

A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES OF
WELL-BEING AT INDEPENDENT PRIVATE SCHOOLS

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. The theory guiding this study was Deci and Ryan's theory on basic psychological needs. It identifies that the basic psychological needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy are universal and underlay optimal well-being. I used a qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach to seek in-depth information from the participants about their lived experiences of well-being at independent private schools. The central research question was: How do independent private school educators describe their experiences concerning workplace well-being? Sub-questions addressed well-being related to basic psychological needs: autonomy, relatedness, and belonging. I used private independent schools as the setting for this study. I selected participants who met the study criteria, utilizing purposeful sampling methods. I gathered in-depth descriptions of participants' experiences through interviews, context maps, and focus groups. Seven themes emerged from the literature: varied definitions of well-being, belonging, agency, competence, individual influence, environment, and experiences of ill-being. Analysis of the findings resulted in two key understandings: belonging is critical for educators' experiences of positive well-being at independent private schools, and well-being is a composite of elements that is unique to individuals.

Keywords: well-being, basic psychological needs, educator, phenomenology, independent private school

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Dedication

I dedicate this to those who have supported me and cared for my well-being along my personal and professional journey. I am grateful for the blessings in my life and for all of you who have chosen to be my family. Your kindness, grace, and support have brought me to this moment.

I also dedicate this manuscript to the two beautiful children with whom I am blessed. Your patience, understanding, support, and independence have inspired and encouraged me.

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I would like to acknowledge the guidance and support of those who have supported me. From the beginning, your insight and wisdom have accurately predicted and framed my experience, providing me a tether during the difficult moments.

I would like to acknowledge the compassion and understanding of the doctoral candidates who are walking this journey with me, at all hours of the night and through each turn and change in my writing. Knowing I am not alone in this journey is important.

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List of Abbreviations

basic psychological needs theory (BPNT)

job demands resource model (JD-R)

perceived autonomy-supportive (PAS)

psychological well-being (PWB)

self-determination theory (SDT)

subjective well-being (SWB)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. In this chapter, I present a comprehensive background of the problem using historical, societal, and theoretical contexts. I explain my motivation for conducting this study and present the problem statement, purpose statement, and significance of the study. I present the theoretical framework of basic psychological needs theory, which framed this investigation and guided the research questions that aligned with the inquiry of the study. I conclude this chapter with definitions of key concepts.

Background

Researchers have studied well-being across life domains and occupations (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2008c; Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2020). Individuals are well if they are optimizing their full potential (Lijadi, 2018); conversely, they are experiencing ill-being if they have negative emotions or moods, depression, anxiety, stress, or negative physical symptoms (Martela & Ryan, 2020; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Ill-being refers to negative affect (Liu et al., 2018) and non-optimal functioning that may result from the thwarting or frustration of basic psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Educator ill-being is described similarly to educator burnout and stress (Rodriguez et al., 2020; Sandilos et al., 2020). Ninety-three percent of educators report high stress levels (Herman et al., 2018). As job demands and roles expanded for educators, educator ill-being has increased (Benevene et al., 2018), stemming from many different facets and obligations within the profession (Aydin & Kaya, 2016; Ayub et al., 2018; Berlin et al., 2020; Schaack et al., 2020).

Historical Context

Teachers have historically cared for children's welfare, socialization, and education; however, the role has expanded over time (Schaack et al., 2020; Shirley et al., 2020). Teacher roles have become increasingly nuanced and diversified in student management, oversight, and interaction (Benevene et al., 2018; Schaack et al., 2020). Educators have constantly been challenged by insufficient time to nurture each child's individual potential (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Duke, 1984). Teachers are now required to teach across all learning domains, conduct ongoing assessments, and engage in ongoing professional development (Schaack et al., 2020). There are increasing shifts and expectations in the scope and depth of the teacher (Fitzgerald et al., 2019; Wright, 2020). Innovative technologies and educational research shifted educators' practices to include active learning, integration, and distance learning (Hainline et al., 2010). Society transformed its expectation of educators, adding stressors and needed competencies (Fitzgerald et al., 2019; García-Huidobro et al., 2017). Educators face challenges to well-being due to role complexity and demands (Greenberg et al., 2016; Kumar & Srivastava, 2014; Miller, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018; Stiglbauer & Zuber, 2018).

Educational reform brought additional changes for teachers as the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). This document changed educators' roles and schools' governance and eroded the belief in the quality of the educational system leading to the rise of assessments and evaluations (Dworkin, 1987). There are positive correlations between teacher stress and high-stakes testing (Gonzalez et al., 2017; Kaynak, 2020; Rumschlag, 2017; von der Embse & Mankin, 2020). High-stakes testing contributes to educator ill-being by placing teachers in the untenable position between supporting students or preparing for the test (Nordick et al., 2019;

Ryan & Deci, 2020; Shirley et al., 2020). Interventions following high-stakes testing increased teacher workload and reduced well-being (Schaubman et al., 2011). High-stakes testing reduced educators' well-being by removing the needs satisfaction of autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2020). High-stakes testing paved the path for high-stakes teacher evaluations (Lavigne, 2014).

Teacher evaluation was linked directly to student learning outcomes in the Race to the Top, an initiative from the U.S. Department of Education that promoted using evaluations to inform decisions regarding educators (Lavigne, 2014). Teachers reported evaluations linked to student performance on high-stakes tests felt unfair, put additional stress on the student and the teacher, and did not represent the teacher's complete influence (Elcan, 2017; Holloway, 2019). Teaching evaluations increase stress, inequity, and competition between colleagues (Anderson et al., 2019; Kaynak, 2020). Educators' high-stakes evaluations negatively impact well-being (Cuevas et al., 2018). Reform efforts within schools to increase student support reduced teacher autonomy, frustrated need satisfaction, and reduced optimal well-being (Ingersoll et al., 2018).

In March of 2020, because of a worldwide pandemic, leaders in organizations, including schools, altered how they worked and managed the workforce (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Pant & Agarwal, 2020), shifting educational systems from onsite in-person education to online delivery of curriculum and instruction (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Jena, 2020; Soni, 2020). Educators experienced additional challenges and stresses as shifts in life and work were expectations during the pandemic (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Currie, 2020; Fujiwara et al., 2020; Tanhan et al., 2020). Teachers faced additional concerns about using online assessment and student supervision, as well as concerns about ethics and privacy matters during the pandemic (Bozkurt et al., 2020). Educators experienced ill-being as they took on additional burdens during the pandemic (Allen et al., 2020; Soni, 2020).

The conditions within schools and the continual changes contribute to educators working in stressed conditions (Ayub et al., 2018; Ramberg et al., 2020). School organizations and resources impact educators' perceptions of ill-being (Greenberg et al., 2016; Roberts et al., 2019; Toropova et al., 2021). The role of teaching shifted as changes in school structure and population needs influenced schools (Price & McCallum, 2015; Snyder, 1993; Toropova et al., 2021). Larger class sizes correlate to job dissatisfaction (Duyar et al., 2013) and higher teacher turnover rates (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). With changes in education and new expectations, teachers experience misperceptions and frustrations that leave them feeling a lack of accomplishment (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Glazzard & Rose, 2019; Rumschlag, 2017). Shifts in education challenge educator well-being (Price & McCallum, 2015).

Social Context

Due to the elevated levels of stress and burnout, educators' ill-being is a concern (Aydin & Kaya, 2016; Benevene et al., 2018; Shirley et al., 2020). Higher stress in educators correlates to health problems (Roeser et al., 2013). Adverse effects of stress may manifest as higher blood pressure and lower immune response (Benevene et al., 2019). Workers who exhibit fatigue strain society, employers, and their families (Xu & Hall, 2021). Worker fatigue costs employers more than \$100 billion annually in health-related costs (National Safety Council, 2021; Well-being Index, 2018). Educators with decreased job satisfaction have lower retention levels (Anderson et al., 2019; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Iancu et al., 2018). Reduced well-being in educators is associated with a decreased desire for collaboration within the workplace (Anderson et al., 2019). With job satisfaction being significant, teacher burnout correlates to teachers' intentions to quit (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Teachers in public and private schools face challenges that lead to attrition from the profession (Wronowski, 2020).

Teacher shortages within schools create challenges for schools (García & Weiss, 2019; Ingersoll et al., 2018; Sutchter et al., 2019), and attrition accounts for approximately 90% of annual teacher shortages (Sutchter et al., 2019). School resources and other educators can face additional stress when recruiting, hiring, and supporting new faculty that may lack the experience or depth of knowledge of the prior educator (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Sutchter et al., 2019). Teacher turnover rates increase for novice teachers or teachers with provisional licenses in schools (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020), especially in private schools (Alifuddin & Widodo, 2021). Researchers estimate the cost of replacements for teacher turnovers could be over eight billion dollars annually nationwide (Sutchter et al., 2019). Teacher turnover correlates to losses in student learning outcomes (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

Educators experiencing ill-being demonstrate behaviors that compromise students' achievement (Arens & Morin, 2016; Madigan & Kim, 2021). Burnout and stress negatively impact educators' instructional styles and student motivation levels (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Shen et al., 2015). Educator ill-being also diminishes student well-being (Carroll et al., 2021; Tikkanen et al., 2021). Educators with high stress levels are less effective in communicating and may negatively impact student behavior (Ayub et al., 2018). Educators suffering from emotional exhaustion, a component of ill-being, are less effective in designing instruction to promote positive learning outcomes (Arens & Morin, 2016). Lambersky (2016) found when teachers lost the desire to teach or had negative emotions, they resented their students and expressed lower job satisfaction. Private school teachers are reported to have different and more demanding expectations than public schools based on the culture (Al-Adwan & Al-Khayat, 2017; Avci et al., 2017; Ingersoll, 2001; Wronowski, 2020). A decrease in well-being leads to challenges in teacher-student relationships (Arens & Morin, 2016; Carroll et al., 2021; Hwang et al., 2017).

Theoretical Context

The study of well-being is rooted in the classical theories that define biology, philosophy, and psychology (Martela & Sheldon, 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Dating back to Aristotle, many scholars examined and conceptualized well-being (Brey, 2012; Martela & Sheldon, 2019).

Works as early as the Enlightenment period focused on social progress and gathering information on human nature (Solovey & Weinstein, 2019). In the 1980s, Deiner's research on well-being led to developing the concept and terminology of SWB (Brey, 2012). Ryff and Singer (2008) developed the PWB approach to classify and define six constructs of eudemonic well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations, autonomy, environmental master, purpose, and growth (Jayawickreme et al., 2012). SDT emerged in the 1980s as a significant macro theory of behavior and motivation to examine PWB (Deci & Ryan, 1980; Ryan & Deci, 2017). From the research on SDT, Ryan and Deci (2017) developed six subtheories, further exploring the tenets of SDT as they continued to explore the interplay between external inputs influence individual behaviors. Seligman (2011) developed the PERMA model based on existing theories of well-being and within the framework of positive psychology. Researchers built upon prior research on well-being to study well-being in technology, economics, and welfare (Brey, 2012). The continued study of well-being uncovered relationships between ill-being and well-being (Martela & Ryan, 2020; Ryff, 1989).

Well-being has seen a shift into the academic domain and scholarly inquiry (Solovey & Weinstein, 2019). Although researchers studied student well-being for quite some time, researchers began focusing on educator well-being in recent years (Shirley et al., 2020). Researchers have applied an ecological framework to understand the contextual elements that influence well-being (Shirley et al., 2020). Previously, researchers have used the job demands

resources (JD-R) model to frame research on educator well-being to examine how schools influence educator well-being (Barbieri et al., 2019; Schaack et al., 2020). Researchers have used the PERMA framework (Turner & Thielking, 2019b) and SDT to study well-being in education (Averill & Major, 2020; Jones et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2020). The rich, thick descriptions I gathered through in-depth interviews enhanced the understanding of educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. By analyzing participants' data, I added to the understanding of the contextual factors influencing educator well-being and the influences of basic psychological needs satisfaction on educators' experiences of well-being.

Problem Statement

The problem was educator ill-being and its consequences for stakeholders in the educational system. Educator ill-being may result from the frustration of individual basic psychological needs (Ebersold et al., 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2019, 2020). Ill-being may include negative emotions or moods, depression, anxiety, physical symptoms, or stress (Martela & Ryan, 2020; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020) and is described similarly to burnout (Rodriguez et al., 2020; Sandilos et al., 2020). Over 90% of educators have reported that teaching is a stressful profession (Herman et al., 2018). There is an association between ill-being and poor educator physical health (Berlin et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2018; Roeser et al., 2013; Sandilos et al., 2020). Educator well-being and ill-being are critical components of educator performance (Anderson et al., 2019; Lambersky, 2016; Stiglbauer & Zuber, 2018) and influence student learning outcomes (Arens & Morin, 2016; Herman et al., 2018; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Schaack et al., 2020). High turnover rates lead to challenges within the educational system for schools and stakeholders (García & Weiss, 2019; Greenberg et al., 2016; Ingersoll et al., 2018; Sutchter et al., 2019). Teacher turnover impacts private and public schools (Alifuddin & Widodo, 2021; Ingersoll, 2001).

Research falls short of providing an understanding of the lived experiences of the phenomenon of independent private school educators' well-being. There is limited research within the independent private school setting on well-being and limited quantitative research on educators' experiences of well-being. The experiences of well-being and ill-being are still emergent in the literature, as is the understanding of the relationship between needs satisfaction and frustration. Utilizing a qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach, I added to the understanding of educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. Throughout this study, well-being is defined as "optimal psychological experience and functioning" (Deci & Ryan, 2008c, p. 1). It was generally defined as a multidimensional construct supported or hindered by an individual's satisfaction with the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Martela & Sheldon, 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2019, 2020). The theory guiding this study was BPNT. BPNT derives from research originated in studies of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2019). In BPNT, the general needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy are universal and support the optimal well-being of individuals (Ryan & Deci, 2019; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020; Warburton et al., 2020). In BPNT, well-being is constructed based on an individual's experiences of basic psychological needs satisfaction and feelings within their environment (Martela & Sheldon, 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2017). I used BPNT to guide this study and design the research questions. I utilized BPNT to analyze participant data related to experiences of well-being at independent private schools.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to further understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools that may modify or clarify BPNT and influence future practices and policies. In this study, I planned to extend the understanding of BPNT or clarify the role of basic psychological needs on educators' well-being at independent private schools. I added to the qualitative literature on BPNT to enhance the understanding of educators' experiences at independent private schools. The study adds to the practical understanding of well-being in a way that enhances future decision-making to support educators' experiences at independent private schools.

Theoretical Significance

In this study, I added to the understanding of well-being and basic psychological needs in a way that extends or clarifies BPNT. Empirical researchers have questioned if there are additional basic needs beyond the needs for autonomy, competence, and belonging (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). There are nine criteria of a need, and researchers use BPNT to analyze individual psychological needs to evaluate if they can be part of the list (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). The influence of threat and safety needs may relate to basic psychological needs during difficult times (Vermote et al., 2021). In this study, I investigated the understanding of need satisfaction related to security needs during challenging times as schools continue to navigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors of BPNT posited that needs satisfaction within context predicates well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). By understanding educators' experiences of well-being and ill-being, I explored the context in which need satisfaction or frustration occurs. I added to the literature to address the understanding of the workplace well-being of independent private school educators.

Empirical Significance

This study of educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools adds to the literature on well-being, BPNT, and independent private schools. Acton and Glasgow's (2015) literature review showed that more than 60% of research on well-being was quantitative. Qualitative data may add depth to understanding how teachers feel regarding well-being (Mulholland et al., 2017) and are needed to detail fully the picture of educators' experiences, describe contextual factors, and advance understanding of the influences on well-being within the school setting (Ryan & Deci, 2020). I used the qualitative design to complement the prior quantitative studies and add descriptions that may enhance the understanding of well-being. Well-being in educators is fluid and dependent on lived experiences, skills, and settings (Simmons et al., 2019). Understanding the lived experiences of educators allowed me to add to understanding basic psychological needs and their relatedness within BPNT by offering descriptions of their experiences. BPNT derives from research on SDT and motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017) and plays a role in development, behavior, and motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vermote et al., 2021). This study contributed to the literature on outcomes of need frustration or satisfaction within independent private schools. Phenomenological studies are a way to provide descriptions of the phenomenon in context to gain a fuller understanding (Moustakas, 1994). Few researchers have sought to synthesize independent private school educators' experiences of workplace well-being. The study of independent private schools is limited.

Practical Significance

In this study, I provided an understanding of educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools that could support organizational and personal practices to influence

future decision-making and enhance educator well-being. Researchers have overlooked the area of educator well-being in schools (Hutcheson, 2016). Adding to the understanding of educators' experience of well-being at independent private schools may provide additional opportunities for educational leaders to identify policies and practices that support autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Stress is prevalent in all work contexts; however, private schools may provide unique demands or challenges (Al-Adwan & Al-Khayat, 2017; Avci et al., 2017; Ingersoll, 2001; Wronowski, 2020). Understanding educators' experiences of workplace well-being may help individuals identify characteristics, behaviors, or patterns that emerge from the study to understand contextual influences on their well-being. There are over 700,000 students in over 1,900 independent private schools, each unique in their mission, governance, financial management, and accountability to their communities and accrediting bodies (National Association of Independent Schools, n.d.b). Understanding educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools may influence schools and individuals to identify and influence policies or practices that induce stress, burnout, and teacher turnover.

Research Questions

I derived the research questions from the problem of educator ill-being and to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. Well-being is not disjointed from the teaching process but rather blended into the everyday actions, thoughts, and contexts of education (Simmons et al., 2019). Well-being is fluid and dynamic, based on individual interpretations and resources for facing challenges (Pant & Agarwal, 2020; Simmons et al., 2019). In BPNT, the authors posited that individuals' needs vary in different contexts (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Using BPNT, researchers asserted that autonomy, relatedness, and competence are necessary for optimal functioning and well-being (Lombas & Esteban, 2018; Ryan & Deci,

2017). Researchers define basic psychological needs as nutrients necessary for optimal well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Psychological needs satisfaction is directly associated with well-being (Lombas & Esteban, 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2017). I designed the research questions to focus on educators' experiences of well-being to understand their perceptions and constructed meanings of the phenomenon. I designed the central research question to identify the phenomenon, setting, and participants. The sub-questions are an effort to uncover experiences of well-being through the framework of BPNT.

Central Research Question

How do independent private school educators describe their experiences concerning workplace well-being?

Sub Question One

How do independent private school educators describe their experiences of autonomy related to well-being in the workplace?

Sub Question Two

How do independent private school educators describe experiences of relatedness and belonging related to well-being in the workplace?

Sub Question Three

How do independent private school educators describe their experiences of competence related to well-being in the workplace?

Definitions

The following are definitions of terms used within this dissertation.

1. *Autonomy* - the right to experience choice and initiate action (Baard et al., 2004)

2. *Autonomy support* - understanding of others' perspectives in needing autonomy and providing opportunities for choice or agency (Baard et al., 2004); perspective-taking to encourage agency and be responsive to perspectives (Deci & Ryan, 2008b; Deci et al., 1994)
3. *Burnout* - psychological strain related to work (Fernet et al., 2017)
4. *Competence* - success at challenging tasks (Baard et al., 2004); a sense of mastery and success (Ryan & Deci, 2020)
5. *Depersonalization* - “cognitive distance, indifference, or cynicism” regarding individuals at work (Arens & Morin, 2016, p. 800); negative emotions toward others at work (Fernet et al., 2017)
6. *Educator well-being*, although not consistently defined, educator well-being as a positive emotional state balanced between environmental influences and the basic psychological needs and expectations of the teacher (Aelterman et al., 2007). it is comprised of a positive emotional state resulting from positive coherence between the multidimensional needs of the educator and the multifaceted workplace context (Acton & Glasgow, 2015; Aelterman et al., 2007)
7. *Negative affect* - “moods and emotions that are unpleasant and represent negative responses people experience in reaction to their lives, health events, and circumstances” (Diener, 2006, p. 400)
8. *Needs* - essentials for survival and growth, innate (Baard et al., 2004); “nutrients that are essential for growth, integrity, and well-being” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 10)
9. *Relatedness* - connection to others (Baard et al., 2004); belonging and connection (Ryan & Deci, 2020)

10. *Self-determined* - to experience choice and regulate individual actions (Deci et al., 1989, 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2017)
11. *Self-determination theory* (SDT) - a macro study of human motivation and behavior stating that humans flourish when psychological needs are met (Deci & Ryan, 1980, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2017); an organismic-dialectical theory indicating the interaction and influence of the environment on the individual (Deci et al., 1994)
12. *Stress* - “physiological and psychological reaction of an individual toward him/herself and external environment as a result of being affected by involved environment and working conditions” (Aydin & Kaya, 2016, p. 186); response to exterior pressure (Bălănescu, 2019)
13. *Subjective well-being* (SWB) - high levels of positive emotions, low levels of negative emotions, and satisfaction with life (happiness) (Deci & Ryan, 2008c); includes evaluations of life satisfaction and interests, and events (Diener, 2006)
14. *Well-being* - although consistently undefined, it may be generally defined as a state of pleasantness, lacking in discomfort, and an optimal psychological experience and functioning (Deci & Ryan, 2008a; Ryan & Deci, 2017); subjective and objective measures identify levels of well-being (McCallum et al., 2017); growth and fulfillment (Ryff & Singer, 2008); “the balance point between an individual’s resource pool and the challenges faced” (Dodge et al., 2012, p. 230); a construct of elements that support well-being (Seligman, 2011)

Summary

The purpose of a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study is to understand educators’ experiences of well-being at independent private schools. Educators face elevated

levels of stress (Aydin & Kaya, 2016; Ayub et al., 2018; Herman et al., 2018; Iancu et al., 2018; Lambersky, 2016; Mulholland et al., 2017; Wilcox & Lawson, 2018; Wulsin et al., 2015) and burnout (Fernet et al., 2017; Greenberg et al., 2016; Herman et al., 2018; Rumschlag, 2017; Yu et al., 2015). Stresses inherent to the profession influence educators' well-being (Herman et al., 2018; Perry et al., 2015; Pyhältö et al., 2020). The level of educator well-being decreased as the role expanded over time (Kumar & Srivastava, 2014; Schaack et al., 2020; Shirley et al., 2020). The crisis of ill-being impacts educators' health and students' educational outcomes, costing schools billions of dollars each year (Greenberg et al., 2016).

BPNT was the framework for this study's research design and research questions. Central to BPNT is the tenet that frustration with the basic psychological needs leads to ill-being (Longo et al., 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2019; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Through qualitative inquiry, I sought to expand the understanding of educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. The research questions focused the study on gathering in-depth descriptions of participants' experiences of well-being and basic psychological needs satisfaction within the workplace. The synthesis of participant experiences expanded or clarified literature regarding BPNT added to the understanding of the phenomenon of well-being and could influence future practice.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

In Chapter Two, I explored the theoretical framework relevant to the present study and reviewed the current literature on educator well-being. I sought to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools through qualitative inquiry examining the phenomenon of well-being through the framework of BPNT. The chapter begins with an examination of the theoretical framework of BPNT. The authors of BPNT posited that autonomy, relatedness, and competency are necessary for optimal functioning and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2019, 2020). I provided context for understanding the problem and situated the study using current, relevant literature regarding well-being, ill-being, educator well-being, and independent private school educators' experiences. Drawing together the components of BPNT and recent literature, this chapter concludes by establishing a gap in the literature regarding the understanding of educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools.

Theoretical Framework

BPNT is a sub-theory derived from the research of Deci and Ryan's SDT. In BPNT, the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence are essential for well-being and optimal functioning (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2001, 2017, 2019; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). The three basic psychological needs are basic, universal, cross-cultural, and spanning developmental periods (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Ill-being arises when individuals' needs are frustrated (Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2019, 2020; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Researchers have found that individuals can experience well-being and ill-being concurrently, raising questions about the complexity of the relationship between

well-being and ill-being (Headey et al., 1984). In this study, I sought to add the understanding of BPNT and the relationship between needs satisfaction and needs frustration through understanding participants' experiences.

In BPNT, the three basic psychological needs intertwine and support the internalization of motivation, resulting in greater self-determination and well-being (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Lombas & Esteban, 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Yu et al., 2015). Individuals need autonomy (Deci, & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020), which provides a sense of self-determined behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Relatedness is the feeling of connectedness to others (Baard et al., 2004; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ebersold et al., 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2017), and within the work context, relatedness correlates positively with well-being (Ebersold et al., 2019; Van Hooff & de Pater, 2019; Wessels & Wood, 2019). Competence is an individual's success at a challenging task (Baard et al., 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020) within their environment (León & Núñez, 2013). The definition of competence derives from the work of White on the proposition of effectance motivation and feelings of efficacy within one's environment (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Acknowledging that there may be other basic psychological besides autonomy, competence, and relatedness, Deci and Ryan (2017) devised a set of criteria to determine if a need was essential to optimal well-being. The nine criteria necessary to be considered a basic psychological need include the requirement that needs satisfaction enhances well-being and needs frustration is negatively associated with well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Novelty has been researched as a candidate for inclusion as a basic psychological need but did not meet all standards for inclusion, falling short of being necessary despite individuals' valuing the need (González-Cutre et al., 2019). Researchers considered beneficence a candidate for inclusion in

the basic psychological needs, as it fulfills many of the criteria; however, when researchers controlled the studies for effects of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, the correlation with ill-being disappeared (Martela & Ryan, 2020). Although researchers evaluated other needs to be considered part of the basic psychological needs list, no additional needs have met all nine criteria (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). In this study, I examined the understanding of individual needs by describing participant experiences that may expand the definition of individual needs.

