HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF WORK-RELATED STRESS AND

RESILIENCE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Deana A. DiLuggo

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe public high school teachers' experiences of work-related stress and resilience in the state of Connecticut. The theory guiding this study is Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (SDT), as it looks at the impact of motivation on human behavior and the fulfillment of the three basic psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy. This study was designed to answer the central research question, uncovering public high school teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience. The researcher obtained informed consent from 12 participants who participated in semi-structured interviews. Eleven of the interviewed participants were deemed eligible to continue to participate. Eight of the participants completed journal prompts and participated in a follow-up interview which served as member checking, and four participants elected to participate in a focus group. The researcher manually coded all data using in vivo, focused, and pattern coding to develop a thick and rich description of the phenomenon of teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience. The study results indicate that teachers feel they must be resilient to be successful and persistent in the field of education, and all participants cited that they were resilient daily. Most participants cited top-down initiatives and administration as their most significant sources of stress. At the same time, all participants cited their students as their primary source of motivation and their reason for persisting in the face of workplace challenges and stress.

Keywords: teacher stress, resilience, burnout, teacher well-being, self-determination

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my Father God, from whom all knowledge flows and without whom I would be unable to complete this dissertation.

To my husband, Nick, for supporting me throughout my dissertation journey.

To my children, Angelina and Nico, may you pursue truth and godliness all your days and recognize that you can do anything with hard work, perseverance, and a heart of obedience to God.

To my mom for always being there for me and continually pointing me to the foot of the cross.

To my dad for pushing me to strive for excellence in everything I do.

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I want to acknowledge my committee chair, Dr. Nancy DeJarnette, who has been my friend and mentor for years. Her gentle guidance, encouragement, and consistent willingness to assist me in brainstorming and improving academically have tremendously impacted my life. I am thankful that God brought Nancy into my life.

I would also like to acknowledge my methodologist, Dr. Rachel N. Hernandez. She provided constructive feedback, support, and positivity. Her joyful disposition is infectious, and I appreciate her presence and perspective.

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List of Abbreviations

Connecticut (CT)

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

Professional development (PD)

Self-determination theory (SDT)

United States (US)

World Health Organization (WHO)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Ongoing national teacher shortages have necessitated a greater understanding of teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience (Buttner, 2021; Dos Santos, 2021). This chapter introduces the proposed research topic of work-related teacher stress and resilience. The chapter begins with a summary of relevant literature providing the historical, social, and theoretical background for the problem, followed by a statement of the research problem, purpose, and significance of the study. The chapter concludes with the research questions and a list of terms pertinent to the study.

Background

Teaching is among the most stressful professions (Gallup, 2014; Johnson et al., 2005; Metlife, 2012). With teacher shortages and attrition rates on the rise, the importance of understanding teacher stress and resilience cannot be overstated (Buttner, 2021; Torpey, 2018). Using the self-determination theory (SDT) as a framework, the present study seeks to uncover high school teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience.

Historical Context

In a 2005 survey of work-related stress, the teaching profession was among the top six out of 26 professions with higher than average levels of stress (Johnson et al., 2005). Since then, the number of newly hired teachers nationally decreased by 3.7% during the 2007 to 2008 school year, and 8% of teachers left the profession between 2011 to 2012 and the 2012 to 2013 school years (NCES, n.d.; NCES, 2022). Teacher job satisfaction declined by 23% between 2008 and 2012, and job satisfaction has trended lower in mid-career teachers reporting higher levels of workplace stress (Metlife, 2012). In a national survey of well-being (Gallup, 2014), teaching was

shown to be among the most stressful occupations, with 46% of teachers reporting high levels of daily work-related stress. Other professions reported high levels of stress but compensation for teachers was far less than for other high-stress occupations (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

In a more recent survey of school districts throughout the United States, 75% of urban, 60% of suburban, and 65% of rural school districts reported teacher shortages (Buttner, 2021). As of January 2022, 44% of public schools in the US reported teacher vacancies; 61% consider COVID-19 to be the primary cause of those vacancies, with resignations accounting for 51% of the teaching vacancies (DeLaRosa & Elias, 2022). While in another study on teacher attrition (Rasanen et al., 2020), 50% of participants cited intentions to leave the profession due to workload, lack of commitment, social and environmental challenges, and changes within the school system. While schools are experiencing teacher shortages, national employment of secondary school teachers is expected to increase by 5% from 2021 to 2031 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has sponsored the School Pulse Panel. This study will determine the impact of COVID-19 on the students and staff in public schools in the U.S. (Institute of Education Sciences, n.d.). The results of this survey indicate that 53% of public schools in the U.S. were understaffed at the start of the 2022-2023 school year. Of the schools participating in the study, 69% cited a lack of applicants for the openings as the main reason for their staffing shortages, while 64% cited a lack of qualified applicants. Additionally, 48% of schools reported an inability to fill teaching positions, and 36% reported losing full-time teaching staff since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (Institute of Education Sciences, n.d.).

In addition to teacher shortages, U.S. public schools have reported a significant increase in chronic teacher absences and difficulties in securing substitute teachers since before the start

of the pandemic (Institute of Education Sciences, n.d.). To remedy this situation, schools have

had to be creative in covering the teacher absences by having administrators, non-teaching staff,

and other teachers cover classes during their planning periods. In addition to issues with chronic

teacher absenteeism, schools have reported increased staff seeking mental health services since

the pandemic's start (Institute of Education Sciences, n.d.). High work demands and student

discipline problems are correlated with an increased risk of burnout and attrition from the

teaching profession (Li et al., 2021). The most recent data on teacher mental health due to work-

related stress shows an increase from 34% in 2015 to 58% in 2017 (AFT, 2017). While 61% of

teachers considered their work environment to be stressful "always" or "often," 42% of high

school teachers reported significant daily work-related stress, and approximately 50% of teachers

reported less enthusiasm about their chosen occupation (AFT, 2017; Metlife, 2012). Finally, in a

survey of teachers in the U.S., during the spring of 2020, teachers reported that their jobs were

more stressful than not (Institute of Education Sciences, n.d.).

There is a link between discontent in the teaching profession and attrition (Harmsen et al.,

2019). In a study of beginning teacher induction programs, beginning teachers reported

increasing dissatisfaction with the teaching profession over time (Harmsen et al., 2019). Support

for beginning teachers may aid their retention by building their self-efficacy and sense of

relatedness (Harmsen et al., 2019; Kaplan, 2021). In response to the trends in teacher stress,

Congress introduced the Teacher Health and Wellness Act (H.R. 4221) in August 2019. This

legislation called on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to conduct a five-year study on

reducing teacher stress and increasing teacher well-being and retention through the

implementation of programs targeting stress management, the use of mentoring and induction

programs to better support new and pre-service teachers, and training programs for administration

In 2020, due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, schools nationwide closed their doors and quickly transitioned to virtual learning. Over the following three years, schools would transition between virtual, hybrid, and in-person learning that was either synchronous or asynchronous. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a lasting impact on the field of education and has contributed to teacher stress (Alves et al., 2021; Lynch, 2021; Tawfik et al., 2021). Before the pandemic, teachers' well-being and quality of life were below that of other professions (Lizana et al., 2021). Their well-being has declined because of working conditions during the pandemic, and teachers' outlook on the teaching profession's future has worsened following the COVID-19 pandemic (Alves et al., 2020; Lizana et al., 2021). Female teachers, particularly those younger than 44, reported significantly reduced quality of life due to the pandemic (Lizana et al., 2021; Oducado et al., 2021). Some teachers reported leaving the profession during the pandemic lockdowns to care for their children who were learning virtually (Dos Santos, 2021). In contrast, others reported time management, technology issues, parenting issues, challenges balancing home-work life, and lack of resources as sources of stress during the pandemic (Dos Santos, 2021). While teacher stress is not a new phenomenon, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a lasting impact on the field of education, and studies are beginning to show the effect of these changes on the teaching profession.

Social Context

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicted that approximately 270,000 teachers would leave the profession between 2016 and 2026, with the most significant proportion among elementary teachers (Torpey, 2018). Additionally, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022)

expects the national employment of secondary school teachers to increase by 5% from 2021 to 2031. In response to national teacher shortages, the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) calls on states, school districts, and higher education institutions to utilize their COVID-19 relief funding to increase the number of qualified teachers ready to enter the profession. Current teacher shortages result from increased demand for qualified staff amidst decreasing teacher availability. It is estimated that approximately 85% of the teacher demand will result from teacher attrition and that the cost of replacing teachers nationally is estimated at eight billion dollars (Sutcher et al., 2016). Teacher attrition increases costs to school systems needing to hire new teachers. It costs a school system approximately $20,000 per new hire (LPI, 2017). These costs represent funding that would better serve the school system if used to improve school buildings, programs, and curricula that directly benefit students.

