A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON TEACHERS’ LIVED EXPERIENCE WITH SELF-EFFICACY TEACHING FACE-TO-FACE INSTRUCTION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

by

James Scott Phillips

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

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Abstract

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe teachers’ lived experiences with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic in a public school district in South Georgia. The theory guiding this study is Bandura’s (1977) theory of self-efficacy which was used to answer the following central research question: What are teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic? Twelve teachers from two schools described their lived experiences teaching in-person instruction amid the pandemic. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, teacher journals, and a focus group. Data analysis followed Moustakas’ (1994) transcendental methods of epoché, phenomenological reduction with horizontalization and thematic development to create a textual description of the phenomenon, imaginative variation to create a structural description of the phenomenon, and synthesis of textural and structural descriptions to present the essence of the phenomenon. The study produced four themes and nine sub-themes. The themes were perseverance, awareness, a need to socialize, and challenging. The findings revealed that teachers’ self-efficacy in teaching in-person instruction continuously fluctuated and was informed by their classroom experiences and perceptions of their classroom environment. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy through mastery experience, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion, which enhanced their commitment and relationships but experienced decreased self-efficacy through emotional arousal because they perceived their environment as challenging, which exacerbated stress.

Keywords: center for disease control, covid-19, burnout, frontline worker, pandemic, self-efficacy, stress.
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife Courtenay and my daughter Hannah. Courtenay, you have constantly encouraged me and always believed in me throughout this process. Your confidence gave me confidence. I could not have completed this journey without your endless support and sacrifice. Hannah, my little girl, you have been my inspiration since the day you were born. You were my inspiration to complete this dissertation. When I began this voyage, I wanted to persevere to show you that if you believe in yourself and stay committed, you can accomplish your dreams.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my mom and the memory of my dad. Mom was always there and supported my endeavors all my life. Dad taught me how to be a father and showed me the importance of education. He provided me with an example of a self-made man who, through determination, overcame all obstacles. Thank you. I love you all.
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List of Abbreviations

Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)

Center for Disease Control (CDC)

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

World Health Organization (WHO)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

As public-school systems throughout the United States reopened, teachers were thrust to the frontline of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (Beames et al., 2021; Mason, 2020) to teach face-to-face instruction in a classroom during the pandemic. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), frontline workers are individuals whose work-related duties are performed onsite, and job responsibilities involve being in proximity of less than six feet to the public or their co-workers (Center for Disease Control, 2020a), which signifies teachers as frontline workers (Levinson et al., 2020; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021; Sim, 2020; Sokal et al., 2020; Will, 2020). Teachers may be prone to the same psychological risks as frontline healthcare workers (Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021), which can negatively influence their self-efficacy and invite teacher burnout (Pellerone et al., 2021; Pressley, 2021b). This chapter provides a background of the problem, the problem and purpose statement, a discussion of the gap in the literature as it relates to the problem, and the significance of this study. The chapter concludes by introducing the research questions, key definitions, and an overall chapter summary.

Background

The most relevant literature provides a historical, social, and theoretical context related to teacher self-efficacy. The problem is frontline teachers teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic may be subjected to an adverse teaching environment (Ziauddeen et al., 2020) conducive to additional job stressors (Santamaria et al., 2021) that could influence their self-efficacy (Muenchhausen et al., 2021) and induce burnout (Pressley, 2021b). Symptoms of stress and anxiety are prevalent among frontline workers (Tasnim et al., 2021). Job stress is a major factor reducing teacher self-efficacy (Antoniou et al., 2020; Rabagletti et al., 2021; Yin et
al., 2020), and many teachers experienced increased levels of stress and burnout because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021; Stachteas & Stachteas, 2020). Teacher self-efficacy is critical because decreased self-efficacy can lead to attrition which financially impacts school districts (Ryu & Jinnai, 2021; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020) and negatively impacts student achievement (Gallant & Riley, 2017; Kelchtermans, 2017; Newberry & Allsop, 2017). Because self-efficacy is crucial for coping with COVID-19 stressors (Bidzan et al., 2020), more research is needed on the teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy while teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic.

**Historical Context**

A historical context describing teacher stress is necessary to understand teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy while teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic. Teaching has long been recognized as an occupation with numerous sources of stress (Arvidsson et al., 2016; Au et al., 2016; Harmsen et al., 2018; Newberry & Allsop, 2017) and the number of teachers leaving the profession due to high levels of stress is a global concern (Junker et al., 2021). Stress has been known to cause low self-efficacy and burnout among public school teachers, especially in circumstances where job demands are high and resources are low (Akin et al., 2019; Bottiani et al., 2019). Occupational stress is the state of physical or psychological tensions that occur when teachers are confronted with adverse experiences that infiltrate their pedagogical world, while burnout is manifested in symptoms such as decommitment and decreased self-efficacy (Wu, 2020). Teacher burnout is a dysfunctional response to persistent emotional and interpersonal occupational stressors (Zhu et al., 2018), and self-efficacy may be the most important cause of human behavior because it predicts outcome expectancies by helping individuals decide their course of action and whether they persist in that action when
confronted with adverse situations (Zee & Koomen, 2016). While stress may be a root cause of burnout (Cherniss, 2017), occupational stress is a primary motivator of low self-efficacy among teachers (Antoniou et al., 2020; Yin et al., 2020).

Excessive workload, student misbehavior, inadequate working conditions, poor working relationships, role conflict, role ambiguity, lack of autonomy, negative school climate, and lack of professional development opportunities increased teacher stress across multiple grade levels (Collie et al., 2016; Faisal et al., 2019; Hermsen et al., 2018). Ouellette et al. (2018) and Liu and Hallinger (2018) found school culture and principal leadership a significant contributor to teacher stress. School climate and student behavior play a major role in the development of stress and burnout (Junker et al., 2021; Sonmez & Betul, 2021), and stress is negativity associated with teacher self-efficacy (Hu et al., 2019). Teacher interaction with students and parents is also an occupational stressor that influences teacher self-efficacy (Ravalier & Walsh, 2018). For instance, disrespectful and disruptive student and parental behavior (Fernet et al., 2012; Hastings & Bham, 2003) on school grounds is a primary cause of teacher stress and emotional exhaustion (Ravalier & Walsh, 2018). Furthermore, standardized high-stakes testing is responsible for high stress and low teacher self-efficacy across all grade levels (Gonzalez et al., 2017). Richards (2012) found that two of the top five causes of stress among teachers were the accountability measures imposed by high stakes testing, which puts teachers under an enormous amount of pressure to deliver instruction that will ensure acceptable progress on state mandates (Schaubman et al., 2011).

Kumawat (2020) suggested that teacher stress and burnout can also be exacerbated during times of adverse situational demands. Because of the threat of school shootings and school violence, many teachers worry about keeping themselves and their students safe from shootings,
and the fear of violence or the stress involved in preventing violence causes many teachers to quit (Schmelzer, 2019; Won & Chang, 2020). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2016) identified job stress as a cause of emotional exhaustion, reduced self-efficacy, and burnout resulting in many teachers leaving the teaching profession. Although emotional exhaustion may influence teacher self-efficacy, self-efficacy is significantly important to burnout (Arvidsson et al., 2019). While low teacher self-efficacy may accelerate burnout, burnout influences teacher self-efficacy (Buric & Kim, 2020; Capone & Petrillo, 2020; Mclean et al., 2019). After the school shootings in Columbine, Colorado, and Parkland, Florida, many teachers in both locations experienced stress and anxiety about returning to school (Schmelzer, 2019; Tempesta, 2021), while some teachers who survived the school shooting in Sandy Hook, Connecticut, sought psychological help because of stress and anxiety (Collins, 2014). Stress can have debilitating effects on the mental health of individuals (Fink, 2017), and work-related stress decreases teacher self-efficacy (Gonzalez et al., 2017; Troesch et al., 2017; von der Embse et al., 2016; Yin et al., 2020).

Teachers throughout the United States routinely participate in safety and lockdown drills which ironically increase stress levels (Wender & DeMille, 2019), and work-related stress has been known to adversely influence physical and mental health (Taris, 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic also created an adverse environment that may exacerbate the problem of low self-efficacy (Kast et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2021; Pellerone et al., 2021) and burnout (Panisoara et al., 2020; Zadok-Gurman et al., 2021) among frontline teachers because of the emergence of additional work-related stressors like those experienced by frontline healthcare workers (Moldova et al., 2021; Nhan et al., 2021; Trumello et al., 2020). Historically, it is imperative to understand the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic to explore teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy while teaching on the frontline during the pandemic. In December
2019, a group of patients with pneumonia of unknown cause was linked to a seafood wholesale market in the province of Wuhan (Han et al., 2020), a city of eleven million people in central China (Peirlinck et al., 2020). After the first outbreak, secondary cases were reported after approximately ten days, and although these new patients did not have contact with the marketplace, they had a history of contact with humans at the market, thereby revealing the potential enormity of the spread (Sahin et al., 2020).

The first case of COVID-19 was reported in the United States on January 20, 2020 (Messner & Payson, 2020), and the first fatality is believed to have occurred in Santa Clara County, California, on February 6, 2020 (Unwin et al., 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) classified the transmission of COVID-19 in the United States as a community type transmission on April 9, 2020, just two months after the first reported COVID-19 case in the United States (Tiwari et al., 2021). By March 29, 2020, the United States emerged as the new pandemic hotspot with 124,655 cases and 2,191 fatalities due to COVID-19 (Steffens, 2020), and in April 2020, the number of COVID-19 related fatalities in the United States surpassed that of Italy (Unwin et al., 2020). The United States, in September 2020, recorded the largest number of total confirmed cases and fatalities in the world (Tiwari et al., 2021), and by October 1, 2020, the United States was home to over one-fifth of the global mortality rate (K. Zhang et al., 2020). As of July 1, 2021, there have been a total of 33,496,454 confirmed cases and 602,401 fatalities, with 14,256 new cases and 231 fatalities in the last seven days (Center for Disease Control, 2021d).

When people infected with COVID-19 cough, sneeze, sing, talk, or breathe, they produce respiratory droplets, and infection occurs mainly through exposure to those respiratory droplets when a person is in close contact with someone infected with COVID-19 (Center for Disease
People who are infected but do not show symptoms of COVID-19 can spread the virus to other people as well (Center for Disease Control, 2020a). Because the rate of spread of COVID-19 is substantially higher than previously reported pandemics (Tsay et al., 2020), transmission is possible with mild or no symptoms (MacIntyre, 2020). Individuals who are physically near or within six feet of another person with COVID-19 or have direct contact with that person are at the greatest risk of infection (Center for Disease Control, 2020b), which may create stress, anxiety, and fear among teachers (Ampofo et al., 2020; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021; Santamaria et al., 2020) teaching face-to-face instruction in a classroom.

Similar to the psychological risks of stress and anxiety faced by frontline healthcare workers (Antonijevic et al., 2020; Barello et al., 2021; Kachadourian et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2020; Miguel-Puga et al., 2021), teachers on the frontline may also be at risk for these same psychological concerns (Beames et al., 2021; H. Chen et al., 2020; Kumawat et al., 2020). Many teachers reported that pandemic-induced stress led them to stop teaching (Beames et al., 2021). Recent studies (J. Chen et al., 2020; Kumawat et al., 2020; Pellerone et al., 2021; Pressley, 2021a) suggest that as self-efficacy decreases, burnout increases among teachers during the pandemic, indicating that the personal impact of COVID-19 on teachers may be significant (Beames et al., 2021). Some teachers experienced low self-efficacy due to sudden curriculum changes during the pandemic (Putwain et al., 2019), which exacerbated stress (McCarthy, 2019). Many teachers reported high rates of stress and low morale levels during the 2020–2021 school year (Diliberti et al., 2021; Kurtz, 2020). Diliberti et al. (2021) found pandemic-induced stress the most common reason for leaving teaching among 957 public school teachers throughout the United States, and almost half voluntarily stopped teaching after March 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
Taking into consideration the historical context of the problem of low teacher self-efficacy and increased burnout when teachers experience adverse situations, it is not surprising that the adverse environment created by the COVID-19 pandemic may be emotionally taxing for teachers (Kim & Ashbury, 2020) since stress is intensified during unexpected situational demands (Kumawat, 2020). Since self-efficacy determines how teachers interpret their thoughts, actions, and emotions in difficult situations (Zee & Koomen, 2016), teachers need self-efficacy to grow (van der Want et al., 2019). Therefore, it is imperative to explore teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching on the frontlines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social Context

To explore the teacher’s lived experience with self-efficacy while teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, a description of the social context of the pandemic is necessary. The pandemic has had significant psychological and social implications on children, students, and frontline workers, who are more apt to develop stress, anxiety, depression, and other symptoms of distress (Algeri et al., 2020). Practically all students in grades K–12 in the United States had face-to-face instruction halted during the 2019–2020 academic year because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, more than 1.5 billion students in 165 countries have been adversely affected by the lockdown of school campuses (Osman, 2020), and in the United States, more than 55 million children have missed in-class instruction (Pattison et al., 2021). The unplanned and sudden interruption of traditional education abruptly changed the work environment of teachers in the United States (Kaden, 2020), and many were challenged by teaching in a remote environment (Cardullo et al., 2021), which resulted in new stressors for
teachers (MacIntyre et al., 2020), which exacerbated the problem of low teacher self-efficacy and burnout (Herman et al., 2018; Pressley, 2021a).

An amalgamation of problems such as potential mental health issues of students in quarantine (Thakur, 2020), the challenges of virtual education for both students and teachers (Cardullo et al., 2021), and student equity issues (Hageman, 2021) vaulted teachers back to their classrooms on the frontline of the pandemic in an environment full of uncertainties (Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021; Santamaria et al., 2021) as policy shifted away from school closure to reopening. However, many teachers hesitated to return to the classroom to teach face-to-face instruction during the pandemic (Chizhik & Brandon, 2020). Chizhik and Brandon (2020) indicated that many teacher candidates in California did not continue their face-to-face student teaching after March 2020, even after completing the California requirements of 500 hours for clinical practice, while other teacher candidates volunteered to continue student teaching through virtual instruction.

Although children rarely have severe COVID-19 illness, they can easily transmit the infection to adults, and roughly 40 million adults in the United States that teach school-aged children have definite or probable risk factors for contracting severe illness from the virus (Gaffney et al., 2020). Roughly one in five American public-school teachers are 55 or older, and they constitute a higher risk than younger adults, and those numbers do not include teachers with preexisting health conditions or high-risk family members (Belsha, 2020). Wada et al. (2020) found the infection and transmission rates of COVID-19 among students in Japan after school reopening indicated 39 cases were reported among teachers with an unknown transmission route in 90% of high schools, which exacerbated teacher stress. An outbreak of COVID-19 occurred in a high school in Israel 10 days after reopening increased fears with 153 students and 25 teachers
testing positive for the virus after an environmental inspection report revealed the presence of overcrowded classrooms with the impossibility of social distancing (Stein-Zamir et al., 2020). Yin et al. (2020) found a negative relationship between stress which indicates the experience of teachers in an adverse school environment reduces self-efficacy and increases the likelihood of teacher burnout (Anderson et al., 2021; Richards et al., 2018; Zhu et al., 2018).

Teaching is already widely recognized as a stressful occupation characterized by numerous challenges (Hayes et al., 2020; Kuok et al., 2020; McCarthy, 2019), and the pandemic exacerbated those challenges for frontline teachers in the classroom (Cervantes-Guevara et al., 2021; Pressley, 2021a). Li (2020) found a significant positive correlation between work stress and job burnout among 150 rural teachers in China, and Al Lily (2020) and Besser et al. (2020) suggested that many teachers accrued high levels of stress and symptoms of anxiety during the pandemic which is indicative of teacher burnout (Cansoy et al., 2017; Lauermann & König, 2016; Naz et al., 2017; Pressley, 2021b). Previous research suggests that teacher self-efficacy is a fundamental determinant of instructional quality (Buric & Kim, 2020; Kunsting et al., 2016), teacher engagement (Durksen et al., 2017; Granziera & Perera, 2019), job satisfaction (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Troesch & Bauer, 2017), well-being (Collie et al., 2016; Song et al., 2020; Zee & Koomen, 2016), and occupational commitment (Huang et al., 2021; Mokhtar et al., 2021).

Faced with COVID-19, many teachers dealt with new classroom procedures and insecurity (Santamaria et al., 2021), which can lower self-efficacy (Anderson et al., 2021). Low self-efficacy has a potential social impact on classrooms because it can influence teacher relationships with students (Hajovsky et al., 2020a; Miller et al., 2017) and affect student achievement (Bourne et al., 2021; Hassan & Akbar, 2019; Shahzad & Naureen, 2017). On the other hand, teachers with elevated levels of self-efficacy create higher-quality classrooms where
students have positive outcomes (Dofkova, 2019) because teachers with an elevated sense of self-efficacy provide more effective classroom instruction resulting in higher student motivation and achievement (Miller et al., 2017). Furthermore, teachers who report higher levels of self-efficacy are likely to be more engaged in instructional planning (Chao et al., 2017) and are likely to possess the ability to cope with the stress of new job demands and challenges (Shoji et al., 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic led to prolonged exposure to stress among frontline workers (Algeri et al., 2020), and many teachers were stressed about enforcing social-distancing and mask-wearing protocols (Brown, 2020), which can reduce self-efficacy (Baloran, 2020). Low self-efficacy is associated with higher burnout rates among teachers (Barnes et al., 2018; Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021; Smetackova et al., 2019), which can lead to teacher attrition (Acheson et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2017), and teacher attrition has a negative social effect on students and school districts (Hester et al., 2020). “According to The United States Labor Department, during the first 10 months of 2018, public school teachers quit at an average rate of 83 per 10,000 each month” (Hackman & Morath, 2018, p. 41), and 17% of new teachers left after twelve months while 10% of teachers with ten or more years of experience left annually (Blatt, 2016). Furthermore, as many as 50% of teachers leave the profession within their first five years (Ryan et al., 2017) due to work-related stress (Li, 2020; Saeki et al., 2018) and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic elevated stress among many teachers (Kumawat, 2020; Myung et al., 2021; Wong & Moorhouse, 2020) causing some to balk at continuing to teach versus protecting themselves (Chizhik & Brandon, 2020).

Teacher attrition is detrimental because it reduces instructional continuity, negatively impacting students’ learning and social development (Gallant & Riley, 2017; Kelchtermans,
2017; Newberry & Allsop, 2017). Teacher turnover inflicts economic and human resource costs on school districts due to the need to hire replacement teachers (Ryu & Jinnai, 2021; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). It is essential to understand the social context of teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy while teaching on the frontline during the pandemic because teachers are prone to high amounts of stress and reduced self-efficacy as a result of the social issues they experience in their work environment (Farmer, 2020).

**Theoretical Context**

Self-efficacy has been widely researched since pioneered by Albert Bandura in the 1970s (Page et al., 2014), and research on teacher self-efficacy and burnout has largely been underpinned by stress and coping theories (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) as well as human behavioral theories (Rotter, 1966). Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) transactional theory of stress is the premier theory for conceptualizing stress and coping across occupational environments (Herman et al., 2020). The theory “describes stress as the emotional, cognitive, and physiological experience when environmental demands exceed an individual's resources to adapt, and coping is defined as an individual's attempt to manage those demands” (Herman et al., 2020, p. 70). Sun et al. (2018) found that the relationship between stressors and stress reactions is tempered by individual differences in cognitive judgments or subjective perceptions, suggesting efficacious beliefs about those stressors (J. Chen et al., 2020). Stress is the primary cause of burnout (Cherniss, 2017), and occupational stress is the leading cause of low self-efficacy among teachers (Antoniou et al., 2020; Yin et al., 2020). With that in mind, the COVID-19 pandemic created an unorthodox teaching environment (Ziauddeen et al., 2020) and a host of new stressors (Santamaria et al., 2021), which could influence teacher self-efficacy (Hu et al., 2019) and provoke burnout (Pressley, 2021b).
Bakker and Demerouti’s (2007) job demand theory describes how work overload and stressful work demands are risk factors for job burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Dicke et al. (2020) found that self-efficacy buffered the relationship between job demand and strain, while self-efficacy predicted teacher engagement when job demands were high. Self-efficacy in classroom management plays a significant role in teachers' stress development, especially in high classroom disturbances, and serves as a barrier to strain-enhancing job effects and boosts teacher engagement (Dicke et al., 2020). Teachers returning to teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic face new job demands of preventative measures such as social distancing and wearing protective face coverings while being responsible for teaching students (Levinson et al., 2020; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2020; Pressley, 2021a; Sokal et al., 2020; Ziaudddeen et al., 2020). Teacher self-efficacy influences classroom management coping engagement (Lazarides et al., 2020), and teachers who feel more confident in their ability to manage their classroom are more likely to teach more effectively (Herman et al., 2017).

Rotter’s (1966) theory of locus of control describes the concept that people can exercise control over actions that influence their lives (Zee & Koomen, 2016) and has also been used by researchers (Ghahari et al., 2017; Tas & Iskender, 2017) to describe self-efficacy, stress, and burnout. Rotter (1966) suggested that individuals develop beliefs about their ability to control their environment and that those beliefs range from a sense of internal control or the notion that one can control their environment to external control or the belief that one cannot control their environment. Locus of control influences individual psychological personality and behavior and indicates the extent to which individuals believe they have control over the outcome of their behaviors (Cook, 2012).
Roddenberry and Renk (2010) and Rasheed-Karim (2020) found that teachers with an internal locus of control are less likely to suffer stress and burnout because stress induces higher levels of external locus of control, resulting in lower levels of self-efficacy. Truzoli et al., 2021) found stress as the main predictor of teacher satisfaction with online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, while internal locus of control and self-efficacy emerged as mediating factors to stress. Prolonged exposure to experiences of COVID-19 related stress can lower teachers’ confidence in their ability to do their job and entice burnout, causing them to quit teaching (Buric & Kim, 2020). Despite the vast contribution of the above theories, they have yet to be used to frame an in-depth study focusing on teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction on the frontline during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Problem Statement**

The problem is that the COVID-19 pandemic increased occupational stress among frontline workers (Du et al., 2020; Teo et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021a), and occupational stress is a primary culprit of low teacher self-efficacy (Gonzalez et al., 2017; Herman et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2020) and teacher burnout (Prasojo et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2018). The CDC defines frontline workers as individuals whose work-related duties are performed onsite, and job responsibilities involve being in proximity of fewer than six feet to the public or their co-workers (Center for Disease Control, 2020a). Teaching is a profession that has been associated with high levels of stress (Candeias et al., 2021; Travers, 2017; Wong et al., 2017), which can influence teacher self-efficacy (Cappe et al., 2021; Ipek et al., 2018), resulting in professional burnout (Chirico et al., 2020; Herman et al., 2018). As public-school systems throughout the United States reopened during the COVID-19 pandemic, many teachers returned to the frontlines facing a different environment, daily routine, increased safety measures, and instructional approaches
(Nabe Nielsen et al., 2021; Pressley, 2021a; Ziauddeen et al., 2020), which created additional stressors (Myung et al., 2021; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021; Santamaria et al., 2021) influencing their self-efficacy and commitment to teaching (Pellerone et al., 2021; Tang et al., 2021).

Although the pandemic has disrupted school systems across the globe, creating high amounts of stress and psychological challenges for teachers (Jones, 2020), current research studies focus on student self-efficacy (Granda-Vera et al., 2020; Rizun & Strzelecki, 2020; Wen et al., 2021), student mental health (Elsharkawy & Abdelaziz, 2020; Giannopoulou et al., 2021), teachers in relation to virtual instruction (Federkeil et al., 2020; Kim & Asbury, 2020), or frontline healthcare workers (Hu et al., 2020; Xiong et al., 2020). Despite the reality that teachers serve as frontline workers (Levinson et al., 2020; Mason, 2020; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021; Sim, 2020; Sokal et al., 2020; Will, 2020), research is lacking on teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy while teaching face-to-face in a brick-and-mortar environment during the COVID-19 pandemic. By focusing on the problem of occupational stress, school systems can develop strategies to promote stress management to reduce burnout and encourage teacher efficacy (Ansley et al., 2021) among teachers on the frontline during the pandemic. This study will attempt to close the gap in the literature by examining teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy while teaching face-to-face on the frontline during the pandemic.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic in a public school district in South Georgia. At this stage in the research, self-efficacy was defined as teachers’ belief in their ability to perform behaviors necessary to succeed in a situation (Bandura,
The theory that guided this study was Bandura’s (1977) theory of self-efficacy. The theory of self-efficacy suggests that psychological symptoms alter the level of individual self-efficacy and personal efficacy determines the occurrence of coping behavior, how much effort will be exerted, and the sustainability of that effort when faced with obstacles or aversive experiences (Bandura, 1977).

**Significance of the Study**

As public-school systems reopened across the United States, teachers were snatched from the virtual realm and spirited back to their classrooms along the frontline of the pandemic, which created novel stressors (Copková, 2021; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021; Santamaria et al., 2021); teacher stress is a major contributor to low levels of self-efficacy (Gonzalez et al., 2017; Koomen & Zee, 2016; Mclean et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2020) and increased burnout (Bottiani et al., 2019; Gluschkoff et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2021). By focusing on teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy as frontline workers during the pandemic, this phenomenological study has the potential to shed light on the coping strategies teachers may or may not use teaching on the frontline. This study may benefit school administrators who develop stress management strategies for teachers that promote self-efficacy and stakeholder commitment, and it may benefit teachers who are exposed to such strategies. Understanding how interrelated teacher stress, self-efficacy, burnout, and coping can inform administrators of preventive and intervention strategies to support teachers (Herman et al., 2021). Furthermore, this study may be used on a wider scale to elevate awareness of teacher well-being which influences overall institutional achievement (Banerjee et al., 2017; Dicke et al., 2020; Klusmann et al., 2016).

**Theoretical**

This study was grounded in Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory and has the potential
to confirm Bandura’s theory in the lives of a familiar population facing a novel threat to teacher self-efficacy. Recent research suggests that teachers are not immune to the vulnerabilities created by the pandemic (Talidong & Toquero, 2020), such as increased work demands (Duan & Zhu, 2020), anxiety (Q. Li et al., 2020b; Wakui et al., 2021), stress (Santamaria et al., 2021), and fear (Ampofo et al., 2020), which can cause low self-efficacy (Gonzalez et al., 2017; Herman et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2020) and burnout (Prasojo et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2018). Teachers who doubt their ability to teach during the pandemic may be more likely to resist new coping behaviors (Sokal et al., 2020), and coping enhances self-efficacy, which can serve as a buffer between occupational stress (Karabatak & Alanoglu, 2019) and burnout (Zhu et al., 2018). Self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in people’s perception of the stressful events they attribute to their surroundings (Bandura, 1997), and if teachers doubt their ability to cope, their environment may seem more fearful than the actual potentially threatening event (Bandura, 1983). Individuals who judge themselves as incapable of managing potential threats approach those situations anxiously, which lowers their self-efficacy that they can perform (Bandura, 1983). Therefore, self-efficacy is vital to understand from a theoretical perspective (Herman et al., 2021) regarding the experience of teachers on the frontline during the pandemic to understand the coping strategies they may or may not implement.

