating mindfulness techniques can be effective in improving self-efficacy, which in turn results in positive implications for depression.

Emotions are contagious, especially in a classroom setting. Teachers play a vital role in creating the environment of a classroom; job-related stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression do not foster a classroom fit for growth. Person-centered teaching practices promote the interaction of students' needs and interests with teacher expertise and resources. When these interactions are inhibited, so is classroom learning; decreased teacher well-being, including teacher stress, anxiety, and depression, impede person-centered interactions. Teachers and students are both impacted by these relationships; closeness with students predicts teacher joy and enjoyment, and relationship conflict relates to student academic, social, and emotional outcomes (Hwang, Medvedev, et al., 2019). Research indicates that mindfulness-based interventions help reduce this toxic environment (Zarate et al., 2019). An important part of person-centered teaching practices is mindfulness. Although mindfulness techniques vary, their positive results for teacher well-being are uniform. Research indicates that mindfulness interventions improve teacher-student verbal behavior. Mindfulness-based interventions improve classroom organization, teacher effectiveness, and emotional support (Hwang, Noh, et al., 2019). These techniques allow teachers to anchor in the present and be aware of emotional and physical sensations, decreasing depression and increasing well-being, aiding in better teacher-student interactions.

Gaps in Current Mindfulness Research

While current research results yield much understanding of the benefits of mindfulness techniques for teachers and everyday people alike, more research must be conducted to better understand correlations between teacher mindfulness and stress, burnout, and depression to best aid teacher and student well-being (Schussler et al., 2018). Studies discovering the impacts of mindfulness-based interventions on teacher stress, anxiety, well-being, and more are increasing. Because of the variety of techniques, measures that MBIs impact, and experiences of teachers, though, these studies often present issues with generalizability. In a meta-analysis of MBI studies, however, data show that MBIs indeed have significant and effective results for targeted teacher betterment outcomes. Also, among many studies, those trained in teaching MBI techniques are often just as effective as program developers; this is encouraging for school systems desiring to implement and teach such programs. The amount of MBI training differs from program to program; because there is no one program to follow, each type of training requires different inputs of time. Extending MBI training beyond a certain dosage may prove ineffective; thus, participants should determine schedules most beneficial to their specific districts and situations (Klingbeil & Renshaw, 2018).

Mindfulness training has been linked to increased occupational health and well-being, especially among teachers and their impacted students. To continue the improvement of education, institutions should continually aid in teacher support, mentorship, and professional development. Habits of mind such as critical thinking, awareness and reflection, nonjudgmental patterns of thinking, and mental flexibility posit many benefits to professional development. Because of the human service aspect of teaching, these skills are necessary for classroom success. Teachers are constantly forced to interact with students exhibiting different emotional

and academic needs as well as a plethora of curriculums, which require on-the-spot thinking and action (Roeser et al., 2012).

Research Questions

1. Is mindfulness associated with stress levels among teachers?
2. Is mindfulness correlated to teacher burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement)?
3. Is mindfulness associated with levels of depression among teachers?

Method

Current Study

Research suggests that teacher experiences including stress, burnout, and depression result in adverse outcomes for both teachers and students (Haydon et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2019). Research also shows, however, that practicing mindfulness is effective in reducing teacher stress, burnout, and depression (Braun et al., 2018; Flook et al., 2013; Seo & Yuh, 2022; Zarate et al., 2019). To effectively understand and implement mindfulness among teachers, however, more correlational research is needed to investigate the relationships between teacher mindfulness and teacher stress, burnout, and depression.

Participants

This research proposal will survey a group of K-12 teachers in terms of mindfulness, stress, burnout, and depression. Adding to current research, this study plans to focus on a school district in East Tennessee to better understand correlations between teacher mindfulness and the specific categories of teacher stress, burnout, and depression. Participants in this study will consist of elementary, middle, and high school teachers. This district consists of one early learning center, eight elementary schools, two middle schools, two high schools, and one

alternative school. The professionals applicable to this study will instruct grades K-12 and will be full-time, in-classroom teachers. Participants will be recruited via their school emails, announcements at staff meetings, and informational flyers sent to them in weekly updates.