In addition to the cost of hiring new teachers amidst a teacher shortage, schools are beginning to report the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the educational landscape. U.S. public schools are reporting a significant increase in student and teacher absenteeism since the pandemic's start (Institute of Education Sciences, n.d.). In a recent survey of public school teachers in Texas, increased perceived stress was associated with increased teacher absences, and high school teachers were among those with the highest absenteeism rates (Howard & Howard, 2020). In May 2022, 52% of U.S. public schools reported needing to use alternative means for covering teacher absences "very frequently," including the use of administration, non-certified staff, and other building teachers during their planning periods, due to a lack of substitute teachers and increased teacher absenteeism (Institute of Education Sciences, n.d.).

At the start of the 2021-2022 school year, 64% of U.S. public schools claimed the COVID-19 pandemic played a significant role in student learning losses (Institute of Education Sciences, n.d.). In March 2022, a substantial percentage of parents and school staff reported concerns about meeting students' academic, physical health and safety, social-emotional, and mental health needs. Additionally, a significant percentage of teachers report concerns over their ability to meet the developmental needs of their students. By May 2022, approximately 84% of schools reported that the pandemic had a negative impact on students' behavioral development, and about 87% reported a negative impact on students' social-emotional development (Institute of Education Services, n.d.).

As the School Pulse Panel continues to collect data, more information on the current state of the field of education becomes available. In April 2022, 70% of U.S. public schools reported an increased need for student mental health services, 29% reported an increase in mental health services for teachers and building staff, and 56% of schools were struggling to provide effective mental health services for both their students and their staff (Institute of Education Services, n.d.). In May 2022, approximately 30% of U.S. public schools reported increased cases of bullying, student fighting, and threats. While 56% of schools reported increased classroom behavior issues, 49% reported increased rowdiness outside of the classroom, and 42% reported increased student misuse of technology at school. Additionally, a third of the schools that participated in the survey indicated increased verbal abuse and disrespect of teachers and school staff by the students (Institute of Education Services, n.d.). Teacher stress is not a new phenomenon but is linked to attrition, negatively impacting teachers, their students, and the school (Rasanen et al., 2020; Sanetti et al., 2020). Chronic work-related stress reduces teacher well-being, causing physical and psychological damage to teachers (Abos et al., 2019a). The

teaching profession was reported as having the second highest level of poor psychological well-being due to work-related stress (Johnson et al., 2005). The overall prevalence of mental health disorders was 5-6% higher than the average prevalence in other occupations (Stansfeld et al., 2011). While 6% more teachers reported their health as "fair" or "poor" from 2014 to 2017 (AFT, 2017). Work-related stress and reduced job satisfaction are linked to stress-induced illnesses in teachers (Peltzer et al., 2009). Chronic teacher stress reduces job performance and leads to burnout, which may negatively impact student academic achievement (Abos et al., 2019a; Flook et al., 2013). With the current statistics cited by the School Pulse Panel, teacher stress may continue to rise if something isn't done to remediate the sources of teacher stress and increase teacher resilience.

Teacher stress negatively impacts students' satisfaction with school, their perceptions of teacher caring, and their well-being (Ramberg et al., 2020). Teachers under stress tend to depersonalize their work relationships, withdraw from students and colleagues and exhibit less effective teaching strategies (Abos et al., 2019a; Ramberg et al., 2020). While teacher burnout negatively impacts workplace relationships, increases organizational costs, and is correlated with reduced achievement in math, as indicated on achievement tests (Klusmann et al., 2016; Llorca-Pellicer et al., 2021). Burnout in special education teachers is related to poor quality individualized education plans (IEP), reduced IEP goal attainment, and poor student behavioral and academic outcomes (Brunsting et al., 2014). A link has been noted between increased morning cortisol levels in students whose teachers were experiencing higher levels of burnout, meaning that students' ability to cope with stress at school was reduced due to their teachers' stress levels (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). Students are more engaged in learning environments with supportive teachers; depersonalization is an element of burnout that would

prevent teachers from supporting their students in a manner that effectively meets their learning needs (Klem & Connell, 2004; Ulmanen et al., 2022).

In response to teacher shortages, schools may hire inexperienced or unqualified teacher candidates, cut classes, or increase class sizes, which can harm student achievement and increase stress for teachers working within the school system (Ost, 2014; Sutcher et al., 2016). In May 2022, 60% of the schools, participating in the School Pulse Panel reported needing to hire additional staff (Institute of Education Services, n.d.). Student achievement in math has been reduced by 8.2% to 10% below the mean and 4.9% to 6% below the mean in language arts when teacher turnover rates are at 100% compared to years with zero teacher turnover (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Teacher turnover has had an even more significant impact on students in low-performing schools and African American students (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Teacher stress and burnout are linked to a reduced willingness to implement research-based instructional practices (Aarons et al., 2009; Larson et al., 2018).

In May 2022, 79% of U.S. public schools reported needing more mental health support for their students and staff, 51% reported needing more classroom management training for teachers and staff, and 70% reported needing more training on student social-emotional learning for teachers and staff (Institute of Education Services, n.d.). Research on teacher stress and resilience may benefit teacher preparation programs and professional development (PD) for current teachers. Mansfield et al. (2016) determined a need for revisions to teacher education programs to assist prospective teachers in building resilience before entering the profession. Lack of resilience has been linked to attrition from the teaching profession, justifying training and PD that focuses on coping skills, building resilience, and charting the course for a long and fulfilling career as a teacher (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). Additionally, the insight gained from

my study may benefit school leaders who seek to enhance the well-being of their teachers and cultivate a positive and empowering school culture, causing their students and teachers to thrive and not just survive.

Theoretical Context

Various theoretical lenses have been utilized to examine the problem of teacher stress. Some of those theories include the transactional theory of stress, children's life satisfaction theory, the theory of trauma exposure, the theory of conservation of resources, and the ecological systems theory. The transactional theory of stress was utilized to examine teachers' propensity toward stress and the stress-coping strategies employed by beginning teachers (Bjorndal et al., 2021; Fitchett et al., 2021). Children's life satisfaction theory was used to establish a connection between teacher stress and student school satisfaction (Ramberg et al., 2020). The theory of trauma exposure was used in a study of the degree of trauma exposure experienced by teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Lynch, 2021). A study looking at the impact of school climate on teacher stress and exploring the relationship between teacher burnout, well-being, and resilience used the theory of conservation of resources as the theoretical lens (Buric et al., 2019; Hu et al., 2019). At the same time, the ecological systems theory was used to explore teachers' perceptions of work-related stress and coping strategies (Carroll et al., 2021a).

Among all of the theoretical lenses used to address the problem of teacher stress, the theory of job demands-resources (JD-R) and self-determination theory (SDT) were the most cited within the literature. The theory of JD-R provides a theoretical lens for exploring the dynamic interaction between job demands and job resources in the development of burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001). The theory postulates that burnout results from a lack of resources in the face of job demands or the outcome of job demands that exceed personal or professional

resources to the degree they cause exhaustion. Studies have used the theory of JD-R to explore the impact of burnout and engagement on workplace commitment and attrition, to examine the role of emotional intelligence on work engagement and teachers' perceptions of stress, and on the impact of induction programs on stress in beginning teachers (Harmsen et al., 2019; Merida-Lopez et al., 2019; van der Vaart & de Beer, 2021). The theory of JD-R has been used as a framework to explore the factors that predict burnout in urban teachers, to explain the role of various workplace factors on teacher job satisfaction, and to examine the impact of curriculum changes and teacher self-efficacy on teachers' perceptions of stress (Camacho et al., 2021; Kengatharan, 2020; Putwain & von der Embse, 2019).

Self-determination Theory (SDT) is based on the work of cognitive theorists (Deci & Ryan, 1985). SDT seeks to explain the role of motivation in human behavior, looking at the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on human behavior and the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Gagne & Deci, 2005). It looks at two motivational orientations, autonomous and controlled, and the propensity towards stress and burnout or resilience for an individual prone to either of these orientations (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011). SDT has been used as a framework for exploring teachers' propensity towards stressful thinking and their career choices, examining the relationship between motivation and job commitment, and determining whether a link exists between exposure to work-related stress, basic psychological needs, and teacher well-being (Aldrup et al., 2017; Maryam et al., 2020; Tillman et al., 2020). SDT has been selected as the theoretical lens to frame the current research project.