**Empirical**

The empirical significance of this study is that it will close the gap in the empirical literature on teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy while teaching on the frontline in the classroom during the pandemic and contribute to the current literature on the experience of frontline workers during the pandemic. Although there are numerous studies on frontline workers during the pandemic regarding increased stress (Moore & Kolencik, 2020; Nie et al.,
2020; Taylor, 2020), fear (Amin, 2020; Galehdar et al., 2020), burnout (Joshi & Sharma, 2020; Soto-Rubio et al., 2020; Yıldırım & Solmaz, 2020), and reduced levels of self-efficacy (Bidzan et al., 2020; Xiong et al., 2020), research on frontline teachers is lacking. Only a small number of studies (Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021; Pressley, 2021a) found that frontline teachers, like frontline healthcare workers, experienced negative emotions in a brick-and-mortar environment during the pandemic. This study will attempt to close the gap in the empirical literature on the frontline teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic.

Practical

Based on current research, public school systems can implement stress management strategies (Embse et al., 2019; Necsoi, 2018; Yu et al., 2016;), provide emotional support (Berkovich et al., 2018; Maas et al., 2021), and create professional learning communities (Gilbert et al., 2018; J. Zhang et al., 2020; Zonoubi et al., 2017) to reduce teacher stress and foster teacher self-efficacy. Research suggests that principal leadership is also necessary to promote teacher self-efficacy (Gkolia et al., 2018; Polatcan et al., 2021; Valecx et al., 2020), reduce stress (Collie, 2021; Lambersky, 2016; Liu et al., 2018), and prevent teacher burnout (Ford et al., 2019; Kim, 2019; Player et al., 2017), but it was unclear if teacher self-efficacy enhanced teacher commitment to teaching. Principals should pursue leadership strategies that support the psychological well-being of teachers as teachers face the challenges in the modern classroom (Hu et al., 2019). This study may uncover efficacious strategies that teachers use to cope in adverse situations that school systems can use to foster teacher self-efficacy, reduce stress, and promote commitment for teachers in K-12 public school systems throughout the state of Georgia.
Research Questions

This transcendental phenomenological study is guided by one central research question and four sub-questions.

Central Research Question

What are teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Sub-Question One

What role does mastery experience play in teacher perceptions of self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Sub-Question Two

What role does vicarious experience play in teacher perceptions of self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Sub-Question Three

What role does verbal persuasion play in teacher perceptions of self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Sub-Question Four

What role does emotional arousal play in teacher perceptions of self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Definitions

1. CDC- The CDC or the Center for Disease Control is a United States federal agency responsible for protecting and disseminating information about public health (Kowitt et al., 2017).

3. **Frontline Workers**- Frontline workers are employees who are likely at greatest risk for work-related exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 because their work-related duties must be performed onsite, and their job responsibilities involve being in proximity of less than six feet to the public or co-workers (Center for Disease Control, 2020a).

4. **HIPAA**- The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, or HIPAA, is a federal law that created national standards to protect sensitive patient health information from being disclosed without the patient’s consent or knowledge (Center for Disease Control, 2018).

5. **Pandemic**- A pandemic is an event that represents a public health risk to other states through the international spread of disease, potentially requiring a coordinated international response (Ali Maher & Bellizzi, 2020).


7. **Self-Efficacy**- Self-efficacy refers to an individual’s belief in their capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance outcomes (Bandura, 1977).

8. **Social Constructivism**- The ontological assumption relates to the nature of reality through the concept of multiple realities and their characteristics (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

9. **Transcendental Phenomenology**- A phenomenology that describes the common meaning for individuals who experienced a common phenomenon through their lived experiences in relation to that phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
10. **WHO**- The World Health Organization is a recognized specialized agency of the United Nations concerned with the public health of the international community (Tanno et al., 2020).

**Summary**

The COVID-19 pandemic increased occupational stress among frontline workers (Du et al., 2020; Teo et al., 2021; Y. Wang et al., 2021a), and work-related stress is a primary culprit of low teacher self-efficacy (Gonzalez et al., 2017; Herman et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2020) and teacher burnout (Prasojo et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2018). The CDC defines frontline workers as individuals whose work-related duties are performed onsite, and job responsibilities involve being in proximity of less than six feet to the public or their co-workers (Center for Disease Control, 2020b). The CDC vaccine plan deemed teachers as essential frontline workers (Mclean, 2021), which indicates that teachers teaching in a classroom during the pandemic are frontline workers (Beames et al., 2021; Levinson et al., 2020; Mason, 2020; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021; Sim, 2020; Sokal et al., 2020; Will, 2020). Although research studies exist on the experience of frontline healthcare workers during the pandemic (Hu et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2020; Trumello et al., 2020; Vagni et al., 2020; Villar et al., 2021), research is lacking on the experience of frontline teachers during the pandemic. Research is needed on teachers’ experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic (Pressley, 2021b) because the sustained behaviors of frontline teachers are imperative to a successful educational response to the pandemic (Sokal et al., 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy while teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic in a public school district in South Georgia.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical framework and a systematic review of the literature on the lived experience of teachers teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first section presents a discussion of Bandura’s (1977) theory of self-efficacy followed by a synthesis of current literature on teacher self-efficacy during the pandemic along with literature on frontline workers in the context of teachers as frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the limited research on the teachers’ experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, this chapter presents a synthesis of the current literature regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the educational system, teacher self-efficacy during school closure, teacher self-efficacy regarding virtual instruction, the self-efficacy of frontline workers, and the self-efficacy of frontline teachers after school reopening during the pandemic. This chapter concludes with a summary identifying a gap in the literature that introduces a need for the current study.

Theoretical Framework

This section provides the theoretical framework that guided this research study. Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy (1977) provided the theoretical foundation of how this study was framed in describing teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The theory of self-efficacy provided a lens to describe teachers’ experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic, and it provided the foundation for the research questions of this study. Because individual belief in ability determines how much emotion a person experiences in a threatening
situation (Bandura, 1977), and since personal efficacy influences coping behavior when faced with obstacles (Bandura & Adams, 1977), the theory of self-efficacy was used to describe teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Theory of Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in their ability to perform behaviors necessary to succeed in a situation (Bandura, 1977) and can be regarded as a precursor to motivation and theoretically assumed to determine individual behavior (Holzberger & Prestele, 2021). Self-efficacy dictates how individuals feel, think, and act, and elevated self-efficacy levels have been conducive to coping measures such as perceiving difficult tasks as challenges rather than viewing them as threats (Rooij et al., 2019). In educational settings, teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs have been found to play a key role in their commitment and coping ability (Yin et al., 2020). An efficacy expectation is a belief that an individual can execute certain behaviors to achieve specific outcomes (Bandura, 1977), and perceived self-efficacy influences a person’s choice of activities, how much effort they will exert, and their persistence level in the face of adversity (Bandura, 1982; Bandura & Adams, 1977).

Individual perceptions of self-efficacy influence the type of anticipatory scenarios that people construct and then regurgitate (Bandura, 1989) while also stimulating and shaping individual goals, behaviors, and coping actions that are influenced by environmental conditions (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016). The ability to successfully perform and maintain behaviors that elevate the individual as successful negotiators of their environment is predicated on self-efficacy levels (Chesnut & Burley, 2015). Teacher self-efficacy is related to their persistence, enthusiasm, commitment, and classroom behavior (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Individuals
who have an elevated sense of self-efficacy envision successful experiences and cognitively
rehearse solutions to successfully navigate bourgeoning problems, while individuals who possess
a decreased sense of self-efficacy view themselves as inept and envision unsuccessful scenarios
concentrated on calamity (Bandura, 1989).

Individuals who have serious cognitive doubts about their capabilities either relax their
efforts or forfeit their actions, whereas people with a robust sense of self-efficacy exercise
greater effort to confront those same challenges (Bandura, 1982). Self-efficacy perceptions
influence an individual’s choice of activities (Bandura, 1982), and that perception gives birth to
individual futures born into the present, which guides and motivates behavior (Bandura, 2006).
Self-efficacy beliefs also determine how individuals view obstacles (Bandura, 1977) and whether
they think erratically or strategically, positively or negatively, the course of action they choose to
follow, the outcomes they expect their efforts to yield, and how much stress and anxiety they
experience in coping with threatening environmental demands (Bandura, 2000). Individuals with
low efficacy are easily dissuaded of the futility of their efforts in the face of difficulties and
quickly give up trying, while those with high levels of self-efficacy perceive obstacles as
surmountable through persistent effort and stay the course in the face of threatening situations
(Bandura, 1977). Teacher self-efficacy beliefs are related to their effort and persistence when
things do not go as planned in the face of obstacles (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009)
because people tend to evade activities that they believe exceed their coping capabilities but
perform activities they believe they are capable of handling (Bandura, 1982). Self-efficacy is
attained based on the following four sources of information (see figure 1): mastery experience,
vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal (Bandura, 1977).
Mastery Experience

Mastery experience or performance accomplishment is based on personal mastery of experiences, and individual accomplishment increases mastery expectations while repeated failures lower them (Bandura, 1977). Elevated self-efficacy expectations are developed through repeated success or exposure to unfavorable environmental stimuli, which reduces the negative connotations of that exposure (Bandura, 1977). The successful accomplishment of individual performance establishes a healthy belief in one's personal self-efficacy, but the failure of performance destabilizes that belief if that failure occurs before a sense of self-efficacy is formed (Bandura, 1983). Once an individual develops strong efficacy expectations through repeated mastery experiences or performance accomplishment, the negative impact of the occasional failure is likely to be diminished (Bandura, 1977). Individual failure overcome by determination can strengthen individual persistence, especially if one discovers through experience that even the most difficult situations can be mastered by that sustained effort (Bandura, 1977). The establishment of self-efficacy requires mastery experience in overcoming obstacles through sustained effort in the face of adversity (Bandura, 1983), which has significant implications for teacher development (Morris et al., 2017; Perkins Coppola, 2019; Tschannen-Moran, & McMaster, 2009) in the classroom because it results in higher motivation and lower burnout levels (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017a).

Vicarious Experience

Vicarious experiences refer to elevating self-efficacy by observing similar individuals persevering in a negative environment (Bandura, 2012; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016), but observing the failures of another individual lowers the observing individual’s judgment of their self-efficacy and undermines their efforts (Bandura, 1977). The impact of vicarious experience
on perceived self-efficacy is strongly influenced by the perceived similarity between observer and observed because the greater the assumed similarity, the more persuasive are the successes and failures of the observed (Bandura 1997). Hence, seeing others perform threatening activities without adverse consequences can generate cognitions in the observer that they can persevere in the same situation if they persist in their efforts (Bandura, 1977). Although perceived self-inefficacy causes individuals to approach intimidating situations anxiously and lower their belief that they will be able to perform in adverse situations (Bandura, 1989), if teachers observe other teachers successfully performing a teaching task, they are more apt to view the teaching task as manageable (Sheu et al., 2021; Tschan nen-Moran & McMaster, 2009) which influences their self-efficacy and coping behavior (Bandura, 1977) while shielding them from chronic burnout (Shoji et al., 2016).

**Verbal Persuasion**

Individuals are led, through verbal cues, to believe they can successfully navigate difficult situations that overwhelmed them in the past (Bandura, 1977). Verbal persuasion that teachers receive from other people, such as their administrators and co-workers, influences perceptions of self-efficacy, which was found to be a powerful source of efficacy among public-school teachers (Moradkhani & Haghi, 2017). Once people are persuaded to believe in themselves, they are more apt to persevere when faced with difficult situations because their resolve increases their chance of success (Bandura, 2012). Individuals who are verbally persuaded that they possess the capability to succeed in threatening situations are likely to exert greater efforts and persistence than if they continue to harbor cognitions of self-doubt when confronted with such adverse situations (Bandura, 1977). Verbal persuasion could be a simple pep talk from fellow teachers or feedback from a principal regarding teacher ability (Tschan nen-Moran et al., 1998). People who
are persuaded to believe they can exercise control over distressing stimuli display less emotional arousal and impairment in coping ability than individuals who do not believe they have personal control over difficult situations (Bandura, 1983) such as a pandemic. Persuasive boosts in perceived self-efficacy cause individuals to exert more effort to succeed, promoting a sense of personal self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, during the pandemic, teachers on the frontline need instructional guidance to ease their anxiety around teaching face-to-face instruction which may influence their self-efficacy during this challenging time (Pressley, 2021a) to help prevent burnout.

**Emotional Arousal**

Individuals also acquire self-efficacy from their physiological state stemming from emotional arousal (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016) because they rely partly on their emotional state when judging their capabilities. They interpret their responses to stress as signs of vulnerability to poor performance (Bandura, 1977). It is not an individual emotional reaction that is important but instead how they are perceived because individuals who have a high sense of self-efficacy are likely to view their state of arousal as positive, but individuals who experience self-doubts view their arousal as debilitating (Bandura, 1977). Stressful situations generally provoke emotional arousal, which influences perceived competency (Bandura & Adams, 1977), and emotional arousal is a fundamental source that can influence individual perceived self-efficacy in coping with stressful situations (Bandura, 1977). It is perceived that inefficacy in coping with potentially harmful events makes them fearsome (Bandura, 1983). By conjuring up fearful cognitions about their inability, individuals can trigger elevated levels of anxiety that greatly exceed the fear experienced during a genuinely threatening situation (Bandura, 1977). Individuals who perceive themselves as less vulnerable than previously assumed are less prone
to generate fearful thoughts in threatening situations (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, individuals may behave boldly in situations they perceive to be safe but retain self-doubt in less secure situations (Bandura, 1977). Stressful environments create emotional arousal that informs individual personal competency (Bandura & Adams, 1977), and new teaching experiences may cause these emotions for teachers (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009), which can lower self-efficacy and increase burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017c).

Although research lacks the self-efficacy of frontline teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, Bandura’s (1977) theory of self-efficacy will frame and guide this study by providing an understanding of how teachers experience self-efficacy while teaching face-to-face instruction in a classroom during COVID-19. The theory of self-efficacy guided the research questions of this study by focusing on the efficacious constructs of the theory. This study will attempt to provide additional support for the theory of self-efficacy by exploring the teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching on the frontline during the pandemic. This study will also add to the existing literature by inserting the experience of frontline teachers during the pandemic into the overall body knowledge on self-efficacy. Hopefully, the findings of this study will contribute to the existing literature on teacher self-efficacy within the efficacious constructs of mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal.

**Related Literature**

As the cases of infection and mortality continued despite several stringent measures taken by the medical community to eradicate the virus (Shah et al., 2020), frontline workers were called upon to continue providing services to the public despite exposure to negative psychological and emotional experiences while on the frontlines of the pandemic (Baloran, 2020). Healthcare workers may come to mind when mentioning frontline workers, but the CDC
also defines public school teachers as frontline workers (See Table 1) because their work-related duties are performed onsite, and job responsibilities involve being in proximity of less than six feet to the public or their co-workers (Center for Disease Control, 2021a). Many public-school systems across the United States partially resumed face-to-face instruction in Fall 2020 and continue to shift between virtual, hybrid, and in-person instruction (Pattison et al., 2021) in response to the pandemic. This shift propelled teachers to the frontline of COVID-19, where they may be subject to the same psychological symptoms as frontline healthcare workers (Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021), which can negatively influence their self-efficacy and coping ability and increase burnout (Pressley, 2021b).

**Table 1**

*Categories of Frontline Essential Workers Mapped to Standardized Industry Codes and Titles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017 NAICS Code</th>
<th>2017 NAICS Title</th>
<th>CISA v4.0 Sector</th>
<th>ACIP Recommended Vaccination Phase</th>
<th>ACIP Workforce Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6111xx</td>
<td>Elementary and Secondary Schools</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6112xx</td>
<td>Junior Colleges</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6113xx</td>
<td>Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6115xx</td>
<td>Technical and Trade Schools</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61171x</td>
<td>Educational Support Services</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Frontline essential workers (1b): Frontline workers likely at highest risk for work-related exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, because their work-related duties must be performed on-site and involve being in proximity of less than six to the public or co-workers (Center for Disease Control, 2021a). Adapted from the Center for Disease Control, 2021, by the Centers for Disease Control, (https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/categories-essential-workers.html). In the public domain.*
**COVID-19 and the Educational System**

Although the teaching profession has long been plagued with high rates of teacher burnout, attrition, stress, and excessive workloads (Cataudella et al., 2021), the COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented damage to the educational system on a global scale, and besides the enormous economic impact, the pandemic also created an unorthodox environment within all levels of education (Anderson et al., 2020; Aucejo et al., 2020; Vu et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic created the largest disruption of educational systems in human history (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021) because at least 124,000 public and private schools were closed due to the pandemic (Pattison et al., 2021), and school systems were forced to shift from face-to-face instruction to online learning (Osman, 2020), which isolated teachers from more than 220 million students (Ma et al., 2021). The new preventative measures to limit face-to-face exposure (Osman, 2020), also referred to as “Suspending Classes without Stopping of Learning,” were initiated by the Chinese Government (W. Zhang et al., 2020 p. 2) and adopted by K-12 institutions in the United States. However, these high expectations set by school systems may encourage teachers to foster their persistence as a result of the challenges posed by the school (Guidetti et al., 2018) which enhances teacher self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and reduces burnout (Pressley, 2021b; Sokal et al., 2020). Although the COVID-19 pandemic provided educational systems the opportunity to introduce new teaching methods (Dhawan, 2020), many teachers experienced stress and anxiety because of the implementation of those vastly different teaching methods (Middleton, 2020), and stress elicits emotional arousal, which influences self-efficacy and coping behavior in threatening situations (Bandura, 1977). Supporting teacher self-efficacy is important for schools because previous studies have found a negative correlation between
teacher self-efficacy and teacher burnout (Chesnut & Burley, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016; Zee & Koomen, 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic left teachers little time to prepare for continued instruction in the wake of school closures (Cho & Clark-Gareca, 2020; Dibner et al., 2020) and led many to question their teaching ability (Assuncao Flores & Cago, 2020) which increases stress and reduces coping ability leading to burnout (Richards et al., 2018). Reopening schools will be costly because smaller class sizes will be required to meet social distancing requirements in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, thereby requiring classroom alterations (Baker et al., 2020) which also causes stress and anxiety among teachers (Delgado-Gallegos et al., 2021; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021). Research is lacking on the symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression among frontline teachers during the pandemic (Pressley, 2021a), but they are prone to the same psychological symptoms (Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021; Pellerone et al., 2021; Santamaria et al., 2021) experienced by frontline healthcare workers (Savolainen et al., 2021; Villar et al., 2020).

The spread of the coronavirus poses a physical threat to the lives of frontline teachers. It was an outbreak accompanied by the propagation of anxiety, fear, and uncertainty, which also presents challenges to their psychological health (J. Zhou et al., 2021). Teachers during the pandemic suffer from stress, anxiety, and depression (Al Lily et al., 2020), and stress can decrease self-efficacy, which can lead to teacher burnout (Chesnut & Burley, 2015; Pressley, 2021b; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017b) and turnover throughout the public educational system (Herman et al., 2018). Many states faced the prospect of increased resignations or retirements among teachers (Kim et al., 2021). The pandemic requires more instructional hours for teachers (Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021), which may cause them to question their teaching ability since major
societal disruptions negatively influence teacher self-efficacy and coping ability (Malinen et al., 2019). Teaching is already a stressful profession (Herman et al., 2018). However, many emotional difficulties imply consequences for teachers in terms of their psychological well-being, and consequences such as stress, perceptions of contracting the coronavirus, and anxiety appear to have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic (Duan & Zhu, 2020; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2020) which may decrease their self-efficacy (Sokal et al., 2020) and place them at increased risk for burnout (Pressley, 2021b).

**Teacher Self-Efficacy and School Closure**

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and its rapid expansion throughout the world forced all countries to establish regulations based on social confinement (Tabernero et al., 2020), which removed teachers from their traditional environment through school closure, creating perceptions of uncertainty and disrupted relationships between teachers and parents (Kim & Ashbury, 2020). Many teachers reported negative parental feedback, generating negative relationships with parents (Kim & Ashbury, 2020). Verbal persuasion, a source of self-efficacy, is referred to as appraisal or evaluative feedback from others (Haverback, 2020; Watson & Marschall, 2019; Yada et al., 2019) and can increase perceptions of self-efficacy and coping ability when positive oral or written feedback is received (Regier, 2021; Webb & LoFaro, 2020), but negative feedback can also undermine perceptions of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Moradkhani and Haghi (2017) found verbal persuasion to be the most influential source of self-efficacy among Iranian teachers (N=213), and teacher self-efficacy is a powerful predictor of teacher burnout (Fathi & Saeedian, 2020).

The period of confinement during the school closure amid the COVID-19 pandemic had negative effects on the psychological state of teachers (Amri et al., 2020), and these distressing
events produced emotional distress and anxiety symptoms among teachers (Marelli et al., 2020), which decreases self-efficacy (Chesnut & Burley, 2015) and increases burnout (H. Chen et al., 2020). Amri et al. (2020) reported increased burnout during school shutdown among Moroccan teachers; however, Talidong and Toquero (2020) found that even though many Filipino teachers possessed a positive outlook during school closure, they were still susceptible to the anxieties produced by the pandemic. Furthermore, Marelli et al. (2020) found that the lockdown had a significant negative impact on the psychological and emotional well-being of 93 Italian teachers during school closure.

Self-efficacy beliefs influence the actions of teachers when confronted with potential threats (Tabernero et al., 2020) that may occur during a pandemic, and the effect of isolation on feelings of loneliness, vulnerability, and worry may leave teachers feeling less capable of performing, which exacerbates their existing fears (Marelli et al., 2020). Perceived self-efficacy can influence the choice of behaviors and expectations of eventual success, and it can also influence coping energies once they are introduced (Bandura, 1977). Fernández et al. (2020) indicated a strong correlation between lockdown and emotional distress, and distressful situations usually provoke emotional arousal, a self-efficacy source, that influences individual perceptions of personal competency, which influences the ability to cope with threatening situations (Bandura, 1977). Since teachers are not immune to the emotional effects, vulnerabilities, and uncertainties surrounding school closure (Talidong & Toquero, 2020), similar feelings of uncertainty may infect teachers as they engage in face-to-face instruction (Wakui et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2020), which may have negative repercussions on their self-efficacy, coping ability, and exacerbate burnout (Cheng & Lam, 2021; Copkova, 2021; Sánchez-Pujalte et al., 2021).
Teacher Self-Efficacy and Virtual Instruction

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted teachers at all levels by placing them within a technological realm where they had to quickly respond to the transition from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction (Carrillo & Flores, 2020), which increased their workload (MacIntyre et al., 2020) and led to self-efficacy and coping issues because they were ill-prepared (Dolighan et al., 2021; Toto & Limone, 2021). The challenges of the pandemic created new environmental demands on classroom teaching (Pozo-Rico et al., 2020) and magnified the importance of teacher self-efficacy (Toto & Limone, 2021) because self-efficacy is essential for dealing with COVID-19 stressors (Bidzan et al., 2020). The sudden shift to virtual instruction created stress and anxiety because many teachers lacked experience with technology (Cheng & Lam, 2021) which reduced self-efficacy levels (Kim & Ashbury, 2020) due to the absence of mastery experience (Haverback, 2020). The increased demands placed on many teachers as they learned to teach students virtually served as a primary stressor (Sokal et al. 2020) because many teachers were not familiar with technology (Dolighan & Owen, 2021; Pellerone et al., 2021) which can reduce their self-efficacy level (Cardullo et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2021; Truzoli et al., 2021) and increase burnout (Martínez-Ramón et al., 2021). Although many teachers reported increased anxiety due to the significant shifts from normal learning and teaching habits to virtual teaching (Q. Li et al., 2020a), once teachers successfully navigate online teaching through mastery experience, their self-efficacy level may increase (Haverback, 2020).

Many teachers mentioned that lack of support with new technology altered their coping ability (Carrillo & Flores, 2020), reducing self-efficacy because of the lack of verbal persuasion (Haverback, 2020). People’s perception of their coping capabilities plays a crucial role in their self-regulation of emotional states (Bandura, 2012). Shenoy et al. (2020) found increased fear
and anxiety levels among 20 teachers in Bangalore, India, when they moved to virtual classrooms, and Bottiani et al. (2019) suggested that job-related anxiety increases teacher burnout. Although a positive correlation exists between the pandemic and elevated fears among frontline workers (Barzilay et al., 2020; Rooij et al., 2019), perceived inefficacy in coping with that stress is what makes it fearsome (Bandura, 1983).

Virtual instruction has created a host of stressors for teachers (MacIntyre et al., 2020) that requires successful coping ability to prevent burnout (Bayani & Baghery, 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017a) which makes teacher self-efficacy the most critical construct in teacher competence (König et al., 2020). Virtual instruction is a considerable stress factor for teachers (Ansley et al., 2021), and prolonged stress increases teacher burnout (Roberts et al., 2020), but their perception of self-efficacy directly helps teachers continuing virtual instruction (Panisoara et al., 2020). Teachers’ perceived self-efficacy signifies their perceptions about their abilities to succeed in specific conditions (Bandura, 1977) and influences teacher action, exertion, and persistence in the face of those conditions (Granziera & Perera, 2019; König et al., 2020). Therefore, teacher self-efficacy is decisive during the pandemic (König et al., 2020) in coping with psychological factors (Mojsa-Kaja et al., 2015) attributed to coping ability and teacher burnout (Lee & Shin, 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017c).

Self-Efficacy of Frontline Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Research on the COVID-19 pandemic and frontline healthcare workers has been researched worldwide (Hu et al., 2020a; Labrague & de Los Santos, 2021; Miguel-Puga et al., 2021). The pandemic is a continuing public health crisis (Tang et al., 2021) that may provoke increased experiences of stress, fear of infection, and anxiety among frontline workers (Alshehri et al., 2020; Lai et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2020; Magner et al., 2020) which may diminish their self-
efficacy and entice burnout (Machado de Assis et al., 2021). Although social distancing and fear of infection have taken a toll on frontline workers (Ahsan et al., 2021; Joshi & Sharma, 2020), frontline personnel, such as healthcare workers and teachers, continue to carry out their work through different service delivery models despite those stressful environmental circumstances (Allen et al., 2020). As these frontline workers serve at the forefront of society during the pandemic, many are increasingly worried and fearful of contracting the infection due to exposure (Joshi & Sharma, 2020) which may influence their belief that they can execute a behavior to produce the desired outcome (Bandura, 1977) leading to lower self-efficacy, coping ability, and job burnout (Trumello et al., 2020). Frontline workers are being confronted with anxiety, stress, burnout, increased risk perceptions, and emotional distress during the pandemic (Middleton et al., 2020), reducing self-efficacy (T. Zhou et al., 2021).

Self-efficacy is a critical personal resource that enables frontline employees to face and overcome threatening occupational challenges and demands because their belief in their capabilities determines their approach to coping with those adverse work-related conditions (Ojo et al., 2021). When frontline workers believe they can master their job demands in the face of a threatening situation, they may overcome the threat, cope with the stress attached to those demands, and accomplish their occupational endeavors (Ojo et al., 2021), which increases self-efficacy and negates burnout. Burnout refers to emotional arousal associated with cognitions of frustration and powerlessness due to negative attitudes at work (Algunmeeyn et al., 2020), and, like the experiences of frontline teachers regarding increased responsibilities (MacIntyre et al., 2020), frontline medical workers who experienced an increase in job responsibilities reflected a higher rate of burnout (Zheng et al., 2020). Frontline workers observing the negative emotions of another worker can trigger similar emotions in themselves (Joshi & Sharma, 2020), leading to
fear, anxiety, and stress (Hu et al., 2020a), and the less efficacious an individual judges themself to be, the more fear they experience when they attempt to perform the threatening task (Bandura, 1983).