Demographic information for the school district that will be utilized in this study was obtained from the district's Human Resources Department. The demographic breakdown of this school district is fairly representative of national demographics; this will aid in the generalizability of the findings (Irwin et al., 2023). The district is comprised of 610 teachers. Among teacher employees, 23.4% of teachers are males and 76.6% of teachers are female. Teachers range from ages 22 to 68. The mean age of all teachers is approximately 42 years. The majority of the teachers in the district identify as White (non-Hispanic). The average salary among teachers in the district is \$64,760. The average household income of the surrounding area is \$42,948 per year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Participation criteria require that participants be full-time classroom teachers, therefore excluding administration such as Principals, Assistant Principals, and other district-level leadership.

Procedure

To recruit participants, a district-wide announcement will be sent to teachers in addition to an in-person presentation by the researchers. Informational flyers will also be sent to teachers and posted around schools. A general overview of the purpose and methods will be described. For those interested in participating in the study, a link and email will be provided for teachers to gain more information. Participation is voluntary and participants can withdraw at any time. IRB approval will be received before conducting this study. Participants will agree to terms of informed consent, being made aware of the information they are releasing as well as their freedom to participate/not participate in the study. Teachers will be asked to complete an

anonymous, online survey. The self-report survey will measure basic demographic data and teacher mindfulness, stress, burnout, and depression. The survey should take participants approximately 30 minutes to complete. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression statistical tests will be run to examine the relationships between each variable's subscale. Participating teachers will receive a free coffee voucher from a local coffee shop.

Measures

Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ). The 39-item Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) will be utilized to evaluate teacher mindfulness. The five facets include observing, describing, acting-with-awareness, non-judging of inner experience, and non-reactivity to inner experience. They are scored on a five-point Likert-type scale with options ranging from 1 = Never to 5 = Always True for questions such as “I tell myself I shouldn't be feeling the way I am feeling” and “I'm good at finding words to describe my feelings.” Each subscale is averaged for a mean score for each dimension. Higher scores indicate higher mindfulness skills. Scores range from 39 to 195. Good construct, predictive validity, and internal reliability are present in the FFMQ with Cronbach's alpha between 0.75 and 0.91 (Cohen et al., 1983).

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). The 10-item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) will be used to assess stress levels. This scale instructs participants to reflect on their lives in the previous month on a five-point Likert scale, from 0 = Never to 4 = Very Often. Questions consist of reflections such as “In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?” Scores for certain questions are reversed and then added to the remaining scores for a total. Scores can range from ten to 50, with higher PSS scores reflecting higher stress levels. The PSS has high internal consistency and Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.67 to 0.91 (Cohen et al., 1983).

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The 22-item Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) will be utilized to assess burnout. This scale assesses three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement. On a seven-point Likert-type scale from 0 = Never to 6 = Every Day, the survey consists of questions such as “I feel emotionally drained with my work.” Scores are summed for each category. Emotional exhaustion includes feelings of fatigue and emotional overextension with scores ranging from zero to 54; higher scores indicated greater emotional exhaustion. Depersonalization includes impersonal feelings with scores ranging from zero to 30; higher scores indicated greater depersonalization. Personal achievement includes productivity and feelings of competence with scores ranging from zero to 48; higher scores indicated greater personal achievement. The MBI has high reliability and validity with Cronbach’s alphas of 0.90 for emotional exhaustion, 0.76 for depersonalization, and 0.76 for personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 1996).

Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D). The 20-item will be used to assess teacher depression. On a four-point Likert-type scale from 0 = Rarely to 3 = Most or All of the Time, teachers were asked to rate their experienced depression symptoms within the past week. Questions consist of statements such as “I thought my life had been a failure.” Higher scores on the CES-D indicate greater depressive symptoms. Scores range from zero to 60. This scale has satisfactory reliability and validity, with Cronbach’s alpha between 0.895 and 0.940 (Radloff, 1977).

Discussion

Anticipated Results

This study aims to discover more about the relationship between teacher mindfulness practices and each of the factors of teacher stress, burnout, and depression. Teacher stress,

burnout, and depression not only negatively impact teacher well-being but also students, coworkers, family members, and friends. Across all scales, a negative correlation between mindfulness and each scale of stress, burnout, and depression is expected.