Problem Statement

The problem is a national teacher shortage resulting from growing teacher stress in work environments that do not support their basic psychological needs. The proposed research seeks to uncover teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience. In a national survey of schools in the US, at least 60% of school districts reported teacher shortages (Buttner, 2021). At the same time, a study on teacher attrition said that 50% of teachers intend to leave the profession (Rasanen et al., 2020). The most commonly cited reasons for leaving the teaching profession include work demands and student discipline problems, which are also known sources of teacher stress (Abos et al., 2019b; Camacho & Parham, 2019; Coyle et al., 2020; Fitchett et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021; Rasanen et al., 2020). Teacher stress may be the primary cause of teacher shortages, and SDT has been used as a framework for exploring teachers' experiences with work-related stress and the fulfillment of basic psychological needs on teacher well-being, work motivation, and commitment (Aldrup et al., 2017; Maryam et al., 2020; Sanetti et al., 2020; Tillman et al., 2020). Understanding teachers' experiences with stress is essential to creating strategies that reduce teacher stress, burnout, and attrition, and few studies have focused on secondary school teachers' stress in the US (Lizana et al., 2021). Growing teacher shortages are further compounded by the decreasing quality of life and well-being reported by teachers, following the pandemic, due to work-related stress (Alves et al., 2020; Buttner, 2021; Lizana et al., 2021). This study seeks to uncover high school teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience, gaining insight into their lived experiences to inform the creation of academic and workplace systems that will enhance teacher well-being through stress reduction and building resilience.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe public high school teachers'

experiences of work-related stress and resilience in the state of CT, using SDT as a framework

for understanding teachers' work motivation, commitment, and propensity towards resilient

behaviors. Additionally, the study may provide insight to support school leaders in creating

workplace systems that better support teachers in building resilience. Stress creates negative

physical and psychological consequences that resilience may mediate (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011).

Resilience is an intrinsic trait often found within autonomously motivated individuals and may

be bolstered by fulfilling the individual's basic psychological needs (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011).

For this study, teacher stress will be generally defined as negative emotions resulting from

various workplace experiences (Kyriacou, 2001). Furthermore, resilience will be defined as

managing challenges and maintaining one's commitment to the classroom (Gu & Day, 2013).

Significance of the Study

The current study seeks to add to the current body of knowledge by providing insight into

high school teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience and extending the

existing literature on teacher stress through qualitative data focusing on high school teachers in

the US. Capturing teachers' experiences will provide school leadership with insight that could

contribute to creating workplace systems that address and remediate teacher stress.

Theoretical Significance

Self-determination theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), explains the role

of motivation in human behavior. Self-determination is characterized by flexibility in managing

the interaction between oneself and the environment. Individuals must have control over the

outcomes of their behavior for the behavior to be self-determined but having control does not

always produce self-determined behaviors. SDT distinguishes intrinsic and extrinsic motivation's roles in human behavior to achieve all human beings' three basic psychological needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Weinstein and Ryan (2011) extended the theory to explain the impact of autonomous or controlled motivation on stress incursion, citing evidence of resilient characteristics in an autonomously motivated individual. Furthermore, an environment that supports an individual's three basic psychological needs may increase their propensity towards autonomously motivated behaviors and, subsequently, increased well-being (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011). Individual differences in personality and motivation orientations may result in increased resilience, but environmental factors can further support those individuals or encourage them to respond more favorably to stress (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011).

School cultures that provide teachers with support from leadership and colleagues, opportunities for collaboration and shared decision-making, and the development of healthy relationships in the workplace also support the fulfillment of basic psychological needs (Chiu, 2022; Ford et al. 2019; Kaplan, 2021). A school culture that supports teachers' basic psychological needs will encourage self-determined behaviors, promoting persistence, resilience, effective teaching practices, job satisfaction, a positive work environment, and teacher well-being (Gagne & Deci, 2005; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020; Vermote et al., 2022; Weinstein & Ryan, 2011). While the self-determined behaviors of an autonomously motivated individual may be seen as a means of persistence or resilience, in the face of chronic workplace stress, additional research is needed on the impact of teacher stress and the fulfillment of the three basic psychological needs (Abos et al., 2019b). My study will extend the theory of self-determination

by providing insight into high school teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience and the fulfillment of their basic psychological needs in the workplace.

Empirical Significance

The current study will use a phenomenological approach to gain insight into teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience and is a departure from the use of questionnaire-based research designs (Garcia-Carmona, Marin, & Aguayo, 2019; Kyriacou, 2001). Teachers' perceptions impact how they respond to stress and their propensity towards resilience, and resilience is linked to workplace commitment, self-efficacy, and motivation for teaching (Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019). Resilience is an intrinsic characteristic related to reduced stress and greater well-being (Soykan et al., 2019). It is preventative against attrition and depends upon a dynamic interaction between the individual's intrinsic characteristics and environment (Flores, 2020). A strong sense of purpose, high levels of emotional intelligence, and adaptability are some intrinsic characteristics of resilient behaviors (Daniilidou et al., 2020; Schussler et al., 2018). The dynamic interaction between inherent characteristics and the environment further highlights the importance of school culture in supporting resilient behaviors among teachers.

Much of the cited research on resilience has been done on children rather than adults, and there needs to be more research on teacher resilience in the US, particularly in the area of resilience and teacher retention and effectiveness (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). Teacher stress is the primary cause of teacher shortages (Sanetti et al., 2020). Despite this fact, few empirical studies on teacher stress have focused on teachers in the US, and there is limited information on the impact of the fulfillment of the basic psychological needs of teachers and their ability to cope with stress (Abos et al., 2019b; Fitchett et al., 2021). Additional research is also needed on the

psychological resources secondary teachers must employ to cope with work-related stress (Soykan et al., 2019). Additionally, research is required on teacher resilience in preventing future burnout and adverse mental health (Buric et al., 2019). There is a need for systems that support teacher well-being and reduce their stress (Camacho et al., 2021; Carroll et al., 2021a). The more we learn about teacher stress and well-being, the better we can create interventions that remediate their work-related stress (Alves et al., 2021; Soykan et al., 2019). The current study will expand the literature on teacher stress and resilience by providing insight into the subjective nature of the stress response, including examining the psychological resources teachers use to cope with work-related stress, and extending the literature on teacher stress in the US.

Practical Significance

Teacher stress impacts the entire school community, not just the individual teacher (Sanetti et al., 2020). Stress is a contagion in the workplace, and teacher attrition and workplace fatigue have been shown to increase within a school culture that is predominated by stress-prone colleagues (Fitchett et al., 2021). Teachers who are engaged in their workplace are less anxious, report fewer feelings of stress, and can better maintain positive relationships in the workplace (Abos et al., 2019a). Chronic teacher stress often results in burnout and attrition from the profession (Fitchett et al., 2021). Teacher attrition costs a school system approximately $20,000 per new hire, and workload is the most significant factor impacting burnout (Llorca-Pellicer et al., 2021; LPI, 2017). As work demands increase, teacher burnout increases (Llorca-Pellicer et al., 2021).

Teacher burnout is associated with anxiety, depression, reduced workplace engagement, and increased professional dissatisfaction (Abos et al., 2019a). Burnout reduces teacher well-being and negatively impacts students' academic achievement (Brunsting et al., 2014; Ronfeldt

et al., 2013). Increases in teacher burnout are linked to reduced student achievement on standardized testing and reduced attainment of students' IEP goals (Brunsting et al., 2014; Klusmann et al., 2016). Reductions in students' ability to cope with school stress may result from interactions with highly stressed teachers (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). Students report reduced satisfaction with school, reduced academic achievement and perception of their academic efficacy, reduced perceptions of teacher caring, and reduced well-being due to teacher stress (Carroll et al., 2021b; Ramberg et al., 2020). Students perceive stressed teachers as less effective in managing the classroom and supporting their students (Carroll et al., 2021b). Additional research on teacher stress and resilience will provide necessary insight that may lead to the development of systems that support teachers in facing the daily challenges of their careers and increase academic excellence for students (Carroll et al., 2021a; Drew & Sosnowski, 2019).

Research Questions

Research questions were designed to uncover the phenomenon of high school teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience in public schools in CT in recent years. The research questions seek to discover their experiences with work-related stress and resilience through uncovering information on common sources of teacher work-related stress. The research questions also explore intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation among teachers experiencing work-related stress and resilience.

Central Research Question

What are public high school teachers' (grades 9-12) experiences with work-related stress and resilience?

Sub-Question One

How do public high school teachers describe their experiences with work-related stress?

Sub-Question Two

How do public high school teachers describe their experiences with resilience in the workplace?

Sub-Question Three

What motivates public high school teachers to persist in the face of workplace challenges and stress?

Definitions

1. *Burnout* – Burnout results from workplace stress and is characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced efficacy (WHO, 2019).

2. *Emotional intelligence* – Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and monitor one's emotions and the emotions of others, allowing the information to impact your thoughts and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

3. *Growth mindset* – A growth mindset views challenges as opportunities for growth and learning rather than failures and setbacks to be endured (Dweck, 2016).