In BPNT, researchers asserted that individual needs, satisfactions, and frustrations vary over time and in different contexts (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Basic psychological needs are influenced by contexts that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Psychological needs satisfaction may serve as a predictor of well-being and needs frustration as a predictor of ill-being (Rouse et al., 2020; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020) and performance, citizenship, and job effectiveness (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Ryan and Deci (2020) called for further research to continue to develop an understanding of the “experiences, practices, and motives involved in need supportive schools, and to facilitate translational research for everyday use” (p. 17). I used a qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach to synthesize participants’ descriptions of their experiences. The qualitative lens was needed to study well-being to add how educators feel and make meaning without assumption (Mulholland et al., 2017). This approach allowed me to add to the understanding of educators’ experiences based on their descriptions of feelings and constructed meanings.

Related Literature

In this section, I examined the recent literature relevant to this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study of educators’ experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I provided an overview of the literature on well-being and ill-being. I reviewed literature related

to the influences of basic need satisfaction, thwarting, or dissatisfaction on well-being. I discussed current literature concerning causes, characteristics, and outcomes specific to educator ill-being. I provided a review of the limited research related to independent private schools. I concluded this section with a summary of the literature on strategies that reduce the symptoms of ill-being and enhance well-being.

Well-being and Ill-being

Definitions of well-being date back into the early 1900s; however, no formalized definition captures both the objective and subjective measures (Anderson et al., 2019). Human well-being is a multidimensional construction of many elements that are subjective to the individual (Lijadi, 2018; Seligman, 2011). Eudaimonic well-being is a dynamic process of fulfilling potential through growth while maximizing happiness (Deci & Ryan, 2008c; Ryan et al., 2008). Well-being occurs when individuals can engage in purposeful, value-driven behaviors drawn from the individual's capabilities and energies positively (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The context surrounding individuals' experiences influences individuals' well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Ryff & Singer, 2008). Resource availability, relationships, families, and other contexts impact well-being (Finsterwalder & Kuppelwieser, 2020; La Placa et al., 2013). Well-being fluctuates based on changes in factors at the personal, interpersonal, organizational, and national levels (Evans, 2016; Luhmann et al., 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Well-being is supported by satisfying the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Lombas & Esteban, 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2020; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020).

Ill-being is described as negative affect and can include anxiety, depression, or heightened stress (Martela & Ryan, 2020; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Ill-being correlates to loss of motivation, disengagement, and distress (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). A loss of autonomy

driven by external rewards (Bartholomew et al., 2018; Rouse et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2008) and goals placed on individuals extrinsically (Warburton et al., 2020) can contribute to ill-being. Researchers associate ill-being to lack of need satisfaction (Kujanpää et al., 2021) and the frustration of the three basic psychological needs (Lombas & Esteban, 2018; Martela & Ryan, 2020; Martela & Sheldon, 2019; Rouse et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2019; Warburton et al., 2020). Needs frustration is a predictor of ill-being indicators, including stress (Campbell et al., 2017; Rouse et al., 2020), anxiety (Ryan & Deci, 2017), and greater feelings of despair (Rouse et al., 2020).

To fully understand well-being, one must examine ill-being (Rice, 2019). Some researchers believe well-being and ill-being are opposite ends of the continuum (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Other researchers identify ill-being and well-being as two different constructs related to need satisfaction and thwarting (Bartholomew et al., 2011; Warburton et al., 2020) or view them as distinctly opposite experiences (Shirley et al., 2020). Biologically, identical and inversely related biomarkers do not indicate ill-being and well-being symptoms, supporting that they are independent of each other (Ryff et al., 2006), but well-being and ill-being do share some multiple biomarkers that indicate they are related and influence each other (Diener et al., 2018; Ryff et al., 2006). Individuals can show signs of both ill-being and well-being concurrently (Rodrigues et al., 2021; Ryff & Singer, 1996; Ryff et al., 2006; Warburton et al., 2020). Influences that cause ill-being can occur in a primarily positive life without causing ill-being depending on the extent, timing, and other factors related to the influence (Rice, 2019). Increasing well-being does not remove ill-being (Shirley et al., 2020), but addressing ill-being requires promoting well-being (Fava et al., 2004). The relationship and interplay among needs frustration and needs satisfaction influence each other and well-being or ill-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Meeting the three basic

psychological needs mediates against ill-being; conversely, frustrated needs lead to ill-being (Martela & Ryan, 2020). Well-being and ill-being are related constructs, but the relation is undefined and variable (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kujanpää et al., 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020).

Educator Well-being

Researchers have failed to agree on a common definition or dimensions that construct educator well-being (Viac & Fraser, 2020). For this study, I defined educator well-being as a positive emotional state influenced by environment context and the teacher's basic psychological needs and expectations (Aelterman et al., 2007). Educator well-being is a fluid state grounded in educators' experiences (Simmons et al., 2019). Educator well-being may fluctuate based on time, setting, and individual experiences (Ebersold et al., 2019) and influences the construction of multiple facets of educators' identity (Elcan, 2017; Spilt et al., 2011). Van Horn et al. (2004) identified five dimensions of educator well-being (affective, social, professional, cognitive, and psychosomatic). In contrast, Collie et al. (2015) suggested only three (workload, organizational, and student interaction), and Viac and Fraser (2020) identified four (cognitive, subjective, physical and mental, and social). Although each researcher identified different dimensions, the educators' experiences are foundational, and unifying themes run through the different approaches (Viac & Fraser, 2020). Educator well-being levels originate from individual perceptions, responsibilities, and individual experiences (Hutcheson, 2016; Simmons et al., 2019). Educators experience positive effects when their psychological needs are met (Ebersold et al., 2019).

Educator well-being is an essential component in workplace satisfaction and retaining teachers in the profession (Anderson et al., 2019; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017;

Iancu et al., 2018). Educator job satisfaction also contributes to student well-being (Toropova et al., 2021). Need satisfaction leads to greater job satisfaction, well-being, and health (Gomez-Baya & Lucia-Casdemunt, 2017). Factors such as school climate, agency, and individual motivation directly relate to job satisfaction (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Individuals with a great sense of job control have higher job satisfaction (Berlin et al., 2020). Some research shows that a sense of collective efficacy, a contribution to a part of something greater than themselves, contributes significantly to job satisfaction for educators (Buonomo et al., 2020). Meaningful work enhances workplace well-being (Aboobaker et al., 2019).

Facets of Educator Well-being

Meeting individual elements that comprise well-being may enhance overall well-being (Martela & Ryan, 2020). The satisfaction of the basic psychological needs fosters well-being (Rouse et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Different catalysts may impact needs satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Well-being prospers in environments of sustainability (Shirley et al., 2020). Educators recognize that well-being is a dynamic and fluctuating process influenced by many factors (Fox et al., 2020).

Autonomy-Supportive Environments

Support of autonomy is necessary for optimal functioning and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Slemp et al., 2018). Increased autonomy supports positive work outcomes (Slemp et al., 2018; Wright, 2020). Teachers who have control of key decisions and are allowed to be creative in their jobs experience greater personal fulfillment than those who do not have autonomy (Schaack et al., 2020). When goal orientation is autonomous due to needs being satisfied, well-being increases (Li et al., 2020). Autonomy support helps internalize work motivations, causing them to be autonomous through needs satisfaction and relates to positive learning outcomes

(Slemp et al., 2018). Teachers show a positive effect when meeting their psychological needs, especially the basic psychological need for autonomy (Ebersold et al., 2019). Autonomy-supportive leaders and autonomy-supportive environments are correlated positively with well-being (Slemp et al., 2018).

PAS environments lead to greater organizational commitment (Collie et al., 2018; Slemp et al., 2018) and satisfaction (Herrera et al., 2021). Autonomy-supportive environments predict well-being and positive engagement in work behaviors as they support the basic psychological needs (Slemp et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2019). PAS also correlates with higher levels of adaptability and engagement and lower levels of emotional exhaustion. PAS supports the optimal functioning of teachers through the promotion of personal resource development and reduced job demands (Collie et al., 2018). Organizations with clear procedures, structures, and guidance for employees provide reassurance and support the basic psychological needs of competency and autonomy (Gagné et al., 2019). Autonomy promotes optimal functioning and less counterproductive work behaviors (Bureau et al., 2018). When teachers are given space for support and allowed to have a voice, it supports expertise, enhancing teacher efficacy (Nordick et al., 2019). Environments that are autonomous supporting encourage greater choice and motivate employees (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

Autonomous supporting environments that display trust positively impact teacher well-being (Deci et al., 1989; Gagné & Deci, 2005). The use of distributed leadership and authentic trust relationships helps teachers feel valued and supported (Sowell, 2018). The delegation of authority is insufficient and must accompany positive perceptions of work-related roles (Kõiv et al., 2019). Transformational leadership characteristics increase autonomous motivation and impact the organization's collective motivation impacting the culture (Gagné et al., 2019).

Transformational leadership improves motivation through competence support (Messmann et al., 2021). Perceived organizational support may increase work motivation and satisfaction (Gillet et al., 2013). Autonomy-supportive leadership correlates positively with meeting psychological needs and well-being (Ebersold et al., 2019; Eyal & Roth, 2011; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Gillet et al., 2013; Slemp et al., 2018).

Agency to implement effective practices and support meaningful work supports well-being (Turner & Thielking, 2019a). Autonomously motivated teachers are less likely to exhibit symptoms of burnout, demonstrate high engagement, and foster better student-teacher relationships (Abós et al., 2018). Allowing teachers access to necessary resources and utilizing them autonomously to meet the needs of students supports educator well-being (Howard et al., 2016; Perry et al., 2015). Leaders may empower individuals regarding job satisfaction and organizational commitment by providing agency and meaningfulness (Kõiv et al., 2019). Motivation for teaching was directly related to the self-determination experiences of teachers (Perry et al., 2015). Teachers who believed they had been treated fairly in exchange for their efforts articulated higher job satisfaction (Cumming, 2017). Understanding the rationale behind decisions promoted the internalization of values and increased autonomous motivation (Deci et al., 1994).

Positive Work Environment

Educational systems are unique and influence teacher and student well-being (Herman et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2018). Positive school climates are correlated to positive well-being as they promote growth, distributed leadership, and goal congruency (Converso et al., 2019). Positive climates that enhance motivation increase work outcomes that benefit the organization (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Empathy is a precondition for supporting the basic psychological needs of others

(Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Educational context impacts motivation, and educational strategies (Ryan & Deci, 2019) influence well-being (Shirley et al., 2020). Teachers who feel safe and supported report higher perceived self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation (Reaves & Cozzens, 2018). Findings indicate job security is also correlational to well-being (Reaves & Cozzens, 2018; Simões & Calheiros, 2019). A positive environment is a motivational element that enhances work experience and emotion (Gupta, 2015). Teachers who find joy and pride in their work sometimes use positive emotions to buffer against stress (Berlin et al., 2020). Social engagement with others increases positive emotions (Thurlings et al., 2015; Wessels & Wood, 2019).

Quantity communication and clear communication by principals build trust and support the well-being of educators (Kamal Kumar & Kumar Mishra, 2017; Nordick et al., 2019; Reaves & Cozzens, 2018). Gagné et al. (2019) cited the need to provide a clear vision that encourages self-efficacy to increase well-being. Clear expectations impact intrinsic motivation and positive staff outcomes (Reaves & Cozzens, 2018). Communication is a way administrators can validate teachers and frame challenges into growth opportunities (Nordick et al., 2019). Leaders who share a clear vision for a program or school impact educators' well-being positively by communicating their passion for the work (Schaack et al., 2020). Communication of a uniting vision can also lead to a sense of belonging and unity for educators (Jones et al., 2020).

Relatedness

Relatedness plays a key role in internal climate and culture, impacting the values of the organization and the well-being of individuals (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Educators' sense of relatedness extends to other colleagues within the organization, students, and administrators (Anderson et al., 2019; Perry et al., 2015). When the risk is low, teachers feel a keen sense of

relatedness to those in their immediate environment, and there are shared feelings of joy through social bonds (Gupta, 2015; Perry et al., 2015). The organization benefits from a strong commitment to relatedness and fostering a sense of commonality and trust between educators (Nordick et al., 2019). Relatedness positively affects outcomes on individual well-being (Ebersold et al., 2019; Gagné & Deci, 2005).

Relationships are essential in education (Acton & Glasgow, 2015; Berlin et al., 2020). Collaboration among teachers may support feelings of belonging and positive emotions (Anderson et al., 2019; Ford & Youngs, 2018). Conversations that are supportive, empathetic, and inquisitive convey that relationships matter (Schubert & Giles, 2019). Educator collaboration positively influences the school culture and student well-being (Shirley et al., 2020). Through professional mentoring opportunities, teachers have enhanced trust and connectedness (Nordick et al., 2019). With greater relatedness and collaboration experiences, individuals may experience less burnout (Pyhältö et al., 2020). Teachers' descriptions of happy work environments correlated to positive emotions based on positive relationships (Sahin Yarbag, 2015).

Benevolence, positively influencing others, enhances well-being (Martela & Ryan, 2020). When valued within relationships by others, individuals may feel inspired and discover new understandings of themselves (Schubert & Giles, 2019). Rumschlag (2017) found that exhaustion may be combated with accomplishment and professional support, given or received. Teachers find meaning in their work through positive interactions, pedagogical knowledge gains, providing classrooms focused on learning outcomes, and when they have an impact beyond the classroom (Turner & Thielking, 2019b). Meeting benevolence satisfaction enhances well-being and works with the three basic psychological needs to protect from psychological harm (Martela

& Ryan, 2020). Elcan (2017) indicated that well-being is fostered by educators seeing positive impacts in student learning outcomes.

Spirituality

Spirituality means having inner peace and interconnection (Villani et al., 2019). Spirituality may reduce depressive symptoms and enhance flourishing (Kent et al., 2020). Research has found that daily private spiritual experiences enhance well-being (Bradshaw & Kent, 2018; Kent et al., 2020; Villani et al., 2019). Spirituality and religion connect to purpose and meaningfulness in life (Villani et al., 2019). Kōiv et al. (2019) found that when there are stronger feelings of meaningfulness, there are stronger connections to school and the workplace; when it matters beyond themselves, teachers feel a connection. Spirituality mitigates the stress of everyday routine (Kent et al., 2020). Mahipalan and S (2019) found that spirituality critically connects to substantial happiness and gratitude, correlated with happiness. Working as a buffer, spirituality may enhance well-being by reframing negative contexts or enhancing positive contexts such as gratitude and tranquility. Innerness and inner peace reduce negative well-being (Villani et al., 2019).

Aboobaker et al. (2019) and Riasudeen and Singh (2020) documented the role of spirituality in significantly impacting workplace well-being. Spirituality connects to dedication, work meaning, and pride (Lizano et al., 2019). A positive sense of community translated into higher workplace well-being (Aboobaker et al., 2019; Riasudeen & Singh, 2020). Positive connections occur between spirituality and reduced intent to quit, positive work engagement, and organizational self-esteem. The study also connects spirituality with PWB and leadership effectiveness (Riasudeen & Singh, 2020).

Feelings of Competence

Competence support from colleagues enhances educator well-being and is more important than school management support (Jungert et al., 2019). Connection and success with students may support the educators' psychological need for competence (Spilt et al., 2011). Teachers need to feel effective to bring joy into the profession (Liu et al., 2018). Providing support and training may help increase skills and competencies that support well-being (Gupta, 2015; Herman et al., 2018). Targeted professional development for educators empowers educators (Sowell, 2018). When teachers feel competent, they are motivated to seek out professional learning (de Wal et al., 2020). Administrators can add to the support of educators' autonomy and competence through encouragement, availability, and openness (Stoloff et al., 2020).

Within the educational context, relevant and appropriate feedback and setting appropriate goals foster competence (Jungert et al., 2019). Implicit feedback may support competence, indicating that educators thrive in their occupation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Teachers benefit from encouragement and support (Lambersky, 2016; Nordick et al., 2019; Sarros, 1990; Stone et al., 2009). Teachers report greater organizational commitment when school leaders provide feedback and encouragement (Collie et al., 2017). Teachers want meaningful feedback designed to enhance their practice (Anderson et al., 2019). Organizational recognition may support teacher well-being through recognizing competence and providing support (Liu et al., 2018). Well-structured, feedback-orientated, and growth-focused workplaces best meet the need for competence (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Individuals vary in their coping skills, which can be taught (Herman et al., 2020). Schools and administrative leadership who provide opportunities for employees to enhance coping skills

to manage stress through professional development aid individuals in increasing their sense of self-determination (Herman et al., 2018; Howard et al., 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Professional development that practices strategies for problem-solving and dealing with challenges may help educators develop coping skills (Ebersold et al., 2019). Teachers need coping skills to maintain well-being (Jeon & Ardeleanu, 2020). Developing coping skills links to generating enduring positive emotions such as hope or optimism (Gupta, 2015; Perry et al., 2015). Teachers who feel they may both cope with frustrations and positively impact their students' outcomes demonstrate higher levels of well-being (Anderson et al., 2019; Herman et al., 2018). Professional development can reduce discipline-related negative associations and burnout and improve student-teacher relations (Sandilos et al., 2020).

Ryan and Deci (2019) described motivation as involving both direction and energy for action. Motivation and self-determination may vary by individual, situation, and experiences (Howard et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2018). Energy enhances well-being as it may mobilize behaviors (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Teachers who report enjoying and valuing teaching, thus autonomously motivated, are less likely to exhibit symptoms of burnout, demonstrate high engagement, and foster better student-teacher relationships (Abós et al., 2018). Energy is one factor related to morale within the school climate (Converso et al., 2019). Ryan and Deci (2019) were clear that not all activities deplete energy, noting that some enhance autonomous motivation and vitality. Sociocultural conditions and the environment impact motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008b). Positive interest, engagement, and commitment may positively impact mental state, thus morale and school climate (Converso et al., 2019). The work characteristics of persistence and responsibility toward goal attainment connect to elevated levels of well-being (Danylchenko, 2020). Educators who experience pressures within the workplace, demonstrating controlled motivation, are found

to put energy into their work but report being worn out and pay a high emotional price for their engagement. Autonomous motivation is a buffer against the negative dynamics of job demands (Abós et al., 2018).

Mindfulness supports well-being (Hwang et al., 2017; Iancu et al., 2018; Zarate et al., 2019). Clarà (2017) found that reflection may increase resilience and increase well-being. Mindfulness correlates to lower perceived stress, lower anxiety, better sleep, and higher job satisfaction (Hwang et al., 2019). Mindfulness relates to the quality of student-teacher interactions (Braun et al., 2019). Mindfulness strategies utilized by educators support emotional regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Used as a practice with middle school teachers, mindfulness reduced symptoms of job stress, burnout, depression, and anxiety (Braun et al., 2019; Zarate et al., 2019). Mindfulness moderates defensiveness as it integrates values and works as a buffer. Mindfulness may produce increased autonomous functioning due to increased awareness (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Through mindfulness, teachers were more successful in regulating emotions and cognitions. Mindful teachers also supported more emotionally supportive student relationships (Braun et al., 2019).

Enhanced Educator Efficacy

Self-efficacy is an agentic belief system (Bandura, 2019). Self-efficacy is the crossroads between knowing how to do something and the ability to take action; a combination of competence and autonomy (Kurt, 2016) and can be equated with competence directly (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy are vital to their well-being and may mediate the effects of burnout (Yu et al., 2015). Perceptions of self-efficacy impact educator well-being, specifically teacher-efficacy (Howard et al., 2016). Teachers who believe they may make a

difference through their actions or voice have increased self-efficacy and optimism (Nordick et al., 2019; Perry et al., 2015; Yu et al., 2015).

Understanding teacher efficacy requires looking beyond the classroom and believing that the teacher can impact the outcomes in the broader educational arena (Perry et al., 2015).

Personal values predict teacher self-efficacy (Barni et al., 2019). Teacher-efficacy supports the psychological needs of educators when they have a voice and opportunity within the educational system. Opportunities to collaborate and problem solve are opportunities to increase competence and enhance well-being (Wessels & Wood, 2019). Teachers gather competence from the social support of colleagues, not management, which is a predictor of teacher-efficacy (Jungert et al., 2019).

Self-efficacy in educators is important (Anderson et al., 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2017; Koschmann & McDonald, 2015; Kurt, 2016). Feelings of competence and autonomy are necessary for intrinsic motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). A significant factor in teacher efficacy is the teacher's recognition of the intrinsic value of education (Barni et al., 2019). There is no significant difference in educator efficacy across grade levels (Mankin et al., 2018). Novice teachers have the firmest self-efficacy beliefs (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Two themes that impacted self-efficacy across schools are leadership and educational change (Gonzalez et al., 2017). Vital to teacher self-efficacy is professional feedback (Anderson et al., 2019). Teachers who feel safe and supported report higher perceived self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation (Reaves & Cozzens, 2018). Educators' enhanced self-efficacy and faith in their ability to teach, mediate symptoms of burnout, foster hope, and increase resilience (Perry et al., 2015; Yu et al.,

2015). Teachers need to feel effective to bring joy into the profession (Liu et al., 2018). Teacher efficacy impacts teacher well-being as well as student learning outcomes (Penttinen et al., 2020).

Teacher efficacy may be influenced by school administrators and systems (Gonzalez et al., 2017; Lambersky, 2016; Reaves & Cozzens, 2018). Management that consistently showed respect, acknowledged teacher efforts, supported relationships, and provided for growth were seen as supporting self-determination and well-being within the school (Gupta, 2015; Lambersky, 2016; Rumschlag, 2017). Active monitoring is a way to increase self-efficacy and increase positive relationships within the work context (Reaves & Cozzens, 2018). Faculty leadership enhances teacher efficacy through supportive relationships, scaffolding collaboration, and enhancing expertise (Nordick et al., 2019). Sharing goals allows for autonomously motivated behaviors and enhances teacher efficacy through the scaffolding of collaboration (Nordick et al., 2019). Support from higher levels of leadership within an organization may support autonomy despite less autonomy support from proximal supervisors (Slemp et al., 2018).

Outcomes of Positive Educator Well-being

Positive well-being influences significant areas of educators' lives (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Turner & Thielking, 2019b). When individuals' basic psychological needs are satisfied and they experience positive well-being, they are more intrinsically motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2017) and experience vitality (Bartholomew et al., 2011). A reduction in teacher stress correlates to a boost in task speed and accuracy, as well as an increase in speed in task switching and cognitive ability (Carroll et al., 2021). Employees with higher perceived levels of relatedness to others and a feeling of connectedness result in positive work-related outcomes (Riasudeen & Singh, 2020; Tov & Chan, 2012), as do employees who feel higher levels of autonomy (Baard et al., 2004).

Teachers with higher well-being are more committed to the school and students (Dreer, 2021; Turner & Thielking, 2019b). Student-teacher relationships are strong and meaningful with teachers with positive well-being (Carroll et al., 2021; Dreer, 2021; Penttinen et al., 2020; Turner & Thielking, 2019b). Teachers with positive well-being report higher levels of engagement in lesson planning and are more focused on lesson quality (Turner & Thielking, 2019b). Teachers with positive well-being report high job satisfaction (Dreer, 2021). Positive educator well-being positively correlates to intent to remain in their position (Aboobaker et al., 2019).

Positive well-being positively influences health and physical wellness (Turner & Thielking, 2019b). Teachers who used coping strategies to achieve positive well-being are not influenced by daily stressors as significantly (Turner & Thielking, 2019b). Teachers with positive well-being are less stressed and more relaxed (Turner & Thielking, 2019b). Positive moods and well-being are associated with longevity and lower morbidity (Pressman & Cohen, 2005). Individuals with higher life satisfaction have better overall health indicators (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2008). Diener and Chan (2011) found correlates between well-being and better health outcomes.

Educator Ill-being

Approximately 25% of teachers define themselves as in a state of professional ill-being (Fedorov et al., 2020). There is no common definition for educator ill-being; however, researchers have described ill-being as exhaustion (Cuevas et al., 2018), the opposite of well-being (Shirley et al., 2020), and anxiety and depression (Han et al., 2020). Educator ill-being occurs when educators conflict between their values and what they must do by the schools or are overwhelmed by expectations (Shirley et al., 2020). A lack of recovery time due to a lack of separation from work heightens educator ill-being (Kujanpää et al., 2021). Teachers experience

spillover of work-related stress into their personal time (Jeon & Ardeleanu, 2020). The frustration of the basic psychological needs may explain elevated levels of educator ill-being (Bartholomew et al., 2014; Ebersold et al., 2019). Negative pressure and stress may influence educator ill-being (Cuevas et al., 2018).

Researchers reported findings in which person-level variables correlated to educators' perceptions of ill-being (Collie et al., 2020; Raj et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2018), in contrast to researchers who found no effect within their studies of well-being related to person-level variables (Silver & Zinsser, 2020). Raj et al. (2019) and Van Petegem et al. (2005) identified gender as significantly correlated to levels of well-being and turnover intentions, whereas in another study, well-being was not significantly influenced by gender (Katsantonis, 2020). In another study, gender, when paired with work engagement, correlated with turnover intentions (Mérida-López et al., 2020). Variance in findings may be related to gender equity in non-work-related expectations (Allen et al., 2020). Researchers indicated that more years in the field correlated to lower levels of burnout (Pyhältö et al., 2020; Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). In contrast, Aldrup et al. (2017) found no significant differences based on age or work experience, and Ballantyne and Retell (2020) found well-being to decrease in the first five years of teaching and increase after that. Special education and specific subject area teachers show higher levels of stress and burnout than their peers (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). In another study, elementary teachers reported higher organizational well-being than middle or secondary teachers (Collie et al., 2015).