**Experiences of Stress Among Frontline Workers During the Pandemic**

Empirical research has demonstrated that frontline workers experienced heightened levels of severe stress during or immediately after the onset of pandemics (Di Tella et al., 2020; Carmassi et al., 2020) which can decrease self-efficacy (Mo et al., 2021; Shahrour & Dardas, 2020) and increase burnout (Afulani et al., 2021; Sriharan et al., 2021). Frontline workers face unprecedented levels of stress from the current COVID-19 pandemic (Malik et al., 2021; Sheares, 2020), and the stressful work environment of frontline workers cannot be underestimated (Magnavita et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020) because stress is negatively associated with self-efficacy (Liu & Aungsuroch, 2019) and positively correlated with burnout among frontline workers (Jose et al., 2020). Burnout is a behavioral response to chronic emotional stressors on the job and is exacerbated by personal inefficacy (Jose et al., 2020). Increased levels of stress (Huang et al., 2020; Kang et al., 2020; Sain & Mukherjee, 2021) was observed among workers in proximity of co-workers and directly involved at the frontline of the pandemic (Lai et al., 2020). Recent studies (Baloran, 2020; Moore & Kolencik, 2020; Xu et al., 2020) found a correlation between the pandemic and stress among frontline healthcare workers (Tummers et al., 2015), but self-efficacy served as a moderator to those psychological stressors (Omholt et al., 2017). Some frontline workers relied on persistence in coping with stress and managing their emotions while at work (Munawar & Choudhry, 2021). These coping strategies suggest their self-efficacy expectations were developed through mastery experience regarding exposure to unfavorable environmental stimuli, which reduced the negative impacts of that exposure.
Therefore, the negative association between stress and self-efficacy (Rayan, 2019) can be negated by perceived self-efficacy, which reduces emotional stress (Makara-Studzińska et al., 2020) and is a common indicator of psychological well-being among frontline healthcare workers and teachers (Yin et al., 2020).

**Risk Perceptions of Frontline Workers During the Pandemic**

The threat of contamination is extremely high due to the contagious nature of the virus compared to other diseases that frontline workers encounter daily (Shahzad et al., 2020), which exacerbates perceptions of fear (Allen & Cug, 2020; Thakur & Jain, 2020). Many frontline workers (Lin, 2020; Zheng et al., 2020), like frontline teachers (Ampofo et al., 2020; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021), fear being infected with COVID-19 and transmitting it to their family members (Gautam et al., 2020). Emotional threats refer to a psychological cognition characterized by irrational fears, extreme hostility, or persistent anxiety, and the COVID-19 pandemic provoked such perceptions in frontline workers (Kumar & Nayar, 2021; Shahzad et al., 2020), leading to burnout (Barello et al., 2020; Ismail et al., 2021). If frontline workers conjure up fear-provoking thoughts about their ineptitude, they can create elevated levels of anxiety that exceed the actual threatening situation (Bandura, 1977) of the pandemic, and lower self-efficacy has been implicated in maintaining such phobic behavior (Raeder et al., 2019). Teachers who have low levels of self-efficacy tend to see their work environment as full of dangers and emphasize the negative consequences of those perceived threats (Guidetti et al., 2018), which increases stress and teacher burnout (Chesnut & Burley, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017c).

The concept of fear is an adaptive behavioral response to the presence of perceived dangerous situations and threats resulting from the current pandemic, can produce chronic fearful cognitions that can become burdensome (Mertens et al., 2020) and not only cause frontline
workers to question their ability to perform but also cause burnout (B. Tan et al., 2020) and the fear of contamination (Alnazly et al., 2021). If frontline healthcare workers, like frontline teachers, view themselves as inefficacious in managing potential threats, they may approach that threatening situation anxiously, which subsequently lowers their sense of efficacy regarding their ability to function in that threatening situation (Bandura, 1983).

**Experiences of Anxiety Among Frontline Workers During the Pandemic**

COVID-19 was shown to increase mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression among frontline workers (Lai et al., 2020; Menon et al., 2021; Serrão et al., 2021), which lower self-efficacy (Hou et al., 2020) and increases burnout (Sumner & Kinsella, 2021). A recent extensive survey of frontline workers highly susceptible to the coronavirus infection ($N = 173$) revealed a prevalence rate of generalized anxiety at an alarming 44.7% (R. Li et al., 2020), similar to anxiety levels experienced among frontline teachers (Pressley, 2021b) as a result of anxiety associated with their working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bruyneel et al., 2021). Anxiety surrounding COVID-19 in the United Kingdom is ranked higher than physical well-being (Groarke et al., 2020), while a survey conducted by the Indian psychiatric society found a 20% rise in anxiety-related cases during COIVD-19 among frontline workers (Joshi & Sharma, 2020).

The self-efficacy theory suggests that although work stressors are determined by individual characteristics, previous experiences, and environmental factors (Troesch & Bauer, 2017), stress elicits emotional arousal, affecting perceived self-efficacy and coping behaviors (Bandura, 1977). Individual behaviors are influenced by generalized expectancies for control and the perceived capabilities to perform those behaviors (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Although many frontline workers experienced anxiety (Labrague & de Los Santos, 2020; Shen et al., 2021;
Simonetti et al., 2021), some coped with those emotions by facing and accepting the gravity of the situation (R. Li et al., 2020), which suggests a link between perceived self-efficacy, reduced anxiety (Tabernero et al., 2020), and teacher burnout (Shoji et al., 2016).

**Self-Efficacy of Frontline Teachers During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the psychological well-being of individuals across the United States (Passavanti et al., 2021), and frontline public-school teachers confronted with increased job demands and limited resources are not exempt from these stressful consequences (Anderson et al., 2021; Kim & Asbury, 2020). Frontline workers have been especially vulnerable to psychological risks such as elevated stress, risk perceptions, and anxiety (Di Giuseppe et al., 2021; Duncan et al., 2021), including those employed in infrastructure-related activities (Kane & Tomer, 2021), which raises questions around the implications for teachers (Kim et al., 2021). Similar to frontline healthcare workers, the COVID-19 pandemic may diminish teacher perceived self-efficacy (Pressley & Ha, 2021) and increase burnout (Sánchez-Pujalte et al., 2021).

The pandemic has forced adaptations that stimulate psychological states such as self-preservation, resilience, self-efficacy, and burnout (Shanafelt et al., 2020) among frontline teachers. The importance of face-to-face instruction is well-documented (Sharfstein & Morphew, 2020) and fundamental to student development (Pattison et al., 2021). However, frontline teachers who are required to show up to their jobs face direct health risks because they are frequently in proximity to students and are exposed to contaminants or other potentially hazardous conditions (Ampofo et al., 2020; Kane & Tomer, 2021). Teachers on the frontline teaching face-to-face instruction, like frontline healthcare workers, risk infection, the transmission of infection, and are confronted with unprecedented and unorthodox working
conditions (Manger et al., 2021), which may adversely influence self-efficacy and burnout (Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021; Pressley, 2021a).

Therefore, school environment intermingles with the four main constructs of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal, and may influence teacher self-efficacy (Fackler & Malmberg, 2016), which is imperative because teacher self-efficacy is negatively associated with burnout and positively associated with teacher commitment to teaching (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017c; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Mastery experience, in the school context, can be related to a positive classroom environment (Fackler et al., 2021). The vicarious experience can be associated with teacher observance of colleagues experiencing teaching under the same pandemic-related conditions (Fackler et al., 2021). Teachers can judge their capabilities concerning the attainment of other teachers in similar situations (Bandura, 1997), which can influence their perceived self-efficacy through vicarious experience (Clark & Newberry, 2019; El-Abd & Chaaban, 2020).

Verbal persuasion can be related to oral feedback from administration or fellow teachers (Fackler et al., 2021) and was found to be a powerful source of self-efficacy among teachers (Moradkhani & Haghi, 2017). Emotional arousal can be associated with the emotional, physical, and psychological job demands that may place an extra burden on teachers and contribute to the complexity and difficulty of their teaching tasks (Huang et al., 2019). Moradkhani and Haghi (2017) and Oplatka and Iglan (2020) found that teachers who interacted more with their co-workers when facing adverse occupational situations reported less stress, indicative of vicarious experience and verbal persuasion.

Although the presence of students in school may be essential (Caffo et al., 2020), the distressing conditions teachers have been faced with in the classroom during the pandemic have
not been entirely satisfactory (Santamaria et al., 2021) and have elicited stress, fear, and anxiety among teachers (Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021; Pittinsky, 2020). Throughout the pandemic, many frontline teachers have experienced increased job demands, uncertainty, negative perception of the teaching profession, and expressed concern for others’ well-being leading to increased experiences of stress and anxiety, exhaustion, and a lack of feeling valued as a professional (Kim et al., 2021) which may reduce teacher self-efficacy (Cataudella et al., 2021; Pressley & Ha, 2021) and entice burnout (Copková, 2021; Machado de Assis et al., 2021; Sanchez-Pujalte et al., 2021). Previous studies (Boujut et al., 2017; Lauermann et al., 2016; van der Want et al., 2019) found a negative correlation between teacher self-efficacy and burnout across multiple grade levels.

The reopening of public schools during the COVID-19 pandemic is a challenging issue that requires school districts to implement unorthodox safety measures such as mask-wearing and social distancing (Anderson et al., 2021), which ironically may encourage fears among teachers regarding new guidelines and behaviors (Fedorenko et al., 2021). Because of exposure on the job, frontline workers such as teachers (Beames et al., 2021) are faced with the threat of infection that may become traumatic when personal protective measures are not adequate (J. Zhou et al., 2020), which could reduce self-efficacy and entice burnout (Pellerone, 2021).

The new demands teachers face coming back to the classroom to teach face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic not only create new stressors (Collie, 2021; Delgado-Gallegos et al., 2021; Nabe Nielsen et al., 2021), but also may cause teachers to doubt their teaching ability which may lower self-efficacy (Sokal et al., 2020) and cause burnout (El Helou et al., 2016). It is perceived self-inefficacy in coping with potentially threatening events that make them fearsome (Bandura, 1977) but returning to work during the pandemic may
improve self-esteem (Modini et al., 2016; W. Tan et al., 2020) and negate burnout (Sokal et al., 2020). Therefore, despite the uncertainty of teaching on the frontline (Ozamiz-Etxebarria, 2021), teachers may have ample opportunities for mastery experience, which may strengthen self-efficacy and coping ability (Haverback, 2020) and prevent burnout (El Helou et al., 2016; Pressley, 2021b).

Unlike frontline medical workers, teachers engaged in face-to-face instruction remain unaware of the medical conditions of the students in their classroom, which may also elicit feelings of stress (Santamaria et al., 2021), anxiety (Pittinsky, 2020), and fear of exposure (Amofo et al., 2020). Hyde (2020) found that adolescents appear more likely to be asymptomatic and have the potential to play a role in community transmission because they are in close contact settings such as schools, further exacerbating teacher stress, fear, and anxiety (Federkeil et al., 2020; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021) which can decrease self-efficacy (Tang et al., 2021) and lead to burnout (Machado de Assis et al., 2021).

Therefore, teachers engaged in face-to-face instruction are confronted with an environment where teaching spaces do not allow people to maintain six feet of distance (Allen et al., 2020) from students who do not appear to be less infectious than adults (Hyde, 2020). Numerous studies (Allen & Cug, 2020; Shaukat et al., 2020; Moore & Kolencik, 2020; Serrao et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020b) exist on the psychological experiences of frontline healthcare workers, but research is needed on teachers to understand better their experiences with self-efficacy as frontline workers teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic (Cataudella et al., 2021; Pressley & Ha, 2021; Rabaglietti et al., 2021).
Experiences of Stress Among Frontline Teachers During the Pandemic

Like frontline healthcare workers, public school teachers are not immune to the taxing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Santamaria et al., 2021), and many have experienced high volumes of stress (Delgado-Gallegos et al., 2021). Initial studies on teacher self-efficacy during the pandemic suggest that many teachers experienced a decrease in self-efficacy levels (Pressley & Ha, 2021) related to increased teacher stress (Gobbi et al., 2021; Rabaglietti et al., 2021) and burnout (Pellerone, 2021; Pressley, 2021b), but these studies are limited because they focus on pre-pandemic stressors that may be exacerbated rather than focusing on the fresh experience of teachers in a classroom during the pandemic (Lambert et al., 2020; Ziauddeen et al., 2020).

The problem of teacher stress, especially during periods of uncertainty like the COVID-19 pandemic, manifests across all segments of education (Koutsimani et al., 2019) and often results in exhaustion and lower job fulfillment, which leads to an increased risk of developing adverse psychological effects (De Klerk et al., 2021), such as diminished self-efficacy (Machado de Assis, 2021; Pellerone, 2021; Tang et al., 2021) and increased burnout (Copková, 2021; Gobbi et al., 2021; Sánchez-Pujalte, 2021; Zadok-Gurman et al., 2021). The pandemic created an educational environment where teachers must conscientiously manage their stress (Ansley et al., 2021) because reduced self-efficacy and burnout is the final stage in a chain reaction caused by chronic occupational stress (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). Many teachers have faced psychological challenges such as deteriorating mental health, high-stress levels (De Klerk et al., 2021), increased work hours, and experienced a lack of consideration for their ideas on coping with teaching during the pandemic (Ramrathan, 2020), which can reduce self-efficacy and increase burnout. Pandemic-related teacher stressors are linked to poorer mental health, coping
ability, and teaching ability (Baker et al., 2020), suggesting that teachers must adapt and self-regulate mentally, physically, and emotionally (Jandrić et al., 2020).

Previous studies (Lambersky, 2016; Sliskovic et al., 2020; Yin et al., 2020) found a negative relationship between stress and self-efficacy among teachers, while a stressful school environment increases teacher burnout (Molero Jurado et al., 2019; Richards et al., 2018). Between heavy workloads, new safety precautions, and the challenge of meeting the needs of their students, many teachers reported high levels of pandemic-related stress (Herman et al., 2020). Stressful situations generally provoke emotional arousal and can affect perceived self-efficacy since individuals rely on their state of physiological arousal in judging their vulnerability to stress (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, the pandemic has increased the job-related stress of frontline healthcare workers (Babore et al., 2020; Moore & Kolencik, 2020; Taylor, 2020); it has also significantly increased the job-related stress of frontline teachers as well (Nabe-Neilson et al., 2021). Particularly, pandemic related public health measures have been shown to negatively accelerate individual stress levels (Matiz et al., 2020), and public-school teachers not only have to manage their teaching responsibilities, but now they must also adhere to new preventative measures to hinder the spread of infection in their classroom (Honigsfeld & Nordmeyer, 2020; Nabe-Neilson et al., 2021) which causes additional stress for teachers (Myung et al., 2021).

Teachers face new unorthodox classroom demands of social distancing (Pressley, 2021a; Wakui et al., 2021). They are confronted with stressful working conditions such as demand for student achievement, excessive workload, and overcrowded classes making the teaching profession vulnerable to decreased self-efficacy (Machado de Assis et al., 2021) and burnout (Hermen et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2021). Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. (2021) found that 50.6% of the
teachers suffered from stress, and 14.5% reported severe stress among 1,633 Spanish teachers from compulsory and non-compulsory schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Stress is intensified in hectic situations where job demands are high, and resources are low (Antoniou et al., 2020; Bottiani et al., 2019; Cervantes-Guevarra et al., 2021; Ramberg et al., 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018), contributing to teacher burnout, attrition, and stress-related health concerns (Taylor et al., 2021). Teachers are responsible for providing students with lessons like they did prior to the pandemic (Pressley & Ha, 2021; Santamaria et al., 2021). However, teachers are expected to unrealistically alter their instruction to meet the stressful demands of preventative classroom restrictions while teaching students face-to-face during the pandemic (Pressley, 2021a), which may lead to lower self-efficacy levels (Hu et al., 2020b) and burnout from increased workloads (Nordhall et al., 2020).

Teacher self-efficacy is influenced by the classroom environment (Hajovsky et al., 2020b), shaping classroom management (Lazarides et al., 2020), and teachers who feel more efficacious in their ability to manage classroom behaviors are more likely to teach more effectively (Herman et al., 2017). Wilson et al. (2020) found that the teaching environment played a crucial role in maintaining teacher self-efficacy, and the relationships that teachers form within that environment may also influence self-efficacy levels (Siciliano, 2016) which is indicative of the efficacious sources of vicarious experience and verbal persuasion (Haverback, 2020). Because many school districts have implemented socially distanced classrooms amid the COVID-19 pandemic (Pressley, 2021a), teachers in face-to-face settings may have limited opportunities to increase their self-efficacy through vicarious experience.

Although the pandemic has increased teacher pressure (Wang et al., 2021b) and created a stressful classroom environment (Mirzaie et al., 2021; Lizhi, et al., 2021), it is teacher
perceptions of those excessive stressful demands that could stifle their self-efficacy (Lazarides et al., 2020). With that in mind, there is no shortage of stressors for teachers who returned to the classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic (Weinert et al., 2021), and public school district leaders must not lose sight of those pandemic-related stressors faced by teachers (Baker et al., 2020), which is a relevant topic to research (Cappe et al., 2021) because stress influences teacher self-efficacy and self-efficacy influences burnout (Herman et al., 2018).

**Risk Perceptions of Frontline Teachers During the Pandemic**

In addition to frontline healthcare workers, there are many other types of workers who are at increased risk of COVID-19 infection because they are in proximity to members of the public (Burdorf et al., 2020; Nicholas et al., 2021), like public school teachers (Beames et al., 2021) teaching face-to-face instruction to students in a brick-and-mortar environment. Public school teachers were placed in a situation similar to frontline healthcare workers because they cared for students and were also responsible for infection control in schools while being at risk of infection from those students (Ampofo et al., 2020; Weinert et al., 2021; Yoo et al., 2021).

Many teachers raised concerns over their health and safety because they viewed the reopening of schools for full face-to-face instruction as too risky (Wrighton & Lawrence, 2020), and although teachers with a higher risk perception showed a stronger adoption of disease prevention measures, they also reflected lower self-efficacy levels (Tang et al., 2021). Chadwick and McLoughlin (2021) found among 184 Irish teachers that 95% socially distanced themselves at school, 98% wore a protective mask, and 93% rearranged their classroom to socially distance students, but 94% reported those preventative measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus reduced their belief in their ability to teach. Increased fear of COVID-19 was associated with
increased psychological distress (Chakraborty, 2020; Labrague & de Los Santos, 2020; Nica et al., 2020), which can decrease self-efficacy (Birhanu et al., 2021).

Teachers, like frontline healthcare workers, encounter multiple social contacts as part of their daily work routine, which includes physical proximity to students (Ampofo et al., 2020; Lizhi et al., 2021; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021), and many teachers are not convinced they will be safe on campus teaching face-to-face instruction in a classroom (Kim et al., 2021; Weinert et al., 2021). Teachers may experience increased risk perceptions about being infected with the coronavirus or being confronted with an outbreak in school (Wakui et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021b) which can reduce self-efficacy (Tang et al., 2021) and increase burnout (Dabrowski, 2020). A recent National Public Radio poll revealed that 77% of teachers are worried about risking their health returning to the classroom to teach face-to-face (Kamenetz, 2020).

Meanwhile, a study from Arab countries indicated that the pandemic had caused severe anxiety among teachers, diminishing their ability to teach (Al Lily et al., 2020) and exacerbating fears of contracting the coronavirus (Mertens et al., 2020), and causing the infection of family members (Nicholas et al., 2021).

Statistics reveal that teachers encounter numerous students every day and have more social interactions than frontline workers in other professions, thereby placing them at greater risk of contracting the coronavirus (Ampofo et al., 2020). Since teachers on the frontline have an increased risk of exposure (Ampofo et al., 2020; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021), and many frontline workers fear for their safety (Tayyib & Alsolami, 2020), they are at increased risk of experiencing self-efficacy issues, coping impediments, and burnout (Guidetti et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2021). As schools transition from virtual instruction to hybrid instruction, many teachers argue that vaccines alone are not enough to minimize teacher risk and seek assurances that
schools will not balk at mandating mask-wearing, social distancing, and other safety measures (Racey et al., 2021). Teacher assurances are related to their fear of personal infection and infecting family members, along with disrupting their social well-being and occupational functioning (Brooks et al., 2020; Thombs et al., 2020).

Teachers are vulnerable frontline workers that have significant risk perceptions about in-person teaching (Košir et al., 2021; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021; Pressley et al., 2021a), and teaching within the confines of a brick-and-mortar environment during the pandemic places them in conditions of unfamiliarity and uncertainty (Ziauddeen et al., 2020), which may increase their risk perception. For instance, hundreds of teachers in Chicago did not show up for the first day of school, and many seemed more scared of teaching face-to-face instruction than being terminated (Abuleo, 2021), while some worried how they would cope with people in proximity or that test positive for COVID-19 (Schemer, 2020). The Ghana National Association of Teachers, the National Association of Graduate Teachers, the Teachers and Educational Workers Union, and the Coalition of Concerned Teachers emphatically stated that they were against reopening schools because of the potential risk to teachers (Ampofo et al., 2020).

Similar to the risk perceptions experienced by frontline healthcare workers (Hu et al., 2020; Labrague & de Los Santos, 2021; Villar et al., 2021), many teachers view teaching face-to-face instruction as a health risk to their own lives and their family members (Ampofo et al., 2020; Vouriot et al., 2021) because it is virtually impossible to create six feet of distance between students as more return to the classroom for in-person instruction (Tupper & Colijn, 2021). However, unlike frontline medical workers who are cognizant of the medical certainties of their clientele, teachers in a traditional environment are confronted with a cramped atmosphere filled with uncertainties regarding the medical conditions of their students (Ampofo
These uncertainties may create a fear of infection (Cheng & Lam, 2021; Tang et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021b) comparable to those experienced by frontline medical workers (Chersich et al., 2020; Khattak et al., 2021; Kirkman, 2021). Greater severities of fear regarding COVID-19 infection have been associated with lower levels of self-efficacy (Yildirim & Guler, 2020) and increased burnout among frontline workers (Allen & Cug, 2020; S. Li et al., 2020).

Chronic emotional work stressors such as fear could negatively influence self-efficacy and coping ability leading to teacher burnout (Li, 2020; Zhu et al., 2018).

Therefore, teacher risk perception regarding infection at work and transmitting it from work to home may be substantial among teachers teaching face-to-face instruction (Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021), and merely notifying teachers of the fluctuating federal and state guidelines may not be enough to quell that risk perception (Wakui et al., 2021). Teachers must be fully prepared and psychologically ready to combat cognitive risk perceptions of teaching during the pandemic (Ampofo et al., 2020) because their self-efficacy may be influenced by perceptions of their environment, which could make coping more difficult (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016), which increases the likelihood of burnout (Zhu et al., 2018) due to prolonged exposure of COVID-related stress (Sánchez-Pujalte et al., 2021).

**Experiences of Anxiety Among Frontline Teachers During the Pandemic**

Although COVID-19 vaccines have been developed (Brooks et al. 2020), 185,291,530 confirmed cases with 4,010,834 fatalities have been recorded globally (Yoo et al., 2021), and public-school systems continue to be disrupted (Stachteas & Stachteas, 2021), resulting in high levels of anxiety and burnout among many teachers (Ozamiz -Etxebarria et al., 2021). Anxiety is prevalent among frontline workers (Tasnim et al., 2021), and teachers engaged in face-to-face instruction may exhibit similar symptoms (Q. Li et al., 2020a; Q. Li et al., 2021b; Ozamiz-
Etxebarria et al., 2021), which could influence perceptions of self-efficacy (Huang et al., 2021) and invite burnout (Cho et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021; Sokal et al., 2020).

Numerous emotional difficulties imply consequences for teachers in terms of their psychological well-being, such as frustration, anxiety, uncertainty, and depression, which appear to have increased during the COVID-19 epidemic (Duan & Zhu, 2020; Pressley & Ha, 2021), and some teachers required emotional and psychological support (Collie, 2021). On the other hand, teachers with high efficacious convictions experience higher job satisfaction which increases their sense of well-being (Baluyos et al., 2019; Cataudella et al., 2021). Many teachers have experienced anxiety about returning to the classroom to teach face-to-face instruction (Pittinsky, 2020; Pressley, 2021), and anxiety was the most frequently mentioned emotion among teachers (Wakui et al., 2021) regarding in-person instruction.

When schools reopened for face-to-face instruction, although not trained in infection control, teachers had the additional responsibility of checking students' temperatures, determining their suspected symptoms, directing students to wear masks, and ensuring social distancing to prevent the spread of the coronavirus on campus (Yoo et al., 2021). These additional occupational tasks likely imposed a severe psychological burden on many frontline teachers engaged in face-to-face instruction and increased their symptoms of anxiety which can decrease self-efficacy and increase burnout (Amri et al., 2020; Pressley, 2021b). There have been numerous reports on the psychological effects of COVID-19 (Lu et al., 2020; Verma & Mishra, 2020; Vindegaard & Benros, 2020; Y. Wang et al., 2021b), and teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic has increased anxiety levels among many teachers (Q. Li et al., 2020a) which may influence their ability to make efficacious decisions (Asmundson & Taylor, 2020).
Wakui et al. (2021) found that many teachers reported experiences of infection-related anxiety regarding face-to-face instruction among 263 primary and middle school teachers in Japan. Anxiety leads to psychological issues and reduces work efficiency (Zhou et al., 2018), which may negatively influence self-efficacy and coping and cause teachers to experience symptoms such as burnout (Cao et al., 2018; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). However, teacher self-efficacy is a predictor of higher engagement and lower burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017a) because it influences the way individuals evaluate their ability at work, and the more teachers believe in their ability, the more devoted they will be to achieve professional tasks (Guidetti et al., 2018). Although teachers expressed COVID-19 related anxiety regarding new teaching demands, parent communication, and administrative support (Santamaria et al., 2021), teacher anxiety about face-to-face instruction was exacerbated because of their uncertainty of how students would socially distance, what kind of protective equipment would be available, and how schools would be sanitized (Pittinsky, 2020; Weinert et al., 2021).

Ironically, due to the anxiety of in-person instruction, 74% of teachers in Illinois preferred hybrid instruction over full face-to-face instruction (Cullotta & Sherry, 2020). Previous studies (Akhter et al., 2016; De Clercq et al., 2018; Fitzpatrick et al., 2020) found a negative correlation between teacher self-efficacy and anxiety but indicated a positive relationship between COVID-19 and anxiety (Nikcevic et al., 2021; Warren et al., 2021). Since COVID-19 can heighten anxiety levels (Peteet, 2021), which can disrupt wellbeing at work (Savolainen et al., 2021), frontline teachers may experience lower efficacy and coping ability because of the new challenges of teaching face-to-face instruction which could lead to teacher burnout (Hoang, 2020; Martínez-Ramón et al., 2021; Sánchez-Pujalte et al., 2021; Zadok-Gurman et al., 2021).
Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in frontline workers being called upon to continue their work-related endeavors despite the considerable health risk posed by the pandemic (Allen et al., 2020). Similar to frontline healthcare workers, public school teachers initially tasked with an unfamiliar concept of virtual teaching because of school closures (Allen et al., 2020) were placed on the frontline as more schools reopened for face-to-face instruction. Frontline healthcare workers and frontline teachers cared for others at risk of COVID-19 and played a role in preventing the spread of the coronavirus and experienced symptoms of stress, anxiety, and had to avoid becoming infected to prevent infecting their families and co-workers (Yoo et al., 2021). The problem is that frontline workers during the pandemic have experienced severe psychological stressors that decrease self-efficacy and increase burnout (Cataudella et al., 2021; Martínez-Ramón et al., 2021), but little is known about frontline teachers’ experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic. Self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in teacher coping ability and burnout (Guidetti et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017b; Smetackova, 2017), and recent literature suggests a link between the pandemic and perceived self-efficacy (Barzilay et al., 2020; Machado de Assis et al., 2021; Rabaglietti et al., 2021; Talidong & Toquero, 2020).