4. *Resilience* – Resilience is defined as the ability to manage challenges while maintaining one's commitment (Gu & Day, 2013).

5. *Self-determination* – Self-determination is the capacity to choose one's actions (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

6. *Self-efficacy* – Self-efficacy results from personal belief in one's capacity to accomplish a task or goal, impacting motivation and persistence (Bandura, 1977).

7. *Teacher stress* – Teacher stress is defined as negative emotions that result from various workplace experiences (Kyriacou, 2001).

8. *Teacher well-being* – Teacher well-being is characterized by open, engaged, and healthy functioning (Alfayez et al., 2021).

Summary

The ongoing national teacher shortages and rising attrition rates demand a greater understanding of teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience (Buttner, 2021; Dos Santos, 2021; Torpey, 2018). Teaching has historically been cited as one of the most stressful professions (Gallup, 2014; Johnson et al., 2005; Metlife, 2021). Chronic stress leads to burnout and reduced job performance, negatively impacting student performance (Abos et al., 2019a; Flook et al., 2013; Klusmann et al., 2016). Teacher stress may be the primary cause of teacher shortages, and few studies have focused on teacher stress among secondary teachers in the US (Lizana et al., 2021).

Teacher attrition increases costs to school systems needing to hire new teachers (Llorca-Pellicer et al., 2021; LPI, 2017). Teacher attrition may also result in hiring unqualified or inexperienced teachers, cutting classes, or increasing class sizes, all of which negatively impact the quality of student learning (Ost, 2014; Sutcher et al., 2016). The present study seeks to describe public high school teachers' experiences of work-related stress and resilience in the state of CT, using SDT as a framework for understanding teachers' work motivation, commitment, and propensity toward resilient behaviors, to provide insight that may support school leadership in the creation of workplace systems that better support teachers in building resilience.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A systematic literature review was conducted to explore the problem of teacher stress and resilience as it relates to teacher well-being, burnout, and attrition. This chapter will review the current literature related to the topic of study. The first section will review the self-determination theory as a framework for the study. In the following section, a synthesis of recent literature regarding teacher stress, well-being, burnout, attrition, and the impact of COVID-19 will be presented. In the final section, a review of current literature on resilience, self-efficacy, self-determination, and emotional intelligence will be synthesized, and possible stress-reduction strategies will be reviewed, leading to a gap in the literature and a presentation of the viability and the need for the current study.

Theoretical Framework

Self-determination theory (SDT) focuses on motivation and human behavior, specifically intrinsic and extrinsic motivation's role in behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Intrinsically motivated behaviors are the result of internal rewards or an internal interest in the behavior or outcome of the behavior. In contrast, extrinsically motivated behaviors are the result of an external reward or to achieve compliance. SDT was built upon the work of cognitive theorists and developed by Deci and Ryan (1985) to explore the relationship between behavior and outcomes and explain the impact of motivation on human behavior.

Self-determination is characterized by flexibility in managing the interaction between oneself and their environment or the ability to control the environment and its behavioral outcomes, including giving up control (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Individuals must have control over the results of their behavior for the behavior to be self-determined but having control does not

always produce self-determined behaviors. Self-determination involves choice, not coercion or obligation, is based on the needs of the individual, and is an integral part of intrinsic motivation. The ability to choose one's actions and the outcomes of those actions are the cornerstones of self-determined behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Some behaviors are intentionally chosen while others are not; autonomous motivation and controlled motivation are terms used to distinguish between these behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gagne & Deci, 2005). Intrinsic motivation is a form of autonomous motivation, as it involves choice (Gagne & Deci, 2005). At the same time, controlled motivation involves using extrinsic rewards to cause a person to engage in an activity. Both autonomous and controlled motivation produce intentional behaviors and contrast with amotivation, or the lack of intention or motivation to engage in an activity. While extrinsic motivation tends to be a form of controlled motivation, with an external locus of control, an individual can internalize the extrinsic motivation, thereby shifting the locus of control. Gagne & Deci (2005) refer to this phenomenon as the controlled to autonomous motivation continuum. When an extrinsically motivated behavior becomes internalized, it is considered self-determined because it becomes an integral part of the person (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

SDT provides a framework for understanding the subjective nature of stress and the powerful impact of resilience in reducing the adverse effects of the stress response (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011). An individual's motivational orientation, which their personality may partially dictate, determines how they self-regulate their behaviors and coping styles. Autonomously motivated individuals tend to exhibit more resilient behaviors and are better able to process the emotions that emerge from stressful situations and view stressful situations as challenges to overcome (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011).

SDT highlights the three basic psychological needs inherent to all human beings. These basic psychological needs are the underlying factors for intrinsic motivation or internalized extrinsic motivation. The three psychological needs are competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Gagne & Deci, 2005). According to SDT, individuals need to feel connected to others, capable of effectively accomplishing the task, and have the autonomy to choose to engage in a behavior and control the outcome of that behavior to fulfill their basic psychological needs (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

A supportive school culture promotes autonomous motivation, enhances well-being, and reduces teacher stress by creating an environment where teachers can fulfill their basic psychological needs (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011). A school culture that promotes teachers' basic psychological needs will encourage intrinsic motivation and the internalization of extrinsically motivated behaviors, thereby promoting persistence, effective teaching practices, job satisfaction, a positive work environment, and teacher well-being (Gagne & Deci, 2005). While a school culture that does not support the fulfillment of teachers' basic psychological needs will promote controlled motivation linked to increased stress incursion (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011).

Self-determined behaviors may be a means of persistence in the face of chronic work-related stress. At the same time, self-determination and resilience may explain why some teachers remain in the profession, despite chronic workplace stressors. The present study seeks to advance the self-determination theory by highlighting teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience and uncovering their motivations for persisting through chronic work-related stress.

Related Literature

A common theme emerged from the literature on teacher stress and resilience. Teacher stress causes adverse outcomes for the teacher, their students, and the school community, while resilience is an intrinsic trait that is preventative against the adverse effects of stress. Self-efficacy, self-determination, and emotional intelligence were often connected to resilience and viewed as preventative against stress and burnout. The following is a discussion of the current literature on teacher stress and resilience.

Teacher Stress and Well-being

In a survey of 26 occupations, teaching was among the top six most stressful occupations (Johnson et al., 2005). Secondary school teachers often report greater stress levels than elementary teachers (Alson, 2019; Kongcharoen et al., 2019). Individual perception of the psychological demand of the teaching profession impacts the degree of stress experienced over time (Harmsen et al., 2019). Teachers who experience more stress report worsening mental health and more difficulties coping and teaching, while those with greater resilience are more likely to report ease in coping and teaching (Baker et al., 2021). Teacher stress is associated with reduced student satisfaction in school, reduced student perceptions of the teacher as a caring individual, and reduced student academic achievement and well-being (Ramberg et al., 2020). As perceptions of teaching difficulties and negative perspectives of the future of the profession increase, negative perceptions of professional well-being also increase, and teachers with low levels of well-being are less able to promote the well-being of their students (Alves et al., 2021; Stapleton et al., 2020). Daily stress exposure both in and out of the classroom, including a heavy workload and lack of resources to accomplish the job, harms teacher well-being because stress exposure inhibits satisfaction of basic psychological needs; less stress exposure is linked to more

teacher competence and feelings of relatedness to students and colleagues (Aldrup et al., 2017; Llorca-Pellicer et al., 2021). Stress exposure and well-being depend on the dynamic interaction between environmental factors and subjective reality.

Teacher well-being is characterized by the ability to make wise instructional and management decisions and maintain healthy relationships with students and colleagues (Murphy et al., 2021). It is not the absence of stress but the ability to process and cope with stress that promotes healthy functioning and builds resilience (Murphy et al., 2021; Soykan et al., 2019). According to teachers, their well-being impacts their teaching practice, job satisfaction, motivation, and feelings of accomplishment (Murphy et al., 2021). Positive emotions, healthy relationships, and workplace achievement are the components of well-being with the most significant impact on job satisfaction (Dreer, 2021). Higher teacher job satisfaction is connected to higher feelings of well-being and is not dependent on the teacher's age, gender, or years of experience (Dreer, 2021). Teacher well-being is also connected to teaching quality, commitment to the profession, effectiveness in the classroom, student well-being, and school culture, and is mediated by the satisfaction of teachers' basic psychological needs (Alfayez et al., 2021; Alves et al., 2021). Work engagement and resilience are often indicators of teacher well-being; teachers' reactions to daily stress, based on their resilience, impact their well-being (Almeida, 2005; Klusmann et al., 2008).