Stress is an indicator of ill-being (Martela & Ryan, 2020). Working in education is stressful (Berlin et al., 2020; Herman et al., 2018; Jeon & Ardeleanu, 2020; Perry et al., 2015). Teacher stress is an unpleasant emotion produced due to the daily demands of teaching (Skaalvik

& Skaalvik, 2018) and decreases. Penttinen et al. (2020) reported that teacher stress is constant throughout the academic year, whereas other researchers indicated stress is variable throughout the year and by an individual (Fox et al., 2020). Fifty-eight percent of teachers reported being in less than good health due to high stress, and 37% reported symptoms of depression (Johnson et al., 2020). The length and intensity of stressors within the organization may influence perceptions of stress and burnout (Bartholomew et al., 2017). Educators identify that stress hurts well-being and their ability to perform well within the classroom, affecting students (Anderson et al., 2019; Howard et al., 2016).

Several factors influence stress (Clipa, 2017). The many demands and complex nature of the teaching profession impact teachers' well-being (Collie et al., 2018). Stress can stem from evaluation processes (Anderson et al., 2019), lack of resources (Aldrup et al., 2017), lack of agency (Sandilos et al., 2018), high-stakes testing practice (Kaynak, 2020), and low wages (Roberts et al., 2019). Some researchers assign the origins of educator stress to school administration (Aydin & Kaya, 2016). In contrast, Jeon and Ardeleanu (2020) found that stress derives from significant factors: work context, family support, and students' behavior. The loss of respect for educators in the community increases stress and ill-being (Gonzalez et al., 2017). Teachers' profiles influence how they manage, with only seven percent of teachers believing that they can adapt to manage stress. Teachers experiencing stress express feeling emotionally drained (Lambersky, 2016). Teachers with high stress and low coping skills are prone to burnout (Herman et al., 2018). Work-related stress is strongly associated with depression in teachers (Roberts et al., 2019) and is a direct cause of job burnout (Yu et al., 2015).

Exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced commitment to accomplishment define burnout (Howard et al., 2016; Lizano et al., 2019). Burnout correlates to ill-being in the forms of

anxiety, depression, poor health, disengagement, and dissatisfaction (Sabagh et al., 2018). Burnout results in reduced job satisfaction, intent to quit, lack of engagement, increased stress level, and health issues (Sabagh et al., 2018). Approximately eight percent of the teaching population leaves the field annually due to job dissatisfaction (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). A teacher's time teaching may influence levels of burnout (Ballantyne & Retell, 2020); both novice and experienced teachers demonstrate elevated levels of burnout due to struggles with motivation or loss of enthusiasm (Bălănescu, 2019; Rumschlag, 2017). Correlations between workload and increased burnout are evident (Lawrence et al., 2019). Financial stress may exacerbate by burnout (Al-Adwan & Al-Khayat, 2017). Some types of educator burnout go undiscovered since educators are highly engaged (Abós et al., 2019). Unaddressed, burnout may negatively influence passion for teaching, increase fatigue, and lessen the enthusiasm of educators (Yu et al., 2015). As burnout increases, PWB and performance diminish (Sabagh et al., 2018).

Lack of perceived social support or emotional exhaustion in educators within the organization may indicate educator burnout (Lawrence et al., 2019; Sabagh et al., 2018). Additional burdens and changes in educational policy have teachers experiencing emotional exhaustion and dissatisfaction with elements of the educational process (Glazzard & Rose, 2019; Lawrence et al., 2019). Frustrations over extra burdens placed on educators arise when educators feel they are taking on the role of parenting (Rodriguez et al., 2020), non-teaching responsibilities (Fox et al., 2020), managing disruptive classrooms (Herman et al., 2020; Simões & Calheiros, 2019) or earning lower wages (Schaack et al., 2020). When the basic psychological need for autonomy is frustrated, it plays a vital role in negative affect and emotional exhaustion (Ebersold et al., 2019). Individuals experiencing burnout report negative emotions regarding

their work (Moeller et al., 2018). Depersonalization breaks down educators' ability to connect, leading to heightened disruption (Benita et al., 2019; Simões & Calheiros, 2019). When educators' leadership does not give them autonomy, they feel depersonalized (Collie et al., 2018). Teacher depersonalization leads to classroom management problems (Benita et al., 2019). Emotional exhaustion in educators is directly related to intentions to leave their position (Schaack et al., 2020).

Need frustration is predictive of increased anxiety (Ryan & Deci, 2017). All three basic psychological needs independently connect to feelings of anxiety (Martela & Ryan, 2020). Teacher anxiety can influence the teacher and the student (Aydin, 2021). Anxiety correlates to low job motivation and satisfaction (Peele & Wolf, 2021). The many demands of teaching and the praxis of teaching can cause teaching anxiety (Aydin, 2021). Teachers can fear that the school staff, principal, or other teachers will treat them unfriendly (Agustiana, 2019). Teaching anxiety relates to feelings of efficacy, as low efficacy increases and predicts anxiety (Aydin, 2021). The roles teachers take on in their professional lives cause anxieties (Glazzard & Rose, 2019). Teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward teaching correlate to teacher anxiety levels (Aydin, 2021). Teacher anxiety corresponds to greater intentions to leave the teaching profession (Wang & Hall, 2021). Anxiety blends with other symptoms of ill-being, such as burnout and emotional exhaustion (Aydin, 2021).

Facets of Educator Ill-being

Various work-related factors contribute to ill-being (Diener, 2006). Some researchers have identified that work context, support from families, and students' behavior influence educator stress (Jeon & Ardeleanu, 2020). Other researchers identified that educators' main causes of stress are job security, long hours, heavy pressure, and impacts on personal finances

(MacIntyre et al., 2019). Teachers' coping skills, traits, and perceptions influence their stress (Anderson et al., 2019; Bălănescu, 2019; Camacho et al., 2018; Herman et al., 2018). At times, educators' abilities to be resilient against stress and burnout are challenged by external factors causing a tipping point toward ill-being (Glazzard & Rose, 2019). Higher perceptions of stress occur when teachers' basic psychological needs are thwarted (Avci et al., 2017). Stress negatively impacts job satisfaction for educators (Farley & Chamberlain, 2021).

Work Environment

Educators define the work environment as school culture, school leadership, and relationships with colleagues (de Stasio et al., 2017). Multiple factors within the workplace influence well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2019) and contribute to retention rates (de Stasio et al., 2017). Educators believe that people view teaching as low in social status and low on the socioeconomic scale (Mutluer & Yüksel, 2019). School contextual factors include resources and support (McCallum et al., 2017; Ross et al., 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007), school climate (Simões & Calheiros, 2019), leadership and collegial support (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007), class size, salary, school location, and working conditions (Burkhauser, 2017). Policies, school community, and student population demographics are also contextual factors influencing schools (Rodriguez et al., 2020). School-based work environments, primarily designed for children's education, do not consider the professional needs of teachers (Fox et al., 2020). When used as a control mechanism, grading practices negatively affect teachers and students (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Contextual factors are an area that would benefit from additional research regarding educator experiences of well-being (Fernet et al., 2017).

A school's climate influences educator well-being (Converso et al., 2019). Teachers may be working in economically challenging contexts (Wessels & Wood, 2019). Resource scarcity,

including time or resource dissemination, may lead to additional stress for teachers (Aydin & Kaya, 2016; Rumschlag, 2017). Some educators work in schools where students are experiencing poverty or other traumas that influence the school community (Shirley et al., 2020). Teachers may feel a lack of autonomy due to school initiatives and conflict between perceived and experienced autonomy (MacIntyre et al., 2019), reducing job satisfaction (Rumschlag, 2017). Educators who experience pressures within the workplace, demonstrating controlled motivation, are found to put energy into their work but report being worn out and pay a high emotional price for their engagement (Abós et al., 2018). Teachers who feel the school climate is safe and supported have higher well-being and are more intrinsically motivated than educators who do not feel safe and supported (Reaves & Cozzens, 2018). Feelings of isolation or exclusion frustrate the basic psychological need for relatedness (Ebersold et al., 2019). Individuals do not function at optimal levels when needs are frustrated by social environments (Warburton et al., 2020). The school environment is of great importance to a feeling of satisfaction for educators (Elcan, 2017). Work environments are highly complex, and it is challenging for researchers to capture all elements that influence well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Leadership impacts educator well-being (Lambersky, 2016; Liebowitz & Porter, 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2019). Ill-being can result from poor management decisions or unfair treatment of employees (Anderson et al., 2019; Deci et al., 1989; Lambersky, 2016). Teachers want transparency in leadership decision-making (Fox et al., 2020). Behaviors from management predict turnover, absenteeism, commitment, productivity, and job satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Administrative decisions such as class schedules and changes within the system can be seen as inhibitors of agency by teachers and perceived negatively (Lambersky, 2016). Administrators who compare teachers in practice or outcomes also negatively impact teachers'

sense of agency (Anderson et al., 2019; Lambersky, 2016). Administrative pressures and lack of support may manifest into deficient performance and teachers describing feelings of fatigue or exhaustion (Yu et al., 2015). When overlooked by management, teachers may become frustrated (Schubert & Giles, 2019). Conversely, when teachers feel overly monitored in their day-to-day teaching practices, they feel dissatisfaction and discomfort (Kaynak, 2020). The behaviors of school administrators may contribute directly to teacher stress when they are discriminatory, unjust, or unclear (Aydin & Kaya, 2016; Ayub et al., 2018; Lambersky, 2016).

People's bias toward the educator's race and ethnicity may shape educators' experiences of well-being (Rodriguez et al., 2020). Families' perceptions regarding educators' race or ethnicity may impact educators' well-being (Rodriguez et al., 2020). Educators may be unprepared for the hostility of the diverse racial climates in schools (Kohli, 2018). Educators of color may experience dissatisfaction when they feel negative about the workplace approach to diversity and feel they lack relatedness within the environment (Grooms et al., 2021). Educators of color may face additional burdens and stress related to being asked to address issues of discipline or race with students of color (Paterson, 2019). Frustration with the educational system regarding race arises for educators when there is a perceived bias in the high-stakes testing process that disadvantages specific demographic populations within their classes; the educators may experience ill-being as they empathize with students (Shirley et al., 2020).

High perceptions of student- and parent-perpetrated violence directed at teachers may directly impact psychological demands on teachers (Berlanda et al., 2019; Moon & McCluskey, 2020). Violence against teachers is common (Berlanda et al., 2019; de Cordova et al., 2019; Moon & McCluskey, 2020). One in 10 teachers reported physical abuse or sexual harassment (Moon & McCluskey, 2020). Eighty-four percent of teachers reported school-related violence,

from harassment to threats to physical assault (Berlanda et al., 2019). Forty-four percent reported verbal abuse within the last 12 months (Moon & McCluskey, 2020). Harassment by parents and students in the form of intimidation or threats is the highest prevalence of violence, with female and elementary teachers reporting high levels of harassment (Berlanda et al., 2019). Students that engage in violence create a feeling of destabilizing the safe atmosphere of the classroom and hinder well-being (Kaynak, 2020). Feelings of reduced safety in the classroom result in the inability to connect, negative job performance, and correlate to poor classroom management (Moon & McCluskey, 2020).

High-Stakes Practices

High-stakes testing counters the basic psychological needs necessary for well-being and negatively affects educators (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Teachers express concern that high-stakes testing puts additional pressure on teachers and students (Kaynak, 2020) and creates competition between teachers reducing collaboration (Farvis & Hay, 2020). Teachers believe they have additional demands on their time as high-stakes testing impacted classroom instruction (Gonzalez et al., 2017). Changes in classroom curriculum to align with testing objectives hurt educational outcomes and increase stress and ill-being in educators (Farvis & Hay, 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2017). Management behaviors surrounding high-stakes testing increase negative relationships (Farvis & Hay, 2020). Legislative sanctions levy external rewards and consequences based on high-stakes test results (Ryan & Deci, 2020). High-stakes testing creates ill-being as it is overly controlling and removes autonomy from the teachers in the classroom (Kaynak, 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2020). High-stakes testing contributes to teacher stress (Iancu et al., 2018) and anxiety (Farvis & Hay, 2020). High-stakes testing, which applies pressure on

teachers from school systems to engage students, negatively affects teacher well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Teachers' perceptions were the role of faculty evaluations that promote a high-stakes culture within the school (Anderson et al., 2019). Educator evaluations influence educators' well-being and effectiveness within the classroom (Anderson et al., 2019; Rumschlag, 2017). Teachers report that evaluation practices raise stress levels and reduce job satisfaction, conflicting with administrative perspectives that evaluations provide feedback to enhance student learning. Controlling or competitive faculty evaluations decrease relatedness through increased competitiveness (Anderson et al., 2019). Teachers report that they dislike being observed and find discomfort with the process (Kaynak, 2020). Educators feel increased stress and anxiety because evaluations depend on student performance on high-risk testing metrics that often change (Anderson et al., 2019). High-stakes courses also increase teacher job-related stress (Gonzalez et al., 2017). Some school systems use student achievement or growth as part of the educator evaluation adding additional pressures and stress to educators (Anderson et al., 2019; Dennie et al., 2019). Increased pressure within the job setting increases stress for teachers (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). The negative impact of the pressure felt by educators increases ill-being (Cuevas et al., 2018).

Job Demands

Teaching is a highly complex profession with many demands (Collie et al., 2018; Viac & Fraser, 2020). The additional roles outside the classroom contribute to frustration and dissatisfaction (Lawrence et al., 2019; Wessels & Wood, 2019; Wright, 2020). Teachers cite taking on roles such as hall monitoring, bus duty, paperwork, and extensive meetings that all add to the complexity of the work context as they increase the roles educators play (Wright, 2020).

Teachers serve as caregivers, creating additional stress through long days, insufficient breaks, and too many children (Berlin et al., 2020). Teachers must meet the students' socioemotional needs in the classroom, in addition to academic needs, increasing additional burdens and stress (Schleicher, 2018). Technological changes and initiatives require teachers to adapt their skills and competencies necessary for teaching (Schleicher, 2018). Teachers are in a client relationship with parents who adds challenge and stress when they do not feel appreciated and have to manage challenges with the parent (Berlin et al., 2020). Teachers must attend meetings outside the school day or during preparatory periods that increase stress (Fox et al., 2020; Rodriguez et al., 2020). Teachers unable to detach from work showed low levels of well-being (Kujanpää et al., 2021). The many demands and complex nature of the teaching profession impact teachers' well-being (Collie et al., 2018) and can lead to burnout (Miller, 2021).

Constant interactions and continual demands within the classroom reduce educator well-being (Black et al., 2014). Classroom discipline is a significant source of stress that negatively impacts educator well-being (Aldrup et al., 2017; Camacho et al., 2018; Jeon & Ardeleanu, 2020; Simões & Calheiros, 2019). Students with frequent behavior problems influence ill-being (Berlin et al., 2020). The strain of teaching while managing the classroom may create stress and deplete the joy of teaching (Bălănescu, 2019). Students' lack of motivation challenges teachers' well-being (Kaynak, 2020). Students' and their parents' concerns spilling over into educators' personal lives influence work-related stress (Aydin & Kaya, 2016; Berlin et al., 2020).

Education's combined academic and social goals can challenge individual well-being (Everitt & Tefft, 2019; Perry et al., 2015). Student disruptions and lack of opportunities for professional growth reduce educator well-being (Collie et al., 2018; Schaack et al., 2020). Teachers who believe their efforts are futile lack motivation and have lower well-being (Kaynak, 2020).

Evidence indicates that thwarting the basic psychological needs leads indirectly to ill-being through maladaptive rigid behaviors that individuals employ to protect themselves from need frustration (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Educators prioritize the needs of students over personal well-being (Montoya & Summers, 2021; Rodriguez et al., 2020). Teachers are sacrificing self-care to benefit the needs of their students (Cumming, 2017). Teachers recognize that they have a public self and face scrutiny for actions others may not (Rodriguez et al., 2020). Wright (2020) asserted that teachers prioritize the needs of students over pay increases. Teachers prioritize student needs, ignoring their physical and mental health (Rodriguez et al., 2020). Teachers recognize that accepting additional workloads and pressures from external sources adds a burden to their role but believe that it brings success to both the school and the teacher (Pacaol, 2021). Prioritizing others makes it difficult for teachers to adequately address their needs (Rodriguez et al., 2020).

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic provided additional contextual challenges to educators (Alea et al., 2020). Well-being suffered during the pandemic (Evanoff et al., 2020). During the pandemic, individuals reported high stress, anxiety, work exhaustion, burnout, and overall reduced well-being (Evanoff et al., 2020). Çiçek et al. (2020) found that educators reported mild depression, anxiety, and moderate psychological inflexibility. For professionals working from home, stresses included the inability to separate work and private life and increased parenting demands (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). Personal challenges to safety added to the staffing shortages and stress due to guidance to stay home (Bailey & Schurz, 2020). Over 18% of educators were classified as vulnerable because they were over age 55 (Bailey & Schurz, 2020). In private schools, over 25% of teachers were over age 55, and more than 47% of administrators (Bailey &

Schurz, 2020). Indicators of stress increased related to family home life and financial security as employees worked from home for multiple weeks (Evanoff et al., 2020). Educators felt a loss of relatedness while working remotely (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020). Educators reported challenges with communication, internet stability, technological devices, learning management systems, and social media (Alea et al., 2020). The transition to remote video conferencing created additional challenges (Henriksen et al., 2020). Educators felt unprepared while called to lead (Iivari et al., 2020). During COVID-19, educators felt sentiments of anger, sadness, and loneliness during remote instruction (Evanoff et al., 2020; Pant & Agarwal, 2020).

The additional roles placed on teachers were burdensome and challenged feelings of competence (Iivari et al., 2020). Many educators struggled to feel competent with switching to online classes during remote emergency instruction (Alea et al., 2020; Jena, 2020). Moving to new forms of learning, such as blended learning with online instruction, required increased flexibility for unanticipated challenges (Dziuban et al., 2018). COVID required educators to rethink practices and mediums for lesson delivery (Henriksen et al., 2020). Only 51% of educators felt well-equipped for distance learning (Alea et al., 2020). The educational system also added additional stress to teachers as only 37% reported being given additional resources for support during distance learning, and only 58% felt ready to use online materials they had access to (Alea et al., 2020). The remote emergency instruction delivery system also highlighted planning, communication, and management challenges, which added to the burden for educators (Bozkurt et al., 2020). Reports of increased stress in educators due to home quarantine and the need to deliver instruction online were reported (Alea et al., 2020).

Outcomes of Ill-being

Ill-being may impact job performance (Mankin et al., 2018; Nislin et al., 2016; Penttinen et al., 2020). Ill-being may result in decreased motivation, slower reaction times, impaired concentration, poor memory, poor judgment, and over \$100 billion in annual health-related costs to employers (Well-being Index, 2018). Teachers with ill-being may leave the teaching profession (Anderson et al., 2019; Fernet et al., 2017). Turnover in public schools costs more than \$7.3 billion annually nationwide (Barnes et al., 2007). Educator burnout and turnover negatively influence schools through the loss of resources associated with providing coverage during absences or replacement (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). The contagion of ill-being may impact the workplace negatively (Fernet et al., 2017; Ingersoll, 2001).

Educators' ill-being correlates with poor quality instruction (Kwon et al., 2020; Mankin et al., 2018; Penttinen et al., 2020). Educators may lose their passion, experience fatigue, lose enthusiasm, and demonstrate negative or passive attitudes toward their students (Yu et al., 2015). Being overwhelmed by job demands, educators are less effective in positively managing classrooms, creating relationships, or regulating responses (Braun et al., 2019). Educator ill-being links to poor student-teacher relationships (Sandilos et al., 2020; von der Embse & Mankin, 2020). Teacher burnout may jeopardize student motivation (Shen et al., 2015) and inhibit positive student-teacher relationships (Hwang et al., 2017; Lambersky, 2016). Work-related stress may manifest into negative emotional supportive classrooms and less organization of classroom practices (Penttinen et al., 2020). Teacher turnover has academic costs, resulting in reduced student learning outcomes in areas of high teacher turnover (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

Ill-being impacts educator quality and student outcomes (Berlanda et al., 2019; Cumming, 2017; Ross et al., 2012; Tsang & Liu, 2016). When teachers are emotionally

exhausted, they cannot prepare their classrooms, resulting in low levels of academic achievement, poorly prepared lessons, and reduced quality of feedback (Anderson et al., 2019). Students are able to identify teachers' stress through facial expressions and mannerisms toward the class (Glazzard & Rose, 2019). Students taught by a teacher who experiences burnout may perform worse on exams than students taught by teachers who are not experiencing burnout (Madigan & Kim, 2021). A loss of enthusiasm by educators accompanies a loss of motivation, resulting in lower motivation and outcomes for students (Arens & Morin, 2016; Shen et al., 2015; Yu et al., 2015). When students feel negative emotions from the educator, attitudes that promote learning are not evident (Deci & Ryan, 1981).

Ill-being may negatively impact teachers' physical or mental health (Hwang et al., 2017; Kidger et al., 2016; Kwon et al., 2020). Eudemonic ill-being, lack of purpose, and reduced happiness are also correlated to lower health outcomes through a lack of regulation of physiological systems such as inflammatory markers and cholesterol (Ryff & Singer, 2008). Needs frustration directly influences physical needs (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Ill-being in educators leads to higher reported anxiety levels, high blood pressure, and heart disease (Roeser et al., 2013). Stress may impact the brain's neuroplasticity, which is essential for learning; areas such as the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex link to emotions, including happiness. Stress may foster conditions in which newly formed cells have lower survival levels, decreasing an individual's learning ability (Currie, 2020). Needs frustration depletes individuals of energy (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020) and correlates to poor sleep patterns (Campbell et al., 2017). High blood pressure and heart disease correlate with ill-being (Kwon et al., 2020; Roeser et al., 2013). Needs frustration relates directly to reduced physical health (Gomez-Baya & Lucia-Casdemunt, 2017).

Independent Private Schools

Working in private schools may have unique factors that may reduce educator well-being (Avci et al., 2017; Aydin & Kaya, 2016; Ayub et al., 2018; Balossi & Hernandez, 2016; Ingersoll, 2001). Over 530,000 teachers work in private schools, with approximately 250,000 teachers working in independent schools supporting over 2.1 million enrolled students (National Association of Independent Schools, n.d.b.). Independent schools are not-for-profit private schools that are independent in philosophy and have a unique mission (National Association of Independent Schools, n.d.a). Independent private schools are unique in their mission and management (Balossi & Hernandez, 2016; National Association of Independent Schools, n.d.a). Each site has a board of trustees who manages strategic vision and oversees their one hire, the head of school or president. In the independent private school, the head of the school or president is then responsible for the school's operations. The Digest of Education Statistics (2019) reported that 5.7 million students were enrolled in private schools in recent years. In contrast, the Private School Universe Study (PSS) (National Association of Independent Schools, n.d.b.) indicated a number closer to 4.9 million as that survey does not include pre-kindergarten programs. Enrollment in private schools has grown in recent years for students of color but has narrowed in socioeconomic diversity (Murnane et al., 2018).

Private school culture has high expectations of teachers (Avci et al., 2017; Aydin & Kaya, 2016; Balossi & Hernandez, 2016). Teachers in private schools face different challenges than public school teachers (Wronowski, 2020). Stressors at private schools may increase educator stress levels and may differ from other school types (Aydin & Kaya, 2016). The social composition, responses to student discipline, academic climates, and curriculum of private schools may differ from public schools (Dronkers & Robert, 2003). Adhering to brand

expectations may challenge teacher well-being (Adams, 2018). Independent private school teachers are tasked with flexibility within the position due to the need to continually market the school (Ramberg et al., 2020). Private school places additional pressures on educators that make them incapable of performing well, leading to burnout (Al-Adwan & Al-Khayat, 2017). Private school educators' workloads are often expanded due to the continually expanding nature of education while combating limited resources (Aydin & Kaya, 2016). Demands expand to establishing strong relationships with students, in addition to the demands of pedagogical knowledge and content expertise (Balossi & Hernandez, 2016). School administration is a source of stress for independent private school educators (Ayub et al., 2018; Ingersoll, 2001).

Educator turnover is a problem for independent private schools (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll et al., 2018; Wronowski, 2020). Private schools have higher turnover rates than public schools (Ingersoll, 2001; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). The high need to perform at independent private schools impacts educator turnover (Al-Adwan & Al-Khayat, 2017). Salary differences, de-professionalization, negative perceptions of administrator support, and perception of demoralization are causes for private school teachers to leave the profession (Wronowski, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the financial security of private schools (Wodon, 2020). Private school teachers delivered more online lessons than their public-school counterparts, which may account for a distinct increase in anxiety in private school educators (Allen et al., 2020). Studies warned that private schools should expect up to a 50% drop in enrollment due to the pandemic for the fall of 2021 (Miradora et al., 2020). Due to increased unemployment during COVID-19, families may have reduced their ability to pay tuition (Wodon, 2020). During the pandemic, private school teachers exhibited higher anxiety levels due to expectations of more live online sessions for students (Allen et al., 2020).

Summary

In this transcendental phenomenological study of educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools, I used BPNT as the theoretical framework. BPNT is a sub-theory derived from the research on SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The satisfaction or frustration of the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness influence well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Well-being and ill-being are complex, multifaceted constructs (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020; Viac & Fraser, 2020). Researchers' understandings of needs satisfaction and needs frustration and the relationship of basic psychological needs with ill-being and well-being is continually expanding (Fava et al., 2004; Shirley et al., 2020). Potentially, BPNT could expand to include additional essential nutrients necessary for optimal well-being (Martela & Ryan, 2020).