As schools in the United States continue to fully reopen, most current research studies (Carrillo & Flores, 2020; König et al., 2020; Shenoy et al., 2020) concerning the pandemic revolve around the experiences of frontline healthcare workers and teacher experiences with virtual instruction. Research on the teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction in a traditional learning environment is severely lacking, creating a gap in the literature. Therefore, research on teachers’ lived experiences with self-efficacy teaching face-to-
face instruction during the pandemic is needed to identify successful coping mechanisms that encourage teacher commitment during the pandemic.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe teachers’ experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic in a public school district in South Georgia. Although numerous research studies exist on the experience of frontline healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Labrague & de Los Santos, 2021; Manzano & Ayala, 2021; Nie et al., 2020; Tomar et al., 2020; Veeraraghavan & Srinivasan, 2020), research is lacking on teachers teaching in a classroom during the pandemic (Pressley, 2021b) despite the fact that they are frontline workers (Levinson et al., 2020; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021; Sim, 2020; Sokal et al., 2020; Will, 2020). This research study will provide frontline teachers an opportunity to communicate what is “meaningful and essential in its phenomenal and experiential components” as they teach face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic to understand their lived experience with self-efficacy (Moustakas, 1994, p. 93). This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the research design, research questions, setting, participants, research procedures, the role of the researcher, data collection methods, and the data analysis measures. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the trustworthiness and ethical considerations of this research study, followed by an overall chapter summary.

Research Design

Qualitative research places the observer in the world and brings that world to life by turning it into a series of representations through a set of interpretative and material practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) to understand the meaning individuals or groups attribute to a human problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative design is framed because it begins with
assumptions and utilizes a certain procedure to inform the study of research problems (Creswell & Poth, 2018) aimed at understanding how people or groups construct meaning (Patton, 2015). Qualitative research is also personal because what entices a researcher to a specific study matters, and qualitative researchers serve as the primary instrument of research (Patton, 2015), collecting data themselves in the natural setting where participants experience the problem of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative design was the best choice for this study because it explores how teachers construct meaning (Patton, 2015) of their experiences with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. I chose this design to understand the meanings teachers attribute to their experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and to understand how they make sense of their world (Patton, 2015) as teachers.

Edmund Husserl is regarded as the intellectual founder of phenomenology (van Manen, 2014). Husserl focused on discovering meanings and essences found in individual knowledge because, from a transcendental perspective, all objects of knowledge originate from experience (Moustakas, 1994). The term phenomenon originates from the Greek word *phaenesthai*, which means to reveal itself, and what reveals itself provides the motivation for experience and the creation of fresh knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl’s phenomenology is transcendental in nature because it uses descriptions of individual consciousness or objects the way they appear and clings to what emerges through subjective and objective acts (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is the initial form of knowledge because it begins with things themselves while attempting to alleviate all forms of presuppositional knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological design was chosen for this study because it focuses on how people experience what they experience in relation to a shared phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenology
provides first-hand knowledge of the teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic and allowed me the opportunity to explore how those teachers understand and made sense of their experience because all knowledge must conform to experience (Moustakas, 1994).

A transcendental phenomenology is a study of the appearance of things or a phenomenon just as they reveal themselves to our individual consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). The transcendental approach follows the investigative path of epoché, reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis to obtain the meanings and essences of the phenomenon or lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). Presuppositions and prejudgments were set aside by me to freshly revisit the phenomena in the epoché state of openness (Moustakas, 1994). Although epoché does not eliminate all the voices of the past, it releases individuals from the bondage of the primal mindset they use as a foundation for truth and reality (Moustakas, 1994). Through reduction, each experience was considered equal while I bracketed my presuppositions to remain in a state of conscious openness throughout this reflective process when developing a complete textural description of the meaning and essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The imaginative variation allowed me to develop structural themes from textual descriptions while also realizing the arrival of numerous possibilities related to the essence and meaning of lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, transcendental phenomenology seeks the essence and meaning of a phenomenon by integrating the textural and structural descriptions to create a holistic account of the essences of the lived experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

A transcendental phenomenological approach was chosen for this study because it focuses on teachers’ descriptions of their experiences as they appear in their consciousness, which will explain the meanings and essences of their lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The
transcendental approach allowed me to set aside my biases and focus on the descriptions of teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic. Furthermore, a transcendental phenomenology was chosen because a textural-structural description can be created on what teachers experiences and how they experience teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic, illuminating the “what” of the teacher experience in developing an understanding of “how” they experienced the shared phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions

This transcendental phenomenological study will be guided by the following research questions:

Central Research Question

What are teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Sub-Question One

What role does mastery experience play in teacher perceptions of self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Sub-Question Two

What role does vicarious experience play in teacher perceptions of self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Sub-Question Three

What role does verbal persuasion play in teacher perceptions of self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Sub-Question Four
What role does emotional arousal play in teacher perceptions of self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Setting and Participants**

Although there are no advanced criteria for locating and selecting prospective research participants, it is imperative that all participants experience the phenomenon of the study (Moustakas 1994), and site selection often revolves around the chosen research design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It was essential to use participants from different public schools to determine if all participants experienced the central phenomenon the same way.

**Sites**

The sites for this study were two public schools located in South Georgia. Coastal Middle School (pseudonym) and Charter Middle School (pseudonym) are part of the Coastal School District and are home to approximately 172 teachers and 3,000 students from diverse backgrounds. The leadership structure of both schools revolves around district and building level management. The superintendent oversees both schools at the district level, and each school has a leadership hierarchy at the building level consisting of a principal, assistant principals, lead teachers, and department heads. Although the participants may be located at a single site (Creswell & Poth, 2018), two schools were selected to gain a deeper understanding of teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy. Because Coastal Middle School and Charter Middle School partially resumed in-person instruction in Fall 2020 and will continue to offer hybrid instruction throughout the 2021-2022 school year, teachers in both schools experienced the common phenomenon of teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic. Coastal District requires staff and students to wear masks while on campus. Because Coastal Middle School and Coastal Charter Middle School are part of Coastal School District, both schools are required to adhere to
the district’s mask mandate and social distancing policy. The rationale for choosing Coastal Middle School and Charter Middle School was that they had the most students returning from virtual learning since Coastal School District partially reopened compared to the nine elementary schools and one high school in the district that continue to have a disproportionate number of students enrolled in virtual learning, thereby significantly reducing their in-person student population on campus. Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of teachers lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic, Coastal Middle School and Charter Middle School were selected because they represent a more accurate teacher-student ratio indicative of traditional in-person instruction.

Participants

Because researchers suggest phenomenological studies should have a specific participant range (Creswell & Poth, 2018), the number of participants in this study ranged from 12-15 (Ellis, 2016) public school teachers in grades 6-8 that taught face-to-face instruction in a classroom at least three blocks a day. It is essential that all participants experience the phenomenon and understand the nature of its meaning because this phenomenological study focuses on descriptions of how participants experience what they experience (Moustakas, 1994) regarding self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The more diverse the participants, the more difficult it would have been for me to discover common experiences and themes and synthesize the essence of the phenomenon of all participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Researcher Positionality

My motivation for conducting this phenomenological study emanated from my desire to give public school teachers a voice through their lived experience with self-efficacy while
teaching face-to-face instruction in the classroom during the pandemic. As an educator, I have experienced a phenomenal roller coaster ride in a public-school classroom. This cyclonic ride spans 20 years from student teaching through many ups and downs to the current COVID-19 pandemic. During my freshman year in college, an old but distinguished history professor sparked my interest in history and teaching as he interestingly rambled on about the history of the Old South. I changed my major to history, graduated with a history degree, obtained a teaching certificate, and entered a public school system as a social studies teacher. Soon after entering a high school classroom, I knew I had made the right choice. Throughout my journey, I taught in some school systems where teachers had a voice and in other systems where our voices fell on deaf ears. As the years passed, I watched neighboring teachers come and go and often wondered the reasons why. Why did some seem happy, and some appear not so happy? It was as if teachers were subconsciously talking, but no one was paying attention. My motivation for this study is grounded in my belief that public school teachers are underrepresented during the pandemic, and I want to give this silent minority a voice. However, I understand that I must elucidate my premeditated perceptions before attempting to comprehend something that is not my own (Moustakas, 1994). In addition to my practical presuppositions and biases, I also have several philosophical assumptions.

**Interpretive Framework**

This study was phenomenological because I sought to describe the common meaning of a lived experience of several individuals who experienced a common phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and it was rooted in the description of that experience because description illuminates the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Social constructivism is an interpretative framework where individuals attempt to understand and make sense of their world through
unique personal experiences (Patton, 2015). These meanings are varied in nature and required me to seek the complexity of participants’ views because each person’s way of making sense of the world was valid and worthy of respect (Patton, 2015). The objective of research in social constructivism is to focus on participants’ views of a particular situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, because I wanted to understand the meanings frontline teachers have about the “world in which they live and work,” social constructivism served as the interpretive framework for this phenomenological research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 34).

**Philosophical Assumptions**

As a current public-school educator and researcher, I understand that I brought certain philosophical assumptions to this qualitative research study, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated those assumptions. Therefore, I needed to disclose my philosophical assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and ultimately set those assumptions aside to “suspend everything that interferes with fresh vision” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 86) when conducting my study. My philosophical assumptions were presented as ontological, epistemological, and axiological in nature.

**Ontological Assumption**

Ontological assumptions in qualitative research recognize that people have multiple realities of a phenomenon or situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My ontological assumption was that I believe in the existence of subjective reality, and a common meaning can be found by examining that subjective reality. I recognize that teachers have different realities about teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, but I also believe that a common meaning can emerge through those different realities. As a researcher, I attempted to cluster multiple perspectives into themes which I used to create a textural description of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).
Epistemological Assumption

Epistemology is concerned with the basis of knowledge and relates to how I know truth or reality (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017) while attempting to get as close to participants as I can to gather their subjective experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Building relationships with participants allowed me to understand better the world in which participants inhabit (Creswell & Poth) when obtaining their views of their lived experience in their natural teaching environment because the opportunity for discovery is limitless (Moustakas, 1994). My epistemological assumption was that relationship-building promotes an understanding of truth and reality among individuals developed in that relationship.

Axiological Assumption

Axiological assumptions are the values a researcher brings to the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I disclosed those values and biases in addition to recognizing the role they played in data collection and analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although my parents shaped my values, they were further developed along with my educational biases through my experience as a public-school teacher. However, as the researcher, I bracketed my presuppositions to enter a state of epoché by setting aside any preconceived knowledge, notions, and biases about the phenomenon to capture the individual participants’ descriptive experiences (Moustakas, 1994). As the human research instrument, I engaged in the epoché throughout my study every time presumptions crept into my consciousness to ensure my receptiveness to openness (Moustakas, 1994).

Researcher’s Role

Because I am an educator during the COVID-19 pandemic, I am familiar with the daily grind of teaching students while social distancing, wearing facial coverings, constantly using
hand sanitizers, and wiping down student desks between every class change. However, I bracketed out my lived experience before exploring the lived experience of the prospective participants in this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research is a personal endeavor where the researcher is the primary instrument of investigation (Patton, 2015). I served as the human instrument in this transcendental phenomenological study. However, phenomenological research is personal and brings a researcher to a topic (Patton, 2015). I engaged in the epoché to set aside any presuppositions, biases, and prejudgments to freshly revisit things within the realm of conscious openness (Moustakas, 1994).

Although epoché does not eliminate all the voices of the past, it releases individuals from the bondage of the primal mindset they use as a foundation for truth and reality (Moustakas, 1994), and I embraced this concept by describing my own experience with the phenomenon to bracket that experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, in disclosing a description of my experience with the phenomenon, I set aside my personal experience to focus on the experience of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To identify my presuppositions and remain objective, I kept a reflective journal throughout this study to document any biases or influences that entered my consciousness to ensure my continued engagement in the epoché. Epoché is a recurrent process because “every time a distorted thought or feeling enters, the abstention must once again be achieved until there is an open consciousness” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 89). All potential participants will be educators from schools outside of my institution, and I have no personal relationship or power issues with any of the prospective participants in this study.

**Procedures**

Data was not collected until Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) and site approval were granted. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with each
participant in their classroom or a neutral location to gain insight into their lived experience with self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. I used an interview guide listing the open-ended questions to be explored, allowed participants to respond in their own words (Patton, 2015), and took notes during interviews. I sent each participant a calendar meeting invitation through Microsoft Outlook, notifying them of the date, time, and location of the interview. Interviews were audio-recorded using a Sony PX Series digital voice recorder and an Apple iPhone, and the recordings were checked at the conclusion of each interview to ensure the equipment worked properly. Next, the interviews were transcribed using ATLAS.ti software, and I sent each participant a transcription of their respective interview for member checking to gain feedback to help ensure validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Upon receiving member-checking feedback from participants, I read the interview transcriptions and made notes in the margins for coding and thematic development. Teacher interviews were saved as an encrypted file on an Apple MacBook and backed up on an external hard drive to ensure the security and confidentiality of the data.

Next, each participant was asked to keep an electronic journal of their daily experiences teaching face-to-face instruction in a classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic for ten days. I created a private Google classroom, electronically assigned each participant to that secured classroom, and provided four journal prompts. Participants were asked to complete a journal on a secured document on their Google drive about their experience teaching face-to-face instruction in a classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic and share those journal entries electronically with me using their personal Google drive account to ensure privacy. At the conclusion of the ten days, I analyzed participants’ journal entries for coding and thematic development, documented the process of journaling in the audit trail, and suspended all presuppositions when analyzing
participant’s journal entries by documenting those preconceptions in a reflective journal to engage in the epoché (Moustakas, 1994).

Finally, a focus group was conducted with six randomly selected participants in a preselected classroom to get multiple perspectives and to increase confidence in emerging patterns and themes (Patton, 2015). I secured a location and set up a date and time for the focus group. If participants express concerns about social distancing, the focus group will be conducted through the Google Meet internet platform, and participants will be sent an electronic invitation through Google Meet. Teachers did not have access to the questions prior to the focus group interview. Focus group questions were predicated on initial data analysis from interviews and journal entries (Patton, 2015), and I will add any necessary questions after that analysis. The focus group interview was video recorded with a Sony digital camera and audio recorded using a Sony PX Series digital voice recorder and an Apple iPhone. I documented the focus group interview in the audit trail, bracketed all biases, and noted them in a reflective journal to engage in the epoché (Moustakas, 1994).

Permissions

Qualitative research involves studying a particular research site or multiple sites and involves gaining site permission (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and from a supervising authority such as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to collect data (Patton, 2015). A completed review by the IRB is required prior to accessing the research site and studying human subjects (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data was collected after I obtained approval from IRB at Liberty University (Appendix A) and secured site permission. Permission request forms (Appendix B) were distributed to the principals of each school to gain site permission.

Recruitment Plan
After receiving approval from the IRB and permission responses from the principals of each school (Appendix C), I sent a recruitment email (Appendix D) to seek participants for this research study. The participants in this study were selected through purposeful criterion sampling to intentionally inform an understanding of the research problem of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018) because participants must experience the common phenomenon so they can reflect on their lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). Participants met the criteria of being a full-time public-school teacher and teaching face-to-face instruction in a classroom in grades 6-8 for at least three blocks a day on a 4x4 block schedule. PowerSchool software was consulted to identify teacher schedules by block. Once the participants responded, I sought the help of the principal from each school to identify each respondent’s teaching schedule to ensure they met the criteria of teaching three blocks a day. Once the teaching schedules of each respondent were analyzed and validated, I sent a consent form (Appendix E) to teachers purposefully selected to participate in this study to inform them of the following: the purpose of this study, the right to voluntary withdrawal at any time, the benefits and risks of participation, and the measures to protect their confidentiality (Creswell & Poth, 2018) because the protection of human subjects requires informed consent (Patton, 2015).

To gain extensive detail about each site and individual (Creswell & Poth, 2018), the sample pool of this phenomenological study consisted of 180 teachers teaching face-to-face instruction in grades 6-8 at two public schools in a Georgia school district during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although there are “no-advance criteria for locating and selecting research participants” (Moustakas, p. 107, 1994), this study aimed for a sample size ranging between 12 and 15 participants. However, there are no rules for sample size in qualitative research because the size depends on what I want to know, the purpose of the study, the risks, usefulness,
credibility, and what can be accomplished with the available time and resources (Patton, 2015). The goal of qualitative sampling is to have enough participants that provide rich, in-depth data to understand the phenomenon being studied (Hennink et al., 2019), which suggests the sample size can be adjusted as themes emerge and inquiry deepens because sample size may increase or decrease based on thematic saturation (Patton, 2015). Therefore, thematic saturation determined the sample size of this phenomenological study (Patton, 2015).

**Data Collection Plan**

Qualitative research is interpretative and attempts to reveal the world to others through the study of things in their natural environment by making sense of the meanings people bring to a central phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Although any phenomenon represents an appropriate starting point for inquiry, a research study emerges from a strong interest in a particular topic, and the researcher’s enthusiasm stimulates the study (Moustakas, 1994). This study was qualitative and used a transcendental phenomenological method to explore teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Qualitative studies use various data collection methods such as interviews, focus groups, surveys, observations, and document analysis (Patton, 2015). To gain deep insight into participant’s experience with the phenomenon and to achieve triangulation, data was collected through interviews, journaling, and a focus group, and an audit trail (Appendix F) was used to document the steps in the data collection process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Individual Interviews**

Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perception of others is meaningful, comprehensible, and can be made clear (Patton, 2015). An interview is a relationship and interactional and allows participants the opportunity to focus on their
experience, reflect on any moments of awareness, and describe their experience in detail (Moustakas, 1994). Interviews were conducted with each participant (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which allowed me to gain insight into the perspective of each participant (Patton, 2015). Prior to conducting the interviews with each participant, I engaged in the epoché to set aside biases and presuppositions so they did not taint the interview process (Moustakas, 1994). Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with each teacher to obtain “rich, vital, substantive descriptions” of their lived experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116) of teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews were conducted in the natural setting of each participant’s classroom or a neutral location.

The phenomenological interview consists of an informal and interactive method that employs open-ended questions (Moustakas, 1994) and invites thoughtful, in-depth responses that produce what is significant to the participant (Patton, 2015). Therefore, interview questions were open-ended, which allowed participants to respond in their own words (Patton, 2015) and broadly posed to gain a rich description of participants’ experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Follow-up questions (probing) were asked as needed to gain greater depth and detail (Patton, 2015) and to enhance coding and theme identification (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interviews were audio-recorded with two recording devices, an iPhone and a Sony PX Series digital voice recorder, to ensure recording reliability.

Notes were taken during the interviews to encourage greater depth response, to provide cues to keep participants on track, and it allowed for probing as the interview progressed (Patton, 2015). After the conclusion of each interview, I checked the recording to ensure it worked (Patton, 2015) and transcribed the interviews using Otter.ai software. I wrote down notes while reading the transcriptions, kept a reflective journal (Appendix G) to identify bias to remain in a
state of epoché, documented the data collection using an audit trail, and reviewed the interview notes to reflect on the quality of the information received from the interviews (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, I followed up with each participant to ensure they understood that their responses were taken seriously and used the interview approach outlined by Moustakas (1994). The opened-ended interview questions (Appendix H) that I asked each participant is listed below.

**Individual Interview Questions**

1. Please tell me about yourself- what do you teach, why did you become a teacher, how long have you been a teacher? Ice breaker

2. What did you experience when you discovered your school would be reopening for face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic? SQ4

3. What do you experience on a typical day in the classroom teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic? SQ1 and SQ4

4. If you could change one thing about teaching in a classroom during the pandemic, describe what you would change and why? SQ1

5. What is your most successful experience in the classroom during the pandemic? SQ1

6. What thoughts or emotions stand out to you about that successful experience? SQ1

7. What experiences help you when teaching in the classroom during the pandemic. SQ1, SQ2, and SQ3

8. What is it about those experiences that help you to teach during the pandemic? SQ 1, SQ2, and SQ3

9. What social interaction experiences have you had with administrators and other teachers while at school during the pandemic? SQ2 and SQ3
10. What thoughts or emotions stand out to you about your social interaction experiences? SQ2 and SQ3

11. What experiences did you find to be the most stressful while teaching in a classroom during the pandemic? SQ4

12. What is your most disappointing experience in the classroom during the pandemic? SQ4

13. What thoughts stand out about that disappointing experience? SQ4

14. What are your feelings or thoughts about mandated protective masks and social distancing requirements in the classroom? SQ4

15. Based on your experience in the classroom during the pandemic, what advice would you give teachers about how to cope with teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic? SQ 1

16. What else would you like to share about your experience teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, and SQ4

Question one was intended to be an icebreaker and began with a conversation piece aimed at creating a relaxed atmosphere (Moustakas, 1994). Question two addressed sub-question four and sought to understand participants’ feelings, emotions, and perceptions about returning to school to teach face-to-face instruction during the pandemic to understand teachers’ experience with self-efficacy in relation to emotional arousal. Questions three and four addressed sub-questions one and four by exploring teachers’ experience with self-efficacy in relation to mastery experience and emotional arousal. Questions five and six addressed sub-research question one by exploring teachers’ experience with accomplishment in the classroom during the pandemic to understand teachers’ experience with self-efficacy in relation to mastery experience.
Questions seven and eight addressed sub-research questions one, two, and three by exploring teachers’ experience with previous classroom situations and how that experience interacted with teachers’ experience with self-efficacy regarding mastery experience, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion. Questions nine and ten addressed sub-questions two and three by exploring the social interaction experiences of teachers with administrators and co-teachers during the pandemic to understand how that experience interacted with teachers’ experience with self-efficacy in relation to verbal persuasion and vicarious experience.

Questions eleven, twelve, thirteen, and fourteen addressed sub-research question four by exploring teachers’ experience with adverse situations in the classroom during the pandemic to understand teachers’ experience with self-efficacy in relation to emotional arousal. Question fifteen addressed sub-research question one by exploring the possible coping strategies teachers used teaching in a classroom during the pandemic to understand teachers’ experience with self-efficacy in relation to mastery experience. Question sixteen addressed sub-research questions one, two, three, and four by attempting to gain additional information from participant teachers about their experience with self-efficacy in relation to mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal.

*Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan*

The individual interview data analysis plan followed the methods outlined by Moustakas (1994). Interviews were transcribed using Otter.ai software, and individual transcriptions were distributed to respective teachers for member checking. I suspended any presuppositions before analyzing the transcriptions and reviewing the interview filed notes by writing those assumptions in a reflective journal to identify biases to remain in the state of epoché (Moustakas, 1994). Each interview statement was given equal value through horizontalization, and repetitive statements
were removed, leaving the invariant qualities or meanings of each teacher’s experience (Moustakas, 1994). Next, these qualities or meanings of the experience were coded and clustered into themes using ATLAS.ti to create a textural description of each teacher’s experience (Moustakas, 1994). I integrated each teacher’s textural description into a universal textural description of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Next, I developed structural qualities of teachers’ experience and coded and clustered them into themes to create a structural description of each teacher’s experience (Moustakas, 1994). All the individual teacher’s structural descriptions were integrated into a composite structural description of experience (Moustakas, 1994). Then I combined the universal textural and structural description of teachers’ experience to discover the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The data collection method was documented in an audit trail.

**Journals**

The second method of data collection for this study is journaling. Journaling is a method of data collection that has been validated to gain access to rich qualitative data (Hayman et al., 2012) and is an appropriate method for a transcendental phenomenological design. A journal is a combination of a diary and a log because it consists of personal reflections, individual accounts of events, and individual descriptions of lived experiences (Chabon & Lee-Wilkerson 2006). I asked participant teachers to complete an online journal of their lived experience teaching face-to-face instruction in a classroom during the pandemic for ten days because to “gain access to other people’s experience, we request them to write about a personal experience” (van Manen, 1997, p. 65). Teachers completed their journal entries on a secured document on their Google drive and shared those journal entries electronically with me using their personal Google drive account to ensure privacy.
Teacher journals were used to enrich and substantiate data collected from teacher interviews (Hayman et al., 2012) because journaling captures a moment or describes an experience and provides a way for participants to reflect on their emotions and make sense of those emotions (Portman, 2020). Furthermore, journals as a data collection method provided me insight into the cognitions of participants (Portman, 2020). Participants were asked to write an account of their lived experience teaching in a classroom during the pandemic over ten days. Participants were asked to write at least three complete sentences to the journal prompts (Appendix I) listed below.

**Journal Prompts**

1. What feelings did you experience today being in a classroom during the pandemic? SQ 4
2. What experience stood out for you the most today while teaching in a classroom during the pandemic? SQ 1
3. Reflecting on your experience as a teacher in a classroom during the pandemic, suppose I was a new teacher and asked you what I should do to be successful teaching in a classroom during the pandemic; what advice would you give me? SQ1, SQ 2, and SQ 3
4. What other experiences regarding teaching in a classroom during the pandemic would you like to share that were not mentioned during your interview? SQ1, SQ 2, SQ 3, and SQ 4

Question one was a feeling question “aimed at eliciting teacher emotions or feeling responses of teachers to their experiences,” and question two was “an experience question about what a teacher does or has done to elicit behaviors or experiences” (Patton, 2015, p. 444). Question one addressed sub-question four by seeking to gain a “rich, vital, substantive description” of the teacher’s experience with self-efficacy in relation to emotional arousal.
Question two addressed sub-question one to understand teachers’ experience with self-efficacy regarding mastery experience. Question three addressed sub-research questions one, two, and three to understand teachers’ experience with self-efficacy in relation to mastery experience, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion. It is a role-playing question that helped me gain insight into teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy because it allowed participants to elaborate on experiences that they did not feel comfortable expressing during an interview (Patton, 2015). Question four addressed sub-questions one, two, three, and four to understand teachers’ experience with self-efficacy in relation to mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal, and it enriched and substantiated data collected from teacher interviews (Hayman et al., 2012) by allowing participants to elaborate on any experiences they did not disclose during their interview (Patton, 2015).

**Journal Prompts Data Analysis Plan**

The journal prompts data analysis plan followed the methods outlined by Moustakas (1994). Teacher journals were transcribed using Otter.ai software. Before analyzing the data from teacher journal entries, I set aside any assumptions or preconceived ideas and wrote them in a reflective journal to engage in the epoché to remain receptive (Moustakas, 1994). Each statement in the journal entries was given equal value through horizontalization, and repetitive statements were removed, leaving the meanings or horizons (Moustakas, 1994). Next, the horizons were coded and clustered into themes using ATLAS.ti to create individual teacher textural descriptions of each teacher’s experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). All textual descriptions were integrated to develop a universal textual description of the teacher’s experience (Moustakas, 1994). I constructed structural qualities and coded and clustered those into themes using ATLAS.ti to create individual structural descriptions of each teacher’s
experience (Moustakas, 1994). All structural descriptions were combined to develop a composite structural description of the teacher’s experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The universal textural and structural descriptions were used to develop an overall texture-structural description of the teacher’s experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

**Focus Groups**

The third data collection method of this study is a focus group. A focus group is an interview with a small group of participants that will allow me access to various perspectives leading to emergent patterns because participants can listen to each other’s responses and make supplementary comments outside of their original responses (Patton, 2018). The object was to gain quality data in a social setting where people can think about their personal views in relation to the views of other participants because they can influence each other through their responses to the comments they hear from each other (Patton, 2015). Focus group interviews invite diverse perspectives because varying opinions give credence to focus group discussions (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, the interaction among focus group members served as a check and balance, enhancing data collection quality because it removed falsities (Patton, 2015).