Teacher well-being is connected to school location, and grade level taught, while less experienced teachers report more emotional exhaustion when they do not relate well to their students (Aldrup et al., 2017; Alves et al., 2021). Daily stress exposure, both in and out of the classroom, hurts teacher well-being because stress exposure inhibits the satisfaction of an individual's basic psychological needs (Aldrup et al., 2017). Teachers exposed to less stress

report greater feelings of competence and relatedness to colleagues and students (Aldrup et al., 2017). While their-well-being decreases as their perception of teaching difficulties and negative perspectives of the profession's future increase, teachers who report greater happiness also report lower stress (Alves et al., 2021; Merida-Lopez et al., 2022). Emotional intelligence impacts one's ability to cope with stress; the ability to perceive and regulate one's emotions is connected to greater teacher well-being (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Merida-Lopez et al., 2022). This link between emotional intelligence and teacher well-being further highlights the individual nature of the stress response and the importance of workplace culture.

Stress can be a catalyst for mental health disorders, and increased job demands cause an increase in teacher burnout and ill health (Hakanen et al., 2006; Lucas-Mangas et al., 2022)., Teacher well-being is connected to instructional effectiveness, workplace commitment, student well-being, and school culture, and teachers who engage in self-care report greater well-being (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Alves et al., 2021). School systems should support their staff in building resilience and a strong professional identity by providing opportunities for professional success and supporting healthy collegial relationships and healthy coping strategies (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Lucas-Mangas et al., 2022; Stapleton et al., 2020). The literature indicates that changes within teacher education programs and school systems are needed to support teachers better throughout their careers.

Coping strategies should be taught in teacher education programs, as today's students are tomorrow's teachers, and their ability to cope with stress has been linked to academic achievement (Gustems-Carnicer et al., 2019). In addition to supporting teachers in building resilience and coping strategies, learning-centered leadership is directly related to teacher well-being and strongly correlated to organizational well-being, a manageable workload, and student

well-being, suggesting that school leadership can cultivate a school culture that fosters resilience and reduces teacher stress (Alfayez et al., 2021). Support from colleagues, observing student growth, and the ability to grow professionally are hallmarks of a healthy school culture that support teacher well-being and promote teacher work motivation (Kaynak, 2020). A greater understanding of teachers' experiences with stress and their sources of stress is necessary to address the issue of teacher well-being effectively.

Sources of Teacher Stress

The sources of teacher stress are individual and based on a dynamic interaction between the objective nature of the stressors and the subjective nature of the individual's perception of those stressors, with individual perception dictating the severity of the stress (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Almeida, 2005; Schussler et al., 2018). Teacher stress levels depend on the amount of stress experienced in the workplace and the degree of support received in the workplace and at home (Johnson et al., 2005). Despite the individual nature of teacher stress, some common themes exist within the literature. Research has shown teacher stress to result from systematic, organizational, relational, or interpersonal stress, sometimes referred to as task-based, role-related, or work events stress (Carroll et al., 2021a; Masoom, 2021). Task-based stress is stress related to specific tasks, role-related stress is related to particular aspects of a teacher's role, and work events stress is connected to specific work events or occasions that cause stress in the individual (Masoom, 2021). The researcher's perception is that school culture can either suppress or enhance the impact of work-related stress on teachers.

The school's culture plays a significant role in teacher stress, and some work environments are more prone to stress than others (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Hu et al., 2019). Teacher professionalism, both individual and collective, and the leadership style employed by

the school administration, as components of the school culture impact teacher stress (Hu et al., 2019). Teachers teaching outside their certification area, connected to more significant workplace fatigue, report higher stress levels (Fitchett et al., 2021). While teachers working in schools with a high proportion of minority and economically-disadvantaged students also report increased stress levels, some teachers report stress related to staffing shortages and a lack of qualified staff to work in the school (Coyle et al., 2020; Fitchett et al., 2021). New or less experienced teachers report experiencing more stress, with 70% of those teachers reporting their stress levels to be moderate to high, over more experienced teachers, while education level impacted perceived stress and resilience, with higher education levels reporting more pressure but also greater resilience (Agai-Demjaha et al., 2015; Almeida, 2005). Finally, individuals aged 25-59 report higher levels of daily stress, and more severe stress, than those 60-74 years old (Almeida, 2005). Despite the varying degrees of stress experienced by teachers, the sources of their stress are consistent throughout the literature.

There is a significant negative relationship between stress exposure in the classroom and work motivation; as stress increases, emotional exhaustion increases, and work motivation decreases (Aldrup et al., 2017). Teachers have reported numerous stressors contributing to their workplace fatigue, reduced occupational commitment, and motivation for the teaching profession (Fitchett et al., 2021; Klusmann et al., 2008). Teacher stressors appear to result from things within and outside of a teachers' locus of control, including systemic issues resulting from state and local policies, school community issues, school culture, and classroom issues. Systemic stressors include poor work conditions, lack of resources, miscommunication and unclear directives, too much administrative oversight and insufficient administrative support, low salary and professional status, time pressure, and workload (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Alson, 2019;

Camacho & Parham, 2019; Faheem & Rashid, 2020; Kaynak, 2020; Kongcharoen et al., 2019; Stapleton et al., 2020). School community stressors include a school culture that doesn't support teacher autonomy and collegiality among colleagues, pressure from high-stakes testing, curriculum changes, teaching outside of one's certification area, and class size (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Camacho & Parham, 2019; Faheem & Rashid, 2020; Kaynak, 2020; Murphy et al., 2021; Putwain & von der Embse, 2019). At the same time, common sources of classroom stress include student misbehavior and ineffective classroom management, student aggression and behavioral health issues, student motivation, and poor interpersonal relationships with students (Alson, 2019; Camacho & Parham, 2019; Faheem & Rashid, 2020; Kaynak, 2020; Murphy et al., 2021).

Student misbehavior has been linked to amotivation and is a source of teacher stress impacting teacher competence and the ability to effectively manage one's classroom, a dimension of autonomy, predicts susceptibility to stress, workplace fatigue, and occupational commitment (Abos et al., 2019b; Fitchett et al., 2021). A lack of shared decision-making impacts teacher autonomy and relatedness, while social barriers resulting from a lack of collegiality between teachers and school leadership impact teachers' feelings of relatedness (Abos et al., 2019b). Among the many sources of teacher stress, the workload has been reported as the most detrimental factor to teacher well-being and resilience, impacting all three basic psychological needs (Abos et al., 2019b; Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019).

Chronic stress in one's personal life, such as caring for a sick family member, made individuals more reactive to daily stressors, and daily stressors significantly affect the individual's daily routines and well-being (Almeida, 2005). Chronic stress leads to burnout. Some common sources of burnout include increased workload, lack of autonomy, lack of

recognition, poor quality of social interactions, unfair or inequitable treatment, value conflict, and a wrong fit between the teacher and the school (Coyle et al., 2020; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Chronic stress is linked to burnout, teacher attrition, and the current staffing shortages in the United States.

Teacher Burnout and Attrition

Teacher burnout results from workplace stress, which increases as work demands increase and is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or cynicism, and reduced accomplishment (Alson, 2019; Buric et al., 2019; Llorca-Pellicer et al., 2021; Makhdoom et al., 2019; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; WHO, 2019). Burnout is a phenomenon of stress that exhibits itself in the form of anxiety and depression along with physical symptoms like headaches, gastrointestinal distress, muscle tension, hypertension, difficulties sleeping, and cold and flu symptoms (Abos et al., 2019a; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Burnout has been shown to increase negative emotions, increase poor mental health, and reduce well-being and the ability to employ coping skills (Buric et al., 2019; Christian-Brandt et al., 2020). In the presence of burnout, personal resources like emotional intelligence, resilience, and coping skills, begin to deteriorate (Buric et al., 2019). Negative work behaviors, including low organizational commitment, absenteeism, and increased attrition, are associated with burnout (Abos et al., 2019a; Makhdoom et al., 2019; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; van der Vaart & de Beer, 2021). There is a dynamic relationship between burnout and work engagement, where work engagement is viewed as the desire to avoid burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

Emotional exhaustion leads to depersonalization, distancing oneself from various work aspects, and is a negative means of coping with burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Teacher emotional exhaustion reduces autonomous motivation and increases students' perception of low

teacher support in the classroom (Shen et al., 2015). Emotional exhaustion and depersonalization negatively correlate to teacher self-efficacy, indicating a reciprocal relationship between teacher self-efficacy and burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Autonomy, workload, and relationships also have an impact on emotional exhaustion and feelings of relatedness, with a greater workload corresponding to greater emotional exhaustion, less job satisfaction, and reduced teacher well-being (Dreer, 2021; van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014; Hakanen et al., 2006; Murphy et al., 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Burnout is impacted by both the teacher's intrinsic traits and environment.