I presented current literature related to the problem of educator ill-being and literature to support the purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study of educators' experiences of well-being. I included an examination of the multiple facets leading to the problem of ill-being and related outcomes. The complexities of work environments contribute to ill-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). High-stakes testing practices of testing and evaluation erode educators' sense of autonomy and lead to ill-being (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The complexity of the educator role places demands on teachers that are unique and variable and can lead to ill-being (Collie et al., 2018). During COVID-19, educators continue to face challenges to well-being due to contextual challenges faced during this time (Pellerone, 2021). I reviewed the effects of ill-being on performance (Fernet et al., 2017), instruction (Penttinen et al., 2020), student outcomes (Anderson et al., 2019), and personal health (Gomez-Baya & Lucia-Casdemunt, 2017). I provided a synthesis of the literature regarding the facets contributing to educator well-being and

the outcomes of positive well-being. The literature supports that the fostering of educators' basic psychology enhances educator well-being (Rouse et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2019, 2020), and research is continuing to expand understanding of educator and school experiences around need satisfaction and frustration (Ryan & Deci, 2020). I concluded the chapter by examining the literature on independent private schools as the specific contextual setting in which my study occurred. In the limited research on independent private schools that is available, private schools stand apart from public school culture (Avci et al., 2017), and there is some evidence that private school teachers may have different experiences of needs satisfaction and frustration than public school teachers (Al-Adwan & Al-Khayat, 2017; Dronkers & Robert, 2003).

This study used a transcendental phenomenological approach to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I sought to expand or clarify the theoretical framework by contributing to the literature by extending the contextual understanding of BPNT, situating the study within independent private schools, continuing to expand the understanding of educator needs satisfaction, and conducting the study in a pandemic era, or adding to the literature that could contribute to future candidate needs for consideration for BPNT. The qualitative focus of this study may add to the understanding of educators' experiences and the descriptive literature on the phenomenon. I looked for practical applications to support future decision-making and personal practices that support well-being by analyzing the participants' experiences of well-being that may enhance educator well-being.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I begin this chapter by describing the research design and its relevance to the current study. I present the research questions and sub questions. I describe the research setting and process for participant selection. I explain the researchers' role in this study and address bias. I include an explanation of data collection and analysis procedures. I explain how the procedures align with a transcendental phenomenological approach. I conclude the chapter by defining methods that support the study's trustworthiness and ethical foundations.

Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I chose a qualitative design for this study. The qualitative design provides a depth of information about a small group and increases understanding (Bhattacharya, 2017; Patton, 2002). The idea that meaning is constructed based on lived experiences and interactions is foundational to qualitative inquiry (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2015). The qualitative process of exploring personal experiences may also uncover new understandings or unanticipated themes through the open-ended process in which data are collected (Patton, 2015). A qualitative study takes place in the natural setting where the phenomenon occurs (Given, 2008). A quantitative design uses standardized measures to gather data from many people on a predetermined question set. Qualitative data are appropriate for comparison or broad, generalizable findings (Patton, 2015). In this study, I sought to understand the phenomenon of well-being within the natural setting,

which aligns with a qualitative design. I used open-ended interviews, mind maps, and focus groups to encourage participants to share their well-being experiences and understand the meaning they have constructed. I gathered in-depth information about independent private school educators' experiences concerning well-being to increase understanding, which aligns with a qualitative design. The focus I chose for this study aligned with a qualitative design.

A phenomenological approach focuses on the essence of the phenomenon; it seeks understanding derived from what individuals perceive, sense, and know in their experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological approaches help discover new, authentic, and complete understandings of human phenomena through intentional focus and reflection on participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2017). A narrative approach closely studies individuals or small groups and descriptively retells their story (Patton, 2015). Case studies are in-depth inquiries bound by the research design and often examine a program, event, or process (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Grounded theory design seeks to generate new theories based on participant views (Patton, 2015). Ethnography studies focus on the shared pattern of behaviors by a social or cultural group over time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I chose a phenomenological approach because the purpose of the study was to understand well-being as perceived and experienced by the participants. I used descriptive data gathered from participants to create a robust synthesis of the phenomenon. I sought to understand educators' lived experiences of well-being at independent private schools through reflection. I chose to use a phenomenological approach in this study to understand well-being from the participants' lived experiences.

Husserl pioneered transcendental science and emphasized a systematic method rooted in discovery to fill the void of knowledge only originated from human experience. In a

transcendental approach, one seeks to describe the experiences, not explain or analyze, gathered through first-person reports (Moustakas, 1994). I used scientific methods to understand participants' well-being experiences. I utilized a systematic method of inquiry to gather detailed descriptions of participants' lived experiences. I drew understanding from educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools, contributing to the knowledge gathered from human experience, thus aligning to the transcendental approach.

Research Questions

The following research questions built an understanding of educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools:

Central Research Question

How do independent private school educators describe their experiences concerning workplace well-being?

Sub Question One

How do independent private school educators describe their experiences of autonomy related to well-being in the workplace?

Sub Question Two

How do independent private school educators describe experiences of relatedness and belonging related to well-being in the workplace?

Sub Question Three

How do independent private school educators describe experiences of competence related to well-being in the workplace?

Setting and Participants

In this section, I explain my rationale for selecting the setting of the study and the

participants. The setting was independent private schools located in the United States.

Participants were educators selected through purposive sampling and using criteria aligned with this study's intent.

Setting

The setting for the study was independent private schools in the United States. Well-being and basic psychological needs are universal and cross-cultural (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Well-being is a construct of elements that transcend different life domains (Seligman, 2011).

Independent private school educators may have more pressures and experiences than public school educators (Allen et al., 2020; Wronowski, 2020). Independent private schools are a natural setting for the study where the phenomenon of well-being occurs. I set the study in the United States. Including educators from multiple school sites provided an ample sample size to fully understand the phenomenon. The theoretical framework and research questions supported examining the environmental context to understand well-being. Individuals needed to meet all the criteria to participate.

Participants

Phenomenology seeks to gain a deeper understanding of daily experiences (Van Manen, 2017) and examines the phenomenon from many sides (Moustakas, 1994). In this study, my target number of participants was 12-15, understanding attrition during the research process was probable. Each participant was given a pseudonym during the study. Research participants must have experienced the phenomenon and were willing to participate in lengthy interviews (Moustakas, 1994). I determined that for participants to be information-rich for this study, they must have experience within the independent private school that was the setting for this study, have experienced the phenomenon of well-being, and were willing to participate in interviews,

focus groups, and complete a mind map. All 12 participants were educators 18 years of age or older and worked at independent private schools. I did not use any other criteria to limit the study. I selected participants from various academic divisions and as many grade levels as possible to most fully represent the lived experiences of educators. Each participant was from a different independent private school. I gained multiple perspectives to understand educators' experiences of well-being fully at independent private schools with a sample size of 12-15 participants.

Researcher Positionality

As an educator at independent private schools for over two decades, I felt the stress and tensions of my professional life. Many factors have influenced my well-being, but it is generally positive. Significant moments stand out as highlights or low moments of professional well-being; they are difficult to detangle from personal, relational, and societal contexts. At the time of this study, I served as an administrator within an independent private school and was concerned with the educators' well-being within this setting. I watched the demanding standards that educators achieve while worrying about the various factors that influence their roles. I wanted to conduct this study to understand the phenomenon of well-being, individually and collectively, as related to educators' experiences at independent private schools. I believe that teachers are the heart of the school and need support.

Interpretive Framework

I ascribe to a social constructivist worldview. A social constructivist worldview draws from the work of Vygotsky and assumes that understanding and meaning develop jointly with other individuals based on collective experiences (Amineh & Asl, 2015). The meanings individuals form are not solely based on an individual's experiences but also through their

interactions with others in the environments in which they live and work (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The social constructivist researcher seeks to understand the meaning others make about their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study, I sought to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools.

Philosophical Assumptions

In this section, I articulated my philosophical assumptions that may influence the research study. I addressed my ontological, epistemological, and axiological beliefs. Understanding my beliefs and frameworks helped individuals understand my motivation for conducting this study and my choices in study design. My philosophical assumptions may also provide insight into any bias I had in my approach to the research design or analysis.

Ontological Assumption

Realists believe that the world exists independently of perception but can be studied and explained (Patton, 2015). Realists believe concepts, meanings, and intentions discovered through indirect evidence are real, despite observing them directly (Maxwell, 2012). Relativists hold that there is no simple reality but that individual constructions based on experience inform understandings of the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). I struggle between the realist and the relativist ontological perspectives. I believe some things in the world to be true, regardless of perception, experience, or understanding. I also believe that the individuals' experiences construct understandings that may vary based on experiences.

Epistemological Assumption

I believe that each individual makes meaning from their experiences, and those understandings help form meaning for future experiences. I believe each individual can interpret

a situation differently based on their positionality in relation to the event. I believe that through social interaction, people can come to understand and amend the meanings that they make more fully, changing their prior constructions. I believe individuals come to know the world by synthesizing experiences based on perspective, personal narratives, and attributes. I believe what we know is what we have experienced, been told, or come to understand by observing it within context. In this study, I sought to make meaning and enhance knowledge of educators' experiences of well-being through my understanding gained through data collection. As the researcher, I was interconnected with this study's participants and recognized the potential for bias. I utilized epoche and triangulation to reduce bias within my study.

Axiological Assumption

I believe individuals who teach do so because they have a calling. As members of the school community, it is each of our responsibility to be the caretaker for those around us. I believe in the worth of all people and protecting the dignity of individuals. My beliefs about teachers and school communities may have presented a bias toward understanding individual motivations. In contrast, my beliefs about teachers and school communities drove me to investigate educators' well-being experiences and inform future decisions and practices that support and care for educators. My belief in protecting and caring for individuals helped ensure the safety and confidentiality of participants within the study.

Researcher's Role

The researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative research (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2011). Patton (2015) described the role of the researcher as increasing the "opportunity to generate insight, which deepens social knowledge" (p. 59). In this study of educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools, I was the data collector. I generated

insights and increased understanding of educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I conducted all procedures within the study and analyzed the data.

Researchers must be neutral and maintain integrity (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2015). Merriam (1998) suggested communication, empathy to build rapport, and listening help more fully enhance data collection and avert bias. Patton (2015) promoted a systematic approach to data collection and strategies, such as external review and triangulation, to reduce bias and accurately represent the phenomenon. My lived experiences of well-being of over 20 years in education and my role as an administrator may have presented biases based on my own experiences of well-being. I used epoche to limit bias in the data collection and analysis procedures by limiting my prior conceptions and focusing on participant experiences and meanings. I designed this study with multiple data sources for triangulation, am recording and transcribing interviews and focus groups for accuracy, and utilizing systematic processes for data analysis. I gave critical attention to epoche and adherence to maintaining the research design.

Procedures

In this section, I explained the procedures I used in the study. I identified the permissions I needed to secure before beginning the study. Upon gaining institutional review board (IRB) approval and permission from social media sites, I posted recruitment information. I asked social media groups on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Clubhouse to allow me to post a participant recruitment letter and follow-up letter (see Appendices A, B, D). Within the initial recruitment letter, I asked participants if they met the criteria to participate in the study. I asked participants to respond to the recruitment letter to express their willingness to participate in the study. I provided informed consent documents for participants to review and sign prior to beginning data collection. I used three types of data collection and analyzed information to understand

educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I concluded this section by discussing how I used the three data sources to achieve triangulation.

Permissions

I sought approval from the Liberty University IRB (see Appendix A). Before final approval by the IRB, I contacted individuals who moderated groups on social media sites and sought approval to recruit participants (see Appendix B). I asked individuals to provide consent to post information within social media groups (Appendix C). After IRB and site approval, I began the recruitment of participants. I posted recruitment information on my social media sites (Appendix D). I used my contacts to send emails to recruit participants (Appendices E and F). Individuals responded to the recruitment information and were directed to a survey to confirm eligibility for the study (Appendix G). Individuals on social media were not approached unless they self-selected into the study. Permissions from social media sites and groups complied with local and group-specific requirements. I provided a model letter of approval of my study on this site for their convenience (see Appendix C).

Recruitment Plan

Purposive sampling allows researchers to understand the phenomenon from a sample with relevant experience (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2011). Purposive sampling is a means to provide information-rich analysis from participants and identified this method as most useful in gaining understanding (Patton, 2002, 2015). I used purposive sampling to identify 12-15 participants who have experience with the phenomenon, work within an independent private school in the United States, and were willing to participate in an interview, mind-mapping activity, and focus groups. Within the initial recruitment information posted on social media sites or in recruitment emails, I disclosed the intent of the study (see Appendices B, D, E, and F). In the recruitment

survey, I asked participants if they met the criteria to participate in the study. By responding to the email, participants verified that they met the criteria to participate in the study and were willing to participate. Individuals verified that they were 18 years or older, had been employed at an independent private school in the United States, and were willing to participate in interviews, mapping activities, and focus groups. I sought information-rich participants who had experiences with well-being at independent private schools to understand well-being fully. I used purposive sampling to see various perspectives and to create a synthesis of well-being experiences.

If I had not reached enough participants through purposive sampling, I would have used snowball sampling to identify additional participants. Snowball sampling increases the pool by identifying others who may experience the phenomenon (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2011). I planned to ask participants to identify possible participants who may be appropriate for the study. If I would have been unable to meet the threshold of 12-15 participants, I would have expanded my study to an additional independent private school in a larger geographical location. I did not have to use snowball sampling within the study.

I evaluated the participant sample using the selection criteria to verify that participants met the requirements for the study. Research participants must have experienced the phenomenon and were willing to participate in lengthy interviews (Moustakas, 1994). I determined that for participants to be information-rich for this study, they must meet the following criterion:

- Work within an independent private school in the United States
- Have experienced the phenomenon of well-being
- Willing to participate in interviews, focus groups, and complete a mind map

I notified participants of selection via email or social media messaging and immediately

began arranging data collection procedures. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym. Individual demographic characteristics such as gender, years of experience, and grade level may influence teacher perceptions of well-being (Fernet et al., 2016; Mulholland et al., 2017). Within my study, these characteristics were not criteria for participation but were relevant in analyzing the participant data. I selected participants based on the earliest responses to my request for research participants. I informed participants that I chose them for the study, answered any questions, and emailed them the informed consent documents (see Appendix H). I asked participants to sign and return individual informed consent documents. I offered to meet with participants to discuss the research study and participant expectations if they had any concerns or questions.

Data Collection Plan

The data collection process focuses on asking, observing, and reflecting in an iterative process (Merriam, 1998). Utilizing multiple sources of evidence strengthens the design's intent to provide a content-rich description of the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). In the current study, I used interviews, mind maps, and focus groups. Data source triangulation is a way to corroborate findings and increase construct validity (Patton, 2015). I used triangulation to verify and reinforce participants' understandings and protect against unintentional bias. The data collection methods that I used align with qualitative inquiry and the focus of this study.

Individual Interviews

The long interview is a method to collect data in a phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994). The strength of the interview lies in the researcher's ability to gain insights into participants' perspectives and experiences (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). Researchers use interviews to gain insight that cannot be observed, including feelings,

perceptions, and experiences, thus allowing the research to determine the experience from the participants' perspective (Patton, 2015). Merriam (1998) stressed that, at times, interviews are the only way to obtain data and can be used to probe for further understanding. Researchers must be skilled in asking open-ended questions, asking clear questions, artful in listening, probing appropriately, and recording observations while remaining neutral (Patton, 2015). Merriam (1998) stressed beginning interviews with questions in a neutral tone and seeking to gather general information. Rubin and Rubin (2011) emphasized the importance of follow-up questions for depth and detail. Interviews are a formal process, prompted by questions framed by the research design, but have a casual tone to create a relaxed environment (Moustakas, 1994).

I used interviews as a source of data to understand the educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. Each of the prompts addressed an element of the theoretical framework derived from the research questions and assisted in gathering data to address the research questions. I created open-ended questions to guide the interviews that aligned with the systematic approach of phenomenology and the theoretical framework of BPNT. I probed for further narrative descriptions of the educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I asked three experts with a doctorate in education to review the interview questions and provide feedback to enhance the quality of the interview questions. I planned to refine my questions, if necessary, after the first data collection interview.

Video recording, concurrent note-taking, and post-interview note-taking are strategies to enhance interview data (Merriam, 1998). I conducted interviews and focus groups in this study in person or on Zoom. I began each interview by asking participants for permission to record the interview using digital devices to be reviewed for themes and utilized for horizontalization. I used Zoom software on my iPad to record online or in-person interviews. I planned that if I

experienced technology challenges with my iPad, I would have used my computer to record the interview. I reconfirmed consent after the recording had begun. I reviewed the purpose of the study. I took notes during the interview on paper on any observations or follow-up questions regarding the participant and my perceptions, reflections, observations, and understandings. Although I used a protocol, I remained flexible within the dialog to allow for a conversational tone, follow-up questions, and probing for more detail as the participant shared their experiences. I transferred video recordings directly to my computer and removed copies from my iPad. I stored all recordings and data on a password-protected computer or locked filing system. I anticipated that individual interviews would take one to two hours.

I began the interviews with basic introductory prompts and moved into probing questions concerning this study's focus. My interview guide included the following prompts (see Appendix D):

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me as if we just met one another. CRQ
2. Please explain to me your current position and workplace. CRQ
3. How many years have you been an educator? CRQ
4. Describe the job tasks and roles associated with your position. CRQ
5. Describe what well-being means to you. CRQ
6. Tell me about experiences of well-being while working at independent private schools.
CRQ
7. Thinking of the setting and events that happen in a school, where do your experiences of well-being occur? CRQ

8. Describe experiences that enhanced or supported your well-being. Where, when, with whom, or how did that occur. CRQ
9. Describe your experiences of ill-being. Where, when, with whom, or how did that occur? CRQ
10. How do you describe experiences where you feel in control at work? SQ1
11. Tell me about times when you had independence at work. SQ1
12. How do you think those experiences may have influenced your well-being? SQ1
13. Please describe your experiences of feeling competent within the workplace. SQ2
14. Describe how feelings of mastery or accomplishment may influence your workplace well-being. SQ2
15. Please explain to me your experiences of belonging or connection at your independent private school. SQ3
16. Tell me about how experiences of belonging at your school influence your well-being. SQ3
17. What other information about your experiences of workplace well-being can you share? CRQ

The initial questions established the individual's identity, role as an educator in an independent private school, workplace context, and understanding of well-being. Across cultures, individual and collective aspects of well-being are critical for teachers (Liu et al., 2018). Well-being is a construct of different elements that are unique to individuals, contribute to positive emotion to well-being, are pursued for their own sake, and can be analyzed independently from each other (Seligman, 2011). The nature of the questions supports establishing a non-threatening environment and building rapport with the participants. The

individual's experience and role at independent private schools may impact the participant's understanding of school culture, expectations, and experiences of well-being.

The subsequent interview questions were derived from the theoretical framework of BPNT and research questions to seek an understanding of participants' experiences of autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Satisfaction of the basic psychological needs is essential for optimal well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Each setting is unique and influences well-being (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Herman et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2019), and basic psychological needs are context-responsive (Prentice et al., 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Independent private school culture has high expectations of teachers (Aydin & Kaya, 2016; Balossi & Hernandez, 2016), and culture influences well-being (Anderson et al., 2019). These questions allowed me to understand the experiences of the participants' basic psychological need satisfaction and well-being. The interview questions allowed me to gather participants' experiences of contextual elements that influence well-being. I asked follow-up questions to encourage reflection and probe into their experiences.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

I began examining the educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools through participants' lived experiences by bracketing the phenomenon. I used the transcriptions of the interviews to create statements about participants' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I recorded each experience individually within an Excel spreadsheet to see them all uniquely. I removed any experiences that were not focused on educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I removed any redundant or overlapping statements. I used NVivo, a qualitative data software tool, to help organize information by theme and identify codes. I used both in vivo coding and researcher-generated

codes. I used researcher-generated, descriptive coding to create a robust and comprehensive list of themes that aided in developing the textural description. I drew initial codes from the key terms within the research literature and questions. I developed additional codes as themes emerged. I created a coding sourcebook and updated it throughout the research process. I analyzed data using NVivo for possible further codes, code patterns aligning with chronological sequences, divergent perspectives, or the benefit of mapping codes.

Concept Map

A concept map is a visual representation of the main concept of the study (Tanhan et al., 2020). Concept maps support research designs to help individuals identify concepts related to the experience, reflect on their experience, and for concepts to be revisited in a less traditional format within a study (Wheeldon, 2011). Individuals who reflect on their experiences can clarify information, add details, and extend perceptions (Moustakas, 1994). The use of mapping structures may help participants capture their experiences (Striepe, 2020; Wheeldon & Ahlberg, 2019; Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009). Concept maps visually represent knowledge used by researchers and may help identify misconceptions (de Ries et al., 2021). I asked participants to use the map to identify elements of workplace well-being and the contextual elements that enhance or thwart well-being. I provided a copy of the blank map and prompts to participants to guide the activity (see Appendix J) at the end of their interview. I asked participants to use the map to identify, describe, and link their experiences of autonomy, competence, and belonging at independent private schools. I asked participants to complete the concept map considering descriptions of who, what, when, and where their experiences of well-being occurred. The concept map helped participants represent the experiences of workplace well-being and bring to consciousness additional understandings. The concept map allowed for deeper layers of

understanding to emerge. I asked participants to email their maps within one week of the interview. I downloaded all submissions to a password-protected device and deleted emails from my account. I anticipated that concept maps would take one hour to complete. In conjunction with initial interviews, I used emergent themes from maps in focus group discussions.

Concept Map Data Analysis Plan

Qualitative researchers analyze maps for codes and concepts within the participants' experiences (Daley, 2004; Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009). I used the maps provided by the participants to create statements that capture their experiences of workplace well-being. I analyzed concept maps for concepts and connections using codes established during the interview phase and for emerging codes that provide insight into participants' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. The experiences and connections were placed into the Excel spreadsheet and analyzed to establish horizons. I did not analyze the placement of elements or ideas within the concept on the map. I noted any connections between themes in the spreadsheet. After I put individual statements into a chart, I removed any redundancies from the spreadsheet. I used NVivo to analyze the additional data for emerging codes and add them to the sourcebook. I used the maps to look for conflicting data for clarification during focus groups. I also used the maps to enhance understanding drawn from in-depth interviews and to prepare for focus groups.

Focus Groups

I conducted the final stage of data collection through focus groups. In multi-subject experiences, individuals interact socially to challenge and uncover additional understandings of the phenomenon and interpersonal knowledge of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Patton (2015) identified that meaningful conversations might help verify the data. I used focus groups to

verify data and develop a greater understanding of the participants' experiences of well-being by allowing participants to engage in dialog about the phenomenon. I used the participant interviews and concept maps to identify themes or emerging understandings that may be included or revisited in the focus group discussions. I used the focus groups for diving more deeply into participants' experiences of well-being.

A group is formed by gathering individuals who have shared the phenomenon to create the group's focus and is its own data collection unit (Yin, 2011). I planned to have four to five focus groups ranging in size from three to four people. I invited all 12 participants in the study to participate in one of the one-hour focus groups. Participants selected the focus group that best fit their schedule. Focus groups were online over Zoom. I asked permission to record the focus group from each participant and confirmed consent to the recording once I began recording. I used Zoom software on my iPad to record online or in-person focus groups. If I had technological challenges with my iPad, I had planned to use my computer to record the focus groups. I transcribed focus groups using Zoom software and checked for errors. I transferred video recordings directly to my computer and removed copies from my iPad. I stored data and notes in a locked device or file. I moderated the focus groups to balance and welcome all experiences as equal.

Focus group questions (Appendix K) derived from the theoretical framework and research design and were intended to clarify themes or understandings from the initial interviews and concept maps. I used questions to revisit the experiences of workplace well-being within the focus group. Focus group questions aligned with the theoretical framework and the research questions. I provided an open opportunity for participants to discuss experiences and reflect on their well-being. After the individual interviews and concept maps, I might have needed to

amend focus group questions. The focus groups aided in validating understanding of the educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools.

Focus Group Questions

Initial semi-standardized focus group prompts:

1. Describe how you define well-being. CRQ
2. Describe a workplace experience that supports your perception of well-being. CRQ
3. Describe when your school has influenced your well-being. CRQ
4. Where, when, with whom, or how has well-being been enhanced? CRQ
5. How do you describe situations where well-being is frustrated? CRQ
6. Describe a workplace experience that supports your perception of ill-being. CRQ
7. How would you describe experiences of well-being stemmed from autonomy within your school? SQ1
8. Describe your workplace experiences of competence related to well-being. SQ2
9. How would you describe your experiences of well-being regarding relatedness or belonging at your school? SQ3
10. Is there anything else you would like to share about well-being? CRQ

Initial focus group questions derived from the study's purpose and central research question. These questions allowed participants to revisit the intent of the study and collectively address the experiences of well-being. I used BPNT and the basic psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence to frame the focus group questions. I used the questions to clarify and seek further understanding of the participants' experiences. Additional questions naturally developed from the dialog and prior interactions with the participants.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

I used the transcriptions of the focus groups to create statements about participants' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I wrote each experience individually within an Excel spreadsheet. I removed any redundant or overlapping statements. I analyzed for additional codes, patterns, connections, divergent perspectives, or emerging themes. I used the codes established during the individual interviews and added emerging codes if necessary. I used NVivo to analyze the data for additional codes. I used the focus groups to triangulate the data and look for divergent or conflicting elements.