I arranged a date and time and conducted one focus group meeting with six selected participants, three participants from each school, to gain multiple perspectives on their lived experience with self-efficacy teaching in a classroom during the pandemic and to increase confidence in emerging patterns and themes (Patton, 2015). Prior to conducting the focus group interview with participants, I engaged in the epoché to set aside biases and presuppositions to focus on the descriptions of the teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy (Moustakas, 1994). The focus group was video recorded using a Sony digital camera and audio recorded using a Sony PX Series digital voice recorder and an iPhone. I took interview notes during the focus
group and reviewed them to reflect on the quality of the information received from participants in the focus group (Patton, 2015). The focus group met after the conclusion of the interview process and the completion of teacher journals to gain insight into the multiple realities of their lived experiences. (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015).

Bringing participants together created an opportunity for meaningful conversation (Patton, 2015) about the lived experiences of participants. A focus group interview enhanced data quality because it allowed me to visualize the emotions, body language, and mannerisms of participants as well as how they talked about their lived experiences (Patton, 2015). I used an interview guide which is essential when conducting focus group interviews because it kept the group engaged while allowing individual views and experiences to flourish (Patton, 2015). Focus group questions were open-ended and allowed for probing as needed, which increased the depth of participant responses (Patton, 2015) and provided detailed and substantive descriptions of the participants’ experience (Moustakas, 1994). After initial interviews, additional focus group questions may be added based on early data analysis to gain a deeper understanding of themes and patterns that emerge from that analysis (Patton, 2015). Preliminary focus group questions (Appendix J) are listed below.

**Focus Group Questions**

1. Please introduce yourself to each other. Ice Breaker
2. What thoughts do you have about your ability to perform instructional tasks teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic successfully? SQ1
3. What individuals connected with your experience of teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic stand out for you? SQ2 and SQ3
4. What is the primary emotion that you experience teaching face-to-face instruction in the
classroom during the pandemic? SQ4

5. What other experiences would you like to share about teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic that you did not mention in your interview or your journal entry? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, and SQ4

Question one is designed to establish rapport between participants because qualitative interviewing is interactional, and the establishment of rapport is essential (Patton, 2015). Question two addressed sub-question one and explored teachers’ experience with performance accomplishment to understand teachers’ experience with self-efficacy regarding mastery experience. Question three addressed sub-questions two and three and explored teachers’ experience with social interactions at school to understand teachers’ experience with self-efficacy in relation to vicarious experience and verbal persuasion. Question four addressed sub-question four and explored teachers’ emotional experience to understand teachers’ experience with self-efficacy regarding emotional arousal. Question five addressed sub-questions one, two, three, and four and gave participants one last opportunity (Patton, 2015) to fully disclose their experience with self-efficacy (Moustakas, 1994).

**Focus Group Data Analysis Plan**

The focus group data analysis plan followed the methods outlined by Moustakas (1994). The focus group interview was transcribed using Otter.ai software, and once the transcription process was completed, I sent each participant a transcription of their interview for member checking. The organization of data occurred when I studied the material from the transcribed interviews through the methods and procedures of phenomenological analysis (Moustakas, 1994). Before examining the transcribed focus group interview, I suspended any presuppositions and biases and noted them in a reflective journal to engage in the epoché to freshly revisit the
phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994) and documented the focus group interview in the audit trail. Focus group interview statements were given equal value through horizontalization to develop meaning units (Moustakas, 1994). Repetitive statements were purged, and the meaning units were coded and clustered into themes using ATLAS.ti and used to develop a textural description of each teacher’s experience (Moustakas, 1994). The textural descriptions were combined to create a universal textual description of the teacher’s experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The structural qualities of each teacher’s experience were created, coded, and then clustered into themes using ATLAS.ti to develop individual structural descriptions of each teacher’s experience (Moustakas, 1994). Next, I integrated all individual structural descriptions and developed a composite structural description of the teacher’s experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The universal textural and structural descriptions were used to develop an overall textural-structural description of each teacher’s experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

**Data Synthesis**

Phenomenological data synthesis seeks to grasp and illuminate the meaning, structure, and essence of a phenomenon through lived experience (Patton, 2015). Data was analyzed using the methods outlined by Moustakas (1994), and I documented the steps of the data collection and analysis process using an audit trail (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The following data analysis steps were used: epoché, phenomenological reduction (bracketing, horizontalization, the clustering of themes and textural descriptions), imaginative variation (structural descriptions), and synthesis of textural, structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994).

The process of data synthesis began with engagement in the epoché. I set aside any presuppositions and freshly viewed the phenomena without the presence of a preconceived
mindset (Moustakas, 1994). Epoché provided me an opportunity to self-evaluate individual biases in the quest to achieve a sense of individual openness even if a perfect sense was not reached (Moustakas, 1994). I began the process of epoché by describing and disclosing any personal experience with the phenomenon to bracket any biases, presuppositions, and prejudgments and focused on the experiences of the participants in this study (See appendix G; Creswell & Poth, 2018). No position of any kind was taken by me when transcribing teacher interviews, analyzing journal entries, and transcribing the focus group interview because I freshly revisited things within the realm of openness (Moustakas, 1994). I kept a reflective journal throughout all phases of this study to prevent personal experiences from polluting data collection, analysis, and synthesis. Engagement in the epoché was ongoing because transcendental phenomenology attempts to continuously eradicate all presuppositions to reach a transcendental state of openness (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenological reduction is a reflective process that seeks to unify the parts into a whole while consciously remaining in the epoché to gain the textural meaning of experience (Moustakas, 1994). Textural descriptions refer to “what” participants experience with the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenological reduction involves bracketing, horizontalization, clustering horizons into themes, and using those horizons and themes to develop a coherent textual description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The organization of data analysis began when I thoroughly analyzed the transcribed interviews through phenomenological methods and analysis (Moustakas, 1994). I continued to bracket myself from the experience to remain in the state of epoché and focused on participant’s lived experience (Moustakas, 1994), and used a reflective journal to jot down any presuppositions that entered my
consciousness. Individual teacher interviews, journals, and the focus group interview were transcribed using Otter.ai software.

Next, I read those transcriptions and journal entries multiple times, looking for significant statements while horizonalizing the triangulated data, and I gave equal value to each statement to uncover the meaning and essence of that statement (Moustakas, 1994). I wrote memos in the margin of transcriptions while reading and rereading them, which helped with coding and thematic clustering (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Repetitive statements were expunged, “leaving only the horizons or invariant constituents of the phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). Transcriptions were distributed to participants for member-checking, which allowed them to judge the accuracy of the transcription (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moustakas (1994) emphasized that “horizons are unlimited no matter how many times we reconsider or review them” (p. 95).

Next, horizonalized statements were coded, and the meanings were clustered into themes (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015) using ATLAS.ti. Saldana (2013) described a code as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). Once statements were coded, they were clustered into themes and then organized and used to create an individual textural description of each teacher’s experience. Each textural description was a “complete description of its essential constituents, variations of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, sounds, colors, and shapes” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). Next, I analyzed and integrated the textural descriptions of all teachers and created a universal textural description of “what” teachers experienced with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The next step in the data analysis process was an imaginative variation which sought to understand the structural essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Structural descriptions
refer to “how” the experience happened, and I focused on the “how” in the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 201) by teachers. I identified structural qualities derived from the textural meanings identified through phenomenological reduction to seek possible meanings to uncover the underlying factors related to how teachers experienced what they experienced to explore which structural meanings potentially motivated textural meanings (Moustakas, 1994). To put it another way, “the “how” that speaks to conditions that illuminate the “what” of experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). Next, the structural qualities of each teacher’s experience were organized and clustered into structural themes using ATLAS.ti to recognize the meanings that accounted for the development of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) describes these universal structures as “time, space, bodily concerns, materiality, causality relation to self or relation to others” (p.99). Next, I analyzed and integrated all individual teacher structural descriptions to create a composite textural description of teachers’ experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The last stage of data synthesis included a synthesis of the universal textural and universal structural descriptions. I “intuitively integrated” the universal textural and structural descriptions of the teacher’s experience and created a unified statement of the meaning and essence of teachers’ experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100). This unified statement represented the essence and meaning of the overall phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

**Trustworthiness**

The credibility of research findings and interpretations depends on establishing trustworthiness (Patton, 2015). To attain trustworthiness, I used triangulation to capture and report multiple interpretations through numerous data sources (Patton, 2015). I also identified my biases, engaged in reflexivity, achieved prolonged engagement at the research site, collaborated
with participants, and enticed member feedback through member checking (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study followed Lincoln and Guba (1985) to achieve trustworthiness by instituting credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical considerations.

**Credibility**

The following measures were used to ensure the credibility of this study: triangulation, prolonged engagement, and member-checking. Triangulation from interviews, journals, and a focus group were used to check the consistency of evidence from multiple data sources to validate emerging themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). Prolonged engagement allowed me to “invest sufficient time with participants and build trust while eliminating any distortions that might creep into the data” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 302). I invited participant feedback on the interview and focus group transcriptions on judging the “accuracy and credibility of the account” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 261), which allowed participants’ to give additional information previously not mentioned during the interview process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) described member-checking as the “most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). Reflexivity was employed in all measures to bracket my presuppositions to remain in the epoché (Moustakas, 1994) in the backdrop of data analysis (Patton, 2015). Credibility and reflexivity are interrelated (Sundler et al., 2019), and reflexivity was maintained throughout this qualitative research study to increase credibility.

**Transferability**

Transferability parallels external validity (Patton, 2015) and refers to the usefulness and relevance of the research findings (Sundler et al., 2019). I provided a “rich thick description” of the lived experience of participants and the research site, allowing readers to decide
transferability (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 263; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study provided the “widest possible range of information for inclusion in the thick description and for that reason engaged in purposeful sampling” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316) and provided a rich description of participant verbalizations and expressions to understand the participant’s lived experience of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Dependability**

Dependability, similar to reliability (Connelly, 2016), focuses on the process of the research study and my responsibility for ensuring the study was logical, traceable, and well documented (Patton, 2015). I increased dependability through an inquiry audit by having a researcher that is not involved in the research process examine both the process and product of the research study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The aim of an external audit was to evaluate the accuracy and evaluate if the findings, interpretations, and conclusions were supported by the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Confirmability**

Confirmability, analogous to objectivity, focuses on connecting the interpretations and findings to discernable data analysis (Patton, 2015). I created an audit trail and documented the steps in the data collection process (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to increase the confirmability of this research study. An audit trail is a clear description of the research steps from the beginning of a research study to the development and reporting of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which includes records regarding what was done throughout the investigation (Amankwaa, 2016). The audit trail consisted of journals, written field notes, interview transcriptions, coding, themes, reflexive notes, and the findings (Amankwaa, 2016). Furthermore, I developed a reflexive journal to set aside biases to increase confirmability (Amankwaa, 2016).
Ethical Considerations

Researchers are “guided by the ethical principles on research with human participants” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 109). Prior to collecting research, I obtained approval from the IRB at Liberty University and acquired authorization from the principals at both sites through permission letters (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I selected a site that did not raise power issues with participants, informed those participants of the general purpose of the study, and informed them that their participation was voluntary through the acquisition of their informed consent (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants and research sites were issued pseudonyms to protect their identity throughout this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviews were fully overt (Cypress, 2018), and I avoided asking leading questions, prevented the disclosure of sensitive information, and protected all information obtained from participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Electronic data was saved as password-protected files, stored on an external hard drive, and locked in a safe along with hard research data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Research data will be kept for three years. The external hard drive consisting of the electronic data will be manually deleted along with the audio and video recordings, and the hard research data will be manually shredded at the conclusion of the three-year mark (Given, 2012).

Summary

This chapter describes the methods that were used in this qualitative inquiry. A qualitative transcendental phenomenological design was used to explore teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic in a Georgia school district. A transcendental phenomenology was utilized because it focused on describing the experiences of participants with the phenomenon rather than my interpretation of those experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research study was guided by one central
research question and four sub-research questions. The research study occurred at two schools with participants chosen through purposeful sampling with thematic saturation determining the sample size. The role of the researcher was discussed in detail to openly acknowledge my existing presuppositions to bracket them to freshly revisit things within the realm of openness (Moustakas, 1994). Data collection methods consisted of individual interviews, teacher journals, and a focus group. They were analyzed using the following methods outlined by Moustakas (1994): epoché, phenomenological reduction (bracketing, horizontalization, the clustering of themes and textural descriptions), imaginative variation (structural descriptions), and synthesis of textural, structural descriptions. The strategies of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were employed throughout this study to ensure trustworthiness, and ethical considerations were considered to protect the rights of participants.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy while teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic in a public school district in South Georgia. A phenomenological design allowed me to focus on several teachers who experience a shared phenomenon and explore what they have in common as they experience that phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This phenomenological study was guided by the following central research question: What are teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic? This chapter includes a description of 12 purposefully criterion selected participants, the findings of the study, outlier data, thematic and sub-thematic development generated through transcendental phenomenological reduction, participant responses to the research questions, and concludes with an overall chapter summary.

Participants

The 12 participants in this study were drawn from two middle schools in the same district and selected through purposeful criterion sampling. All participants were full-time public-school teachers, taught grades six through eight, and they all taught face-to-face instruction in a classroom at least three blocks a day on a 4x4 block schedule. A recruitment email was sent out to both middle schools, and after receiving responses, each respondent’s teaching schedule was verified to ensure they met the criteria. Pseudonyms were used to protect the confidentiality of the participants and the schools involved in this phenomenological study. See table 2 for the demographic data of each participant.
**Table 2**

**Participant Demographic Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name*</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Years of Exp.</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>School*</th>
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<tr>
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<td>W</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Charter Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Coastal Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise</td>
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<td>25</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>20</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fen</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Math</td>
<td>Charter Middle School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Pseudonyms

**Amy**

Amy is a 52-year-old sixth-grade science teacher at Coastal Middle School. She has 19 years of teaching experience and has taught first grade, fifth grade, and gifted classes during her tenure as a teacher. Amy has a master’s degree and is certified in science, social science, gifted education, and elementary education. When asked about herself, Amy responded, “I became a teacher later in life when my son was in elementary school, and I began volunteering in his classes, and I felt like I really enjoyed it.” Amy was initially hired as a para-professional but was
encouraged by her principal to get her teaching certification. After she obtained her teaching certification, she was hired as a teacher.

**Breanna**

Breanna is a 30-year-old sixth-grade technology teacher at Charter Middle School with seven years of teaching experience. She has a master’s degree and is certified in engineering and technology, language arts, social science, gifted education, and has an endorsement in curriculum and instruction. Breanna began her teaching career at Charter Middle School, and during that time, she also taught seventh and eighth-grade technology and engineering. Breanna was motivated to become a teacher at a young age by her former teachers. When asked about herself, Breanna responded, “I feel like I became a teacher because I was inspired by so many amazing teachers that I had because they really had a passion for what they taught which impacted my life.” When talking about that inspiration, Breanna said, “I want to do the same for my students.”

**Cole**

Cole is a 41-year-old seventh-grade agricultural teacher at Coastal Middle School with 20 years of teaching experience. He has a master’s degree and is certified in agricultural education, science, social science, and he has an endorsement in instructional technology and online teaching. When asked about himself, he responded, “I initially got into teaching to coach and along the way found out I like teaching too.” Cole first discovered he might want to pursue a career in education when he was taking classes in college because he “wanted to be there” and thought this might be what he wanted to do. Cole enjoys teaching agriculture and stated, “I have been successful at it and had a good time doing it because I think it is kind of my niche.”

**Denise**
Denise is a 48-year-old sixth-grade language arts teacher at Coastal Middle School. She has 25 years of teaching experience and taught special education for the first 16 years of her teaching tenure. Denise has a doctorate degree and is certified in language arts, social science, special education, ESOL, and has an endorsement in educational leadership. When asked about herself, Denise responded, “the reason I started teaching is my mom was a teacher, and when she retired, I decided I wanted to teach.” Denise initially started as a special education teacher because it was her “first passion,” and she also became a compliance specialist for special education. Later she decided to move to the middle grades to teach language arts.

Emma

Emma is a 42-year-old physical science teacher at Charter Middle School. She has 20 years of teaching experience and has taught in a couple of different school districts in the state of Georgia throughout her career. Emma has a master’s degree, is certified in science, gifted education, and has an endorsement in educational leadership. When asked about herself, she responded, “I became a teacher because I had a line of teachers in my family, but the main reason is I wanted to make a difference in the lives of future generations because there were several people throughout my career as a student who made a difference in my life.” Emma mentioned that she wanted to impact the students the way she was impacted.

Fen

Fen is a 58-year-old eighth-grade social studies teacher at Coastal Middle School with 20 years of teaching experience. During his tenure at Coastal Middle School, he also taught sixth-grade science. Fen has a doctorate degree and is certified in history, social science, science, and gifted education. When asked about himself, Fen responded, “I taught two different times during the military, so I had some teaching background, and I have always worked with kids, so I knew
that is kind of what I wanted to do.” Fen ran a youth group for middle school students for 10 years, where his own children attended.

**Gwen**

Gwen is a 38-year-old seventh-grade science teacher at Charter Middle School. She has nine years of teaching experience and began her teaching career at Charter Middle School. Gwen has a bachelor’s degree and is certified in language arts, mathematics, science, and social science. When asked about herself, she replied, “I don't know why but I just I always wanted to be a teacher since I was like five years old.” She said, “there was not any particular person or anything that had anything to do with me becoming a teacher; it just looked like a lot of fun, and I continued to feel that way as I got older.”

**Haley**

Haley is a 42-year-old social studies teacher at Charter Middle School. She has two years of teaching experience. She has a bachelor’s degree and is certified in language arts and social science education. Prior to teaching, Haley was a substitute teacher for five years, taught preschool before she had children, and homeschooled her children. When asked about herself, she responded, “I have technically been teaching for two years, and I teach Georgia studies, which is social studies.” Haley said, “I became a teacher because I like educating people, and I think education is important.”

**Ian**

Ian is a 26-year-old math teacher and baseball coach at Charter Middle School. He has four years of teaching experience. Ian has a master’s degree, is certified in mathematics and science, and taught ninth grade during his tenure as a teacher. Ian mentioned that the “best time to positively impact kids is during the middle grades.” When describing himself, Ian stated, “I
initially wanted to be a physical therapist, but when I got to college, I played baseball. I did not feel myself being in a profession where I am away from the game.” He said, “I have been around sports my whole life, and when I got to college, I realized my heart shifted, so I decided to go and get my education degree.” Ian also stated the “experience of seeing a kid grow from the beginning of the school year to the end, is what made me fall in love with teaching and just watching them grow.”

Jasmine

Jasmine is a 34-year-old seventh-grade language arts teacher at Coastal Middle School. She has 10 years of teaching experience. Jasmine has a master’s degree, is certified in English, language arts, reading, social science, gifted education, elementary education, and has an ESOL endorsement. When asked about herself, Jasmine responded, “Like many people, I became a teacher because I had a really exceptional teacher growing up, my fifth-grade teacher.” When Jasmine and her husband had the opportunity to move back home, she was “happy” to “teach middle grades” at Coastal Middle School.

Kamila

Kamila is a 37-year-old seventh-grade math teacher at Coastal Middle School. She has 12 years of teaching experience and has taught all 12 years at Coastal Middle School. Kamila has an educational specialist degree and is certified in mathematics, science, gifted education, and has an endorsement in the following fields: ESOL, online teaching, reading, teacher leadership, and educational leadership. When asked about herself, Kamila responded, “I became a teacher because my parents were teachers, and I just always loved kids and wanted to make a difference and make an impact on their lives.” Kamila was exposed to teaching at an early age and became interested in teaching when she would go to pre-planning and post-planning with her parents.
Lily

Lily is a 46-year-old gifted honors math teacher at Charter Middle School with 22 years of teaching experience. She has a master’s degree and is certified in mathematics, language arts, science, social science, and gifted education. When describing herself, Lily stated, “What got me started teaching was probably that when I was in school, my teachers had us in rows and would do 40 math problems, and I do not learn that way, and I did not want somebody else to go through that.” She said, “my approach to teaching is a lot different than what I went through because I am more interactive, and we do more activities compared to just being in a seat getting 40 problems and doing them over and over and over again.”

Results

The focus of this phenomenological study was to describe teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was guided by one central research question and four sub-research questions. Data was collected from individual face-to-face interviews, journals, and a focus group which provided a wealth of information for data analysis. All participants engaged in the interview process and completed a journal, and four individuals participated in a focus group. No participants withdrew from this research study. Data collection and analysis followed Moustakas’s (1994) methods of epoché, phenomenological reduction (bracketing, horizontalization, the clustering of themes and textural descriptions), imaginative variation (structural descriptions), and synthesis of textural, structural descriptions.

Throughout data collection, analysis, and synthesis, I set aside my presuppositions in a reflective journal and engaged in the epoché to gain a fresh perspective of participants’ experiences. The reflective journal allowed me to abandon any preconceived notions, distorted
thoughts, or feelings to ensure my consciousness remained free and open (Moustakas, 1994). The interviews, journals, and the focus group were transcribed and thoroughly read and reread to ensure accuracy. The statements from all data sources were given equal value through horizontalization, and repetitive statements were expunged (Moustakas, 1994). I explored each statement for potential textural meanings, and those statements were then coded using ATLAS.ti and clustered into themes during phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994). After analyzing the interviews, journals, and the focus group, initial codes were (Appendix K) constructed and developed into open codes. Four primary themes and nine subthemes emerged from open coding. The themes and subthemes for all triangulated data sources are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

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<thead>
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<th>Themes and Subthemes for all Triangulated Data Sources</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
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**Perseverance**

The first theme identified during data analysis was perseverance and the two subthemes that emerged were coping and caregiving. After talking with participants during interviews and the focus group and after reading their journals, it was clear that teachers developed self-efficacy
through perseverance in teaching face-to-face instruction in the classroom during the pandemic. Nine of 12 participants directly reference their ability to persevere or overcome as they discussed their in-person teaching experiences. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy the longer they were exposed to a classroom without contracting the virus, which led to a sense of accomplishment they could persevere teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. Haley stated, “This year is a little different than last year because I am used to the safety measures, so, I am a little bit better than last year because of that because I guess I am used to it” (Haley, personal communication, January 3, 2022). Ian said, “I feel normal wearing masks and teaching” (Ian, Journal, January 5, 2022). Like Ian, Fen asserted, “This is becoming so routine seeing the same thing again with COVID in the classroom” (Fen, Focus Group, January 19, 2022).

Like Haley, Ian, and Fen, Lily said, “I got used to being in here, it got easier as the days went by, it almost seems normal now with the masks and all. I guess the more you do it, the more you get used to it” (Lily, personal communication, January 3, 2022). Haley and Lily referenced their continued encounter with the daily routine associated with teaching in-person instruction. Over time they became accustomed to that routine and accomplished a state of normalcy as they persevered in that environment. Their perseverance in the classroom enhanced their self-efficacy in teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic.

Gwen and Kamila also referenced prolonged exposure to in-person instruction, which gave them a sense of accomplishment and increased their self-efficacy. Gwen mentioned, “I think now that things have kind of settled in with the masks in the classroom, I am used to it, it feels very much like it did pre-pandemic. Things now feel normal to me with the masks” (Gwen, Journal, January 13, 2022). Kamila asserted,
I mean, we have been in a while, and it’s kind of hard teaching with a mask on, but you get kind of get used to it after a while, and it gets easier. I have been wearing one so long I kind of feel naked without it, but we are making it; we push on in my class. (Kamila personal communication, December 16, 2021)

Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy through ideations of perseverance which they associated with repeated experiences of teaching face-to-face instruction in a classroom during the pandemic. As teachers were continuously subjected to teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic, the more normal that environment became, and the more they experienced perseverance which created a sense of accomplishment. Perseverance increased their self-efficacy they could persist teaching in such an adverse environment.

**Coping**

The first subtheme identified under perseverance was teachers’ desire to engage in coping. Lily stated,

> When I am on planning, I know, because it's my space, I take off my mask, and I need a good 10 to 15 minutes of just silence, just quiet. So just being able to just help yourself and find something that works for you, that allows you to relax, think about what's happened, and just let it go so you can get ready for your next class and continue teaching and take your mind off COVID. (Lily, personal communication, January 3, 2022)

Teachers referenced coping as a way they persevered through teaching in-person instruction. Fen and Amy mentioned their need to engage in coping. Fen said, “Just find your happy place and go there during your planning block. I just turn off my light and turn on my lamp and clean my classroom. It helps me not think about COVID” (Fen, personal communication, December 16, 2021). Amy said, “It’s always important to remember your why. Do all things with the thought
of you can do this and do the best you can to keep yourself busy. I go to another place in my mind (Amy, personal communication, December 13, 2021).

Gwen and Haley also spoke of their coping experiences. Gwen said, “Find something that can take your mind off the virus and focus on that as best you can. I try to read during my planning or just close my door and sit in silence to clear my mind” (Gwen, Journal, January 3, 2022). Haley asserted,

Give yourself grace because there is a lot of frustration, and you second guess yourself a lot. Just kind of take a step back and evaluate and try to relax because it’s hectic.

Relaxing during planning is important to me. Sometimes I close my door, think about my family. (Haley, Journal, January 14, 2022)

Coping was a vital part of teachers’ everyday experience with self-efficacy and helped them persevere teaching during the pandemic. Because teachers experienced increased self-efficacy through perseverance, they developed coping mechanisms to manage teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic.

**Caregiving**

The second subtheme identified under perseverance was caregiving. Several teachers experienced increased self-efficacy by ensuring the safety of their students because it gave them a sense of accomplishment about teaching in-person instruction in the classroom. Amy said, “I make sure to bring the stuff they need. They get it from me, sanitizer, masks, pencils already cleaned, and everything like that. I feel productive looking after them. It’s been good for me caring for them” (Amy, personal communication, December 13, 2021). Haley said,

I want to create an atmosphere that is safe and conducive to learning. It makes me feel
good to do it, to be here, to make them feel comfortable, and know I am available to come to their desks give them hand sanitizer or whatever they need. Help them feel more relaxed, take care of them when they are in here. (Haley, journal, January 13, 2022)

Amy and Haley experienced feelings of accomplishment taking care of their students. Fen mentioned a similar experience. He asserted, asserted, “Keeping keep kids safe in my class means a lot to me. It’s about the kids to me, it’s safety first. It’s a great feeling, you know, keeping them safe, with COVID” (Fen, focus group, January 19, 2022).

Kamila, Jasmine, and Gwen also experienced a sense of accomplishment being a caregiver to their students. Kamila stated, “Knowing I can help them stay safe in this environment, give them what they need, makes me happy and is very satisfying to me” (Kamila, journal, January 7, 2022). Jasmine said, “I think my most successful experience has been making sure that the students feel like the environment is safe for them to come to school and learn. It makes me feel better about being here, helping them” (Jasmine, journal, January 7, 2022). Emma affirmed, “It gives me a little bit of comfort that I can help my students feel safe because we have been through it before, and so I know I can do it” (Emma, journal, January 4, 2022). Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy serving as a caregiver to their students because it gave them a feeling of accomplishment leading to perseverance in teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic.