Teacher burnout is affected by workplace and personal factors that extend beyond autonomous or controlled motivation for teaching (Eyal & Roth, 2010). Teachers are at greater risk for burnout when the demands on their commitment and resources increase, when they lack autonomy in the workplace when demands outside of the classroom interfere with accomplishing classroom tasks, and when surrounded by incompetent or unmotivated teachers creating discontent in the workplace (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Harmsen et al., 2019; Kengatharan, 2020; Llorca-Pellicer et al., 2021; Wronowski, 2018). Coyle et al. (2020) found that 84% of teachers had to bring work home to meet deadlines, 60% felt overburdened by their work responsibilities, 54% did not feel included in work-related decision-making, and 50% felt that circumstances outside their control often impacted their schedule. Additionally, 54% of teachers felt they were not appropriately compensated for their work, 40% felt isolated while completing work tasks, 34% cited lacking resources to do their job, and 19% cited conflict between their personal and professional values and responsibilities assigned to them by school leadership (Coyle et al., 2020). Social-emotional and professional support has been shown to reduce

emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, thereby increasing personal accomplishment and reducing the impact of burnout on teachers (Camacho et al., 2021).

Experiencing any of the dimensions of burnout, which is subjective, increases the likelihood that the teacher will leave the profession, while positive mental health has been shown to reduce the impact of burnout (Hakanen et al., 2006; Li et al., 2021; Lucas-Mangas et al., 2022; Merida-Lopes & Extremara, 2022). Reasons for leaving the profession include workload and work pressure, lack of commitment to the profession, social and environmental challenges in the school, including student discipline problems, lack of autonomy, disempowerment, and disappointment with societal and educational changes in the school system (Alson, 2019; Harmsen et al., 2019; Kengatharan, 2020; Li et al., 2021; Rasanen et al., 2020; Wronowski, 2018). While positive work relationships, professional fulfillment, and encouraging school culture and leadership have been cited as reasons to remain in the teaching profession (Flores, 2020).

More autonomously motivated teachers will be more engaged in the workplace, as intrinsic motivation impacts organizational commitment and is linked to feelings of belonging, relatedness, and loyalty (Li et al., 2015; Maryam et al., 2020; Weinstein & Ryan, 2011). Autonomous motivation increases and basic psychological needs are more likely to be fulfilled when teachers' personal values align with organizational values (Li et al., 2015). Job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion predict teacher attrition, while principal, teacher, and student satisfaction with the school culture supports teacher job satisfaction (Dicke et al., 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Teachers' intentions to leave the profession remained over time, but their reasons for leaving were fluid (Rasanen et al., 2020). The fluidity of their reasons alludes to a

continuous internal negotiation over leaving the profession, which negatively impacts job satisfaction (Rasanen et al., 2020).

Teacher commitment should be viewed as the collective responsibility of all people involved in the school and begins with appropriate integration into the profession and workplace, as a sense of belonging is associated with reduced emotional exhaustion and enhanced job satisfaction (Jo, 2014; Kaplan, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). A positive relationship exists between job resources, engagement, and organizational commitment (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). When teacher values are consistent with workplace values, when they feel supported by leadership, and when they experience positive relationships with colleagues and parents, they experience greater feelings of belonging and relatedness (Canrinus et al., 2012; Kabito & Wami, 2020; Kassis et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Teachers are more engaged and experience greater job fulfillment when their values are aligned with the organization's values and are more resilient in the face of burnout when they set professional learning goals, thereby strengthening their commitment to the teaching profession (Li et al., 2015; Li et al., 2021). Current burnout levels are predictive of future burnout levels, burnout impacts teacher self-efficacy, and teacher emotional intelligence is related to burnout, affecting the quality of student-teacher relationships, classroom culture, and academic achievement (Kim & Buric, 2020; Oberle et al., 2020). Without intervention, the negative consequences of teacher burnout can have a lasting impact on teachers and the future of the teaching profession (Kim & Buric, 2020). In light of the additional stressors placed on teachers and school districts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is recommended that something be done to improve working conditions for all teachers.

Impact of COVID-19

In 2020, due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, schools nationwide closed their doors and quickly transitioned to remote learning. Amid health concerns and various state regulations, schools navigated a season of approximately three years involving a transition between remote, hybrid, and in-person learning. The COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequent changes to the learning environment, have had a lasting impact on the field of education and contributed to teacher stress. Before the pandemic, teachers' well-being and quality of life were below that of other professions, with many teachers reporting a moderate level of satisfaction with the teaching profession (Alves et al., 2020; Lizana et al., 2021). Following the pandemic, teacher well-being has continued to decline, with teachers reporting higher levels of stress, decreased mental health, and reductions in their quality of life because of working conditions during the pandemic, impacting their outlook on the future of the teaching profession (Alves et al., 2020; Karakose et al., 2022; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021; Panadero et al., 2022; Sanchez-Pujalte et al., 2021).

Numerous studies have examined teachers' demographics and their stress and well-being levels. Teachers and staff reported higher rates of traumatic stress than administrators, with K-12 teachers reporting higher stress levels than teachers of higher education due to the pandemic (Lynch, 2021; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021; Panadero et al., 2022). Approximately 50% of teachers surveyed reported stress, 49% reported anxiety, and 32% reported depression following the pandemic-related school closures (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021). Female teachers, particularly those younger than 44, reported a significant reduction in their quality of life, increased stress, and reduced work motivation due to the pandemic, while teachers over the age of 47 reported higher levels of anxiety (Lizana et al., 2021; Oducado et al., 2021; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021; Panadero et al., 2022; Sanchez-Pujalte et al., 2021). Public school

teachers with the majority of their students coming from low socioeconomic homes, teachers with 16-24 years of experience, and teachers with children at home during the school closures reported the most significant decrease in well-being due to the pandemic (Kosir et al., 2020; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021; Panadero et al., 2022). While teachers with three years, or less, of teaching experience, reported the highest levels of depression, stress, and burnout (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021; Sanchez-Pujalte et al., 2021).

Teacher experiences with stress varied across the demographics; however, some common themes persist in the sources of teacher stress and well-being. Lack of connection with others, the challenges of teaching online and technology issues, the challenge of balancing home-work life and creating healthy work hours, lack of student engagement and parental support, concerns over student well-being, and inequity in academic access for students and their families were cited as sources of stress during the pandemic (An et al., 2021; Baker et al., 2021; Dos Santos, 2021; Kaden, 2020; Panadero et al., 2022; Tawfik et al., 2021). In a survey of teacher experiences with online learning during the pandemic, years of teaching experience did not impact teacher self-efficacy in remote learning, and most participants felt confident in their ability to teach online (An et al., 2021; Pressley, 2021). Half of the participants found online teaching to be challenging but rewarding, and 60% found online education to be stressful, while some teachers reported leaving the profession during the pandemic lockdowns to care for their children who were learning at home (An et al., 2021; Dos Santos, 2021). The highest self-reported teacher self-efficacy scores were among teachers who taught all in-person classes, while self-efficacy scores were reduced among those who taught hybrid and all remote classes during the pandemic (Pressley, 2021).

Student engagement in online learning was impacted by their parent's education level, inequities in academic access, access to social-emotional learning activities, the provision of multiple modalities for remote learning, and increased communication between the school and families (Domina et al., 2021). Parents who had access to other parents in their child's class reported greater student engagement in online learning, while families reported inconsistencies across the varying methods for remote instruction and the amount of time their children were engaged in learning (Becker et al., 2020; Domina et al., 2021). Additionally, children with ADHD reported more significant challenges with remote learning than their peers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Becker et al., 2020). These inconsistencies and challenges students face will likely result in more significant challenges for the teachers who teach them in the post-pandemic classroom, which may be an additional source of work-related teacher stress.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, remote learning has harmed school culture and social-emotional learning (Lynch, 2021; Tawfik et al., 2021). Reductions in teacher well-being will likely impact student well-being, as happiness is positively and loneliness is negatively related to the quality of life (Karakose et al., 2022; Lynch, 2021; Tawfik et al., 2021). Students and teachers reported a lack of support for student competence and relatedness in online learning and a need for additional means of engaging students academically and emotionally during the COVID-19 school closures (Chiu, 2021). Teachers reported less happiness and hope and more anxiety, nervousness, and sadness due to the pandemic and school closures (Panadero et al., 2022). While increases in felt insecurity due to the uncertainty of the pandemic led to decreased life satisfaction and increased depression and anxiety among teachers (Vermote et al., 2022). Increased negative mental and physical well-being among teachers due to the pandemic requires

a greater understanding of teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience (Lynch, 2021; Oducado et al., 2021; Pressley, 2021).