Data Synthesis

Phenomenological reduction includes the bracketing of the phenomenon, horizontalizing, clustering themes, and creating a textural description (Moustakas, 1994). In transcendental phenomenological research, textural descriptions are only complete after describing the phenomenon from all angles of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas encouraged looking and describing repetitively, seeking textural qualities such as:

rough and smooth; small and large; quiet and noisy; colorful and bland; hot and cold; stationary and moving; high and low; squeezed in and expansive; fearful and courageous; angry and calm—descriptions that present varying intensities; ranges of shapes, sizes, and spatial qualities; time references; and colors all within an experiential context (Moustakas, 1994, p. 90).

I reexamined the interview, focus group, and map data repetitively and through various lenses, including sensory, emotional, psychological, experiential, and other emergent themes, to fully extract understanding and identify each horizon.

Researchers cluster horizontalized statements into related themes and verify them against

the participants' data to accurately represent the phenomenon's composite textural description. Composite textural descriptions integrate each of the individual textural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). I identified themes from the data using the individual participant statements and the codes. I sorted the statements drawn from participants' experiences into clusters of themes on different pages within my spreadsheet. I removed any redundancies or statements that did not align with the intent of the study. I utilized the clusters identified and outlined after reduction and elimination to create a composite textural description of the phenomenon.

In the process of imaginative variation, researchers identify the essence of the phenomenon, building on the structures and conditions that influence the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher's process of imaginative variation develops a structural understanding of the experience of the phenomenon and how it came to be (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) identified that time, space, bodily concerns, materiality, causality, relation to self, or relation to others are all structures that predicate feelings and thoughts. Structural descriptions require researchers to make thoughtful, imaginative interpretations of the participant data (Moustakas, 1994). I engaged in the process of imaginative variation by examining the textural descriptions through varying lenses. I sought underlying themes and considered the universal structures that predicate feelings. As the essence of the experience became apparent, I created a chart in Excel that helped develop a composite structural description of the phenomenon.

From the processes of phenomenological reduction and imaginative variation, a synthesis of the experiences is created, building an understanding of the knowledge gained in the study (Moustakas, 1994). Van Manen (2017) stated, "good phenomenological description is collected by lived experiences and recollects lived experiences" (p. 27). I wrote a synthesis after I

completed the process of imaginative variation. Within the study, my goal was to lift out the educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I used the charts created in the textual and structural descriptions to synthesize the knowledge of the understandings drawn from the participants' experiences of well-being at independent private schools.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is built through time, relationships, and attention to data process and analysis throughout the research study (Patton, 2015). The researcher's attention to bias within the study can produce more trustworthy reflections and data analysis (Patton, 2015). The failure to maintain deadlines and fabricate or misrepresent facts destroy trustworthiness in a study (Check & Schutt, 2012). I planned to build trust through the research design, implementation, analysis, and reporting phases. I safeguarded the research, participants, and study by adhering to the research process and methods. I used reflective mediation to examine my bias and triangulate the data for verification or unintentional bias. I built trust through timeliness regarding communications, interviews, focus groups, or follow-up questions. I proactively communicated with participants by sending reminders about meetings and tasks. I responded to emails or inquiries within 24 hours. I shared the processes for data collection, storage, and confidentiality with participants and answered any questions to provide a safe climate. I shared the research process and how the data would be used and reviewed. I used focus groups as the final data collection tool to verify and confirm understandings of the phenomenon.

Credibility

Credibility is parallel to internal validity (Patton, 2015). Thick, rich descriptions of the phenomenon shared between researcher and subjects increase credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The triangulation of the data and the multiple data sources support the research's accuracy

(Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2015). Credibility increases when researchers systematically analyze data for divergent themes, conflicting patterns, and rival explanations (Patton, 2015). I used multiple methods to increase the credibility of the study. I used participants' experiences gathered in the interviews, maps, and focus groups to create rich, thick descriptions. I triangulated the data to enhance the credibility of my findings. I analyzed all three data sets for individual, reoccurring, and divergent themes within and across data sets and participants. Credibility came from my systematic approach to research design and implementation. I systematically analyzed data using charts, coding, and sorting processes to identify educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I adhered to the methodology of a transcendental phenomenological approach. I shared this process with participants and within the study.

Transferability

Transferability is associated with external validity (Patton, 2015). Researchers may address external validity by designing research questions aligned to the theoretical framework and research questions (Yin, 2018). Foundationally, transferability increases through rich, full descriptions, broader participant sampling, consistency within findings, congruency to readers' experience or prior research, and applicable conclusions to various settings (Miles et al., 2014). The write-up itself, the presentation of the information is the underlying determinant of transferability (Miles et al., 2014). I designed the study and research questions in alignment with the theoretical framework of BPNT. I used participant interviews, concept maps, and focus groups to develop thick descriptions of experiences of the essence of the phenomenon. The collection of multiple data sources supports transferability. The size of the participant pool in my study may increase transferability. I compared the educators' experiences of well-being at

independent private schools with existing research on BPNT. I wrote a presentation, a synthesis of the experiences of the phenomenon, that may increase understanding of educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools.

Dependability

Dependability examines the consistency within the process (Miles et al., 2014). There is a need for clear questions, clear researcher roles, identification of meaningful parallels, connectedness to theory, comprehensive data, systematic protocols, quality checks, and colleague review to enhance dependability (Miles et al., 2014). I adhered to the research design to support dependability and a consistent approach situated within the theoretical framework of BPNT. Through the committee and director review process at Liberty University, I was supported in articulating transparently the measures necessary to replicate this research study. The data triangulation supported both dependability and confirmability within the study.

Confirmability

Confirmability or objectivity is "one's relative neutrality and reasonable freedom unacknowledged researcher biases" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 311). Explicit methods, data collection and tracing protocols, explicitly linked conclusions, researcher self-awareness and disclosure of bias, competing hypotheses considered, and data available for reanalysis are all elements that may increase objectivity and confirmability (Miles et al., 2014). The triangulation of the data supports dependability and confirmability within the study. I tracked and reviewed all data as necessary through the research process. In support of understanding independent private school educators' experiences of workplace well-being, I used multiple strategies to confirm the information and maintain objectivity. By utilizing epoche throughout the study, I held the phenomenon at the center of the study. I used transcriptions of interviews to ensure the accuracy

of the interviews and focus groups. I used direct quotations and participant experiences throughout the study to provide insight and support for dependability. I safeguarded documents through systematic coding utilizing the codebook.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics is not only a framework for decision-making but a reflection of the values of human behavior (Rebore, 2014). Moustakas (1994) recognized the need for informed consent and ethical behavior in the studies shared within his work. In this study, I mirrored Moustakas' practices. I believe in the inherent value of all people and worked to promote and protect dignity in this research study. Allowing researchers to interview, analyze, and share in the discussions about their lived experiences provides participants with a level of minimal risk of exposure (Merriam, 1998). I utilized informed consent within the study and adhered to the IRB process at Liberty University. Yin (2018) identified professionalism through staying current on research, striving for credibility and understanding, and being transparent as foundational to the broader set of ethical expectations of researchers. I acted ethically and professionally throughout this study. I kept data in a secure password-protected computer and locked files in my home. I met where others would not hear the conversations. The data collection methods I identified presented minimal risk to participants. I informed study participants that only information about their experiences concerning well-being at independent private schools would be collected and stored. I will destroy the data after three years. I informed participants that I was a mandatory reporter, that they may safely withdraw from the study at any point, and their answers would remain in confidence with me.

Summary

In this chapter, I identified the methods aligned to my study of independent private school educators' experiences of well-being. A qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach is a method to capture how the participants experience the phenomenon of well-being and to provide a thick description of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). I used the qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach in the design of this study. I derived research questions from the purpose of the study, theoretical framework, and literature to help capture participants' experiences of well-being at independent private schools from multiple perspectives. I identified participants who had experienced well-being using purposive sampling and perhaps snowball sampling from educators at independent private schools. I identified independent private schools as a natural setting where the phenomenon occurs and the setting for this study. I also discussed my role as the researcher and as an educator within independent private schools.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

In this chapter, I present the data and analysis of my qualitative transcendental phenomenological study of educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I describe the study participants in both tabular and narrative forms. I explain how I analyzed the data gathered through interviews, cognitive maps, and focus groups. I use participant data to identify and describe themes that emerged during the study. I provide concise and direct responses to the research questions, as evidenced by participants' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the results and significant themes.

Participants

I had 12 participants in my study. I was successful in soliciting participants through social media posts and emails. All 12 participants were current or former educators at independent private schools, 18 years of age or older, and experienced the phenomenon of well-being. The average number of years teaching at independent private schools was 19, and half the participants held an advanced degree. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym.

Amelia

Amelia was an independent private school teacher for 16 years. She also taught for one year within the public school system. She was primarily an English teacher, taught religious studies and social studies, and worked as a coach. Amelia was at three independent schools in two states during her career. During the interview, Amelia identified herself as a wife and mother of three children, one of whom she identified as having special needs. Amelia held a master's degree in English and was applying to graduate programs to pursue a doctorate in education

leadership. During the focus group, Amelia shared she recently prioritized mindful eating, taking breaks, providing time for recovery, exercise, and nutrition to enhance her physical and mental well-being.

Caitlin

Caitlin was teaching at independent private schools for 25 years. Caitlin was at multiple independent private schools during her career. She taught for one year at a public school before teaching in private schools. Caitlin was teaching mathematics and English at a Montessori school. Caitlin taught at boarding schools for seven years and served as a dorm parent as part of her job responsibilities. Caitlin was not married and had one grown adopted daughter who lived in a different state. During the interview and the mind map, Caitlin shared that she suffered from ill-being, specifically depression.

Gabriella

Gabriella worked at one independent private school with religious affiliations for 13 years before moving into a position in higher education. Gabriella was primarily a religious studies teacher but took on additional to complete the equivalency of a full-time position. She later served as the Director of Admissions. Gabriella held two master's degrees, one in education and one in business administration. Gabriella's school had about 250 students. During her initial introduction during the interview, Gabriella described herself as a wife and mother of two teenage children.

Jackie

Jackie worked at independent private schools for over 20 years. Jackie has only taught at schools with religious affiliations. Jackie was primarily a social studies teacher but was also an

English teacher and a teacher leader. During the interview, Jackie described that in addition to her role in the classroom, her other roles in the school were:

barista, caterer, party planner, scheduling and logistic guru, parent complaint center, celebrations, student concerns, challenges, counselor, nurse, teacher assistant, duty person, playground monitor, learning center support, security guard, window monitor, curriculum development, professional development, parent. There are a lot, a lot of things outside of the classroom.

During the focus group, Jackie described herself as a wife and mother of two elementary-age children. Jackie was recently recovering from COVID-19 and was taking care of her family, who were ill.

Julia

Julia was a non-native-speaking French teacher at an independent private school. Before her current school, Julia taught French at a boarding school. Julia has been teaching for three years and during the focus group shared that she saw herself as a “young teacher.” In her role at the time of the study, Julia taught six different courses daily, requiring six different lesson plans. During the interview, Julia shared that she came from a family of educators who taught at independent private schools. She always knew she would be a teacher but was surprised to find a passion for the French language. Julia was in her candidacy for a master’s program in French and expected to finish in about two years. During the interview, Julia shared that she was an exercise enthusiast and engaged in yoga and mindful practices.

Kinsley

Kinsley was an educator at an independent private school but left independent private schools and took on a counseling role in a public school system. Kinsley worked primarily in

middle and upper school for over 35 years as an English teacher. She went on to achieve certification in school counseling. During the interview and focus group, Kinsley reported that a tragic accident resulting in the death of multiple students occurred while she was at an independent private school and significantly impacted her. In addition to teaching roles, Kinsley shared during the interview that she believed it was her job “to do anything that principal asked, including driving a bus,” but was grateful that she was never asked to do lunch duty. Kinsley introduced herself during the interview as a wife and mother of two grown children; one of her children pursued a career in education.

Leora

During the interview and focus group, Leora described herself as a 51-year-old independent private school educator. In addition to teaching in the United States, she taught in Canada and China. Leora was in independent private school education for over 25 years. Leora shared during the interview that she has both a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in education. She taught all age groups, various core academic subjects, and supplementary curriculum areas. Primarily, Leora was a mathematics, Chinese, and English teacher. During the focus group, Leora shared that she was an educator through many phases of her life: “single, married, married with small children, and married with larger children and larger problems.” Leora shared during her interview that she has three children.

Lucy

During the interview, Lucy stated that she taught the last “20-something” years of her career at independent private schools but also taught in public schools. She was primarily a sixth-grade English teacher but retired in 2020. Lucy described herself during the interview as the mother of two boys and grandmother of two boys, who all attended the independent private

school where Lucy taught. During the focus group discussion, Lucy credited her large family, where she was the only female, for her sense of humor and ability to navigate interpersonal relationships.

Maddie

Maddie was an educator at three independent private schools for 11 years. She worked at three different boarding schools. She was teaching economics and working in the admissions office but has also taught mathematics and coached lacrosse, ice hockey, and field hockey. Maddie shared during the interview that she did not have a degree in education and did not hold a certification. Maddie worked at the same school as her wife, a second career teacher, after leaving a position as an actuary to join Maddie in education. In addition to her roles as an educator, Maddie served as a dorm parent, academic advisor to a small group, coordinator of weekend activities, and coach. During the interview, Maddie shared that she graduated from an independent private school and was an alum of the school where she currently taught. Maddie shared during the interview that she had two black Labrador retrievers who helped her exercise and connected her to other dog owners in her communities.

Michelle

Michelle was a second-career educator, leaving a career in banking. She worked at two independent private schools and was at a large independent private school with a religious affiliation at the time of the study. Michelle was actively involved in the religious community. During the interview, Michelle shared that she only taught mathematics and referred to herself as “the math mommy.” Michelle took on additional roles as a trip chaperone and advisor. During the interview, Michelle emphasized that the expectation to participate in school-wide events was unspoken and overwhelming, as they could be back-to-back and exhausting. During the

interview and focus group, Michelle described herself as a wife and mother of two teenage sons; neither attended independent private school.

Summer

Summer was an educator at independent private schools for 20 years before the school eliminated her position due to reorganizing and outsourcing different roles. During the interview, she shared that she has two children currently attending the independent private school where she worked. Summer worked as a yoga and dance instructor outside of the school. Summer taught religious studies and worked as a substitute teacher and a physical education instructor. During the focus group, Summer shared that while employed by an independent private school, she was affected by a tragic school shooting within her geographical area.

Thurston

Thurston was a seventh and eighth-grade biology and chemistry teacher at a religiously affiliated independent private school. Thurston did not profess the same religious beliefs as the school where he worked. He taught at the school for seven years. In prior assignments, Thurston taught courses in the upper school. During the interview, Thurston shared that in addition to his teaching roles, the school required him to provide supervision for lunch duty, engage in parent-teacher conference nights, parent coffee events, attend school plays, and other events that the school expected faculty to attend. Thurston came from a family of educators, with both of his parents having been teachers before moving into administration. During all phases of the data collection process, Thurston repeatedly shared that, identifying as a person of color, he was passionate about finding connections within independent private schools so that all individuals felt a sense of belonging and could engage in courageous conversations.

Table 1*Teacher Participants*

Participant	Years Taught at Ind. Private School	Content Areas Taught	Additional Paid Roles	Grade Levels Taught	Adv. Degree
Amelia	16	English, social studies, religious studies	Coach	6th-8th	X
Caitlin	25	Math, English		K-12th	
Gabriella	15	Religious studies	Admissions	K-8th	XX
Jackie	25	Social studies, English		6th-8th	X
Julia	3	French		6th-12th	
Kinsley	35	English	Coach, counselor	6th-12th	X
Leora	25	Math, Chinese, art, English		K-12th	X
Lucy	35	English		6th	
Maddie	11	Economics, math	Coach, admissions	9th-12th	
Michelle	11	Math		1st, 6th, 7th, 8th	X
Summer	20	Physical education		Pre-K-12th	
Thurston	7	Science		6th-12th	

Results

After completing the data collection and transcription, I analyzed participant statements within the data and generated or identified codes. I used an in vivo coding approach and drew codes directly from participants' descriptions of their experiences of well-being. I revisited the data multiple times, analyzing each statement or expression individually to apply codes. I

removed redundancies in the process of horizontalization. I used NVivo to identify frequently used words and phrases, cross-analyze different codes, and identify additional themes to support my analysis. I analyzed the codes using NVivo color striping and through visible connections within the data of commonalities that I saw to identify related codes, then built the codes into themes (see Appendix L). Seven significant themes emerged from the data to describe the participants' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. Themes varied in prevalence; some themes had subthemes emerged that contributed to the major theme. The themes were then used to answer the central and sub questions that guided this research study.

Participants described well-being as an interwoven experience of many elements within the school. Each participant shared experiences of a different combination of the many facets of well-being. In addition to the major themes that emerged, participants included personalized, experience-based, or nuanced data unique to their experiences of well-being. My analysis of the data also showed a few notable outliers. The themes and subthemes were utilized to respond to the central question and sub questions.

Varying Definitions of Well-being

One of the themes that developed from the data was that each educator's definition of well-being varied from the others. Participants perceived well-being as a complex structure unique to each individual. I identified the theme and two subthemes from the codes within the data, as shown in Table 2. The definition of well-being was unique to each participant and difficult for participants to capture. Julia captured that in her interview when she stated, "Well-being is paying attention, rather than prescribing what someone else needs for well-being. Everyone is unique." Throughout the interviews, cognitive mapping, and focus groups, participants defined, then circled back to enhance, amend, or expand the definition of well-being.

Amelia, Leora, and Lucy identified that the definition of well-being shifts, evolves, or is something people constantly strive to attain. Each participant identified multiple facets within their definition of well-being. Summer described well-being best as “an umbrella and underneath it, it has many different things.” The varying definitions of well-being emerged through participants’ descriptions during data collection.

Balanced Work and Personal Needs

Participants identified that the concept of balance between demands was central to all 12 participants’ definitions of well-being. All 12 participants indicated that the state of well-being involved a balance of work-life and personal needs. In contrast, during their interview, only one-third of the participants expressed that they believed well-being was a balance of mental, physical, and spiritual health. Well-being as a balanced construct of multiple elements was echoed by Summer during the focus group when she described the balance of elements contributing to well-being as “interwoven together to create well-being.” During the interview, Jackie described well-being as a state of being a:

fully functioning human and can still do my job, be a wife, a mother, a teacher, and all the other things I am to all people, but still feel good about myself and to take care of myself, so I can give to others. Feeling whole and complete.

Nearly half of the participants described balance as a fluctuating state depending on family or non-work-related demands. During the interview and focus group, Leora gave a salient example of how needs changed as her children’s lives changed. Summer captured the changing needs as a “process that is something we are constantly working on to find that right balance where we have experiences of well-being.” Jackie summarized the essence of the themes of balance in the focus group, “I think there’s so much that is demanded of us, we balance so many

facets of what we are expect to be, so many things to so many people, that reaching that balance is good and productive and important.”

Nearly half of the participants emphasized that the ability to meet personal and changing needs was central to the definition of well-being in either the focus group or the interview. Amelia defined well-being during the interview as “being able to take a step back from work and figure out what I need in order to be successful, personally and professionally.” Amelia’s definition is similar to Thurston’s definition during the interview, which he expanded to include individualized support for diverse needs, financial stability, and being seen as an individual. During the interview and focus group, Leora described the changing needs and conflicting work-life demands at various stages of parenting.

Feeling in Good Health

Feeling in good health, both physically and mentally, was included as a component of the definition of well-being by all participants during data collection. One-third identified feeling in good health as central to the definition during their interview. Nearly half of the participants identified that exercise throughout life is central to the definition of well-being, including sports participation, yoga courses, and listening to the body’s needs either in their interview or on the cognitive map. Julia defined well-being as “achieving happiness through eating well, exercising, and doing what is right for individual minds and bodies.”

Five of the 12 participants identified positive emotions in their definition of well-being during the interviews, and participants discussed positive emotions in two focus groups. Lucy stated in the focus group, “When you feel well-being, you just feel like you can fly to the moon.” Happiness and joy were the most mentioned emotions related to well-being. Michelle stated, “Well-being means that I am happy. I am satisfied. I am doing something I like or enjoy.”

Almost all of the participants emphasized feelings of support from families, parents, colleagues, and administration as part of the definition of well-being during the interview, and participants discussed it as central to feelings of well-being during each focus group. Participants identified that feeling valued and trusted was important. Leora stated, “Well-being comes from being given the space to do my job properly and a boss who is flexible and gives me the freedom to teach in my own way.” During the interview, five of the 12 participants included a feeling of a job well done and success in the definition of well-being.

Table 2

Varying Definitions of Well-being

Theme	Subthemes	Contributing Codes
Varying definition definitions (informs CRQ)		definition, family life, balance, needs, balance for health, family life, balance of demands, facets, health, exercise, positive emotions, supported, valued improves mental health, trusted improves mental health, flexibility improves mental health, feeling successful
	Balanced work and personal needs	balance, needs, balance for health, family life, balance of demands, change, facets
	Feeling in good health	health, exercise, positive emotions, supported, valued improves mental health, trusted improves mental health, flexibility improves mental health, feeling successful

Belonging

From participants’ experiences, I identified belonging as a prevailing theme in my research and a critical experience related to well-being. I drew from participants’ statements and identified a considerable number of codes in the data related to the theme of belonging, as shown in Table 3. Participants in the study strongly perceived that experiences of belonging within their independent private school were essential to well-being. Amelia summarized this in her interview; “I think everybody needs to feel a sense of belonging and a part of the community.

Valued and respected in order to feel well.” Jackie best stated the sentiment of multiple participants that independent private schools “sell a sense of community.” Participants often identified a sense of belonging as having a counter effect to experiences of ill-being.

Feeling valued by others and the organization positively supported the well-being of all the participants. Being genuinely heard, listened to, and having issues addressed was consistently evident in the data from one-third of the participants. Participants highlighted moments of well-being when their ideas were heard, they were seen as individuals, or they were given opportunities to grow or lead. Caitlin identified that “being given a voice” in areas where she felt confident supported experiences of well-being. Lucy identified that being connected to others and having a sense of belonging “amplified voices within the community, uniting them in the mission.” More than half of the participants also identified well-being as connected to feeling valued when they believed they were making a difference in the lives of their students or the school. Lucy articulated the importance of feeling valued, “Not as empty word, but my administrator saying you’re amazing, the best there is. And then she put power into them by supporting us.”

Participants expressed great value in formal and informal connections with other community members. Jackie and Michelle shared experiences of gathering together to celebrate, commiserate, or engage in outside activities connected to feelings of well-being at work. Maddie explained, “Having a good connection with other adults, that’s important. Schools are pretty isolating.” Lucy shared that being part of the grade-level team was critical to well-being because we “strengthened each other and became greater than just individuals. It was us, together.” Julia, Summer, and Kinsley shared feelings of belonging in positive relationships and connections with

students. One-third of the participants identified COVID-19 as making connections more challenging.

Mission-Aligned

Being aligned with the organization's mission and working with others who are also mission-driven was perceived by seven of the 12 participants as contributing to well-being. Lucy shared during the interview that, "being part of something, being part of a community and knowing we are expected to go out and spread goodness—that's pretty energizing." During the interview, Gabriella highlighted the importance of all school members "from the front office to the back of the school—everyone needs to come together with a common goal of servicing the school's mission." The same seven participants shared that they worked at schools where they genuinely believed in the mission, worked hard to do the right things, and took it personally when others did not.

Acts of Care

Nearly all participants identified that acts of caring within the community created experiences of well-being connected to belonging. Amelia identified that because you are part of the community, educators at independent private schools will sacrifice self-care to care for others. Lucy expressed that it helps to know "We are here, together," especially during demanding times. Gabriella talked about human connection, caring for others as essential to independent private school missions, and that "we're not producing widgets right here" but building community. Other participants described care for others as knowing what colleagues need different types of support and nurturing and supporting them.

Nearly all of the participants identified that there was a sense of security when they felt belonging in the community. When members of the community or colleagues supported them, they felt a sense of well-being and belonging. Julia captured this in her interview:

I felt like we had a connection. [My administrator] was the one I would turn to. I returned to her for my well-being. That's what I do. Hopefully, that person is going to be there when I need them—I don't always want them, but when I do want them, they just show up for me.

Five of the 12 participants connected acts of mentorship to feelings of well-being related to belonging. Having members of the faculty support and guide each other created experiences of well-being for participants. Thurston valued the mentorship within the community as it supported “ways we can reach more students—it is super useful.” Three participants talked about the value of peer observations and supporting each other through feedback about classroom management.

Trust

Trust was described by all participants during the interview and focus group process as influencing well-being. Participants expressed feeling valued and feelings of well-being when trusted to take on leadership roles or to be autonomous in their classrooms. Leora stated in the focus group, “I was given the gift of freedom, and look at me, I am the non-Chinese Chinese teacher... we were allowed to teach in whatever fashion we saw fit.” During the focus group, Thurston echoed others' feelings that trust enhanced well-being when he stated:

What helps my well-being the most? Feeling trusted and heard, having my ideas heard—maybe not implemented, but heard where we can discuss where I think we can best help our kids. That's a big deal for me. That helps my well-being the most; it is being trusted.

During the interview, Julia expressed feeling well at her school because they know, “I’m going to do what is right, so I’m not worrying about what anyone else is doing. And that is so like awesome as a teacher.”