As suggested by previous research, a moderately strong negative correlation between teacher mindfulness and teacher stress is anticipated. Previous correlational research found significant correlation coefficients between $r = -0.341$ and $r = -0.300$ (Braun et al, 2018; Sharma & Kumra, 2022). Experimental research also suggests significant differences in teacher stress in pre- and post-mindfulness interventions (Beshai et al., 2015; DiCarlo et al., 2020; Roeser et al., 2013). Although some research suggests no relationship between teacher mindfulness and stress (Elreda et al., 2019), the bulk of the literature supports a negative correlation between teacher mindfulness and teacher stress.

Based on experimental studies, a negative correlation between teacher mindfulness and the burnout subscales of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization is expected. A positive correlation is expected between teacher mindfulness and the burnout subscale personal achievement. In experimental studies, researchers found a significant decrease in burnout after mindfulness interventions (Fabbro et al., 2020; Flook et al., 2013). Experimental research suggests a decrease in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization after mindfulness interventions (de Carvalho et al., 2021; Flook et al., 2013). Research also suggests an increase in personal accomplishment after mindfulness training (Flook et al., 2013).

Last, a negative correlation is anticipated between teacher mindfulness and teacher depression. Based on previous research, a strong correlation coefficient of $r = -0.52$ was found to be significant (Braun et al., 2018). However, in another, a small correlation coefficient of $r = -0.193$ was found (Sharma & Kumra, 2022). Experimental studies with pre- and post-mindfulness

interventions also resulted in significant differences in teacher depression before and after training (Franco et al., 2010; Roeser et al., 2013; Roeser et al., 2022).

The more mindfulness teachers incorporate into daily teaching and living activities, the less overall stress, burnout, and depression they should experience. These correlations are crucial to understanding and improving teacher and student well-being.

Limitations

Although this study could add to the understanding of links between teacher mindfulness, stress, burnout, and depression, there are some limitations. This study aims to identify how teacher mindfulness relates to teacher stress, burnout, and depression to analyze and adjust learning environments for teachers and students. While this research focuses on mindfulness, stress, burnout, and depression specifically related to participants' jobs, other factors play a major role in survey responses. When reporting on levels of stress, for example, a teacher may be experiencing high stress due to a situation at home, not at school. When answering the survey, however, the participant may still highly rate stress, making it difficult to understand teacher stress due to their job.

In addition, the data collected will represent only one school district across the globe. The school district studied in East Tennessee may not be an accurate representation of average teachers across the world. If the workplace environment of these schools, for example, is positive with teacher support, well-behaved students, and workplace freedom, then stress, burnout, and depression levels may not generalize to other systems. The opposite is also true; if this school district crafts a negative workplace environment, teacher reports of mindfulness, stress, burnout, and depression may represent lower overall teacher well-being.

The nature of this study is self-report, placing the accuracy of the data on the participant. The person's feelings and environment at the time of taking the test greatly influence his or her responses to the measures. On difficult days, participants may report feeling worse than on an average school day. They may also answer more favorably, depicting the scores they hope to receive rather than what truly represents their situations.

Due to the correlational nature of this study, there are alternative explanations that limit conclusions of direct cause-and-effect relationships. Further, it is possible that teachers who experience less stress, burnout, and depression are able to be more mindful. To fully understand the potential benefits of mindfulness techniques on teacher stress, burnout, and depression, experimental research should be conducted.

Finally, this research is based on volunteer participants. Several factors may encourage teachers to participate in this study. For example, teachers extremely dissatisfied with their work experience may be more likely to participate to voice their concerns, resulting in more negative results than the average population. On the other hand, teachers who already practice or are interested in mindfulness might be more likely to join.

Implications

The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between teacher mindfulness and experiences of stress, burnout, and depression. Based on prior research, higher mindfulness correlates with lower stress, burnout, and depression; results from this study will provide more insight into these relationships. Research suggests that teacher well-being impacts student well-being and success, so if teachers are experiencing high rates of stress, burnout, and depression, not only will they suffer, but so will their students. Many school systems are seeking ways to combat these negative experiences to better overall education. Mindfulness techniques have

demonstrated benefits across many sectors and implementing them among teachers may also be a successful tool.

This research also aims to display the benefits of mindfulness to inform and encourage school systems across the globe to incorporate mindfulness practices among teachers and administrators alike. The positive impacts of mindfulness will not only support and guide teachers, but their students, families, friends, and coworkers as well.

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