Awareness

The second theme identified during data analysis was awareness, and the two subthemes that emerged were student resilience and teacher resilience. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy through their awareness of others at school. Eight of 12 participants directly referenced their awareness of others as they discussed their in-person teaching experiences. Several teachers
mentioned that observing individuals experience what they experienced helped them teach in-person instruction. Cole said, “Watching students come to school in this dangerous environment, wearing masks, being here, and seeing them excel every day makes me feel a little better about being here” (Cole, personal communication, December 12, 2021). Emma stated, “Some of my friends and family members are teachers; they come here every day. It makes it easier for me because sometimes you know I feel kind of guilty for sometimes wanting to stay home” (Emma, journal, January 3, 2022). Lily asserted, “I feel better having my co-teacher in my classroom with me. Her interaction with students is great” (Lily, focus group, January 19, 2022).

Kamila and Amy also experienced increased self-efficacy by noticing the persistence of their co-workers. Kamila mentioned. “Just seeing my friends across the hall wipe down desks, give students hand sanitizer, and hearing their voices sometimes teaching, makes me feel like it’s ok for me too. We are a family in this mess” (Kamila, personal communication, December 16, 2021). Amy also said,

So, the teacher that I replaced right before open house decided she was not returning because she did not want to teach during the pandemic. I felt like other teachers were teaching and watching them teach, I was like, so if they could do it, why not me? (Amy, personal communication, December 12, 2021)

Teachers experienced heightened self-efficacy through their awareness of other individuals persevering in the classroom, which helped many teachers feel like they could also succeed in the classroom.

**Student Resilience**

The first subtheme identified under awareness was student resilience. Teachers
experienced increased self-efficacy by perceiving the resilience of students in their classroom. Observing students attend class and perform well on their assignments made several teachers believe they could also attend school and function. Kamila said, “I think just having the kids’ master standards, regardless of the COVID circumstances, I call that a win, when they can still master what they need to know. I admire them, and it gives me strength” (Kamila, personal communication, December 16, 2021). Ian mentioned, “By far it definitely made me a better teacher seeing students come to school in this environment and adapting to it, getting good grades, it made me think this is doable. It’s motivating” (Ian, journal, January 4, 2022).

Lily and Haley had similar experiences with student resiliency. Lily stated, “I think it motivates me that I see my kids understanding what they are doing on assignments, see they are understanding what needs to be done to make good grades. Seeing that makes me want to be here too” (Lily, focus group, January 19, 2022). Haley mentioned, “I experienced surprise at the amount of students that actually come to school during this time. It really is amazing to see them come to school and want to be here. It makes being here easier as their teacher” (Haley, Journal, January 5, 2022).

Likewise, Jasmine and Breanna experienced occurrences of student resiliency. By perceiving their students as resilient, they gained a sense of self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction. Jasmine said, “I also feel quite impressed with my students. It has been a breath of fresh air for me, seeing them come to class in this environment and do their assignments. I have enjoyed being here because of that” (Jasmine, personal communication, December 14, 2021). Breanna affirmed,

I think seeing how resilient some of these students are when they do return and being excited to be here and putting in the effort. Even with middle schoolers, you
know, sometimes they are resistant to want to work hard and catch up. So, seeing how resilient they are, is exciting and inspires me to be here with them. (Breanna, personal communication, January 3, 2022)

**Teacher Resilience**

The second subtheme identified under awareness was teacher resilience. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy through their awareness of other teachers on their hall performing in the classroom. Many teachers mentioned that the ability of their co-workers, some of whom were immune-compromised, to continue to come to work and teach under duress influenced their belief that they could also accomplish the same feat. Kamila stated, “I mean, it’s nice to see my neighbors be able to come and teach without getting COVID. Seeing that gives me hope, I mean, I am vaccinated and all but with this new strand you never know” (Kamila, personal communication, December 16, 2021). Amy whispered, “You see that teacher over there, Mrs. Nancy (Pseudonym), she is my inspiration, she can retire anytime, has health problems and is here every day, I know, I watch her, she teaches with her door open. Incredible” (Amy, personal communication, December 13, 2021). Fen said,

> When you see teachers with health conditions continue to do this, and it is really amazing and keeps me going. I really admire those teachers, and we have some on this hall with health problems, but they come in here every day and teach their students. I see them every day. I mean, it is nothing that anybody can explain. (Fen, focus group, January 19, 2022).

Kamila, Amy, and Fen saw their co-workers performing similar duties in the classroom without adverse consequences, which increased their self-efficacy in teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic.
Lily, Gwen, Denise, and Emma perceived their co-workers as resilient. Lily said, “I mean, seeing my co-workers come here and seeing them do their job across the hall makes me feel better to be here, you know, without seeing that, it would be depressing” (Lily, Focus Group, January 19, 2022). Gwen stated,

When I see teachers come to school in this, you know what I mean, this mask, social distancing and all, it makes me think I can too. I mean, I miss days but seeing them teach in the room with a lot of students in this situation gives me hope. (Gwen, Focus Group, January 19, 2022)

Denise said, “Just continuing to see other teachers here with what I know is going on with COVID. Learning from them, watching them is a big boost for me because some of them here, I know some, have health problems” (Denise, personal communication, December 14, 2021). Emma affirmed, “I know that with her next door, and I know her, and she is my friend, I give my best, I am giving all my effort here because I know, I see, she does too, all day” (Emma, Journal, January 16, 2022). Most participants referenced observing other teachers perform without experiencing negative consequences, which led them to believe they could achieve the same tasks in the same environment. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy observing the work-related behaviors of their co-workers.

**Need to Socialize**

The third theme identified was the need to socialize, and the two subthemes that emerged were verbal cues from students and verbal persuasion from co-workers. Ten of 12 participants directly referenced a need to socialize as they discussed their in-person teaching experiences. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy by socializing with others at school and expressed the need to socialize with others. Several teachers mentioned how their social interactions with
others helped them in the classroom teaching in-person instruction. Amy said, “I like to socialize. I need it. It makes me a better teacher in my department” (Amy, personal communication, December 13, 2021). Gwen asserted, “one thing that helped calm my feelings is talking with other teachers on my hall” (Gwen, focus group, January 19, 2022). Breanna noted, “Social interactions really helped me this year; people have come forward with a lot of solutions to problems. Talking with my colleagues is beneficial to me as a teacher and helps me stay focused and worry less” (Breanna, journal, January 4, 2022). Denise said, “I don’t socialize as much as I used to with other teachers because of COVID, but I still do. I kind of need it. It helps me stay focused on teaching” (Denise, personal communication, December 12, 2021). Amy, Gwen, Breanna, and Denise experienced increased self-efficacy by socializing with others because they referenced how their social experiences helped them as educators during the pandemic.

Ian, Emma, Lily, and Fen also spoke about their need to socialize with others at work. Ian affirmed, “I have always been a social person, and I like interacting with other teachers; it helps me through this” (Ian, personal communication, January 3, 2022). Emma mentioned, “I really need social interaction with my co-workers; I want it; we still meet with each other, which is great” (Emma, personal communication, January 3, 2022). Lily said, “I'm a people person, and I know that about me, and I know I like it. Even when there's downtime, I'll go in and go over and talk to somebody about my class. Get some positive pointers” (Lily, focus group, January 19, 2022). Fen stated, “I've always been a biggie on social interaction with other teachers, anyways I wear a mask, and I’m vaccinated, but I need to interact with co-workers” (Fen, personal communication, December 16, 2021).
Most teachers stated the need to socialize was a vital part of their experience teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy through their social interactions with others at work. Socializing allowed teachers to talk to one another about their daily encounters in the classroom and receive encouragement from others which increased their self-efficacy.

**Verbal Cues from Students**

The first subtheme identified under a need to socialize was verbal cues from students. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy from verbal cues from students. They mentioned that receiving positive verbal cues from students gave them a confidence boost that they could persevere teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. Several teachers mentioned that such verbalizations from students made them believe in their ability to teach face-to-face instruction. Kamila said, “I think just talking with students is the biggest thing, the comments they make, they make me believe in myself when they say they like my class and they’re glad I am their teacher during COVID” (Kamila, personal communication, December 16, 2021). Jasmine stated, “Students told me they felt like my classroom was a place they could learn even with COVID. The emotional security that gave me has been the most successful thing that makes me believe I can do this” (Jasmine, journal, January 12, 2022). Ian affirmed,

> You deal with kids this age; they don't understand the seriousness of COVID. I feel bad for them; it's awful. You feel good when they say things like; they want to stay in here all day. It makes me think I’m doing something right. (Ian, personal communication, January 3, 2022)

Kamila, Jasmine, and Ian experienced increased self-efficacy from the verbal cues they received
from their students in the classroom, and those verbalizations helped each of them believe in their ability to teach in-person instruction.

Haley, Gwen, and Amy spoke of similar verbal experiences with students in the classroom. Haley said, “It makes me happy when students tell me that I explain things better than the computer did. Talking about virtual, it makes me feel like they want to be here, and that makes me want to be here” (Haley, Journal, January 5, 2022). Gwen noted, “It's always better when you can be here with your kids and have that interaction. Sometimes just the little things they say like, stay safe, and see you tomorrow, makes me want to come back the next day” (Gwen, personal communication, January 3, 2022). Amy asserted, “I feel like the kids have been very supportive of me with the positive things they’ve said, so that's been really helpful for me. That gives me support, helps me teaching-wise” (Amy, personal communication, December 13, 2021). Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy through verbal cues from students in their classroom, and those cues helped teachers believe in their ability to teach face-to-face instruction.

*Verbal Persuasion from Co-Workers*

The second subtheme under the need to socialize was verbal persuasion from co-workers. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy through verbal persuasion from their co-workers and mentioned that the verbal interactions with other teachers and administrators helped them believe they were capable of teaching in-person instruction. Amy said, “We give each other pep talks and share stories about our day. It helps me as a teacher in this environment, and I look forward to our helpful talks every day” (Amy, personal communication, December 13, 2021). Lily noted, “I especially need to have those conversations with the other math teachers. I mean, it's I go over to another person's classroom because I need a talk to help me get through my day,
my classes” (Lily, personal communication, January 3, 2022). Amy and Lily received verbal persuasion from other teachers, which increased their self-efficacy in teaching in-person instruction.

Emma, Breanna, and Fen also experienced increased self-efficacy through verbal persuasion from co-workers. Emma asserted, “I feel like when my co-workers stop by and say, we can do this, it’s like a shot in the arm. It really helps me out.” (Emma, Journal, January 4, 2022). Breanna said, “So, I really need to be around people. I like when Dr. Thomas (principal-pseudonym) stops by to check on me, he tells me to hang in there, and he is in this with me. It gives me confidence” (Breanna, personal communication, January 3, 2022). Fen asserted, “Things go easier for me when I can talk with my peers; they give me support as a teacher; I really think we give each other support throughout the day” (Fen, focus group, January 19, 2022). Teachers’ experiences with verbal persuasion increased their sense of self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic.

**Challenging**

The fourth theme identified was challenging, and the three subthemes that emerged were emotional challenges, academic challenges, and classroom challenges. All 12 participants directly referenced challenges as they discussed their in-person teaching experiences. Many teachers that experienced increased self-efficacy through perseverance, awareness, and social interaction, experienced decreased self-efficacy when they perceived teaching in-person instruction as challenging, which created stress and self-doubt about their teaching environment.

Denise said, “When I came back, I didn’t know what to expect, I wasn’t sure if I was up to the challenge of coming here. My emotions were all over the palace” (Denise, personal communication, December 14, 2021). Ian questioned himself and stated, “Well, first of all, I was
like how am I going to be able to be in this environment with a group of 20 something kids in a classroom? Very challenging” (Ian, personal communication, January 3, 2022). Denise and Ian spoke of in-person instruction as challenging and experienced thoughts of uncertainty which decreased their self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction.

Cole, Emma, and Fen also experienced reduced self-efficacy because they perceived in-person instruction as challenging, which stimulated unwanted thoughts. Cole asserted, “I am worried about being here, being in a face-to-face setting, just thinking of what happened to Gary (Pseudonym) and all, the challenges have been enormous” (Cole, focus group, January 19, 2022). Emma affirmed, “It’s exhausting to be here, this is a great school and all, but it definitely tests me, you know, it kind of weighs on me” (Emma, journal, January 13, 2022). Fen said, “Going back face-to-face with students certainly was a tall task. I’ve always been fairly comfortable with technology but wasn’t sure about teaching in front of a classroom” (Fen, focus group, January 19, 2022).

Jasmine, Lily, and Amy also experienced decreased self-efficacy. They mentioned in-person instruction as challenging, and their perceptions of that environment created self-doubt and created additional stressors. Jasmine said, “I wasn’t ready to go back to face-to-face. Coming back is very, very challenging, and I didn't feel I would be as effective. There is a lot of accountability for us here teaching face-to-face” (Jasmine, personal communication, December 14, 2021). Lily stated,

I didn't know what it was going to be like. To be honest, I knew it was going to be challenging, but I managed. Now the Omicron variant and numbers are going up fast. I am worried now. It’s skyrocketing here. (Lily, focus group, January 19, 2022)

Amy asserted, “Kids really need to have that face-to-face interaction, but it is a real challenge
with COVID and all” (Amy, personal communication, December 12, 2021). Teachers experienced decreased self-efficacy because of their perceptions of the challenges associated with face-to-face instruction. Their perceptions of those challenges elicited thoughts of self-doubt.

**Emotional Challenges**

The first subtheme under challenging was emotional challenges. Teachers asserted that it was emotionally challenging teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic and referenced emotions of fear, anxiety, stress, and thoughts of self-doubt, which diminished their self-efficacy. Lily said,

“I am feeling overworked and drained. There are 19 teachers out, five in my grade level department alone, which means I have to get other classrooms ready for the day. Then, I continually check on them during the day as new subs come in each block. I totally understand why teachers are starting to burn out now from stress. (Lily, journal, January 11, 2022)

Denise, Fen, and Haley also experienced reduced self-efficacy because of their emotional challenges. Denise said, “I am worried about face-to-face, and I talked to my principal about it. I wanted to make sure first of all that we'd be safe here. I can’t teach unless I’m behind my desk with a shield” (Denise, personal communication, December 12, 2021). Fen also expressed thoughts of fear and perceived his environment as emotionally challenging. He stated,

“I'm very nervous when you consider COVID. So face-to-face with students certainly makes me nervous. I certainly am very apprehensive about that, now with the numbers. It’s stressful. Somedays, I don’t know if I can do it. I don’t get too close to students. (Fen, focus group, January 19, 2022)
Haley said, “Students keep coming to school sick and leaving mid-day. This does two things. It exposes the rest of us to what they have and creates a cycle of getting make-up work. Very stressful, I don’t know how to catch them up” (Haley, journal, January 18, 2022).

Jasmine, Breanna, and Ian had similar experiences of reduced self-efficacy. Their emotional challenges caused them to doubt their ability to teach in in-person instruction. Jasmine said, “I am very nervous. My husband is a type one diabetic. So, he's in a high-risk group for everything. And that is very scary for us face-to-face. Not sure if I could teach face-to-face” (Jasmine, personal communication, December 14, 2021). Breanna stated, “I had just had my son. So, I am very nervous. Having a newborn at home. And teaching in a pandemic is a scary thought you know, not knowing if I was capable, scared for my home life” (Breanna, personal communication, January 3, 2022). Ian said, “So, the first thing automatically that comes to your mind is not getting sick and definitely taking it home to my family. It is stressful. I thought about doing something else, but COVID is everywhere” (Ian, journal, January 4, 2022).

Likewise, Emma, Kamila, and Cole experienced decreased self-efficacy because of their perceptions of teaching in-person instruction. Emma said, “My husband has a congenital heart defect. I was fearful really, of carrying it to him because he did not get vaccinated, so I was scared. I worry about that a lot teaching in the classroom” (Emma, personal communication, January 3, 2022). Kamila stated, “With the increase in students being quarantined and teachers out sick, I second guess myself a lot now, really scary stuff” (Kamila, journal, January 12, 2022). Cole noted,

Teaching face-to-face is hard on me emotionally, I’ve lost someone near and dear to me in this community, and we’ve lost a staff member to COVID. I knew Gary (Pseudonym) and it stays with me in the classroom, I think about that situation, and it
keeps me away, from getting next to students as much, on my toes with masks, social
distancing, and all. Gary (pseudonym) was my age; we grew up together, and so, it’s
constantly here, it happened to him, it can happen to me, to anyone. (Cole, personal
communication, December 15, 2021)

**Academic Challenges**

The second subtheme under challenging was academic challenges. Teachers experienced
diminished self-efficacy because of their perceptions of the academic challenges they
encountered. Many teachers doubted their ability to teach in-person instruction and were stressed
about student achievement, student absences, and increased accountability of teaching in-person
instruction. Kamila said,

> There's a lot of missed instructional time. Now I have students out all the time because
of quarantine, being sick, or something with COVID. Catching those students up on
instruction has been demoralizing, very frustrating; sometimes I want to give up. I mean,
is this ever going to end; now we have the new variant? It’s exhausting. (Kamila, journal,
January 4, 2022)

Gwen and Jasmine mentioned a similar experience. Gwen stated, “The expectations on teachers,
this isn't against our admin, but it’s exhausting how much students are out for quarantine now,
and we’re gonna have to catch them up in class when they return. I doubt I can do that” (Gwen,
focus group, January 19, 2022). Jasmine said, “I think the attitude that if a student is out
quarantining, but some families and some students have the attitude that if they're quarantined,
it's a vacation, and I’m stressed because I’m accountable for their grades here or not” (Jasmine,
personal communication, December 14, 2021).
Ian, Lily, and Haley also experienced decreased self-efficacy because of their perceptions of the academic challenges, which exacerbated stress and self-doubt. Ian stated, “There's a lot of kids missing because of COVID. It’s hard to stay up. I am still accountable for scores. Watching them struggle makes me feel like a bad teacher. I worry about their test scores, stresses me out” (Ian, personal communication, January 3, 2022). Lily affirmed, “I have students who are starting to get sick and are missing quite a bit of school. I am averaging about three to four a class now. I am frustrated, have to do extra work to catch them up” (Lily, focus group, January 19, 2022). Haley said, “Today, I am disheartened and frustrated by the news that numbers are steadily increasing again. The students that are out because of COVID did not even look at their Google classroom. I don’t know what to do now” (Haley, journal, January 10, 2022).

**Classroom Challenges**

The third subtheme under challenging was classroom challenges. Many teachers experienced decreased self-efficacy because of their perceptions of the classroom challenges. Teachers reported challenges such as difficulty social distancing, increased sanitation duties, and policing students wearing masks. Their perceptions of those classroom challenges created additional stress, which lowered their self-efficacy in teaching face-to-face instruction. Amy said, “I don't know if I'm going to make it here some days. I have to constantly tell them to wear your mask, pull up your mask, pull it over your nose. It’s stressful, want to throw my hands up” (Amy, personal communication, December 13, 2021). Denise stated,

Some kids come in coughing; they typically don’t wear their masks the right way. I have to stop teaching, tell them to pull it up. It’s stressful interrupting instruction. I’m like am I doing this right, like OMG, I feel like I am stuck in reverse. (Denise, journal, January 14, 2022)
Ian, Cole, and Breanna mentioned experiencing similar occurrences. They referenced the stress of extra duty wiping and sanitizing desks before, during, and after class. Ian said, “So, you're constantly reminding them because, in their head, they're not thinking about that stuff. So, you constantly tell them to pull up the mask. It's just constant stress. The hygiene part, wiping desks all day, stressful” (Ian, personal communication, January 3, 2022). Cole asserted, “Sanitizing desks is a lot of extra work on all of us, like a lot trying to do this. The fact that I am responsible for sanitizing desks is stressful. I remember Gary (friend-pseudonym) said it was dangerous” (Cole, focus group, January 19, 2022). Breanna had the same perception. She said, We have to clean, sanitize, stop instruction and do it again at the end of every block. It makes me want to go home because if it’s this bad, I mean, if we have to do this, it must be bad. I have a newborn at home. (Breanna, personal communication, January 3, 2022) Emma and Fen also experienced lower self-efficacy because of their perceptions of classroom challenges. Both perceived social distancing in the classroom as challenging, which created additional stress. Fen asserted, There’s no way that you can separate these kids six feet apart. It's absolutely ridiculous. And now they said three feet, which I don't know where the number three feet came from. So even now, in this classroom, which is one of the biggest, it’s stressful, I can't separate kids by three feet. (Fen, focus group, January 19, 2022)

Emma confirmed, “It's hard to do this social distancing. Lots of redirection for the students to keep their hands to themselves, to separate. It stresses me out. I don’t have enough room to really do that” (Emma, journal, January 13, 2022).

**Outlier Data and Findings**

The outlier in this study is a personal friendship one participant had with another teacher
who experienced complications from COVID-19. Only one participant mentioned having a personal relationship with another educator that recently passed away from COVID-19. Cole said he was friends with a teacher who contracted the coronavirus and died. He stated that he also taught the same subject as his late friend and that they grew up together. His previous friendship with a deceased educator may explain why his responses exhibited more emotional arousal than the other eleven participants. Cole constantly referenced his late friend and, in his responses, mentioned words like “emotionally hard,” “cryptic,” “dangerous,” and “terrifying” when describing in-person instruction. He also exhibited increased stress and heightened risk perception of contracting the virus. Cole stated,

Today, I was walking through the hallway and hearing a colleague tell another colleague that she woke up with a scratchy throat. The scratchy throat wasn’t the thing that caught me off guard; my reaction to it was. I immediately wondered if this person was experiencing COVID symptoms and thought of Gary (Pseudonym). I ran the other way. I hate since he passed that the last year has programmed me to have this kind of reaction. I miss the days when my initial reaction would have been sympathy or asking if allergies could be the culprit. (Cole, journal, January 6, 2022)

**Research Question Responses**

This transcendental phenomenological study was guided by one central research question and four sub-research questions. The research questions sought to describe teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The four themes identified during data analysis: (a) perseverance, (b) awareness, (c) need to socialize and (d) challenging, supported participants’ responses to each of the research questions below.
Central Research Question

What are teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic? Teachers described their experience with self-efficacy as a fluctuating process that revolved around their classroom experiences and their perceptions of those experiences. The four primary themes that answered this question were (a) perseverance, (b) awareness, (c) a need to socialize, and (d) challenging. The themes emerged from teachers’ experiences with self-efficacy, which aligned with their classroom experiences and their perceptions of those experiences teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic.

Kamila experienced increased self-efficacy through her classroom experiences with perseverance, but she also experienced decreased self-efficacy when she perceived her classroom environment as challenging. Kamila said, “the masks are like second nature now. I am used to them” (Kamila, personal communication, December 16, 2021). Kamila’s self-efficacy was high at the end of the semester because the longer she was exposed to her classroom without contracting the virus, the more she believed she could persevere teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. However, when she began to perceive her classroom as challenging, her self-efficacy diminished. Kamila asserted,

Today was a rather harrowing day; it felt like September of 2020 again. I have 11 students who are out due to testing positive for COVID, there is a surge in COVID cases in school. We had 10 teachers out too, and we were short substitutes. I am stressed about the sudden increase in numbers. I just got back, and already I feel quite exhausted.
(Kamila, Journal, January 10, 2022)

Lily also experienced increased self-efficacy through awareness of her co-worker’s successful experiences teaching in-person instruction but experienced decreased self-efficacy
when she perceived her classroom as challenging. She asserted, “I feel more comfortable teaching in my classroom, seeing my peers teaching in their room across the hall” (Lily, personal communication, January 3, 2022). Lily’s awareness of her peers succeeding in the classroom increased her self-efficacy that she could also succeed in that same environment teaching in-person instruction. Consequently, when she began to perceive her environment as challenging, she experienced decreased self-efficacy. Lily said,

The numbers are on the increase as the week begins. I am already averaging four to six kids out in each class, and we had over 23 teachers out today. I am very stressed and worried about what is about to occur in the classroom over the next few weeks. Not sure what to do. I can’t remember COVID numbers this fast. It’s not good. (Lily, focus group, January 19, 2022)

Gwen shared a similar experience with self-efficacy. She mentioned, “I am grateful that we have administrators that come to our hall and talk to us and are willing to help us. It’s nice to know they care; it’s like a jolt of energy” (Gwen, personal communication, January 3, 2022). Gwen expressed a need to socialize. Her social experiences increased her self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction, but, like Kamila and Lily, when she perceived her classroom environment as challenging, it created additional stressors and self-doubt, which diminished her self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction. Gwen said, “Today was rough. I had so many missing students because of quarantine, and one of my students threw up in my classroom. It obviously makes it very challenging to make sure students are getting what they need instructionally” (Gwen, journal, January 14, 2022).

**Sub-Question One**

What role does mastery experience play in teacher perceptions of self-efficacy teaching
face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic? This sub-research question was designed to explore how mastery experience may influence teachers perceived self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. One primary theme, (a) perseverance, and two subthemes (b) coping and (c) caregiving, emerged during data analysis. See table 4 for the open codes, themes, and subthemes in relation to sub-research question one.

Table 4

*Open Codes, Themes and Subthemes in Relation to Sub-Research Question One*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Occurrence of Open Codes Across all Data Points</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>Coping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normalcy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Caregiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishment</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Safety</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mastery experience revolved around teachers’ perseverance in the classroom. Teacher perseverance aligned with the self-efficacy source of mastery experience. The more teachers were exposed to the classroom without adverse consequences, the more normal it became, and the more apt they believed in their ability to teach in-person instruction. Their perseverance increased their perceived self-efficacy, which in turn increased their perseverance teaching face-to-face instruction. Haley said,

> It is exhausting having to spend extra energy on nagging students to wear masks and wipe down desks before and after every block, but it’s a normal part of my day. I guess I am used to it. It doesn’t seem as bad like before. Actually, I am getting pretty good at it. (Haley, journal, January 6, 2022)

Lily stated, “Our numbers are up, and many students are missing. I would have to assume that many of these students are either sick or quarantined and I am frustrated, but every day being
here is a new opportunity” (Lily, focus group, January 19, 2022). Like Haley and Lily, Kamila and Jasmine also became more confident in their ability to teach in-person instruction due to mastery experience in the classroom. Kamila mentioned, “Making sure the room, materials, and desks remain as clean as possible for the kiddos is a normal day for me. I succeed every day doing that, no big deal now” (Kamila, journal, January 5, 2022). Jasmine asserted,

Today’s stand-out moment was a bit of normalcy or what seemed normal. I did notice all my students wearing their masks today without me telling them to. I feel like I am making progress with them. I didn’t have to stop teaching to find a mask. I guess my daily reminders are paying off; they can make a decision for themselves, to wear a mask. It’s gratifying to me. (Jasmine, journal, January 11, 2022)

Sub-Question Two

What role does vicarious experience play in teacher perceptions of self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic? This sub-research question was designed to explore how vicarious experience may influence teachers perceived self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. One primary theme, (a) awareness, and two subthemes (b) student resilience and (c) teacher resilience, emerged during data analysis. See table 5 for the open codes, themes, and subthemes in relation to sub-research question two.