Working within a team of educators where mutual respect is evident was essential to nine educators’ well-being within the study. Julia identified during the focus group that at independent private schools, institutional knowledge carries a great deal of weight. Still, when her ideas are heard and respected, it contributes to a sense of well-being. Other educators identified the connection and support between teams or teachers as foundational to well-being. During her interview, Lucy captured the essence of mutual respect when she said, “It doesn’t make me feel less to ask. I am always amazed at people’s insights and their work.”

Support

All 12 participants stated that support from administration, colleagues, and school families contributed to experiences of well-being. Gabriella stated in her interview, “Well-being increases when you are feeling supported and if you’re feeling loved.” According to participants, support came in various ways. During his interview, Thurston identified that support came in addressing inappropriate community behaviors toward staff with diverse sexual orientations, backgrounds, or races.

Almost all participants identified ample support from administrators as essential to well-being. Kinsley stated experiences of well-being derived from administrators’ feedback; she stated during her interview, “I am a big pat on the back person.” Other participants identified that administrators who encouraged self-care provided experiences of well-being. Other participants perceived well-being when administrators supported them in issues with students or the organization. Leora repeated a story, at both the interview and the focus group, of an

administrator that almost lost his job fighting to protect her from negative job-related issues due to her pregnancy. In the interview, Lucy spoke about feeling well-respected, being seen as a contributor to the school by her administrator, and being able to ask for help without fear. In the interview, Maddie stated the value of support from her department head, “He did such a great job of really helping me understand what I was supposed to be teaching and why.”

More than half of the participants highlighted support from colleagues as being essential to experiences of well-being. Julia best described this during her interview when she stated, “that is what well-being looks like and, just, yeah, being able to ask people questions and have them respond in a way that makes you feel good.” During the focus group, participants spoke about lifting each other and providing support to each other, which Jackie captured when she stated that support for each other “revitalizes the energy in the building.” Lucy stated during the focus group, “I knew that I needed the support [of my team] to succeed as a teacher. I need their intellect.”

Two-thirds of the participants highlighted support from others as foundational to experiences of well-being. Two participants shared that working with their spouses enhanced workplace well-being. Maddie spoke about the support of working with her partner and having someone “who you can share similar experiences daily. It makes it tolerable.” Jackie talked about finding “besties” to share and unwind with after stressful events at school. Five of the 12 participants identified that family life, engaging in recovery practices, and exercising with others contribute to well-being experiences at work. More than half of the participants expressed that parents and students within the school community also contributed to well-being. Michelle shared one example of this in a parent’s story stating, “the only reason that we are staying at this school is because of her. She makes math important, and she got him to where he is.”

All of the participants highlighted moments where they felt others were grateful for their efforts as moments of well-being. Kinsley shared during the interview that she kept a file of “student happys,” notes, and cards from students where they expressed gratitude. Appreciation and meaningful feedback from administration, parents, students, and colleagues were all evidenced in each data source as well-being elements. “Teachers enjoy being celebrated for the work that they do” stated Jackie during her interview. More than half the participants identified verbal praise, emails from administration, comments from parents or students, and comments from colleagues as experiences of well-being. During the interview, Lucy best expressed this:

Feeling respected and valued is important. You pour a lot of love and work and effort into teaching, and knowing that someone appreciates it does it for me—when someone says, “Gosh, you are amazing,” this is such a good thing.

Feelings of Safety

Feelings of safety were central to all of the participants’ experiences of well-being. Safety fell into various categories, including being physically safe on campus, safe to take risks, and a sense of feeling secure in their position. Participants identified that the school and administrators’ decisions influenced their feelings of safety. Feeling safe was a theme for individuals who are minorities within their community.

Every participant highlighted experiences of feeling safe during COVID-19 or other crises as experiences of well-being. Within the interview and the mind map, Jackie identified that during COVID-19, personal safety was a concern, but she felt that her organization supported the faculty and provided a sense of well-being. During the interview, Amelia discussed the impact of COVID-19 on her school, “It was very difficult to our mental well-being, right? The fact that in crisis mode, the board still supported us to make decisions that was very helpful in well-being

and getting through.” During the interview and focus group, Kinsley spoke about being an educator at a campus close to a tragic school shooting but experienced well-being from knowing her campus was safe, protected, and well monitored. During the interview, Michelle shared a story of being threatened by a student through email but stated, “I did not feel threatened; the school was more concerned about me than I was, and they took the precautions and did not allow the student back on campus. They wanted to make sure I was safe.”

One-third of the participants described administrators who made decisions to support educators through demanding situations as creating emotionally safe environments. Leora repeatedly addressed this feeling of safety throughout the interview and focus group regarding discipline support from the administration. Lucy identified in all data sets feelings of safety from an administrator who:

worked really hard at finding our strengths which, I think, enabled me to feel really secure in what I was doing. And, if I wasn't going on the right road, I think you know she comes to me, but it was never a threat. I didn't ever feel like I was going to be thrown out the door.

More than half of the participants expressed that feeling safe and supported by their schools and community in their diversity was essential to their well-being. Participants highlighted issues relating to race, gender, and sexual orientation. Thurston stated during his interview, “We have students on campus who either on-campus or off-campus use racial slurs—not directed to an individual—but towards groups or talking about janitorial staff and other people on campus. Having those issues addressed supports well-being.” During the interview, Thurston talked about the support from his school to attend the People of Color Conference hosted by the National Association of Independent Schools. Multiple participants expressed

gender-related issues as influencing experiences of well-being. Julia shared that her boarding school was a “boys club” of men who had worked there for years, but she had feelings of well-being because “others were working to dissipate that culture.”

Table 3

Belonging

Theme	Subthemes	Contributing Codes
Belonging (informs CRQ and SQ2)		community, belonging, valued, support, outside interests, gratitude, COVID-19, mission-aligned, care, security, mentorship, trust, trust-autonomy, mutual respect, support, diversity, administrators, gratitude, respect, diversity, support from administrators, gratitude, respect, support from others, safety, physical safety: belonging - COVID-19, crisis, emotional safety, diversity—safe, gender, colleagues
	Mission-aligned	mission-aligned, community
	Acts of care	care, colleagues, security, mentorship,
	Trust	trust, trust-autonomy, mutual respect,
	Support	support, diversity, support from administrators, gratitude, respect, support from others,
	Feelings of safety	safety, physical safety: COVID -19, crisis, emotional safety, diversity—safe, gender

Autonomy

Participants identified autonomy as essential to feelings of well-being. I identified a sizable number of codes that contributed to the understanding and emergence of the theme of autonomy, as shown in Table 4. Participants valued autonomy but had mixed experiences with levels of autonomy. Julia, Summer, and Leora shared that there is not enough autonomy for educators at independent private schools, whereas Gabriella, Jackie, and Amelia perceived no limits to autonomy within their experiences. Leora captured the participant’s perceptions of autonomy when she stated, “my sense of well-being comes from being given space to do my job properly.”

Independent Decision-Making

Participants described feeling well when able to work and make decisions independently. Thurston, Michelle, and Julia highlighted feelings of autonomy when the school asked them to lead a program or trip where participants would make decisions. During the interview, Kinsley shared that she felt free to do what she felt was the right thing in most situations. In her cognitive map, Caitlin captured that she “truly appreciates being part of the decision-making process, being a stakeholder.” Amelia shared during her interview that at independent private schools, educators want “full autonomy to feel well. They want to make all the decisions and think that’s what will help them feel good and feel empowered.”

Almost half of the participants expressed autonomy to choose curriculum resources and use them as appropriate, supporting well-being. Caitlin described “loving the academic freedom.” Julia talked about being the only teacher in her content area, so having the autonomy to make decisions and use resources as she felt was best, “I have so much autonomy, control. Which is intimidating but a wonderful feeling.” Most frequently mentioned in autonomous curriculum choices were around novels for study. Leora, Julia, and Jackie shared using different methods to teach central to feelings of well-being. During the interview, Thurston shared:

For me, autonomy, to be honest with you, we are all professionals at the end of the day. We are in the trenches with the kids; we know where every child is at and where they need to go. So having confidence in that faith fuels me. Trust me to do the job. It makes me feel valued.

Julia captured this in her statement during the focus group, “Moments of well-being that I have are like when I’m preparing my lessons and like nobody’s telling me what to do. I like, it’s just it’s whatever I want to do.”

Time Freedom

All of the participants described time as an essential component of experiences of well-being. Every participant except one spoke about the demands of time during the school day. Thurston, Jackie, Michelle, Caitlin, and Amelia indicated that when they were overscheduled, their well-being suffered. Participants identified that using time at their discretion promoted well-being.

The majority of the participants identified time to connect to colleagues as essential to well-being. Thurston shared during the interview that as members of different grade levels or content area teams, scheduled time to work together and “hash out lessons and ways we can reach more students is essential to well-being.” Jackie expanded on this idea during the focus groups when she said, “Being there with teachers and laughing with those people, that connects to well-being. It just feels good to come to work every day.”

Time with students emerged from two-thirds of the participants’ experiences of well-being. Daily schedules that promote daily contact with students, limiting special schedules that upset daily schedules, and having substitutes available were all identified as a contributor to experiences of well-being. During the focus group, Thurston stated:

I guess well-being means to me—having the opportunities to enrich and nourish your soul in various outlets outside the content. Not just the curriculum. Providing time—so much of it is time to do things that you enjoy outside of direct instruction.

Two-thirds of the participants expressed that providing time to prepare for lessons and events contributed to experiences of well-being. Participants identified that using prep time without meetings to prepare and provide feedback was essential to experiences of well-being.

Thurston stated during the interview that without time to prepare, “it makes it really difficult to maintain a sense of well-being on campus.”

During the interview, Amelia, Caitlin, Gabriella, Lucy, and Maddie identified the need for calendar time to themselves; this included lunch and breaks, trying to leave in a timely fashion to go home, and not taking the laptop home as elements of well-being. Multiple participants identified self-care and recovery as essential to experiences of well-being. During the interview, Jackie spoke about dedicating time to fitness and recovery and stated that during her exercise, she thought, “I can do this. I can do this another day—I am a queen! I will adjust my crown!” or will cry it out on the bike. One-third of the participants talked about the importance of exercise to support experiences of well-being. Julia captured that in her interview when she stated, “Exercise is number one to being well.”

Flexibility

All but three participants identified that having flexibility contributed to experiences of well-being. This subtheme emerged in each focus group and multiple interviews. Participants consistently identified an important facet of well-being was when administrators allowed educators to have different approaches. During the focus group, Leora spoke about feelings of well-being at one of her schools, stating, “I had so much freedom in that job. I loved that job. Sometimes, I was sitting right beside kids teaching to use proximity. They supported me.” Participants experienced well-being when they could do what was right for the students. Lucy expressed this best in her interview, “We spend a good amount of time on curriculum, but at the same time, if I really had to go with what felt right for the kids, I could.”

Table 4*Autonomy*

Theme	Subthemes	Contributing Codes
Autonomy (Informs CRQ and SQ1)		autonomy, decisions, curriculum decisions, time, time to collaborate, time with students, time to prepare, time for self, flexibility, freedom,
	Independent decision-making	decisions, curriculum decisions,
	Time freedom	time, time to collaborate, time with students, time to prepare, time for self,
	Flexibility	flexibility, freedom,

Feelings of Competence

All of the participants valued feelings of competence and related them to educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. Competence emerged as a theme from various codes built from participant statements, as displayed in Table 5. Julia, Caitlin, and Leora reported feelings of well-being related to competency stemming from being able to do what is right and not second guess oneself. Thurston, Michelle, and Kinsley paired confidence in the roles within the school and trust with competence in their experiences of well-being. Michelle stated during the interview, "If I didn't feel competent, I couldn't teach."

More than half the participants stated that student success and positive interactions with students related to experiences of well-being. This theme emerged most often in the cognitive mapping activity. Julia, Lucy, Michelle, and Thurston wrote in cognitive maps and discussed in focus groups feelings of proficiency and contentment when they believed students were getting it, excited, or seeing growth. Lucy expressed this experience of well-being best during the focus group, "Student success, like when they have done something we're working on right. Just like their happiness and their well-being leads to my well-being in the school setting."

Almost half of the participants explicitly stated they valued investment in their professional growth from their school and other community members. Thurston captured a sentiment mentioned by multiple participants when he stated, “I think where I see the most growth is being around other competent people.” Michelle, Kinsley, Amelia, Julia, and Thurston expressed that their school had sufficient financial support to offer extensive professional development for individuals. Julia expressed feelings of competence when her work was highlighted at a conference, and others gave her recognition for excellence.

Almost half of the participants expressed experiences of well-being related to competency in being clear on their role within the organization. Caitlin and Julia, who recently changed jobs, described well-being as they settled into new roles and began to feel mastery over expectations. On her cognitive map and in her interview, Julia stated feelings of well-being when she felt well prepared for the lessons during the upcoming week.

Table 5

Feelings of Competence

Theme	Subthemes	Contributing Codes
Competence (informs CRQ and SQ1)		competence, student success, professional growth, role clarity

School Environments

All participants identified that authentic attempts to improve well-being within the school environment are appreciated and support educators in achieving positive well-being. Multiple codes contributed to the emergence of this theme and the subthemes, as shown in Table 6. Amelia, Caitlin, Jackie, Julia, Maddie, Michelle, Summer, and Thurston all perceived that planning and prep time, not cluttered by meetings, extra duties, or other demands, contributed to well-being instead of virtue signaling attempts such as jeans days or donuts in the breakroom.

Support from the administration regarding student discipline and parent boundaries was a shared sentiment as foundational to well-being during the focus groups by Amelia, Caitlin, Jackie, Lucy, and Michelle.

Communications

Every participant spoke about the importance of communication in their interview, and most reemphasized it during the focus groups. Leora, Caitlin, Thurston, and Julia spoke about the importance of clear communications between faculty and administration as essential to feelings of well-being. Having “a clear path how we deal with issues” contributed to experiences of well-being (Thurston, personal communication, January 18, 2022). Seven participants spoke about the stress emails bring to well-being and the positive aspects of digital communications. In the interview, Jackie spoke about parents’ emails: “Teachers find a tremendous amount of satisfaction when they hear from parents have huge sway with teachers.”

More than half of the participants emphasized that informal communications were essential to experiences of well-being in the workplace. Summer talked about the value of informal conversations with students contributing to overall well-being because she felt trusted, part of something, and connected. Most frequently mentioned by participants was the impact of informal communications among colleagues. Gabriella stated in her interview, “Collegial relationships in the workplace, the school, and open lines of communications with colleagues I hugely important.” Other participants expanded the importance of informal communications with colleagues to include conversations during lunch, gathering during free periods, or, as Lucy shared, our “infamous Friday afternoon gatherings.”

More than half of the participants expressed ineffective communication skills, times, and methods frustrated needs related to experiences of well-being. Caitlin and Jackie highlighted

frustration with communications after work hours, especially text exchanges during personal time of non-essential communications. Leora, Caitlin, and Gabriella also highlighted a lack of communication, leading to surprises as detracting from well-being. During the interview, Leora expressed this frustration, “We would spend all our collegial time trying to figure out the secret of what was happening tomorrow, every day.” Participants identified that administrators who micro-manage through email communication create a sense of dread about opening emails.

Caitlin best captured this in her interview when she shared, “I begin to think, what have I done wrong today or what should I have done that I’m not doing. I am going to hear about that.” More than half of the participants expressed negative experiences of ill-being regarding how parents spoke to them as women. Lucy, Maddie, Julia, and Caitlin stated that parents negatively influenced well-being when they inappropriately verbally attacked faculty or asked educators to take on parenting responsibilities.

Being Outdoors

Half of the participants identified that being outdoors in good weather was essential to educators’ experiences of well-being. Lucy stated, “When I am inside, I shrink.” During the focus groups, Lucy, Thurston, and Summer described how small outside spaces for learning on their school campuses or utilizing adjacent nature trails contributed to experiences of well-being. Maddie identified experiences of well-being connected to walking her dogs on her boarding school campus as opportunities where “you end up walking your dogs in the middle of the day. Whether it’s the department chair of the English department or the headmaster’s wife or whoever. Having pets, getting outside, has helped my well-being and connection to others.” Just having moved from a cold climate to a warm climate, Julia captured what multiple participants talked about regarding weather. She talked about how during winter months:

everyone sort of like slowed down and dialed back, lethargic. And then so the good weather shows up again, and everyone is a little more positive. So, it's been really cool, like my body is thinking we're not in winter anymore and everyone's well-being is better.

Administrators' Behaviors

The role of administrators within the school and the participants' lives was essential to experiences of well-being for nearly all of the participants. Participants recognized that administrators helped experiences of well-being when they set boundaries and limits, created space for educators to work safely and effectively, maintained expectations for discipline, and trusted the team they hired. Leora captured one experience of well-being when she spoke about how an administrator supported her:

So confident leaders, who could give me my freedom, they could do it, and then we had superstars. We were in the newspaper, and the principal was hustling it. The principal was quite content to not be in the story and confident she had superstars.

Lucy also spoke about the experiences of well-being that stemmed from administrators, "I felt so well-respect, and I felt like she saw me as a huge contributor to the overall goals of the school."

One-third of the participants spoke about the importance of administration modeling and promoting well-being. All 12 participants in a focus group highlighted that central to this facet of well-being was having administrators not add unnecessary burdens to faculty. Further, "administrators modeling that taking care of yourself is important" was clearly stated by Jackie during her interview but was also expressed by three other participants as essential to experiences of well-being.

Table 6*School Environments*

Theme	Subthemes	Contributing Codes
School environment (informs CRQ, SQ1, and SQ2)		attempts, work boundaries, communication, email, informal communications, lack of communication, micro-managed, family communications, outdoors, weather, administrator behavior, work boundaries, discipline, confident leaders, modeling well-being
	Communications	communication, email, informal communications, lack of communication, micro-managed, family communications
	Being outdoors Administrators' behaviors	outdoors, weather administrator behavior, work boundaries, discipline, confident leaders, modeling well-being

Individuals Influence Well-being

Nearly all of the participants identified that individual traits influence well-being. I used multiple codes to support the emergence of this theme from participant data, as shown in Table 7. More than half of the participants believed that personality contributes to experiences of well-being within the workplace. Maddie captured a positive disposition and framework best, “I think for my general well-being, it’s more important to reflect on all the good things like the kids. Kids are kids in their fun and funny. They are exhausting, but they are our kids.” One-third of the participants described themselves as generally positive people who did not stress, so this is a facet of their experiences of well-being. Only a few participants identified that being raised in larger families taught them the value of compromise, resiliency, and confidence. Similarly, only a few participants identified themselves as having a humorous personality, which supported their experiences of well-being.

One-third of the participants stated that personality could have negative impacts on well-being. Caitlin shared in her interview, “Personality comes into that so that some of it is me. I have insecure tendencies that definitely play a part in well-being.” Two other participants

described procrastination as negatively impacting well-being. Julia shared in her interview that procrastinating leads to “the Sunday scaries,” where her lesson plans are not done yet for the coming week.

Maintaining appropriate boundaries was identified by two-thirds of the participants as essential to having experiences of well-being. Participants identified the need for boundaries due to the speed of technology to maintain experiences of well-being. “Parents are so accessible to kids, they call home, and say I failed this test, or this happened to me, and it gets way blown up when it shouldn’t,” reported Maddie in her interview. During the focus groups, other participants expressed a need for boundaries, stating that students emailing at off-hours and expecting immediate responses could negatively influence well-being. Participants identified that boundaries have eroded even more during COVID-19. Michelle captured the sentiments in the focus group, stating, “Boundaries sort of feel dissolved right now because of the past two years we were, we’ve made ourselves very accessible for them.” Participants shared experiences where boundaries within the classroom with parents, students, and other colleagues connected to well-being. Lucy best-expressed this during her interview:

Setting up boundaries really helps. I think in my class what do I want to have happen and what don’t I want to happen. When you sit and think about it calmly, you wouldn’t let a child, teacher, or administrator—nobody should change that in your classroom.

Table 7

Individuals Influence Well-being

Theme	Subthemes	Contributing Codes
Individual influence well-being (informs CRQ and SQ1)		Personality, family size, humor, traits, personal boundaries

Experiences of Ill-being

Participants in the study described experiences of ill-being within the workplace. I identified multiple codes that supported this theme, as shown in Table 8. When I asked participants to define well-being, multiple participants had similar comments to Jackie's statement, "I can tell you what well-being is not." More than half of the participants shared experiences or definitions of ill-being before defining or describing well-being. Participants' feelings of ill-being included stress, confusion, exhaustion, anxiety, depression, and burnout.

COVID-19

COVID-19 has influenced educators' experiences of well-being. Three-quarters of the participants described how COVID-19 negatively influenced well-being through erosion of boundaries or recovery time. Thurston spoke in his interview of the additional burdens placed on teachers and negative impacts on student outcomes. Michelle shared the struggles of teachers:

We had to be like, all these kids are allowed on the list? Or not allowed on the list? Are they supposed to be back or not? I just had to open my Zoom, and if they were there, there were there.

Multiple participants spoke about having colleagues overcome by fear during the pandemic. In her interview, Jackie talked about hearing a colleague "crying in the classroom next door, and that's really sad, or coming to me and saying, 'I'm about to freak out.'"

Demand Conflict

Educators within the study expressed feelings of ill-being due to conflict between multiple workplace demands or between workplace demands and outside demands. Caitlin best-expressed demands when she stated, "demands conflict with well-being because it is superhumanly impossible for a person to take care of our own well-being because if we left,

something at work—our job suffers.” All 12 participants discussed the added burdens of outside events with parents, parent conferences, meetings, chaperoning overnight trips, or supporting other classes as necessary elements in the school, but elements that erode well-being due to conflict between priorities. Lucy stated, “sometimes there are so many needs of the kids, they were so great and so many kids” and talked about being unable to balance her home and work life. Jackie captured the burden of the conflict of demands between home and work in her interview:

I work because I have to get paid because I have to feed my family, so—that’s the demands of the job, and I’m just going to get up and do it because I have these other responsibilities. But then I have conflict with these other responsibilities.

In her interview, Summer emotionally shared the mental demands:

I felt overwhelmed to deal with [a tragedy related to school] and maintaining well-being. I subconsciously start thinking about it, or I’m in the middle of a grocery store, and something strikes me like we ate Cocoa Krispies together, and I have this sense of sadness and anxiety.

Biases

A strong sentiment among the participants was feelings of ill-being related to bias. All participants expressed experiencing gender, racial, weight-related, lifestyle, and age biases. Two participants believed additional duties were placed on single teachers because they are perceived to have fewer outside demands than teachers who were parents or married. Caitlin spoke about the difficulties of finding work at age 57 and the negative perceptions of being overweight.

Every female participant expressed being the victim of gender bias in multiple forms. Three females in the study have left jobs at independent schools because of treatment by others

in the organization connected to gender. Maddie shared that she was overlooked for positions because she was female and could not tolerate, “the department chair who got the position makes inappropriate comments to young female students and had been spoken to multiple times.”

Multiple participants shared about additional challenges for mothers in the workplace. Caitlin cried during the interview as she shared about inequities in jobs she has had and stated:

They [men] get bys and passes on all kind of things that we don't. One guy leaves once a month at 3:45pm to get his haircut, no questions asked. I'm like, I had to go see the oncologist, and it was going to be 15 minutes late for work because that is the only appointment I could get, and I am a cancer survivor.

Lack of Leadership Relates to Ill-being

Participants also cited lack of leadership as relating to ill-being. Caitlin, Gabriella, Jackie, Julia, and Leora shared experiences of frustration, lack of trust, actions that were not mission-aligned, and poor communication. One-third of the participants spoke about administrators who micro-managed personal and created experiences of ill-being. During her interview, Gabriella captured the negative experiences and effects on the organizations and individuals in her statement, “It all comes from leadership, right. So, the fish rots from the head down.” In the interview, Julia captured participants' feelings when she spoke about leaving a position because of a loss of trust in the administration, stating, “If we cannot trust the administrators, trust them to take care of us, then that negatively impacts our well-being.” A few participants shared feelings of insecurity and job security related to ill-being.

Almost half of the participants expressed frustration over decisions made in the school that led to ill-being. Caitlin, Gabriella, Leora, Summer, and Thurston described decisions by administrators that caused ill-being, including regulation of grading practices, testing calendars,

contract hours on non-student days, meetings, and use of leave time. Caitlin captured the essence of working in a school where there was frustration with decisions, “your well-being rests in the uncertainty of it.”

Feeling Not Valued

More than half of the participants expressed feelings related to lacking in value eroded their experiences of well-being at their independent private school. Participants shared that when teachers experienced failure, they felt less valued, and their well-being suffered. Kinsley spoke about feeling upset after trying to help a child and the child saying, “I thought I would understand better after talking to you.” Caitlin, Lucy, and Maddie reported societal perceptions of educators as negatively impacting well-being. Maddie, Lucy, Julia, and Gabriella described feelings of lack of respect that other fields attain, experiences of parents believing they wield power because they pay tuition, and the feeling that “society can feel like, can coerce, and grind down young women,” as Lucy stated in her interview. Gabriella and Julia stated that jealousy and gossip among colleagues negatively impacted their experiences of well-being. Three participants emphasized that evaluations that do not capture the essence of teaching impact feelings of value and well-being. Jackie stated, “Education needs like a whole shift. You know we’ve come to work sick, tired, overworked, and that is the culture of teachers. Like you do it no matter what the cost.”