Despite the increase in teacher stress due to the pandemic, some positive outcomes have been gleaned from the literature. Teachers and students reported the autonomy and supportive nature of online learning, providing opportunities for students to build lifelong learning skills (Chiu, 2021). Teachers who reportedly engaged in collaborative problem-solving with their colleagues reported lower levels of stress and increased feelings of self-efficacy in their ability to effectively use technology during online learning (Kosir et al., 2020; Tawfik et al., 2021). Perceived support from school administration decreased teacher work-related stress during the pandemic, and teachers with higher levels of emotional intelligence and greater socioemotional coping skills, like empathy, emotional regulation, and relational skills, experienced less burnout than their colleagues (Kosir et al., 2020; Sanchez-Pujalte et al., 2021). The literature on teacher stress and well-being during the pandemic highlights the need for additional research on teacher experiences with work-related stress and resilience to understand better and prevent teacher stress and burnout.

Teachers Show Resilience to Work-Related Stress

Resilience is defined as the ability to manage challenges while maintaining one's commitment, involving the individual's perception of both personal and environmental factors (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Gu & Day, 2013). Resilience is positively related to personal accomplishment and is predictive of burnout and stress as indicated by the individual's ability to adapt to their environment and successfully employ personal strategies (Buric et al., 2019; Daniilidou et al., 2020; Iannucci et al., 2020). Teachers who view challenges as opportunities to learn and grow, embrace change and uncertainty, and who have a strong sense of purpose are

more resilient and more likely to remain in the teaching profession (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019; Flores, 2020; Schussler et al., 2018; Toom et al., 2015). Resilience is the ability to distance one's emotions from their work, connected to the individual's emotional intelligence and perseverance, and to cope with failure, which positively impacts well-being and promotes work satisfaction (Flores, 2020; Kamboj & Garg, 2021; Klusman et al., 2008; Schussler et al., 2018). A positive personality, characterized by optimism and proactivity, motivation, focusing on things within one's control, and social and leadership support, were cited by teachers as reasons to remain in the profession, strengthening their resilience and organizational commitment (Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019; Flores, 2020).

Leadership qualities impact teacher stress, motivation, and emotional exhaustion (Carroll et al., 2021a; Eyal & Roth, 2010). Teachers with low self-esteem report higher stress levels, while teachers who report feeling supported by their colleagues and leadership have lower stress levels and greater resilience (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Masoom, 2021). Highly engaged and resilient teachers outperform other teachers and positively impact the school culture, as stress is contagious (Fitchett et al., 2021; Klusman et al., 2008). Teacher attrition and workplace fatigue increase in environments with a greater proportion of stress-prone colleagues (Fitchett et al., 2021). Colleagues' behavior and relationships with school leadership influence teachers' physical health, stress, and career decisions (Dos Santos, 2021). Supportive relationships within the workplace have improved teachers' outlook on their profession and work motivation.

Positive teacher-student relationships result in increased job satisfaction in teachers, while poor teacher-student relationships result in depersonalization (Flores, 2020; Jo, 2014). It is theorized that positive teacher-student relationships cause greater job satisfaction and personal accomplishment than any other professional teacher relationships, impacting all three dimensions

of burnout (van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014). Positive teacher-teacher and teacher-principal relationships are directly related to work commitment, with support from colleagues acting as a buffer, protecting teachers from burnout (van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014; Jo, 2014). Leadership plays a vital role in providing teachers with autonomy which supports them in better coping with stress and building agency, while higher levels of positive emotions are associated with increased teacher commitment and resilience (van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014; Jo, 2014). Teacher resilience depends on the interaction between their internal coping strategies and their environment, establishing a link between self-determination, school culture, and resilience (Flores, 2020).

Resilience is linked to a strong commitment to the teaching profession, self-efficacy, and motivation for teaching and is a component of psychological capital (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020; Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019; Flores, 2020; Soykan et al., 2019). Personal commitment to student learning and professional growth boosts teacher resilience and is driven by a teacher's motivational orientation (Flores, 2020; Weinstein & Ryan, 2011). Teachers' satisfaction with professional relationships and feelings of fulfillment in the workplace is directly related to their level of motivation (Canrinus et al., 2012; Christian-Brandt et al., 2020). The extent to which teachers feel satisfied with their professional relationships and experience self-efficacy in the workplace impacts their organizational commitment and motivation to teach (Canrinus et al., 2012; Christian-Brandt et al., 2020).

Teacher Self-efficacy Bolsters Resilience

Self-efficacy is an intrinsic characteristic that results from personal belief in one's capacity to accomplish a task or goal, impacting motivation and persistence (Bandura, 1977; Putwain & von der Embse, 2019). It is negatively related to perceived stress and linked to the

basic psychological needs of autonomy and competence (Kassis et al., 2019; Putwain & von der Embse, 2019). Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy exhibit positive behaviors that advance the school's mission, and perceived self-efficacy is connected to their professional work environment, including workload, subject matter mastery, and level of support from peers and administration (Kaynak, 2020; Tindowen, 2019). Teachers exhibit stronger self-efficacy when they experience supportive professional relationships and have greater feelings of autonomy, which positively impacts organizational commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction (Canrinus et al., 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010).

Teacher self-efficacy also impacts resilience and predicts stress and burnout (Daniilidou et al., 2020; Schussler et al., 2018). Self-efficacy affects the ability to cope with stress and be proactive in addressing potential stressors, enabling teachers to maintain a strong sense of purpose which further builds their resilience (Daniilidou et al., 2020; Schussler et al., 2018). Teachers with high self-efficacy develop professional social skills and adaptability, which reduces their propensity towards emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, providing them with the ability to be flexible in the face of change, challenge, and work-related stressors (Daniilidou et al., 2020; Kim & Buric, 2020). Teacher self-efficacy does not predict future teacher burnout and burnout negatively impacts future teacher self-efficacy (Kim & Buric, 2020; Ozturk et al., 2021). Furthermore, teachers with high self-efficacy, who are emotionally intelligent, are less likely to become emotionally exhausted, engage in depersonalization, and have greater feelings of accomplishment in the workplace (Daniilidou et al., 2020).

Self-efficacy is also linked to teacher well-being, impacting both the individuals' beliefs and their behaviors, and teacher retention through enhanced feelings of self-efficacy in those who remain in the same school system for an extended period (Kaynak, 2020). Those with high

levels of self-efficacy are confident in their ability to positively impact student achievement (Kaynak, 2020). Leadership practices impact self-efficacy, which supports teacher resilience through modeling, recognition and positive feedback, shared decision-making, and social support through building positive relationships with staff (Hu et al., 2019; Kassis et al., 2019; Mehdinezhad & Mansouri, 2016; Thornton et al., 2020). Feelings of efficacy result from positive, successful experiences in the classroom when guided and independent practice of professional learning is combined with feedback, coaching, encouragement, and opportunities for reflection (Thornton et al., 2020). When teachers are provided opportunities to engage in professional development within a collegial work environment that supports innovation and provides constructive feedback, they grow in self-efficacy and professional identity.

Stress and self-efficacy are impacted by one's perception of their professional identity, and self-efficacy may be preventive against teacher stress, but self-efficacy alone is not enough to bolster teacher resilience to stress, and the strength of the stressor reduces the teacher's ability to cope (Hu et al., 2019; Putwain & von der Embse, 2019). Current teacher self-efficacy predicts their future self-efficacy level; unless changes are made to enhance or reduce teacher self-efficacy, teachers will continue to experience the same level in the future (Kim & Buric, 2020). Self-efficacy can be improved or degraded based on the teachers' professional experiences.

Teacher Self-determination and Psychological Needs Fulfillment in the Workplace

Self-determination is characterized by flexibility in managing the interaction between self and their environment and the impact of motivation on human behavior in seeking to fulfill the three basic psychological needs of all human beings (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The three basic psychological needs inherent to all human beings are competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Gagne & Deci, 2005). These basic needs are the underlying factors for intrinsic and extrinsic

motivation and play a role in human behavior (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Competency and autonomy are viewed as intrinsically motivating factors, while relatedness is an extrinsically motivated factor resulting from self-determination (Tillman et al., 2020). The dynamic interaction between the individual and their environment, along with their personal intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, plays a significant role in establishing self-determined behaviors.

Professional identity impacts work motivation, job satisfaction, commitment, and self-efficacy, thereby meeting the three psychological needs of an individual (Hu et al., 2019). Organizational commitment is partially predicted by self-determination, and organizational commitment links motivation and turnover intentions (Maryam et al., 2020). Intrinsic motivation for organizational commitment is characterized by emotional attachment and loyalty and a personal commitment to student learning and professional growth, driven by self-determined behaviors, which leads to resilience (Flores, 2020; Maryam et al., 2020). While the extrinsic motivation for organizational commitment is characterized by the perceived costs and benefits of remaining in the organization, with a higher salary resulting in increased work motivation (Kongcharoen et al., 2019; Maryam et al., 2020). There is a link between work motivation and personality, and a lack of work motivation results in less innovation in the workplace and difficulty in decision-making (Kongcharoen et al., 2019).