Table 5

*Open Codes, Themes and Subthemes in Relation to Research Question Two*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Occurrence of Open Codes Across all data Points</th>
<th>Theme</th>
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<td>Student Attendance</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Student Resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Attendance</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher Resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Achievement</td>
<td>117</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Attitude</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator Attitude</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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</table>
Vicarious experience revolved around teachers’ awareness of other teachers and students succeeding in the classroom. Teachers’ awareness aligned with the self-efficacy source of vicarious experience. The more teachers were aware or observed other teachers and students succeeding in the classroom, the more vicarious experience they encountered and the more they believed in their ability to teach in-person instruction. Their vicarious experiences increased their self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction. Lily asserted, “Seeing my co-workers come here and seeing them do their job across the hall makes me feel better to be here” (Lily, focus group, January 19, 2022). Emma said, “I was thankful that my co-teacher was able to come back from being sick. It is always nice to feel like things are somewhat back to normal with her teaching in here. When she’s out, I feel uncertain” (Emma, journal, January 6, 2022). Breanna stated,

I felt nervous, a little anxious with the new surge of cases in the county. One thing that helps calm these feelings is knowing that my friend is next door; she is here too. I can hear her sometimes through the wall and it makes me feel safe. We are all like family on this hall. (Breanna, journal, January 4, 2022)

Like Emma and Breanna, Amy and Jasmine also had vicarious experiences in the classroom. Amy mentioned, “Thankfully, Mrs. Jones (pseudonym) was here today. I love that she is here, watching her interact with students, seeing that makes me feel better as a teacher” (Amy, Journal, January 18, 2022). Jasmine said, “It’s refreshing to see kids being positive about school and watching them come in here with that attitude; it rubs off on me” (Jasmine, personal communication, January 18, 2022).

**Sub-Question Three**

What role does verbal persuasion play in teacher perceptions of self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic? This sub-research question was
designed to explore how verbal persuasion may influence teachers perceived self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. One primary theme, (a) a need to socialize, and two subthemes (b) verbal cues from students and (c) verbal persuasion from co-workers, were identified during data analysis. See table 6 for the open codes, themes, and subthemes in relation to sub-research question three.

Table 6

Open Codes, Themes and Subthemes in Relation to Sub-Research Question Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Occurrence of Open Codes Across all Data Points</th>
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<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Staff Attitude</td>
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<td>Need to Socialize</td>
<td>Verbal Cues from Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with Teachers</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal Persuasion from Co-workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with Students</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Department Meetings</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy by socializing with others at school. Most teachers expressed the need to socialize with others while at school during the pandemic. Several teachers mentioned how their social interactions with others helped them in the classroom teaching in-person instruction. Verbal persuasion revolved around teachers’ need to socialize with both students and co-workers at school. The need to socialize aligned with the self-efficacy source of verbal persuasion. The more teachers received positive verbal reinforcement from other individuals at school, the more verbal persuasion they experienced and more they believed in their ability to teach in-person instruction. Their experience with verbal persuasion increased their self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction. Denise said,
It may seem like a small thing, but the experience that stood out to me the most today was that a student who has been quarantined came back and thanked me for sending him work. He said that he didn’t want to get behind since he wasn’t able to be in class, and he thanked me for being his teacher and told me he likes the way I taught, and my class was his favorite. It feels nice to be appreciated. It makes me think I am doing a good job.

(Denise, journal, January 13, 2022)

Amy said, “Today, we received an email from administration thanking us for being supportive, working together, and for keeping it together during these trying times. That was refreshing. I was running on fumes; words like that go a long way” (Amy, journal, January 14, 2022). Gwen stated, “Sometimes I ask my friends at work for advice, and that helps me out” (Gwen, focus group, January 19, 2022).

**Sub-Question Four**

What role does emotional arousal play in teacher perceptions of self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic? This sub-research question was designed to explore how emotional arousal may influence teachers perceived self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. One primary theme, (a) challenging, and three subthemes (b) emotional challenges, (c) academic challenges, and (d) classroom challenges were identified during data analysis. See table 7 for the open codes, themes, and subthemes in relation to sub-research question four.

**Table 7**

*Open Codes, Theme and Subthemes in Relation to Sub-Research Question Four*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Occurrence of Open Codes Across all Data Points</th>
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</tr>
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</table>


<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
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<td>Stress</td>
<td>134</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear of Infecting Family</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Contracting COVID-19</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Scores</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Absenteeism</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Absenteeism</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Mortality</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Masks</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Distancing</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanitation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcrowded</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emotional arousal revolved around the challenges teachers faced in the classroom teaching in-person instruction. Teachers’ perceptions of their classroom challenges aligned with the self-efficacy source of emotional arousal. The more teachers perceived their classroom environment as challenging, the more emotional arousal they experienced, and the more they doubted their ability to teach in-person instruction. Perceived classroom challenges increased their emotional arousal, which in turn decreased their self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction. Ian said, “I felt stressed with the kids coming back after being on break. Knowing they have been doing numerous activities outside of school, it has me worried about them bringing sickness into the classroom. Not sure what to do” (Ian, journal, January 4, 2022). Cole stated,

I had a feeling of nervousness when I came to work. Just because I don't want to get sick and take it home to my family. It was definitely one of those days of me being extra nervous and precautious. The reason why is because the students had a long weekend which usually results in them doing things outside of school that involve groups and can get them sick. Which terrifies me they will get me sick. With this new variant and the quarantines and numbers going up, it seems like this will not go away. I don’t know how we do this in here with these numbers in the community. (Cole, focus group, January 18,
Like Ian and Cole, Haley and Kamila also perceived the classroom as challenging. Haley mentioned, “I am on high alert today. I received an email that a lot of students would be out. How do I teach who’s left? These are all thoughts that run through my head” (Haley, Journal, January 13, 2022). Kamila asserted,

Now I have ten students out because of Covid. It is frustrating when students start missing and all of the extra work it entails. The make-up pile grows exponentially with each student that misses class, and it soon becomes overwhelming to balance the students in class needs with the students out for COVID needs. (Kamila, journal, January 11, 2022)

Amy and Fen had similar perceptions of the classroom. Amy said, “Today has been a very challenging day. We have had several staff absent from COVID, and there aren't enough subs, so I have to cover classes, some averaging 36 students. The added responsibility is frustrating. It’s hopeless” (Amy, journal, January 12, 2022). Fen stated,

Even though we've been in person, just the number of absences is just, I mean, I don't know what other people are seeing, that's what I'm saying. I mean, just it's huge, and nobody seems to really want to address it. At least on any kind of state level. You know, we got state testing coming up, and I think about that too and saying, you know, I've got kids that have missed 10 days of school already, and we just got back. I mean, look at that. The very best of students missing one out of every three days; it’s depressing, there's no way I can make that up. (Fen, focus group, January 19, 2022)
Summary

This chapter illustrated the findings of this transcendental phenomenological study regarding the teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings reflected the experiences of 12 participants with self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction and were organized according to four themes, nine subthemes, one outlier, one central research question, and four sub-research questions. The four themes that emerged from data analysis were (a) perseverance, (c) awareness, (c) need to socialize, and (d) challenging. Numerous quotes from participants were used to support the above themes. The results from the interviews, journals, and a focus group revealed that teachers’ self-efficacy was in a continuous state of fluctuation and was informed by their classroom experiences and by their perceptions of their classroom environment. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy through their experiences with perseverance, awareness, and through their social interactions with others, which led them to believe they could succeed teaching in-person instruction amid the pandemic. However, many of those same teachers also experienced decreased self-efficacy when they perceived their classroom as emotionally, academically, and environmentally challenging due to the pandemic. Those perceptions created increased stress and self-doubt about their teaching ability which diminished their self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction. Teachers’ shared experiences with self-efficacy uncovered one outlier. Only one participant experienced the loss of a close friend who suffered from complications and passed away from COVID-19. This may explain why that participant experienced more emotional arousal about face-to-face instruction than the other eleven participants.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic in a public school district in South Georgia. This chapter includes a discussion of the interpretations of the findings, the implications for policy and practice, theoretical and methodological implications, the limitations, and delimitations, and includes recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with an overall summary.

Discussion

This study explored teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the triangulated data sources mentioned in the previous chapter, the shared experiences of 12 participants were categorized into the following four themes: (a) perseverance, (b) awareness, (c) need to socialize, and (d) challenging. This section discusses the study’s findings in relation to the above themes and supports the interpretation of those findings with empirical and theoretical literature along with narrative evidence from the participants. The discussion includes the following subsections: interpretation of findings, implications for policy or practice, theoretical and empirical implication, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Interpretation of Findings

This section summarizes the thematic findings, followed by an interpretation of those findings. Teachers’ self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic was in a continuous state of fluctuation and was informed by their classroom experiences and perceptions of their classroom environment. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy through...
perseverance, awareness, and socialization but experienced decreased self-efficacy when they perceived their environment as challenging. Individuals can experience subjective shifts in their self-efficacy, and those who struggle may be particularly vulnerable to self-efficacy fluctuations (Veilleux et al., 2021). Teachers’ experience with self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction reflected an oscillating pattern of upswings and downswings predicated on their classroom experiences and perceptions of their environment. Previous research (Gardner & Pierce, 1998; Malmberg et al., 2014; Poulou, 2007) revealed that self-efficacy fluctuates in different situations since it refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform behaviors necessary to succeed in a certain situation (Bandura, 1977).

**Summary of Thematic Findings**

The following four primary themes emerged from data analysis: perseverance, awareness, a need to socialize, and challenging. The themes aligned with the theoretical framework of this phenomenological research study. Perseverance included the subthemes of coping and caregiving. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy through their perseverance in the classroom. Repeated exposure to the classroom without adverse consequences led to a sense of accomplishment among teachers, which fueled their belief that they could persevere teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. Teachers’ use of various coping mechanisms and the sense of accomplishment they gained by taking care of their students in the classroom enhanced their perseverance.

The theme awareness included the subthemes of student resilience and teacher resilience. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy through their awareness of others at school. Observing other individuals that teachers perceived as successful helped those observing teachers believe they could teach in-person instruction. Teachers perceived many of their
students as resilient, and observing those students attend class and perform gave teachers the belief that they could also perform. Many teachers viewed other teachers as resilient. Teachers’ awareness of their co-workers teaching in the classroom under similar conditions influenced those teachers’ belief that they could accomplish the same thing.

The theme of a need to socialize included the subthemes verbal cues from students and verbal persuasion from teachers. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy by socializing with others at school and expressed a strong need to socialize. Several teachers gained the confidence to teach in-person instruction through positive verbal cues from students. Such verbalizations contributed to teachers’ belief in their ability to teach face-to-face instruction. The verbal persuasions they received from their co-workers also helped them believe they were capable of teaching in-person instruction.

The theme challenging included the subthemes emotional challenges, academic challenges, and classroom challenges. Teachers experienced decreased self-efficacy when they perceived teaching in-person instruction as challenging creating stress and self-doubt about their teaching abilities. The emotional challenges of teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic led to fear, anxiety, stress, and thoughts of self-doubt. Teachers questioned their ability to teach face-to-face instruction due to the academic challenges associated with student achievement, student absences, and increased accountability. Teachers perceived social distancing, sanitation duties, and policing masks as classroom challenges which created additional stress and lowered their self-efficacy. The key takeaways regarding self-efficacy while teaching face-to-face during the pandemic is that teachers remained committed to teaching and to their students, relied on relationships, and experienced an enormous amount of stress.
Teachers are Committed to Teaching and their Students Teachers’ self-efficacy was instrumental to their commitment to teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic. As teachers spoke about in-person instruction, it became evident that they gained a sense of commitment through their self-efficacy experiences with mastery experience or performance accomplishment, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion. In educational settings, teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs have been found to play a key role in their commitment (Yin et al., 2020), and teachers with increased self-efficacy have a greater commitment to their institutions (Waweru et al., 2021).

Many teachers gained a feeling of performance accomplishment from their exposure to the classroom, which created mastery experience. Haley mentioned it was “better than last year” and that she was “used to it” while Lily thought that “it got easier as the days went by” and the more she did it, the more she comfortable she became when speaking of in-person instruction. Repeated contact with the classroom increased teachers’ self-efficacy through mastery experience. If an individual masters a certain behavior, their self-efficacy increases (van Rooij et al., 2019), and heightened self-efficacy enhances teacher commitment (Huang et al., 2020).

Teachers were committed to their students’ emotional and physical well-being in the classroom which also led to feelings of performance accomplishment. Amy mentioned feeling “productive looking after them,” and Jasmine “felt better about being here, helping them” when referring to their students. González et al. (2018) and Hallinger et al. (2018) found a positive relationship between teachers’ commitment and their self-efficacy, and even if teachers are not committed to their institution, they can still be committed to their students because of their heightened sense of self-efficacy (Frelin & Fransson, 2017).
Many teachers were committed to teaching face-to-face instruction because they deemed both students and teachers as accomplished individuals in the classroom. Vicarious experience is beneficial to self-efficacy, and teachers with increased self-efficacy exert a strong commitment to teaching (Wilde & Hsu, 2019). These vicarious experiences refer to awareness about how other people perform a task in a certain situation (Chung & Chen, 2018). Since individuals do not always have sufficient ways of evaluating their capabilities, sometimes they need to compare their capabilities to others to feel capable themselves (Phan & Locke, 2015). Most teachers talked about their vicarious experiences in a similar fashion. Observing her “friends across the hall” teaching and seeing her “students excelling” increased Kamila’s commitment to teaching in-person instruction. Watching her co-workers teach made it “better” for Emma to be committed to teaching in-person instruction, and Lily was “committed” to her students by noticing the success they achieved in the classroom during the pandemic. Teachers’ vicarious experiences increase their self-efficacy, an important construct that increases teacher commitment (Chesnut & Burley, 2015).

Teacher commitment is viewed as a relational phenomenon shaped by the interactions between individual teachers and other individuals in their social environment (Day & Gu, 2010; Frelin & Fransson, 2017). Teachers’ experience with verbal persuasion mimicked such interactions, which increased their self-efficacy and commitment to teaching face-to-face instruction. Persuasive verbalizations enhance perceived self-efficacy and cause individuals to commit more effort to succeed promoting an increased sense of personal self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). The verbal persuasions that Jasmine received from her students made her feel “appreciated” and “believe” in herself, which increased her commitment to in-person instruction. The verbal persuasions Ian received “motivated” him to teach, made Lily “want” to teach, and
made Emma feel “better” about teaching in the classroom. Such verbalizations increased their self-efficacy, increasing their commitment to teaching face-to-face instruction. Verbal persuasion is a powerful source of self-efficacy (Moradkhani & Haghi, 2017) that increases teachers’ commitment (Zheng et al., 2021), and teachers with a strong sense of commitment are more resilient and maintain high-level performance over time (Ellison, 2022).

**Teachers Desire Relationships with their Co-Workers.** Teachers craved relationships with other teachers at school, and their thirst for bonding with their co-workers was essential to their experiences with self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. Teachers who develop strong relationships with other teachers tend to have higher self-efficacy than teachers that possess weak relationships with other teachers (Siciliano, 2016). All teachers spoke about their relationship with co-workers positively, and no participant mentioned having a negative relationship with another teacher, which suggests the importance of relationships among teachers teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. Most teachers used their relationships with other teachers as a support system which may also explain the absence of negative relationships among participants.

Breanna mentioned that “working with colleagues” helped her be more “successful in the classroom” teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic, and Amy relied on her “relationships” with her “co-teachers” to help her “emotionally cope” with teaching in-person instruction. Denise mentioned that her relationship with other teachers helped her “adapt to what’s happening” in the classroom while Fen relied on “relationships with other teachers” to help him “unwind.” Gwen used her relationships with other teachers to “deal with covid,” and Emma relied on her relationships to gain “support” from her co-workers and to “offer encouragement” to her co-workers so they would “not be fearful.” Teachers perceived their
relationships with other teachers as vital to their ability to teach in-person instruction, and they enhanced those relationships through vicarious experience and verbal persuasion. Both vicarious experience and verbal persuasion are significant predictors of teacher self-efficacy (Yada et al., 2019).

Support from co-workers increases teacher efficacy (Jungert et al., 2021). Teachers who developed relationships with their co-workers when facing adverse occupational situations experienced increased self-efficacy, indicative of vicarious experience and verbal persuasion (Moradkhani & Haghi, 2017; Oplatka & Iglan, 2020). Teachers utilized their planning block to cope and enhance their relationships with other teachers, which may explain why many teachers experienced emotional arousal when they had to cover classes during their planning time due to increased COVID-related teacher absences.

**Teaching Face-to-Face Instruction is a Stressful Undertaking.** The most mentioned and discussed emotion was stress. Stress played a key role in teachers’ experience with self-efficacy. All teachers perceived in-person instruction as a stressful undertaking. Stressful environments create emotional arousal that informs individual personal competency (Bandura & Adams, 1977), and emotional arousal is a fundamental source that can influence individual perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Despite teachers’ gain in self-efficacy through mastery experience, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion, emotional arousal quickly diminished their self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic.

New teaching demands increase stressful emotions among teachers (Pressley, 2021b; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009) and teacher stress often results in exhaustion (De Klerk et al., 2021) and diminished self-efficacy (Machado de Assis, 2021; Pellerone, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017c; Tang et al., 2021). When the Omicron variant infiltrated participants’ individual
schools and positive coronavirus cases along with quarantines increased, teachers began to experience an enormous amount of emotional arousal, which created stressful perceptions about their classroom environment, lowered their self-efficacy, and created a sense of self-doubt about teaching face-to-face instruction. Individuals may behave boldly in situations they perceive to be safe but retain self-doubt in less secure situations (Bandura, 1977), and there is a strong connection between self-efficacy and the classroom environment (Pressley, 2021a). Teachers were constantly stressed about their personal safety, the safety of their family members, standardized testing, extra duties, and being held accountable for quarantined students.

Jasmine felt stressed because of the “surge of COVID cases” and was “exhausted” from making sure quarantined students completed their assignments while absent. Haley was “exhausted” from covering classes for quarantined and sick teachers, while Kamila was “stressed about the “number of students quarantined” out of her classroom. Amy was “stressed about missing assignments” from quarantined students, and Breanna experienced stress due to the “number of students” from her class “diagnosed with COVID,” and she felt “overwhelmed” trying to make sure those students got “caught up on their assignments.”

Gwen mentioned being stressed and doubted her ability to effectively “sanitize desks” and “social distance” in the classroom, while Fen was “stressed” and “frustrated” due to the “increasing amount of students absent” from his class due to COVID. Cole experienced an enormous amount of stress and projected strong emotional arousal. He was “angry” that the school was still conducting in-person learning with the “numbers on the rise!” He also was “disappointed” because he felt that “teachers’ lives come secondary.” By conjuring up fearful cognitions about their inability, individuals can trigger elevated levels of stress (Bandura, 1977).
Implications for Policy or Practice

The findings of this phenomenological study yielded significant policy and practical implications in relation to teacher self-efficacy. These recommendations are intended to support teachers’ overall experience with self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. The recommendations involving teacher self-efficacy are intended for public school teachers, administrators, and public school districts. The subsections below include the implications for policy and implications for practice.

Implications for Policy

This research study has several policy implications for public school districts. The findings of this study found that all teachers experienced decreased self-efficacy through emotional arousal because of stress. There is no shortage of stressors for teachers engaged in face-to-face instruction during the pandemic (Delgado-Gallegos et al., 2021; Pressley, 2021b; Santamaria et al., 2021). School districts need to adopt policies that provide teachers with stress management strategies and emotional support. The policy implications regarding stress management strategies and emotional support are listed below.

The first policy implication is that school districts should develop regulations protecting teachers’ planning time to reduce teacher stress and encourage relationship building among teachers. Because most teachers in this study used their planning block as a coping mechanism and as a platform to build relationships with co-workers, teachers experienced stress when they lost that time covering classes as teachers’ absenteeism increased in the wake of the pandemic. By safeguarding teacher planning time, districts provide an essential coping strategy aimed at reducing teacher stress over the course of the school year. Self-efficacy is important for better job commitment and job satisfaction among teachers (Mokhtar et al., 2021).
The second policy implication is that school districts should adopt policies regulating the amount of extra duties placed on teachers engaged in face-to-face instruction during the pandemic. Many teachers experienced increased stress due to the extra duties of having to constantly sanitize their classroom, wipe down desks after each block, and police students wearing masks. School districts should restrict the amount of extra duties assigned to teachers teaching in-person instruction. Districts may consider offering incentives to teachers for extra duties, which may help reduce stress.

Another policy implication is that districts should implement a policy providing teachers with mental health days as a strategy to help them cope with stress. Districts can regulate the school calendar and substitute student holidays/teacher workdays as mental health days for teachers. Mental health days support teacher self-care and providing extra support for them may reduce their stress and allow for an increase in self-efficacy (Pressley, 2021a). Gaining knowledge about teacher stress associated with face-to-face instruction during the pandemic is an important first step for school districts to supply teachers with strategies to reduce stress and increase self-efficacy (Nabe-Neilsen et al., 2021).

Implications for Practice

The research study provided practical implications for teachers and administrators. This study found that teachers gained self-efficacy through their commitment and relationships with others but lost self-efficacy because of stress. Teachers want to be effective in teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. However, teachers with reduced self-efficacy may not view themselves as effective because of cognitions of self-doubt fueled by stress predicated on perceptions of their classroom environment. The practical implications aim to promote measures to increase teacher self-efficacy in the classroom and reduce the debilitating effects of stress.
The first practical implication is to encourage teachers to utilize coping strategies. The findings of this study found that teachers used their planning block as a coping mechanism which increased their self-efficacy and enhanced their commitment to teaching in-person instruction. Coping may increase self-efficacy through mastery experience because coping enhances commitment, which may be enhanced by mastery experience. In educational settings, teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs have been found to play a key role in their commitment and coping ability (Yin et al., 2020). Teachers seemed to cherish their planning time and looked forward to it every day. This coping strategy helped alleviate stress about their classroom environment, which increased their self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. If teachers select suitable coping strategies, it can help them overcome stressful classroom situations and perceive them as challenges rather than obstacles allowing them to adapt to their specific demands (Gustems-Carnicer et al., 2020). For example, teachers in this study utilized coping strategies such as meditation, thinking of family members, cleaning their classrooms, and reading a book during planning to cope with the stress of teaching in-person instruction. Relationship building was another coping strategy teachers employed to reduce the stress of face-to-face instruction.

A second practical implication is that teachers should build relationships with other teachers. Relationship building may increase self-efficacy through verbal persuasion. Teachers spoke about their relationships with their co-workers as a positive experience that gave them confidence in their ability to teach in-person instruction amid the pandemic. These relationships provided a platform where teachers received and offered words of encouragement to each other. This encouragement increased their self-efficacy and strengthened their commitment to teaching face-to-face instruction. Teachers should continue to focus on relationship building even with
social distancing requirements and use their daily activities to build those relationships throughout the school year (Pressley & Ha, 2021).

Another practical implication is that teachers should observe other teachers they deem successful. Such observations may increase self-efficacy through vicarious experience. Teachers mentioned that seeing other teachers performing in the classroom during the pandemic boosted their confidence that they could perform in that same environment. Several teachers perceived teachers on their respective hall as resilient, which raised the self-efficacy of those observing such resiliency.

**Theoretical and Empirical Implications**

This phenomenological study explored teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. This section presents the theoretical and empirical implications of the study. Twelve participants described their experience with self-efficacy as a fluctuating process informed by their classroom experiences and their perceptions of their classroom environment. The theoretical and empirical implications are mentioned in the subsections below.

**Theoretical**

The theoretical framework that guided this phenomenological research study was Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in their ability to perform behaviors necessary to succeed in a situation and is attained based on mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal (Bandura, 1977). The findings of this study confirm Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory, support previous research on teacher self-efficacy, and confirm Bandura’s theory in the lives of a familiar population facing a novel threat to teacher self-efficacy.
The study found that teachers’ experience with self-efficacy aligned with Bandura’s four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Specifically, teachers experienced increased self-efficacy through mastery experience, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion but experienced a significant decrease in self-efficacy through emotional arousal. Teachers gained mastery experience through repeated exposure to the classroom teaching in-person instruction without adverse consequences. Elevated self-efficacy expectations are developed through repeated success or exposure to unfavorable environmental stimuli, which reduces the negative connotations of that exposure (Bandura, 1977).

Teachers experienced a sense of performance accomplishment serving as caregivers to their students. These findings supported Bandura’s theory that the successful accomplishment of individual performance establishes a healthy belief in one's personal self-efficacy (Bandura, 1983). Mastery experience increased teacher self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction and teacher self-efficacy is related to teacher commitment (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Previous studies (Myyry et al., 2022; Narayanan et al., 2021; Perkins Coppola, 2019; Rooij et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2020) corroborated the importance of mastery experiences for the development of teacher self-efficacy.

The study validated Bandura’s theory that vicarious experience increases self-efficacy. Teachers’ vicarious experiences revolved around observing other teachers and students performing in the classroom without consequence. Vicarious experience can be associated with teacher observance of colleagues experiencing teaching under the same pandemic-related conditions (Fackler et al., 2021). Teachers can judge their capabilities concerning the attainment of other teachers in similar situations (Bandura, 1997), which can influence their perceived self-
efficacy through vicarious experience (Clark & Newberry, 2019; El-Abd & Chaaban, 2020). Although one participant experienced decreased self-efficacy because of his relationship with another teacher who died from the coronavirus, once teachers observed and perceived others as successful, it gave them the confidence that they could succeed in the classroom, increasing their self-efficacy in teaching in-person instruction. The findings supported Bandura’s theory that seeing others perform threatening activities without adverse consequences can generate cognitions in the observer that they can persevere in the same situation if they persist in their efforts (Bandura, 1977).

The study confirmed Bandura’s theory that verbal persuasion enhances self-efficacy. Teachers experienced verbal persuasion primarily through their relationships with other teachers. In addition to planning time, teachers used their relationships with other teachers as a coping mechanism. Verbal persuasion, a source of self-efficacy, is referred to as appraisal or evaluative feedback from others (Haverback, 2020; Watson & Marschall, 2019; Yada et al., 2019) and can increase perceptions of self-efficacy and coping ability when positive oral or written feedback is received (Regier, 2021; Webb & LoFaro, 2020). Teachers received and offered positive verbalizations to each other through their relationships which boosted their self-efficacy and commitment to teaching. The findings supported Bandura’s theory that once people are persuaded to believe in themselves, they are more apt to persevere when faced with difficult situations because their resolve increases their chance of success (Bandura, 2012).

This study upheld Bandura’s theory that emotional arousal can decrease self-efficacy. Stressful environments create emotional arousal that informs individual personal competency (Bandura & Adams, 1977). All teachers in this study perceived face-to-face instruction as stressful, which enhanced their emotional arousal and diminished self-efficacy. These findings
support previous research that public school teachers are not immune to the taxing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Santamaria et al., 2021), and many have experienced high volumes of stress (Delgado-Gallegos et al., 2021).

Teachers experienced stress about contracting the new Omicron variant and possibly spreading it to family members. Studies found that many teachers view teaching face-to-face instruction as a health risk to their own lives and family members (Ampofo et al., 2020; Vouriot et al., 2021) because it is virtually impossible to social distance in a classroom (Tupper & Colijn, 2021). Statistics show that teachers encounter numerous students every day and have more social interactions than frontline workers in other professions, placing them at greater risk of contracting the coronavirus (Ampofo et al., 2020). Since teachers have an increased risk of exposure (Ampofo et al., 2020; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021), they are at increased risk of experiencing self-efficacy issues and coping impediments. Increased fear of COVID-19 was also associated with increased psychological distress (Chakraborty, 2020; Labrague & de Los Santos, 2020; Nica et al., 2020), decreasing self-efficacy (Birhanu et al., 2021). This study found that teachers experienced stress because of extra duties, increased accountability, and student absences.