Two-thirds of the participants identified negative engagement with parents as influencing educator well-being. Specifically, participants highlighted unspoken demands of accessibility and untenable expectations for customer service as eroding well-being. Lucy stated during the interview, “At private schools, parents made you feel like they owned you. I’m paying you—so you will do exactly what I tell you.” One-third of the participants spoke about what Caitlin

described in her interview as “a new parent population that is extremely difficult.” Excessive emails, calls, and arguing decisions by the faculty with administrators left participants experiencing feelings of ill-being. Multiple female participants spoke about how parents would mistreat female faculty members.

Stress

Stress within the workplace negatively impacted well-being and enhanced feelings of ill-being for six participants. A lack of consistency or days being “hijacked” were mentioned frequently by participants within the study. Individual situations at different schools, such as testing calendars, put a demand on teachers that create stress. Multiple participants expressed stress over meeting the needs of all the students they taught. During her interview, Julia talked about “looming deadlines” as creating ill-being and stress.

Table 8

Experiences of Ill-being

Theme	Subthemes	Contributing Codes
Experiences of Ill-being (informs CRQ, SQ1, SQ2, and SQ3)		ill-being, stress, burnout, covid-19, demand conflict, home-work conflict, overwhelming demands, bias, gender bias, motherhood, lack of leadership, lack of trust, poor communications, insecurity, poor decision-making, stress, testing, meeting needs of students
	COVID-19	COVID-19
	Demand conflict	demand conflict, home-work conflict, overwhelming demands
	Biases	bias, gender bias, motherhood
	Lack of leadership	lack of leadership, lack of trust, poor communications, insecurity, poor decision-making
	Feeling unvalued	failure, societal perceptions, gossip, evaluations, negative parents, parent expectations
	Stress	stress, testing, meeting needs of students

Outlier Data and Findings

Each participant had at least one outlier in their experiences of well-being at independent private schools. Of the outliers, four were significant to understanding educators' diverse experiences of well-being. Outlier data evoked more emotion from participants.

Faith as a Foundation for Well-being

Caitlin identified faith as an essential facet of experiences of well-being. Caitlin worked in a secular school and expressed that she benefited from being able to “make time to pray and attend services.” Although this may align with the subtheme of time for self, its significance in Caitlin's well-being experiences warranted attention, as it was also relevant that her school gave her space to engage in prayerful worship. Many participants worked in religiously affiliated independent private schools and may take their access and ability to engage in prayer for granted.

Service as a Contributor to Well-being

Lucy, Julia, Maddie, and Jackie identified that giving back to others within the workplace was essential to experiences of well-being. Maddie stated, “I am no longer one of the young faculty members. It is important for me to be supportive of younger, especially female faculty, but really all who are struggling.” These participants identified that being part of the community and being expected to serve the greater community outside of the school were important to experiences of well-being.

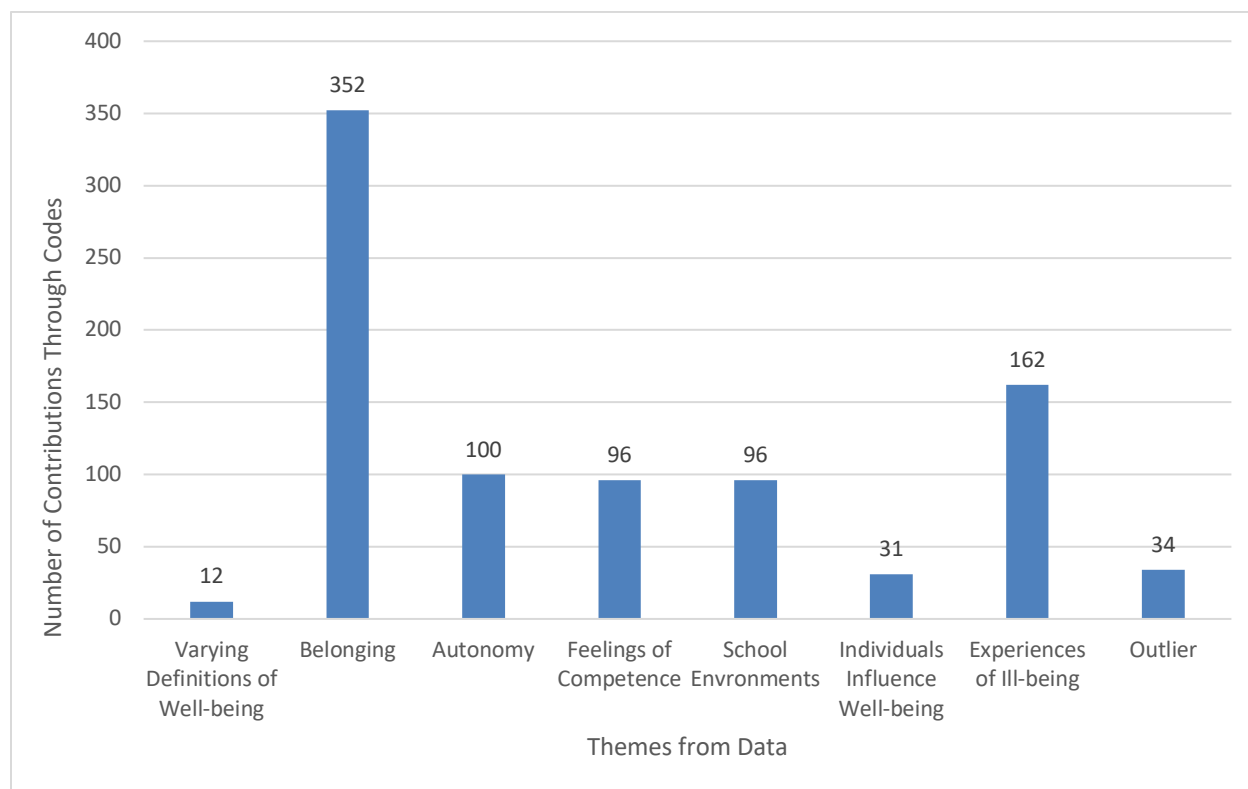
Experiences Influence Well-being

Lucy, Julia, Kinsley, and Amelia perceived that years of experience contributed to feelings of well-being at work. Amelia highlighted that as part of “the older generations of teachers, I feel more well-being than younger generations who want more autonomy and communication with administration.” Julia commented that her confidence was not as strong and

that “sometimes with ill-being, I feel young.” Although experience in some cases may overlap issues of gender, experiences of well-being specific to years of service stood out as significant.

Considering Class Size Related to Well-being

Only Lucy mentioned the importance of class size during data collection. However, given the significant number of times and impact she stated it had on her well-being, it was significant to mention. She captured this when she stated, “I realize how many times I have said small classes has really helped me. This is so important, but when you feel you can’t literally touch them, but you can wrap around them and share your wisdom.” She also categorized it as a “blessing” and mentioned it over ten times.

Figure 1*Themes from Data***Research Question Responses**

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. The research questions were derived from Ryan and Deci's SDT and guided this study. I addressed the research question and sub questions by analyzing participant data collected through interviews, cognitive maps, and focus groups.

Central Research Question

How do independent private school educators describe their experiences concerning workplace well-being?

All seven themes provided support to inform the central research question. Each theme presented contributions to an understanding of independent private school educators' experiences

of well-being. Independent private school educators described experiences of workplace well-being as a construct of multiple facets unique to individuals, situations, and schools. Individual descriptions of well-being and definitions of well-being were unique. It was difficult for participants to capture a single definition succinctly. Summer captured this in her definition of well-being, “So well-being to me is a whole concept. It is not one individual thing. I think of it as more like an umbrella, and underneath it, it has many different things.”

Data from interviews, cognitive maps, and focus groups supported the emergence of the themes of autonomy, belonging, and feelings of competency. All participants described well-being in the workplace for independent private school educators as including experiences of autonomy, belonging, and feelings of competence. Feelings of belonging were the most frequently mentioned contributors to experiences of well-being for all of the participants. Participants expressed that the ability to have autonomy and feel competency in their work contributed to their experiences of well-being.

In addition, school environments, individual influences, and experiences of ill-being all emerged as additional facets of educators’ experiences of well-being. Second in frequency to belonging, participants included experiences of ill-being in many of their definitions and descriptions of experiences of well-being. Each individual also had unique facets that contributed to their experiences of well-being as they described them in their interview, cognitive map, and focus groups. Outliers of significance to contributing to well-being were an individual’s faith practices, a belief in service to the greater community, prior experiences, and class size.

Sub Question One

How do independent private school educators describe their experiences of autonomy related to well-being in the workplace?

The theme of autonomy and subthemes from school environments, individual influences on well-being, and experiences of ill-being provided support for sub question one. Independent private school educators in this study describe experiences of autonomy within their school as the freedom to make decisions, time freedom, and flexibility. Participants valued the autonomy to make curriculum resource decisions and lead within their communities. Additionally, participants valued having the independence to decide how best to utilize their time and location during the workday as it validated feelings of well-being. Flexibility as a contributor to experiences of well-being emerged as a theme in participant data. Julia described autonomy at one of her schools, “I was always grateful for autonomy. I had so much control over what I was doing, which is intimidating, but a wonderful feeling. I got to do what makes these kids happy.”

Subthemes from the school environment, individual influences on well-being, and experiences of ill-being contributed to informing sub question one. Participants in the study valued being autonomous about their work location on campus and integrating personal style into teaching. Educators within the study described experiences of ill-being where their autonomy was frustrated. Significantly, when demands conflicted, and educators could not best meet the needs of students, educators described their autonomy as frustrated.

Sub Question Two

How do independent private school educators describe experiences of relatedness and belonging related to well-being in the workplace?

Sub question two is informed by multiple themes and subthemes. Independent private school educators described belonging as essential and foundational to the phenomenon of well-being in the workplace. Feelings of belonging were mentioned more often as contributors to well-being than any other theme. Educators described belonging as connection, being mission-

aligned, caring for others, being trusted, being supported, and having feelings of safety. Amelia captured the essence of belonging best:

At the end of the day, it is actually belonging. It is belonging that's my well-being. It is being in the right place to do my job and to get through the really hard days even when ill-being sets in. I know that I sit in a good place, personally and professionally, and want to raise my kids here. At the end of the day, it is the belonging that matters the most to my well-being.

Participants described experiences of belonging as presented in a variety of ways.

Participants felt valued when given a voice within the community and when they felt a connection to others within the community. A subtheme that emerged in the research was the importance of mission alignment for individuals at independent private schools. Participants also described acts of caring and experiences of feeling trusted as contributing directly to feelings of belonging and supporting their well-being. Support from others and gratitude emerged as subthemes within belonging as a contributor to well-being. Participants described well-being as including feelings of belonging related to safety and security.

Additional subthemes from the themes of school environment and experiences of ill-being provided support for sub question two. Communications and administrative behaviors greatly contributed to descriptions of educators' experiences of well-being. Descriptions of experiences of belonging were conflicted with participants' experiences by experiences of ill-being. Specifically, the subthemes of demand conflict, not feeling valued, and lack of leadership contributed to participants' descriptions of negative experiences related to belonging in the workplace.

Sub Question Three

How do independent private school educators describe experiences of competence related to well-being in the workplace?

Sub question three was supported through the theme of competence and subthemes from the theme of experiences of ill-being. Independent private school educators describe experiences of competence related to well-being in the workplace as feelings of mastery, professional growth, and having clearly defined roles within the organization. Leora stated, “I found the freedom to teach, and my competence rewarded,” which led to feelings of well-being.

Competence was important for participants as they described their experiences of well-being. Participants described the importance and the value of seeing students find success as relevant to experiences of competence. Understanding the roles they are asked to play within the school and feeling confident in them contributed to feelings of competence and overall well-being. A subtheme within the theme of competence that was significant for participants was the importance of professional growth related to well-being. Each individual described their experiences of competence, but significant themes emerged to support the importance of competence as an essential need for well-being.

Subthemes from experiences of ill-being contributed to sub question three. Participants’ descriptions of competence within the workplace included how that need was frustrated through biases, lack of leadership, and COVID-19. Not being able to feel successful, feeling held back or overlooked, and restrictions due to COVID-19 frustrated competency and negatively influenced well-being. Descriptions of need frustration contributed to how educators described their experiences of competence in the workplace.

Summary

This chapter provided an analysis and summary of participant data on educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. Participants described diverse, individualized definitions and experiences of well-being that are unique to their settings, life situations, and personalities. I provided information on each participant's experiences in tabular form and compositive narrative descriptions of elements that combined to create the phenomenon of well-being. Codes were drawn from participant statements. Codes were then analyzed to find relations and synthesize participant experiences that developed into themes. Together the themes provide a rich textural and structural description of educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools.

Themes and subthemes informed answers to the central research question and sub questions as they emerged from the literature. Educators shared rich descriptions of their experiences of well-being at independent private schools from their lived experiences. Participants perceived well-being to be a multifaceted construct unique to individuals and settings. Belonging was significantly the most common need described by participants related to experiences of well-being. Participants also described experiences of ill-being that negatively influenced well-being within their descriptions of their experiences at independent private schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I sought to describe experiences of well-being to address the problem of educator ill-being and the consequences for stakeholders in the educational system. In this chapter, I provide interpretations of the findings from the participants' lived experiences and themes that emerged from the data. I identify implications for policy and practices at independent private schools. I discuss implications for BPNT drawn from the participants' descriptions of experiences of well-being at independent private schools. I detail the limitations and delimitations of the study. I conclude this chapter with recommendations for further research.

Discussion

This qualitative transcendental phenomenological study sought to answer the central research question and sub questions through in-depth interviews, cognitive maps, and focus groups and capture the essence of the experience of well-being. Twelve participants provided rich descriptions of their lived experiences of well-being at independent private schools that supported understanding of the phenomenon. Seven major themes emerged: varying definitions of well-being, belonging, competency, autonomy, school environments, individual influences, and experiences of ill-being. Multiple themes co-occurred or had simultaneous relevance to educators' lived experiences of well-being at independent private schools.

Interpretation of Findings

All seven significant themes contributed to answering the central research question in this study. The central research question sought to understand how independent private school

educators described their experiences concerning workplace well-being. Well-being is the composite of many unique elements for each individual; thus, each individual has a unique definition of well-being. Understanding the complexity of personalized definitions of well-being provides insight into the challenge of satisfying well-being for educators at independent private schools. Well-being has a complex structure that changes in the elements that contribute to an individual's perceptions of well-being and the weight of that contribution. Understanding the complexity provides understanding about why the well-being of educators at independent private schools continues to be challenging and requires individuals to monitor their understanding of their personal and workplace well-being continually. Understanding that well-being is a personalized experience provides a greater understanding of the phenomenon.

The theme of belonging provided an understanding that belonging is critical for the experiences of well-being for educators at independent private schools. This theme contributed to the central research question and the first sub question. Participants identified belonging as the most dominant need for educators at independent private schools. Participants may have amplified belonging in the study due to the current pandemic, COVID-19. COVID-19 has created a sense of isolation and disruption for educators. The culture of independent private schools and educators' desire to work in specific mission-driven schools may also contribute to feelings of belonging. Feelings connected to the mission and aligned with the mission may create relatedness to the other community members and support a sense of belonging. When there is a misalignment or a sense of friction, educators at independent private schools do not feel a sense of belonging or relatedness, and well-being suffers.

Colleagues, administrators, and parents all influence educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. Actions that build trust, express value, or demonstrate care

support feelings of belonging. Feeling supported by administrators and colleagues was essential to educators' experiences of well-being. Gratitude from stakeholders reinforces a sense of belonging. Finally, educators find belonging through feelings of physical and emotional safety within their communities.

Participants identified the satisfaction and interconnectedness of all three basic psychological needs as a dominant determiner of well-being for independent private school educators through the themes of belonging, autonomy, and competence. As stated, belonging was the most dominant need expressed by independent private school educators. However, autonomy and competence were also significant in supporting educators' sense of well-being. Autonomy within independent private schools may manifest differently than in other areas of their life. Independent private school educators want to do what is best for their students, not just themselves and want the autonomy to do so. Autonomy in this setting reflects not only their desire to act and control their actions but affects outcomes within their environment for their students. Autonomy to make decisions, have flexibility in curriculum, and determine how they wanted to use their time were the most significant experiences of autonomy.

Independent private school educators felt supported in their sense of competence through school professional development programs, successful student learning outcomes, and demonstrated trust from the administration. Competence was satisfied, to some extent, simply by being employed to maintain a position within their independent private schools. Independent private school structure and culture may have higher demands that, if not met, may result in non-contracting for the following term. Educators need to understand and find success in meeting the school's expectations, roles, and demands for educators to experience a feeling of competence that contributes to well-being.

Contextual factors influenced educators' sense of well-being. The theme of school environments emerged from the data as a complex structure that influences educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. Many elements contribute to school environments. Communication, although often intangible, is a variable element within the context of school settings that influences well-being. If utilized effectively by colleagues, parents, and administrators, communications support, build, and expand individuals' sense of well-being. However, poor communications erode trust, isolate individuals, and create ill-being. In addition, administrators directly influence educators' experiences of well-being through decisions they make, actions they take, and modeling healthy practices within their school setting. Finally, the physical setting itself can influence educators' sense of well-being. Having the use of flexible or outdoor spaces may enhance well-being.

The final finding is that individuals described experiences where ill-being and well-being were co-occurring at independent private schools. Participants identified co-occurring constructs or how ill-being and well-being can be interwoven. Understanding the personal nature of well-being and the various elements that contribute to the construct of well-being, one element may be suffering while other elements within the construct are thriving. The co-occurrence of ill-being and well-being adds a layer of complication in understanding educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. From the seven themes identified from codes drawn from participant data, I made two significant interpretations: belonging is critical, and well-being varies.

Belonging is Critical. Belonging is critical for independent private school educators.

Although Ryan and Deci's BPNT identifies belonging as an essential need that supports the well-being of all individuals, it may be amplified for private school educators due to personal needs, contextual elements, and crises. High-demand contextual elements and mission-driven environments may influence well-being and ill-being experiences. Educators at independent private schools with a sense of belonging experienced well-being, even when experiencing other frustrations.

Well-being Varies. Well-being is unique to individuals and moments based on a composite of factors influencing individual interpretations based on current and past experiences. Participants identified that well-being for independent private school educators is influenced by contextual factors, individual differences, and satisfaction of all three basic psychological needs for educators at independent private schools. Well-being varies within individuals during different periods of their lives.

Implications for Policy or Practice

This study provides an understanding of educators' experiences of well-being and its implications for policy and practice. School systems, schools, administrators, colleagues, families, and individuals influence educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. Policy determined at the school or school system level influences well-being through contextual factors and supports the satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Personal, community, and administrative practices influence well-being and merit reflection and review. Implications drawn from the research may inform decision-making and behaviors to enhance educator well-being.

Implications for Policy

Acknowledging the pending teacher shortage and the disruptions and costs to schools, systems, and learning that result, as indicated by García and Weiss (2019) and Sutcher et al. (2019), independent private schools need to consider the policies to support educator well-being and revisioning of policies that lead to educator basic psychological needs frustration. Multiple participants described situations of ill-being that resulted from harassment or bias toward groups or individuals within the school, sometimes causing them to leave their place of employment. Independent private school policies surrounding faculty harassment and whistleblowing should expand to provide direction, training, and support for all employees, supervisors, and families to create consistent boundaries and expectations for the treatment of educators to support well-being.

As schools face an educator shortage, establishing policies that support educator well-being through balance, communicating value, and providing safe and supportive working environments would enhance the independent private school environment. Participants in the study identified that a balance of work demands and personal demands was essential to establishing and maintaining well-being. Additionally, feelings of value, trust, and gratefulness supported individuals' sense of belonging and competence, thus enhancing well-being. Educators at independent private schools described finding value in feelings of emotional and physical safety, especially during times of crisis. Multiple participants shared that they had left their places of employment based on how others treated them within the school. Schools and school systems that attend to developing policies to support the socioemotional needs of educators may benefit and retain faculty.

Rumschlag (2017) accurately identified time as a scarce resource to be used wisely. Independent private schools would benefit from examining work demands and time freedom policies. Educators within the study identified that time freedom was essential to meet student, personal, and professional needs. Kujanpää et al. (2021) identified the need for recovery time for personal needs. Educators' roles have historically expanded (Aydin & Kaya, 2016). Redefining policies that guide course load and additional roles or duties required would support educators' well-being by satisfying the needs of autonomy and competence.

Implications for Practice

Independent private school educators' experiences of well-being described in this study identified practices that support well-being at all types of schools. Reflection and revision of practices that could be adjusted to enhance educator well-being can be viewed from the personal, community, and administrative lens. The research shows that all stakeholders can influence educators' satisfaction with the basic psychological needs of belonging and competence, with colleagues and administrators also influencing educators' sense of autonomy. Understanding that independent private schools each have a unique organizational structure and mission (National Association of Independent Schools, n.d.a.), findings and implications for practice drawn from this study may transfer to all independent private schools as they adhere to the organization's mission.

Administrators. Administrators within independent private schools can make decisions and influence the schools' culture and climate. Creating space within the calendar and schedule for educators to feel belonging through mentoring programs, community gatherings, collaborative planning time, and engaging in acts of care or support may increase well-being experiences for independent private school educators. In addition, creating physical spaces,

especially outdoors, may influence educators' well-being. Participants identified gratitude as contributing to feelings of value, belonging, and well-being. Independent private school administrators may benefit faculty well-being by identifying authentic, sustainable, mission-aligned, and meaningful ways to convey to educators the value they provide to the school. Educators described token appreciation as irrelevant and unrelated to well-being.

Competence is a basic psychological need identified in this study as essential to educators' experiences of well-being. Administrators who provide opportunities for growth and development support educators' well-being. Educators described experiences of well-being when attending professional development workshops and finding success in their work with their students. Limiting the demands on time and non-teaching roles that educators fill may improve perceptions of competency as educators will have more time to devote to the craft of teaching, thus enhancing the well-being of educators at independent private schools. Educators in this study reported conflict demand as eroding well-being by independent private school educators. School administrators benefit educators by reexamining the out-of-classroom demands that influence the workplace for educators and providing consistent expectations and boundaries to promote well-being.

Educators at independent private schools value experiences of autonomy. School administrators who invite educators to have a voice in curriculum and school practice may enhance educators' experiences of well-being. Participants reported that opportunities for educators to act autonomously when leading initiatives, making decisions, and utilizing their time, in the classroom and during planning, supported experiences of well-being. This finding may apply to all independent private schools. School practices that surround choice in pedagogical approaches, classroom design, use of outdoor or alternate teaching spaces, and

assessment may communicate trust and value to educators through providing autonomy and needs satisfaction.

Colleagues and Families. This study shows that non-supervisory stakeholders influence educators' well-being. Parents or family interactions and communications with teachers influenced educators' perceptions of belonging and competence. Families' reflection on communication practices, times, and methods is critical to maintaining educator well-being. Off-hour communications on weekends and evenings were shown to create conflict with personal needs and frustrate educators. Additionally, the tone of communication from parents needs to be appropriate to reflect the professional respect that should be conferred to educators. Practice by parents regarding expectations within the independent private schools should be amended to reflect practical and realistic boundaries.

Colleagues influence others' sense of well-being at independent private schools. Participants identified that colleagues were important in validating competency and building a sense of belonging. The research indicates that intentional practices by colleagues to build community, trust, and show value all support educators' experiences of well-being. Colleagues at independent private schools should build into their daily practice opportunities to express gratitude, value, and trust to their peers. Educators within the school also may be able to influence their colleagues' well-being by limiting gossip, maintaining timely and clear communications, and being inclusive of all members of the school. Simple moments of celebration during faculty meetings may support a sense of belonging and competency.

Individuals. This study identified well-being as a complex structure of different elements unique to each individual; individuals are responsible for their well-being. The study highlighted that self-care practices, including exercise, meditation, and setting appropriate personal

boundaries, may increase well-being experiences within the workplace. Individuals who engaged in seeking out mentorship and constructive feedback expressed feelings of need satisfaction for both belonging and competency. Increasing practices of personal collaboration with others, although taking time, may increase feelings of need satisfaction for all three basic psychological needs and enhance well-being. Individuals should seek out school cultures and climates to which they are mission-aligned and can contribute value.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

Basic Psychological Needs

Ryan and Deci's (2017) BPNT, a sub-theory of SDT, guided this study and asserted that satisfying the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and belonging are essential for well-being. The framework guided my creation of the central research question and sub questions to help me gain a robust understanding of independent private school educators' experiences of well-being. The findings of this study support the necessity of basic psychological needs satisfaction to support experiences of well-being for independent private school educators within the workplace. The findings also add to the literature on independent private schools, educators' experiences of well-being, and overall well-being experiences.

Independent private school educators' experiences of well-being are rooted in the satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Experiences of belonging, autonomy, and competence are foundational to educators' feelings of well-being. The basic psychological needs of autonomy, belonging, and competence are found in prior studies to be intertwined to support other factors that influence self-determination and well-being (Gagne & Deci, 2005; Lombas & Esteban, 2018). Self-efficacy, the combination of knowing how to do something and the agency to take action (Kurt, 2016), as support for well-being (Yu et al., 2015), was supported in the

findings of this study. Educators within the study identified that at independent private schools, feelings of self-efficacy were important to overall experiences of well-being. Ryan and Deci (2001, 2017) asserted that basic psychological needs are universal, cross-cultural, and apply at all life stages. The findings in this study align with the prior literature and support the significance of basic psychological needs being entwined with each other and necessary to support well-being.