The findings of this study are relevant to Duckworth’s (1985) grit theory. Grit is referred to as individual perseverance and entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over time despite adverse conditions (Duckworth et al., 2017). Teachers in this study experienced perseverance the longer they were exposed to a classroom without contracting the virus. By maintaining their effort, teachers persevered, which increased their self-efficacy and gave them a sense of accomplishment that they could continue teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. These findings aligned with the grit theory, which suggests grit represents
perseverance in helping individuals stick to their commitments (Puiu, 2017). Several teachers experienced perseverance ensuring the safety of their students because they remained committed to them despite the adverse conditions of the pandemic. This perseverance increased their self-efficacy and gave teachers grit about teaching in-person instruction in the classroom.

The findings of this study are also relevant to Deci & Ryan’s (1985) theory of self-determination. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy through mastery experience, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion, which enhanced their commitment and their relationships with other teachers. Teachers experienced perseverance through repeated exposure to the classroom, practicing various coping strategies, and taking care of their students, which increased their commitment. Teachers’ commitment to teaching and their students, as well as their desire to build relationships with others, relates to feelings of personal competence and relatedness to others which are essential components of the theory of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

This study suggests teachers’ experience with performance accomplishment, verbal persuasion, and vicarious experience align with autonomous motivation and controlled motivation which are constructs of the theory of self-determination. For example, teachers exorcized self-doubt and gained self-efficacy through exposure to the classroom, observing other teachers they deemed successful and jettisoned cognitions of self-doubt through their desire to build relationships with both students and teachers. Hence, teachers obtained self-endorsement by eliminating self-doubt through mastery experience, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion, which motivated them to continue teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. These findings have implications for the theory of self-determination, which suggests individuals persevere through autonomous motivation because they experience desire and self-
endorsement of their actions (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Most teachers in this study experienced increased self-efficacy through positive verbalizations from students and co-workers, which is similar to controlled motivation. The theory of self-determination posits that controlled motivation consists of external regulation, whereby one's behavior is rewarding, and introjected regulation, where individual behavior is strengthened through approval motive and self-esteem (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Teachers gained controlled motivation through verbal persuasion, which rewarded their behavior through verbalizations they perceived as approval of their teaching, which enhanced their self-esteem and self-efficacy.

**Empirical**

The majority of literature on teacher self-efficacy during the COVID-19 pandemic focused on their experiences with virtual instruction (Dolighan et al., 2021; Ogodo et al., 2021; Rabaglietti et al., 2021; Toto & Limone, 2021) and the self-efficacy of frontline workers during the pandemic (Bidzan et al., 2020; Magner et al., 2021; Pietrzak et al., 2020; Xiong et al., 2020) but research is minimal on the self-efficacy of frontline teachers teaching in-person instruction amid the pandemic. The findings of this study have empirical implications that contribute to the limited amount of literature on teachers’ experience with self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic and corroborates the current literature on the experience of frontline workers.

This study found that teachers’ self-efficacy suffered because of increased stress associated with teaching in-person instruction. Extra job responsibilities, new classroom procedures such as social distancing, sanitation measures, and policing a mask mandate, along with fear of the new Omicron variant, created an enormous amount of stress. These findings support the conclusions of recent literature that the new demands teachers encountered teaching
face-to-face instruction during the pandemic created new stressors (Collie, 2021; Delgado-Gallegos et al., 2021; Nabe Nielsen et al., 2021), which lowers self-efficacy (Sokal et al., 2020). Every teacher in this research study experienced emotional arousal because of stress which caused self-doubt and reduced self-efficacy. Initial studies on teacher self-efficacy during the pandemic suggest that many teachers experienced decreased self-efficacy levels (Pressley & Ha, 2021a) because of increased teacher stress (Gobbi et al., 2021; Rabaglietti et al., 2021). Teachers experienced stress ensuring quarantined students completed their make-up assignments and worried about student achievement on upcoming state standardized tests. Literature shows that between heavy workloads, new safety precautions, and the challenge of meeting the needs of their students, many teachers reported high levels of pandemic-related stress (Herman et al., 2020).

This study found that teachers’ experience with self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction on the frontline in a classroom aligned with the experiences of other frontline workers regarding increased stress. Recent studies show that the pandemic increased the job-related stress of frontline healthcare workers (Babore et al., 2020; Moore & Kolencik, 2020; Taylor, 2020) and significantly increased the job-related stress of frontline teachers as well (Nabe-Neilson et al., 2021). This study revealed that teachers experienced stress about contracting the coronavirus and possibly spreading it to their family members. These findings support current literature regarding the coronavirus as a new and mutating virus and the reality teachers faced teaching in-person instruction about catching or spreading the virus to loved ones (Pressley & Ha, 2021b). These findings support the literature regarding the experiences of teachers as frontline workers. Similar to the risk perceptions experienced by frontline healthcare workers (Hu et al., 2020; Labrague & de Los Santos, 2021; Villar et al., 2021), many teachers view teaching face-to-face instruction as
a health risk to their own lives and their family members (Ampofo et al., 2020; Vouriot et al., 2021).

Teachers were also stressed about not being able to social distance in their classroom, which caused stress about being in proximity to their students. These findings support current literature, which reveals that teachers, like frontline healthcare workers, encounter multiple social contacts as part of their daily work routine, which includes physical proximity to students (Ampofo et al., 2020; Lizhi et al., 2021; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2021), and many teachers are not convinced they will be safe teaching face-to-face instruction in a classroom (Kim et al., 2021; Weinert et al., 2021).

The findings of this study have empirical implications for the literature on coping strategies. Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) transactional theory of stress and coping is the premier theory for conceptualizing stress and coping across occupational environments (Herman et al., 2020). The theory “describes stress as the emotional, cognitive, and physiological experience when environmental demands exceed an individual's resources to adapt, and coping is defined as an individual's attempt to manage those demands” (Herman et al., 2020, p. 70). All participants in this study experienced stress and engaged in various coping strategies. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) a situation is perceived as stressful when there is the possibility of harm, threat, or challenges, and coping is cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage both external and internal demands that are self-appraised as emotionally taxing (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988).

Teachers in this study utilized coping strategies such as meditation, thinking of family members, cleaning their classrooms, reading a book during planning, and building relationships with co-workers to deal with stress. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identified two kinds of coping: problem-based coping and emotion-based coping. Individuals use emotion-based coping when
their appraisal of a stressful situation implies nothing can be done to change that stressful situation and use problem-based coping when they perceive the situation as changeable (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The results of this study suggest that teachers engaged in both problem-based coping and emotional-based coping. For example, most teachers in this study sought relationships with their co-workers and indicated that those relationships helped them believe in their ability to teach in-person instruction. Building relationships is a problem-focused way of coping (Schoenmakers et al., 2015).

Several teachers also engaged in meditation by cognitively going to a happy place, engaged in self-reflection about their spouse and children, and even read books during their planning time to cope with the stress of in-person instruction. Such coping strategies are suggestive of emotion-based coping because they are designed to circumvent, lessen, or create distance between teachers and the stress of in-person instruction (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The findings have empirical implications for the transactional theory of stress and coping because they reveal that teachers are more likely to engage in problem-based coping through relationship building and emotion-based coping through meditation and self-reflection strategies during planning time.

Limitations and Delimitations

No research study is flawless, and all studies contain limitations and delimitations (Peoples, 2021). Limitations are uncontrollable influences that impact a research study, and there are several limitations present in this study. For example, this study was limited geographically because it focused on two schools in South Georgia. The study had to be performed in South Georgia because it is in proximity to where I reside, and commuting to both research sites had to be reasonable to conduct interviews and a focus group. Another limitation was that the study had
a small sample size of 12 participants, which may not be generalizable to a larger population of teachers in K-12 education. The study was limited because of the precautionary measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, I had to practice social distancing and abide by the district-wide mask mandate while conducting face-to-face interviews and the focus group. The focus group meeting had to be conducted in a large enough room to ensure social distancing of at least six feet. The study also had gender and ethnicity limitations. Nine of twelve participants were female. Three were African American, and one was Hispanic. Of the three males that participated in this study, two were white, and one was African American.

Delimitations are exclusionary and exclusionary decisions that establish the boundaries of a study (Simon & Goes, 2013). Several necessary delimitations limited the scope and defined the boundaries of my study. This study focused on teachers’ shared experience with self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. I used purposeful criterion sampling when selecting participants. Participants had to be 18 or older, teach in grades six through eight, be a full-time certified public-school teacher in Georgia, and teach three blocks a day on a four-by-four block schedule. Participants needed to be full-time certified teachers to ensure they met the age criteria and taught three blocks a day. Any person holding a valid teaching certificate in Georgia must be 18 or older, and teachers must teach at least three blocks to be considered full-time on a four-by-four block schedule.

My study needed to be qualitative to understand the meaning teachers attributed to their experiences with self-efficacy and how they constructed meaning from those experiences. A quantitative study would not have provided a detailed understanding of their experience and its meaning because it was not easily measured. A phenomenological design was appropriate for the purpose of my study because I focused on how teachers experienced what they experienced in
relation to a shared phenomenon. Other qualitative designs were not feasible to explore the purpose and problem of this research study. For instance, an ethnography focuses on culture (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which was inconsequential, and it would not have provided an in-depth understanding of lived experience with a phenomenon. A case study is a bounded system that is incongruent with exploring participants’ shared experiences with a phenomenon because such experiences are lived descriptions without set boundaries (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used a transcendental approach because it allowed me to suspend any biases and focus on participants’ descriptions of their experiences. A hermeneutical approach would have required me to co-construct meaning with participants and recall my presuppositions.

Recommendations for Future Research

This transcendental phenomenological research study sought to gain a deeper understanding of teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants in this study consisted of 12 teachers who taught in-person instruction in two middle schools from the same public school district in South Georgia. Future research should include more schools, multiple school districts, a wider geographical area, and it should incorporate additional teachers from numerous grade levels throughout K-12 education to determine if teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy is consistent with the findings of this study.

A qualitative case study on a particular school district’s COVID-19 reopening plan may provide further research on teacher self-efficacy during the pandemic. A hermeneutic phenomenological study on the lived experience of teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic may also offer additional information on teacher self-efficacy and allow researchers to observe teachers in their natural setting to see how they interact with other teachers and students in the
classroom. Because teachers experienced mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal in the classroom, it would be interesting to observe teachers teaching in their classroom under pandemic-related conditions and co-construct meaning with participants through the hermeneutic circle. Such co-construction and observations may offer insight into teachers’ experience with the four sources of self-efficacy and shed light on their experiences as frontline workers during the pandemic.

There is still a considerable gap in the literature regarding the lived experiences of teachers teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic. Since all participants experienced emotional arousal because they perceived their classroom environment as stressful, more research is needed on teachers’ experience with self-efficacy in a brick-and-mortar setting to understand the role of school climate on teacher perceptions of self-efficacy. Those findings can be explored in greater depth through a qualitative case study exploring teacher self-efficacy and school climate during the pandemic in various school districts. Such a case study may allow researchers to focus on teacher perceptions of their educational settings to determine if a pattern of shared experiences emerges among teachers from different school districts. The findings of this study discovered an outlier attributing increased emotional arousal to a personal friendship one participant had with another teacher who recently passed away from COVID-19. This finding can be explored in greater detail by conducting a narrative research study on a teacher's experience with mortality during the COVID-19 pandemic to better understand the role of emotional arousal and personal loss.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction in a public school district in
South Georgia. The theoretical framework of this study was Bandura’s (1977) theory of self-efficacy which was used to answer one central research question and four sub-research questions. Individual teacher interviews, journals, and a focus group were used to answer the research questions. Twelve middle school teachers from two schools in one district were purposefully selected to participate in this research study. They described their shared experiences with self-efficacy teaching in-person instruction during the pandemic.

The findings of this study produced four themes and nine sub-themes during data analysis. Data analysis and synthesis followed the methods outlined by Moustakas (1994). The primary themes were perseverance, awareness, a need to socialize, and challenging. The subthemes were coping, caregiving, student resilience, teacher resilience, verbal cues from students, verbal persuasion from co-workers, emotional challenges, academic challenges, and classroom challenges.

This study found that teachers’ self-efficacy in teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic continuously fluctuated and was informed by their classroom experiences and perceptions of their classroom environment. Teachers’ experience with self-efficacy aligned with Bandura’s four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Teachers experienced increased self-efficacy through mastery experience, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion, manifesting in their commitment and relationships. However, they experienced a significant decrease in self-efficacy through emotional arousal because they perceived their classroom environment as challenging, which exacerbated stress.

Despite the gains in self-efficacy, all teachers in this study experienced stress which substantially reduced their self-efficacy. The findings and implications of this study suggest that
public school districts should embrace professional development policies that promote mastery experience, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion to bolster teacher self-efficacy. Districts should also provide teachers with emotional support and stress management strategies to cope with stress to reduce emotional arousal.
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December 8, 2021

James Phillips
Ellen Ziegler


Dear James Phillips, Ellen Ziegler,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46.104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study in Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office
Appendix B

Permission Request Forms

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is A Phenomenological Study on Teachers’ Lived Experience with Self-Efficacy Teaching Face-to-Face Instruction During the COVID-19 Pandemic and the purpose of my research is to describe the teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic in a public-school district in South Georgia.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at [redacted] and will need to contact members of your staff to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will be asked to participate in an interview, a focus group interview and keep a reflective journal for a period ten days. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

James Phillips
Doctoral Candidate
As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is A Phenomenological Study on Teachers’ Lived Experience with Self-Efficacy Teaching Face-to-Face Instruction During the COVID-19 Pandemic and the purpose of my research is to describe the teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic in a public-school district in South Georgia.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at [redacted] and will need to contact members of your staff to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will be asked to participate in an interview, a focus group interview and keep a reflective journal for a period ten days. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

James Phillips
Doctoral Candidate
Appendix C

Permission Response Forms

11/8/2021

Dear James Phillips:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled A Phenomenological Study on Teachers' Lived Experience with Self-Efficacy Teaching Face-to-Face Instruction During the COVID-19 Pandemic, I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at [redacted] and contact our faculty and invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☐ I grant permission for James Phillips to contact teachers teaching face-to-face instruction in grades 6-8 to invite them to participate in his research study.

Sincerely,

[redacted]
11/8/2021

Dear James Phillips:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled A Phenomenological Study on Teachers' Lived Experience with Self-Efficacy Teaching Face-to-Face Instruction During the COVID-19 Pandemic, I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at [Redacted] and contact our faculty and invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☒ I grant permission for James Phillips to contact teachers teaching face-to-face instruction in grades 6-8 to invite them to participate in his research study.

Sincerely,

[Redacted]
Appendix D

Recruitment Email

Dear Prospective Participant:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to study teachers’ lived experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic in a public school district in South Georgia, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, a full-time public-school teacher in Georgia, teach grades 6-8, and teach face-to-face instruction in a classroom at least three blocks a day on a 4x4 block schedule. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in an individual recorded interview (45 minutes), keep a written teacher journal for 10 days (15 minutes per day), and participate in a recorded focus group (one hour) with other participants. Participants will also be asked to engage in transcript review to help ensure the accuracy of the interview and focus group transcript. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact me at [email protected] to schedule an interview.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of your interview.

Sincerely,

James Phillips
Doctoral Candidate
Appendix E

Consent Form

Title of the Project: A Phenomenological Study on Teachers’ Lived Experience with Self-Efficacy Teaching Face-to-Face Instruction During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Principal Investigator: James Phillips, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study
You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18, teach grades 6-8, be a full-time public-school teacher in Georgia, and teach face-to-face instruction at least 3 blocks a day on a 4x4 block schedule. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

What is the study about and why is it being done?
The purpose of the study is to describe teachers’ experience with self-efficacy teaching face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic in a public-school district in South Georgia.

What will happen if you take part in this study?
If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:
1. Participate in an individual face-to-face interview. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be conducted in a private setting to protect your privacy. The interview will be audio recorded using a Sony PX Series digital voice recorder and an Apple iPhone.
2. At the conclusion of the interview, I will ask you to keep a journal for ten days about your experience teaching face-to-face instruction in a classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic. You will be asked to complete a journal prompt on a secured document on your Google drive and share it with me electronically using your Google drive account to ensure privacy. Journal entries will take approximately 15 minutes to complete per day.
3. Once you complete your journal, I will ask you to participate in a focus group with other participants. The focus group will take approximately one hour and will be conducted in a private setting to ensure privacy. The focus group will be video recorded using a Sony Handycam CX405 digital camera and audio recorded using a Sony PX Series digital voice recorder and an Apple iPhone.
4. Participants will be asked to review their interview and focus group transcripts to ensure accuracy. The time estimates for the transcript review may vary.

How could you or others benefit from this study?
You should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include the following: by focusing on teachers’ lived experience of teachers as frontline workers during the pandemic, this study has the potential to shed light on the coping strategies teachers may or may not have used while teaching on the frontline during the pandemic.
What risks might you experience from being in this study? 
The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected? 
The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Your responses will be kept confidential using pseudonyms. Interviews and the focus group will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. You will share your journals with me electronically using your secured Google account to protect your identity.
- Hard research data will be locked in a safe and electronic data will be saved as password-protected files and stored on a password locked computer. Data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and hard data will be manually shredded.
- Interviews will be audio recorded using a Sony PX Series digital voice recorder and an Apple iPhone. Focus groups will be video recorded with a Sony Handycam CX405 digital camera and audio recorded using a Sony PX Series digital voice recorder and an Apple iPhone. Interviews and the focus group will be transcribed and coded using ATLAS TI software. Audio and video recordings and journal entries will be saved as password-protected files, stored on a password locked computer for three years, and then erased. The recordings and journal entries will be used for the educational research purposes of this study. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings and journal entries.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study? 
You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

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

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study? 
If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.
Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?
The researcher conducting this study is James Phillips. You may ask any questions you have
now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Ellen Ziegler, at

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone
other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board. 1971
University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

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

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

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

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

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Liberty University
IRB-FY21-22-313
Approved on 12-8-2021
## Appendix F

### Audit Trail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/8/21</td>
<td>Received IRB approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/9/21</td>
<td>Sent recruitment email to both sites seeking participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10/21</td>
<td>Received responses from participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/13/21</td>
<td>Received signed consent letters from participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/13/21</td>
<td>Began conducting audio recorded face-to-face interviews with selected participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/13/21</td>
<td>As I competed each interview, I began transcribing them using Otter.ai transcription software and distributed those transcriptions to each corresponding participant for member-checking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/3/21</td>
<td>Concluded face-to-face interviews with all selected participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/3/21</td>
<td>Sent journal prompts to participant’s individual Google Drive account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4/21</td>
<td>Uploaded all interview transcriptions to ATLAS.ti for transcription, coding, and thematic development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/18/21</td>
<td>Participants shared their journal entries with me through their Google Drive account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/18/21</td>
<td>I downloaded each journal entry as a word document and then uploaded those entries to ATLAS.ti for transcription, coding, and thematic development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/19/21</td>
<td>Conducted an audio and video recorded focus group with selected participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/20/21</td>
<td>Transcribed the focus group with Otter.ai software and distributed those transcriptions to each corresponding participant for member-checking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/21/22</td>
<td>Uploaded focus group transcription to ATLAS.ti for transcription, coding, and thematic development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix G

## Reflective Journal

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/13/21</td>
<td>Suspended all presuppositions and biases about COVID-19 and teachers before conducting each interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4/22</td>
<td>Suspended all presuppositions and biases about COVID-19 and teachers before transcribing and coding interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/18/22</td>
<td>Suspended all presuppositions and biases about COVID-19 and teachers before transcribing and coding journal entries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/19/22</td>
<td>Suspended all presuppositions and biases about COVID-19 and teachers before conducting the focus group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/20/22</td>
<td>Suspended all presuppositions and biases about COVID-19 and teachers before transcribing the focus group.</td>
</tr>
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<td>1/21/22</td>
<td>Suspended all presuppositions and biases about COVID-19 and teachers as a before and during initial code development from interviews, journals, and the focus group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/21/22</td>
<td>Suspended all presuppositions and biases about COVID-19 and teachers as a before and during initial code development from interviews, journals, and the focus group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/24/22</td>
<td>Suspended all presuppositions and biases about COVID-19 and teachers as a before and during open code development from interviews, journals, and the focus group.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H

Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about yourself. What do you teach, why did you become a teacher, and how long have you been a teacher? Ice breaker

2. What did you experience when you discovered your school would be reopening for face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic? SQ4

3. What do you experience on a typical day in the classroom teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic? SQ1 and SQ4

4. If you could change one thing about teaching in a classroom during the pandemic, describe what you would change and why? SQ1

5. What is your most successful experience in the classroom during the pandemic? SQ1

6. What thoughts or emotions stand out for you about that successful experience? SQ1

7. What experiences help you when teaching in the classroom during the pandemic? SQ1, SQ2 and SQ3

8. What is it about those experiences that helps you to teach during the pandemic? SQ1, SQ2 and SQ3

9. What social interaction experiences have you had with administrators and other teachers while at school during the pandemic? SQ2 and SQ3

10. What thoughts or emotions stand out for you about your social interaction experiences? SQ2 and SQ3

11. What experiences did you find to be the most stressful while teaching in a classroom during the pandemic? SQ4

12. What is your most disappointing experience in the classroom during the pandemic? SQ4
13. What thoughts stand out for about that disappointing experience? SQ4

14. What are your feelings or thoughts about mandated protective masks and social distancing requirements in the classroom? SQ4

15. Based on your experience in the classroom during the pandemic, what advice would you give teachers about how to cope with teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic? SQ1

16. What else would like to share about your experience teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, and SQ4
Appendix I

Journal Prompts

1. What feelings did you experience today being in a classroom during the pandemic? SQ4
2. What experience stood out for you the most today while teaching in a classroom during the pandemic? SQ1
3. Reflecting on your experience as a teacher in a classroom during the pandemic, suppose I was a new teacher and asked you what should I do be successful teaching in a classroom during the pandemic, what advice would you give me? SQ1, SQ2, and SQ3
4. What other experiences regarding teaching in a classroom during the pandemic would you like to share that were not mentioned during your interview? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, and SQ4
Appendix J

Focus Group Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to each other. Ice Breaker

2. What thoughts do you have on your ability to successfully perform instructional tasks while teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic? SQ1

3. What individuals connected with your experience of teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic stand out for you? SQ2 and SQ3

4. What is the primary emotion that you experience while teaching face-to-face instruction in the classroom during the pandemic? SQ4

5. What other experiences would you like to share about teaching face-to-face instruction during the pandemic that you did not mention in your interview or in your journal entry? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, and SQ4
Appendix K

Initial Codes

1. Family
2. Stress
3. Apprehension
4. Worry
5. Sick
6. Fear
7. Masks
8. Social distancing
9. Sanitizing
10. Risk perception
11. Anxiety
12. Family concerns
13. Children
14. Student achievement
15. Teacher sickness
16. Friends
17. Relationships
18. Taking
19. Collaboration
20. Department meetings
21. State tests
22. Accountability
23. Hand sanitizer
24. Wiping desks
25. Covering classes
26. Students missing assignments
27. Student absences
28. Substitute shortage
29. Administrative support
30. Faculty meetings
31. Virtual meetings
32. Parent contacts
33. Teachers
34. pandemic,
35. classroom,
36. Teachers
37. Feelings
38. Kids
39. Teaching experiences
40. Virtual instruction
41. Hybrid instruction
42. Support at work,
43. Mask mandate
44. Student grades
45. Thoughts
46. Emotions
47. Scared
48. Frustrating
49. Colleagues
50. Observing teachers
51. Social interaction
52. Friendship
53. Solutions
54. Instruction
55. Safety
56. Contact tracing
57. School nurse
58. Quarantined teachers
59. Quarantined Students
60. COVID-19 signs
61. Teaching strategies
62. Face-to-face instruction
63. Accomplishment
64. Successful
65. Understanding
66. Commitment
67. Vaccinated
68. Group work
69. Coping
70. Spouse
71. Children
72. Workload
73. Extra duties
74. Planning block
75. Small classrooms
76. Crowded classes
77. Class size
78. Policing masks
79. Meetings
80. Staff attendance
81. COVID-19 symptoms
82. Disappointment
83. Teacher success
84. Google classroom
85. Hybrid instruction
86. Seating charts
87. Giving
88. Exhausted
89. Self-doubt
90. Increased responsibility
91. Empathy
92. Health concerns
93. COVID experiences
94. Normal
95. Gaps in student learning
96. Perception of COVID-19
97. School climate
98. Conversations with teachers
99. Conversations with administrators
100. Conversations with students
101. Terrified
102. Mortality
103. Increased accountability
104. Make-up work
105. Meditation
106. Happy thoughts
107. Fear of contracting the coronavirus
108. Fear of infecting family members
109. Caring for students
110. Making sure students are safe
111. Personal safety
112. Covering classes
113. Coronavirus numbers rising
114. Omicron variant
115. Helping students
116. Perseverance
117. Committed to teaching
118. Committed to students
119. Unpredictable environment
120. Unsafe classroom
121. Teaching while wearing a mask
122. Teaching behind a desk
123. Stay away from students
124. Teacher attitude
125. Student attitude
126. Administrator attitude
127. Verbal cues from students
128. Verbal cues from administrators
129. Student resiliency
130. Teacher resiliency
131. Student accountability
132. Parent support
133. Paranoid
134. Teachers staying the course
135. Challenging
136. Academic challenges
137. Environmental challenges
138. Classroom challenges
139. Emotional challenges
140. Self-doubt
141. Self-esteem
142. Teachers are tired
143. Long hours
144. Find solutions to problems
145. Focus on your students
146. Give students grace
147. Unknown environment
148. Teacher flexibility
149. Uncomfortable COVID situations
150. Support student learning
151. Teachers remain engaged
152. Students calling home sick
153. Student quarantining increasing
154. Students out with COVID
155. Catching up students that are absent
156. Teachers complaining about COVID
157. Teachers adapting to the classroom
158. Disorganized classrooms
159. Teacher organization
160. Cleaning classrooms
161. Teacher in the same boat
162. Providing students with masks
163. Providing students with hand sanitizer
164. Spending time with colleagues
165. Help students be successful
166. Teacher motivation
167. Teachers having to multitask
168. Hard work
169. Staying caught up
170. Rough days for teachers
171. Concern for students
172. Student getting sick
173. Teachers getting sick
174. Too many responsibilities
175. Observing co-workers
176. Seeing students excel
177. Take it day by day
178. Classroom burdens
179. Lack of parent accountability
180. Teacher anger
181. Disappointment
182. In-person teaching
183. HIPPA laws
184. Teachers protecting themselves
185. Don’t touch anything
186. Teachers buying cleaning supplies
187. Provide opportunities for students to be successful
188. Ask questions
189. Follow the COVID guidelines
190. Share ideas with other teachers
191. Listen to other teachers
192. Encourage co-workers
193. Emotionally draining
194. Reteaching content
195. Physically tiring
196. Overworked
197. Behind on grading
198. Trying to survive
199. Teacher resentment
200. Changing protocols
201. Proud of students
202. Classroom comfort
203. Teachers doing all they can
204. Help each other out
205. Tolerance
206. Be fair with students

207. Be consistent

208. Compassion for students

209. Compassion for teachers

210. Awareness of what others are going through

211. Student behavior

212. Feelings of uncertainty