Findings support prior research on educators' experiences of competence, supporting feelings of well-being. Jungert et al. (2019) found that competence support by colleagues supports well-being. The findings support previous research as participants also described that mentoring, collaboration, and positive feedback enhanced experiences of well-being. Participants in the study valued competence development in the form of professional development as a support for experiences of well-being. These findings support literature from de Wal et al. (2020), stating that teachers feel a sense of competence when motivated to find professional growth opportunities. Educators within the study also highlighted the needs satisfaction of competence when students found success in the lessons they planned.

Participants described that perceived autonomy-supportive (PAS) environments supported feelings of well-being. Supporting the research by Slemp et al. (2018) and Zhang et al. (2019), the participants identified that when they felt trusted within the workplace to have a voice, engage in decision-making, and promote a positive work climate, they also experienced feelings of well-being. Educators reported that distributed leadership enhanced trust and promoted well-being. Research findings from Schaack et al. (2020) indicated that teachers experience greater job satisfaction when experiencing autonomy. Participants described well-

being when given opportunities to choose curriculum resources, utilize their time wisely, and make decisions in the students' best interest.

Participants described feelings of well-being supported through needs satisfaction concurrently with ill-being from needs frustration or ill-being influencers. The most dominant co-occurring well-being and ill-being experiences most often reported by participants were feelings of belonging within aspects of the community, simultaneously with feelings of lacking value by the school. In contrast to findings by Fedorov et al. (2020) that 25% of teachers described themselves in a state of ill-being, all 12 participants in the present study identified that ill-being experiences were limited, co-occurring with well-being. Only one participant of the 12 identified that they were in a state of ill-being related to their workplace. The findings from this study more closely align with the prior research indicating person-level variables influence well-being and ill-being (Collie et al., 2020; Raj et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2018).

Headey et al. (1984) asserted that individuals could simultaneously experience ill-being and well-being. Rice (2019) and Shirley et al. (2020) identified within their research that elements of ill-being can occur in contexts where well-being is experienced and that one experience does not remove the other. The findings from this study align with this co-occurring framework for well-being and ill-being. Findings conflicted with Ryan and Deci's (2017) assertion that well-being and ill-being are opposite ends of a continuum. The findings support the assertion of co-occurrence, as opposed to a continuum view. Individuals expressed feeling ill-being based on specific environmental criteria simultaneously as well-being from needs satisfaction of belonging and relatedness.

Private school culture places different demands on educators (Wronowski, 2020). Participants expressed specific demands that influenced well-being and ill-being, drawing from

the customer-service-based elements and power struggles with parents at independent private schools. Educators within the study identified the challenge with the boundaries of parents and the perception that monetary support of the school could influence decision-making. The perceived lack of leadership and alignment to the organizational mission frustrates feelings of well-being.

Although the research strongly supports the three basic psychological needs identified by BPNT, participants presented no other individual need as universal. No further evidence for additional needs to be included in the list of basic psychological needs or to expand the list of basic psychological needs can be drawn from the participant data. Security and feelings of safety were talked about by multiple participants as a contributor to experiences of well-being. These data may add to the research by Vermote et al. (2021), who posited that threats and safety might influence basic psychological needs. However, needs in this study did not meet the criteria to be considered a basic psychological need. These data align with Vansteenkiste et al.'s (2020) assertion that no other needs meet the nine criteria to be classified as a basic psychological need.

Within the findings, independent private school educators significantly described the need for belonging to be most critically associated with well-being experiences. This finding may be unique to independent private schools or universal to all who choose to work for mission-affiliated organizations. Although this does not expand the theoretical understandings, it adds to the literature on independent private school educators' well-being experiences. It contributes to Ryan and Deci's (2020) assertion that further research is needed to understand need satisfaction within schools.

Belonging. Belonging is critical for the well-being of independent private school educators. In this study, 12 independent private school educators repeatedly and consistently

prioritized the need for belonging in the descriptions of experiences of well-being. All 12 participants highlighted that educators need to feel valued, supported, and cared for at independent private schools to feel well and thrive within the workplace. Feeling supported and connected to others within the community is essential. Independent private school educators described feeling a sense of trust and gratitude within the school related to strong feelings of value, belonging, and well-being. Lijadi (2018) described well-being as optimizing an individual's full potential. Participants described moments where they experienced well-being when others in the community recognized their potential or value.

Independent private schools have unique cultures to their setting and purpose. Ryan and Deci (2017) identified that value-driven behaviors support feelings of competence, agency, and belonging. The participants' descriptions of their experiences of well-being supported the previous findings. They added that the common belief in the institution's mission and values by all community members could further support feelings of well-being. These findings support literature from Nordick et al. (2019), which found that the organization and those in it benefit from a strong sense of relatedness. One of the 12, Amelia, succinctly identified in her interview that individuals may choose to work at an independent private school and experience well-being because of the perceived family-like culture articulated by the school or because they believe in the organization's mission.

Participants identified collaboration and support as contributors to feelings of belonging and well-being. Multiple participants highlighted feelings of well-being when sharing information or receiving support from colleagues related to their work or students. The findings align with prior literature from Anderson et al. (2019) and Ford and Youngs (2018), which found that collaboration among educators supports feelings of belonging. Multiple participants

mentioned mentoring opportunities contributing to feelings of value and belonging, thus supporting well-being. These findings support Nordick et al.'s (2019) research, which identified that mentoring opportunities enhance trust and connectedness within educational relationships.

Well-being Varies. The composite of elements that defines well-being experiences is unique for individuals. Independent private school educators described experiences of well-being as complex and multifaceted experiences influenced by feelings, contextual factors, individual characteristics, and environmental factors. Prior experiences, personality, setting, life stage, and work setting all contributed in different ways to individuals' descriptions of experiences of well-being. The findings of this study align with prior literature regarding the complexity and unique definitions or composites of well-being. Anderson et al. (2019) stated that no formalized definitions of well-being could capture the complete understanding of well-being. These findings are also consistent with Vansteenkiste et al. (2020) and Viac and Fraser (2020), who found that well-being is a multifaceted construct. No two participants in the study had similar experiences of well-being or ill-being, nor did participants define well-being through the same descriptions or constructs of experiences. As Summer described in her interview, well-being is "a whole concept. It's not one individual thing."

Participants highlighted the importance of balance as they described their experiences of well-being in the workplace. Independent private school educators included balance in the definition and descriptions of well-being. Participants described independent schools as having demands on the educators in the study that required intentional effort to find balance with home life, fitness, and nutrition. These findings support previous research by Miller (2021) indicating the additional roles that are taxing to educators influence work-life balance leading to ill-being. The concept of balance aligns with Dodge et al.'s (2012) definition of well-being as "The

balance point between an individual's resource pool and the challenges faced, which include cognitive, psychological, physical, and social resources and challenges.”

Participants reported that contextual factors influenced experiences of well-being. The findings of this study align with the literature by Vansteenkiste et al. (2020) related to contextual factors supporting the satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Participants highlighted the school environment, leadership, colleagues, students, parents, communications, and workflow demands as part of the context in which educators work and experience well-being and ill-being.

Balossi and Hernandez (2016) identified that each independent private school is unique in its mission and organizational structure. Participants frequently spoke about the school mission, organization of workflow, and physical campus relating to well-being experiences. Aboobaker et al. (2019) asserted that meaningful work enhances well-being. Participant descriptions support Aboobaker et al. (2019) when educators felt mission-driven and value-aligned behaviors supported well-being. Participants often named school social, emotional, and political climates as elements that frustrated or satisfied needs related to well-being. Participants described feelings of well-being when experiencing positive emotions within the workplace. Participant descriptions are consistent with prior literature by Converso et al. (2019). Independent private school teachers connected the value-aligned decisions and behaviors of other community members as contributing to experiences of belonging and well-being. Multiple participants also identified how the political culture and power struggles within the independent private school frustrated their sense of well-being. Prior literature asserts that positive school climates promote well-being (Shirley et al., 2020).

In their research, Ryan and Deci (2017) identified that needs satisfaction varies over time, and Fox et al. (2020) stated that educator well-being could fluctuate when influenced by other

factors. Educators identified how feelings of well-being or ill-being were influenced by time of year, work demands, and demands due to COVID-19. Previous studies identified how changes in personal, interpersonal, organizational, and societal trends or events influenced experiences of well-being (Evans, 2016; Luhmann et al., 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2017). The findings in this study were consistent and expanded specifically apply to independent private school educators as multiple participants identified how time, setting, relationships, and expectations of communities influenced their well-being over time both within the same school and when moving positions. Multiple participants identified traumatic events that frustrated their sense of well-being at work, yet feelings of well-being when they felt safe and supported by others in their work environment. These findings are consistent with Reaves and Cozzens' (2018) research, which found that individuals perceive higher well-being when feeling safe and supported. Participants reported that situational stimuli influence school leadership behaviors and their feelings of well-being and ill-being.

Findings support Simmons et al.'s (2019) assertion that educators' well-being is fluid and based on individual educators' experiences. Participants expressed changes in well-being based on years of experience, time in their current position, and previous experiences within the content area. Educators with more years of experience were less influenced by contextual elements than novice teachers. Educators with greater tenure within a specific school appeared to have greater well-being. It is unclear within the participants' descriptions of well-being if the greater sense of well-being aligns with understanding the community over time or if the educator remained in the position due to contextual elements supporting need satisfaction and well-being.

Educators within the study highlighted the importance of the setting as a contextual factor influencing the well-being of independent private school educators. Participants described

having the freedom to arrange rooms, work outdoors, and vary instructional settings as important to feelings of well-being. In contrast, educators who felt physically separated from decision-makers or colleagues expressed frustration and experiences of ill-being. These findings support Elcan's (2017) findings that the school environment can influence well-being and Ebersold et al.'s (2019) findings that feelings of isolation or exclusion can result in ill-being.

Methodology. This study added to the qualitative literature regarding well-being and basic needs satisfaction. Through the lived experiences of the educators, I was able to provide descriptions of their experiences and needs satisfaction. Additionally, this study added to the literature related to the phenomenon of well-being, opening additional descriptions from independent private school educators. Participants shared descriptions of experiences of needs satisfaction, need frustration, and overall well-being. The study adds to the research on independent private school educators' experiences as the previous research in that area is also limited. Participants described settings, practices, and cultural dynamics of independent private schools that support previous literature.

During the study, the methodology of using cognitive maps was highly effective in helping participants solidify their descriptions of experiences of well-being, whereas focus groups were not effective. One reason that focus groups may have been less effective is that they were over Zoom. Zoom may have limited individuals' ability to connect, read cues on when to speak, and feel comfortable sharing. Another reason is that well-being and ill-being experiences may be extremely personal and emotional. Four of the 12 participants cried during their interviews when sharing well-being experiences, two cried in the focus groups, and three expressed appreciation for someone asking questions related to educator well-being. Heightened

emotions may also indicate why the independent mapping activity was successful, as it provided space, time to process, and the ability to succinctly present experiences of well-being.

Limitations

According to Patton (2015), “By their nature, qualitative findings are highly context and case dependent” (p. 658). The researcher may distort interviews or documents due to emotional state, recall, or interactions during the interview (Patton, 2015). The consideration of the use of Zoom technology to fully capture the phenomenon may have limited my ability to read the participants’ reactions, provide sufficient wait time, or recognize non-verbal cues. Although I used approved research protocols, Zoom may have limited my ability to engage in tangential dialog generated from participant statements. The interpretation of documents may have been a limitation if individuals were not accurate or did not fully complete their thoughts, as it was a timed element within the study. Additionally, despite my best efforts and triangulation, personal bias and emotional states during the interviews may have presented limitations.

The participants self-selected to participate in the study after seeing a social media post or receiving an email. Consideration must be given to why individuals self-select into a study regarding well-being and was limited by those who had access to certain social media sites. An additional limitation is that the sample size for this study was 12 participants of the 250,000 private school educators, as cited by the National Association of Independent Schools (n.d.b.). A third consideration related to sampling was the period when the research occurred within the calendar year and the greater societal context.

The delimitations for this study were due to the decisions I made about participant criteria, experiences, and setting. This study focused on independent private school educators’ experiences of well-being. Although many participants have worked in various educational

settings, only experiences of well-being while working at an independent private school were utilized for the research purpose as guided by the study design. Although the study focused on educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools, participants talked about well-being experiences in their personal lives as well. It was not my intent to study all well-being experiences, so the study is limited to the experiences within the work environment.

Recommendations for Future Research

I recommend that future research be dedicated to understanding educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. This study provided a further foundation for the understanding of experiences of well-being at independent private schools; however, this could be enhanced with additional research. Participants in the study asked for additional research and were grateful for the opportunity to share their experiences regarding well-being. As the teacher shortage continues to impact schools, teacher well-being remains a critical topic for all stakeholders. Through increased qualitative literature, educators could be given a voice to change practices within all schools, specifically independent private schools. School decisions and actions of administrators were shown to influence educator well-being. The contextual factors of independent private schools that influence educator well-being is a vast topic that would benefit from further research, especially research focusing on new teachers or teachers transitioning school environments. Limited contextual factors were explored in the study, including outdoor spaces, schedules, and stakeholders; however, a singularly focused study on any contextual factors may provide additional understanding.

Specifically, I recommend further qualitative research that examines experiences of belonging for educators at independent private schools. This study highlighted that belonging was a critical need for educators to experience well-being at independent private schools. Future

research may benefit schools, educators, and all stakeholders. Educators in the study identified need satisfaction of belonging significantly more often than other needs and was most often the co-occurring need with experiences of ill-being. Further understanding of the influence of the satisfaction of basic psychological needs for educators at independent private schools may support educator well-being.

Although COVID-19 and other situations of stress or trauma did not surface in this study as universal deterrents to need satisfaction, a significant number of participants identified continuing challenges due to the changing landscape of education. As the role of educators continues to expand and adapt, as illustrated by the participants' descriptions of conflicting demands and time conflicts and the prior literature focusing on teacher roles, continued and constant research regarding basic psychological needs satisfaction and need thwarting is recommended to help drive policy and practices within independent private schools.

The research also indicates that further exploration into recovery and individualized methods to enhance the well-being of private school educators may be important. This study identified that well-being is unique to individuals and varies over time. Nothing in the study examined how educators suffering from ill-being recover or how individuals maintain or care for their sense of well-being. Further research into coping skills, recovery, and self-understanding of influences of well-being may improve the well-being of educators.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools. This study derived from the problem of educator ill-being and the negative consequences for all stakeholders within the educational system. Guided by the theoretical framework from Ryan and Deci's (2017, 2019)

BPNT, I designed a study to examine independent private school educators' experiences of well-being. I articulated the theoretical, empirical, and practical significance and provided a robust review of the literature regarding educators' experiences of well-being. I derived research questions from the theoretical framework.

Using a qualitative transcendental phenomenological methodology, I gathered rich and thick descriptions of participants' experiences of well-being that self-selected into the study and met the study criteria. Through interviews, cognitive maps, and focus groups, I gathered lengthy descriptions of participants' experiences of well-being in the workplace. I analyzed participant data and identified seven themes. Themes were used to create a synthesis of the phenomenon of well-being and identify significant understandings that could be drawn from the data. I extracted five significant interpretations from the data that add to the understanding of the phenomenon of well-being for educators at independent private schools.

This study contributes to the literature on BPNT and needs satisfaction related to well-being. The study also expands the literature on independent private schools and educators' experiences of well-being. I provided specific implications on how this study could influence policy and practices for stakeholders within the education system. I identified limitations and delimitations within the study. I concluded this study by discussing recommendations for future research, specifically research focused on the well-being of independent private school educators, given the high levels of teacher burnout and the concern over the teacher shortage.

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Appendix A
IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 7, 2022

Kristi Combs
Billie Holubz

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-454 A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES OF WELL-BEING AT INDEPENDENT PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Dear Kristi Combs, Billie Holubz,

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 on 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 Letter

August 1, 2021

Dr. Group Administrator

Dear Dr. Group Administrator,

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 Qualitative Transcendental Phenomenological Study of Educators' Experiences of Well-being at Independent Private Schools. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to understand what experiences educators have at independent private schools that build a positive sense of well-being.

I am writing to request your permission to post a participant recruitment letter to your educational group on social media.

If interested in participating, educators will be asked to complete an interview, cognitive mapping activity, and focus group. I will provide my contact information in the recruitment post if they wish to contact me with questions. Participants will be informed of the purpose of the study and asked to sign an informed consent agreement 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 sample permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Kristi Combs
Graduate Student

Appendix C

Permission Approval Letter

Date

Kristi Combs
Graduate Student
Liberty University



Dear Kristi Combs,

After careful review of your request to recruit participants for your study A Qualitative Transcendental Phenomenological Study of Educators' Experiences of Well-being at Independent Private Schools, we have decided to grant you permission to post your recruitment post on our social media page.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jones
Group Administrator

Appendix D

Social Media Posting

Are you a current or former employee of an independent private school who has experienced the phenomenon of well-being? Please [click here](#) to determine your eligibility for a research study on teacher experiences.

Appendix E

Recruitment Letter Email

August 16, 2021

Dear Educator,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, either a current or former employee of an independent private school and must have experienced the phenomenon of well-being. Participants, if willing, will be asked to meet with me for a lengthy, semi-structured interview, be willing to complete one mind-mapping activity regarding their experiences of workplace well-being, and participate in a focus group. It should take approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes spread over 3 months to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of the study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please [click here](#) to take a short survey.

A link to a consent document will be emailed to you if you are eligible. The consent document contains additional information about my research. You will be asked to sign the consent document through the link or to print the consent form and return it to me at the interview.

Sincerely,

Kristi Combs



Appendix F

Recruitment Follow-up Letter

August 23, 2020

Dear Educator,

Dear Educator,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study. Two weeks ago, an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in my research. This email serves as a reminder to please complete the linked survey below if you would like to participate and have not already done so.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, either a current or former employee of an independent private school and must have experienced the phenomenon of well-being. Participants, if willing, will be asked to meet with me for a lengthy, semi-structured interview, be willing to complete one mind-mapping activity regarding their experiences of workplace well-being, and participate in a focus group. It should take approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes spread over 3 months to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of the study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please [click here](#) to take a short survey.

A link to a consent document will be emailed to you if you are eligible. The consent document contains additional information about my research. You will be asked to sign the consent document through the link or to print the consent form and return it to me at the interview.

Sincerely,

Kristi Combs



Appendix G

Screening Questions

1. Are you 18 years of age or older?
2. Do you or have you worked as an educator at an independent private school?
3. Are you willing to participate in an interview, create a reflective mind map on experiences of well-being, and participate in a focus group?
4. At what email address would you like to be contacted?

Appendix H

Consent

Title of the Project: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study of Educators' Experiences Well-Being at Independent Private Schools

Principal Investigator: Kristi Anna Breault Combs, Ma ED, Doctoral Student, 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 years of age or older, must be either a current or former educator at an independent private school, and must have experienced the phenomenon of well-being. Taking part in the research project is voluntary.

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

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

The purpose of this study is to understand educators' experiences of well-being at independent private schools.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to do the following things:

1. Participate in an interview. The interview will take approximately 45-75 minutes to complete and will focus on gathering information about your experiences. The interview will be audio- and video-recorded and will be conducted either through Zoom or in person.
2. Complete a mind-mapping activity on well-being. This task should take no more than 15-30 minutes to complete through email.
3. Participate in a focus group. The focus group should take no more than 45-60 minute to complete. The focus group will be audio- and video-recorded and will be conducted either through Zoom or in person.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in the study.

Benefits to society may include enhancing the literature regarding the understanding of independent private school educators' experiences regarding well-being. An enhanced understanding of the topic may impact policy or practice.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

I am a mandatory reporter and must disclose that if I become aware of anything during the course of the study that I must disclose, I will be required to do so, including but not limited to: child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of the study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely for three years and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation or in private Zoom sessions.
- Schools will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Data will be stored on a password-protected computer in my home and in a locked filing cabinet. The data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all physical records will be shredded.
- Interviews will be audio- and video-recorded with your consent and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer in my home for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- 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.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

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

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in the 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 Kristi Anna Breault Combs. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, [REDACTED].

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, [REDACTED]

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- and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix I

Interview Questions

Initial semi-standardized interview prompts.

1. Please introduce yourself to me as if we just met one another. CRQ
2. Please explain to me your current position and workplace. CRQ
3. How many years have you been an educator? CRQ
4. Describe the job tasks and roles associated with your position. CRQ
5. Describe what well-being means to you. CRQ
6. Tell me about experiences of well-being while working at independent private schools.
CRQ
7. Thinking of the setting and events that happen in a school, where do your experiences of well-being occur? CRQ
8. Describe experiences that enhanced or supported your well-being. Where, when, with whom, or how did those occur? CRQ
9. Describe your experiences of ill-being. Where, when, with whom, or how did those occur? CRQ
10. How do you describe experiences where you feel in control at work? SQ1
11. Tell me about times when you had independence at work. SQ1
12. How do you think those experiences may have influenced your well-being? SQ1
13. Please describe your experiences of feeling competent within the workplace. SQ2

14. Describe how feelings of mastery or accomplishment may influence your workplace well-being. SQ2
15. Please explain to me your experiences of belonging or connection at your independent private school. SQ3
16. Tell me about how experiences of belonging at your school influence your well-being. SQ3
17. What other information about your experiences of workplace well-being can you share? CRQ

Appendix J

Concept Map

Cognitive maps can help to provide visual understanding of ideas. Please use the map to represent key experiences related to workplace well-being at independent private schools. Please return this map by email once you have completed it.

1. Set a timer for 15 minutes. During this time, map out any thoughts related to your experiences of well-being or ill-being that come to mind. These can be personal or community events, influence by personal practice or outside factors, or any other facet that influences your well-being.
2. Set the timer for 10 minutes. Look at the list and provide a short description of the important elements that defined each experience (i.e.: who, what, when, where, and why). Try and describe why those experiences were significant regarding your well-being.
3. Set the timer for 5 minutes. Look at the experiences and determine if any of the experiences are interconnected. If so, use lines to connect those experiences.
4. Take a final moment to circle the most significant well-being experience(s) on the map.

Appendix K

Focus Group

Initial semi-standardized focus group prompts.

1. Describe how you define well-being. CRQ
2. Describe a workplace experience that supports your perception of well-being. CRQ
3. Describe when your school has influenced your well-being. CRQ
4. Where, when, with whom, or how has well-being been enhanced? CRQ
5. How do you describe situations where well-being is frustrated? CRQ
6. Describe a workplace experience that supports your perception of ill-being. CRQ
7. How would you describe experiences of well-being stemmed from autonomy within your school? SQ1
8. Describe your workplace experiences of competence related to well-being. SQ2
9. How would you describe your experiences of well-being regarding relatedness or belonging at your school? SQ3
10. Is there anything else you would like to share about well-being? CRQ

Additional questions will naturally develop from the dialog and prior interactions with the participants.

Appendix L

Theme	Subthemes	Codes
Varying definitions of well-being (informs CRQ)		definition, family life, balance, needs, balance for health, family life, balance of demands, facets, health, exercise, positive emotions, supported, valued improves mental health, trusted improves mental health, flexibility improves mental health, feeling successful
	Balanced work and personal needs	balance, needs, balance for health, family life, balance of demands, change, facets
Belonging (informs CRQ and SQ2)	Feeling in good health	health, exercise, positive emotions, supported, valued improves mental health, trusted improves mental health, flexibility improves mental health, feeling successful
		community, belonging, valued, support, outside interests, gratitude, COVID-19, mission-aligned, care, security, mentorship, trust, trust-autonomy, mutual respect, support, diversity, administrators, gratitude, respect, diversity, support from administrators, gratitude, respect, support from others, safety, physical safety: belonging - COVID-19, crisis, emotional safety, diversity—safe, gender, colleagues
	Mission-aligned	mission-aligned, community
	Acts of care	care, colleagues, security, mentorship,
	Trust	trust, trust-autonomy, mutual respect,
Autonomy (informs CRQ and SQ1)	Support	support, diversity, support from administrators, gratitude, respect, support from others,
	Feelings of safety	safety, physical safety: COVID-19, crisis, emotional safety, diversity—safe, gender
		autonomy, agency, decisions, curriculum decisions, time, time to collaborate, time with students, time to prepare, time for self, flexibility, freedom,
	Independent decision-making	decisions, curriculum decisions,
Competence (informs CRQ and SQ3)	Time freedom	time, time to collaborate, time with students, time to prepare, time for self,
	Flexibility	flexibility, freedom, competence, experience, student success, professional growth, role clarity,
	School environments (informs CRQ, SQ1, and SQ2)	attempts, work boundaries,
	Communications	communication, email, informal communications, lack of communication, micro-managed, family communications,

<p>Individuals influence well-being (informs CRQ and SQ1) Experiences of ill-being (informs CRQ, SQ1, SQ2, and SQ3)</p>	<p>Being outdoors Administrators' behaviors</p>	<p>outdoors, weather, administrator behavior, work boundaries, discipline, confident leaders, modeling well-being personality, family size, humor, traits, personal boundaries,</p>
	<p>COVID-19 Demand conflict</p>	<p>ill-being, stress, burnout, COVID-19, demand conflict, home-work conflict, overwhelming demands, bias, gender bias, motherhood, lack of leadership, lack of trust, poor communications, insecurity, poor decision-making, stress, testing, meeting needs of students, COVID-19 demand conflict, home-work conflict, overwhelming demands,</p>
	<p>Biases Lack of leadership Feeling not valued Stress</p>	<p>bias, gender bias, motherhood, lack of leadership, lack of trust, poor communications, insecurity, poor decision-making, failure, societal perceptions, gossip, evaluations, negative parents, parent expectations stress, testing, meeting needs of students,</p>