Professional identity impacts work motivation, job satisfaction, commitment, and self-efficacy, meeting teachers' basic psychological needs (Hu et al., 2019). Professional identity is also predictive of teacher stress, as an advanced college degree has been linked to less stress due to a greater propensity toward professional development and greater feelings of autonomy (Hu et al., 2019). There is a relationship between extrinsic motivation and stress-inducing thoughts, with one's perception of stress impacting the degree of stress experienced (Tillman et al., 2020).

Those with a controlled motivational orientation are more prone to stress-inducing thoughts and are more likely to experience reduced work motivation and well-being and increased stress (Tillman et al., 2020; Weinstein & Ryan, 2011). Stress exposure is negatively associated with relatedness and competence, while teacher burnout is negatively associated with autonomous student motivation (Aldrup et al., 2017; Shen et al., 2015). Support from leadership and relationships with colleagues and parents impact teachers' sense of belonging and have been shown to promote or inhibit the fulfillment of the basic psychological needs of autonomy and relatedness (Alfayez et al., 2021; Jansen in de Wal et al., 2020; Kassis et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Supportive work relationships increase teacher fulfillment of their basic psychological needs, work motivation, self-efficacy, and innovation in teaching (Chiu, 2022; Kaplan, 2021). Leader support of teacher psychological needs impacts teacher burnout, organizational commitment, and attrition and is an essential component of creating a supportive school culture that fosters healthy intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships (Ford et al., 2019).

Autonomy is the cornerstone of self-determined behavior and is strongly related to autonomous motivation, and autonomously motivated teachers are more engaged in professional development (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Jansen in de Wal et al., 2020). When teachers have autonomy in their professional development, they are more likely to have their psychological needs of competence and autonomy fulfilled in the work environment and enhanced feelings of job satisfaction (Jansen in de Wal et al., 2020; Kengatharan, 2020). Teacher autonomy moderates the impact of student misbehavior on job satisfaction (Kengatharan, 2020). Autonomous motivation is positively associated with work engagement; when personal values align with organizational values, teachers experience increased autonomous motivation and are more likely to fulfill their

basic psychological needs (Li et al., 2015). When teachers' basic psychological needs are met in the workplace, they are more likely to persist in the face of challenges, exhibiting self-determined behaviors.

Teacher Emotional Intelligence Supports Resilient Behaviors

Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and regulate the emotions of self and others, using the information gleaned to inform one's thoughts and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The ability to understand and regulate one's emotions and assist others in doing the same reduces the impact of stress and burnout while recognizing and not regulating emotions increases perceived stress (Garcia-Martinez et al., 2021; Schoeps et al., 2021). Teachers who can understand their emotions and regulate them are better able to use cognitive processes to create positive emotions in the face of work-related stress (Schoeps et al., 2021). Positive emotions have been shown to mediate the impact of work-related stress and support well-being, while negative emotions harm teacher well-being, potentially interfering with one's ability to regulate emotions and avoid burnout (Merida-Lopez et al., 2022; Schoeps et al., 2021).

Emotional intelligence and positive mental health increase work motivation, decrease burnout and build resilience (Lucas-Mangas et al., 2022; Schussler et al., 2018). Emotional intelligence is protective against stress (Schussler et al., 2018). Teachers who reported higher emotional intelligence also report greater positive emotions, like happiness, suggesting that emotional intelligence is a personal resource that acts as a buffer against perceived work-related stress by enabling the individual to implement coping strategies (Merida-Lopez et al., 2019; Merida-Lopez et al., 2022; Merida-Lopez & Extremera, 2022). Implementing coping strategies through the possession of emotional intelligence and positive emotions increases work engagement (Merida-Lopez et al., 2019). The ability to successfully process one's emotions is

more important than understanding one's triggers, and burnout is lower among teachers who reported positive relationships, growth, self-acceptance, and a strong sense of purpose (Lucas-Mangas et al., 2022; Schussler et al., 2018).

In a study of pre-service teachers, many of the teachers had moderate coping skills, as they were able to recognize the emotions of others but struggled to recognize and regulate their own emotions (Garcia-Martinez et al., 2021). Teacher social-emotional competence and burnout are related and impact student-teacher relationships, classroom culture, and academic achievement (Oberle et al., 2020). Teachers who reported higher burnout had students who reported lower social-emotional competence in their teachers; students perceived their teachers' burnout and stress as indicated in the quality of their interactions with their teachers (Oberle et al., 2020). Emotional intelligence provides adaptive coping skills and reduces the impact of a negative work environment, highlighting the need to enhance teachers' emotional intelligence to better handle work-related stress (Garcia-Martinez et al., 2021; Merida-Lopez & Extremera, 2022).

Stress-reduction Interventions

Although teaching is considered a high-stress profession and many teachers experience common sources of stress, they are unique to the individual and based on interactions between their personality, values, skills, and circumstances (Kyriacou, 2001). Most studies on stress-reduction interventions have implemented programs on relaxation skills, yoga, meditation and breathing techniques, mindfulness, healthy living, social support, and other complementary or alternative medicines designed to teach coping strategies (Abos et al., 2019a; Sanetti et al., 2020). While teaching coping strategies is essential, schools can also work to cultivate a supportive school culture and evaluate their school systems and leadership practices to better

reduce teacher stress, build teacher resilience, and retain qualified teachers. Burnout is preventable, and strategies to reduce or prevent burnout should focus on the individual-level, school-level, and teacher preparation programs (Kim & Buric, 2020).

In a study of newly qualified teachers, emotion-focused, problem-focused, and relationship-focused coping strategies bolstered their resilience to work-related stress (Bjorndal et al., 2021). Awareness of one's emotions and the ability to respond favorably to stress results in increased resilience (Schussler et al., 2018). Professional development on emotional intelligence and stress coping strategies may help with increasing awareness of emotions and enhance teachers' ability to cope with stress and better relate to their colleagues, friends, and family (Bjorndal et al., 2021; Kim & Buric, 2020; Schussler et al., 2018; Tillman et al., 2020). Supporting teachers' mental health and self-care efforts will further address the impact of stress on well-being (Bjorndal et al., 2021; Kongcharoen et al., 2019).

Healthy school cultures reduce teacher stress and burnout (Kongcharoen et al., 2019; Ozturk et al., 2021). School leadership can create a school culture that empowers teachers in a collaborative, collegial work environment characterized by high levels of social support and engagement in professional learning to reduce teacher stress and support the fulfillment of their basic psychological needs (Ford et al., 2019; Hu et al., 2019; Kongcharoen et al., 2019; Kyriacou, 2001; Wronowski, 2018). A supportive, collegial work environment supports fulfilling all three basic psychological needs, increasing work commitment and motivation (Chiu, 2022; Ford et al., 2019). A collegial work environment provides teachers with opportunities to share concerns and to provide each other with suggestions and support and has been shown to reduce feelings of burnout, improving coping skills (Abos et al., 2019a; Hu et al., 2019; Kongcharoen et al., 2019; Kyriacou, 2001). The process of engaging in social activities with colleagues during

the workday can help to alleviate teacher stress and promote feelings of solidarity and empathy between teachers and has been linked to less anxiety, a better quality of sleep, maintenance of personal appearance, and healthier relationships (Abos et al., 2019a; van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014; Kyriacou, 2001).

School leadership can also work to improve the physical environment in which teachers work, reducing their stress and cultivating a school culture designed to meet teachers' basic psychological needs. Improvements to the physical environment include decreasing noise in the school, creating calm areas for noise reduction, and better lighting and ventilation in the school building and classrooms (Faheem & Rashid, 2020). While enhancing collegial work relationships through constructing a school culture that fosters collaboration, provides teachers with autonomy in their professional learning, involves all teachers in decision-making, provides administrative support for student misbehavior, trains staff in coping skills, and reduces teacher workload, all support teacher self-determination and the fulfillment of their basic psychological needs (Chiu, 2022; Faheem & Rashid, 2020). A school culture that is designed to meet the basic psychological needs of their teachers positively impacts teacher well-being, creating a culture that strengths workplace relationships, makes teachers feel heard by leadership through shared decision-making, and strengthens their feelings of relatedness (Alfayez et al., 2021; Canrinus et al., 2012; Hu et al., 2019; Kongcharoen et al., 2019).

Schools can also establish systems that support their teachers by providing ample time to accomplish work-related tasks, reducing job demands, increasing job resources, limiting outside influences in the school, addressing teachers' well-being, providing teachers with opportunities to express their ideas, and providing teacher training (Carroll et al., 2021a; Hakanen et al., 2006; Masoom, 2021; Wronowski, 2018). Workload reduction during the first year of teaching may

mediate the stress of perceived psychological demands of the profession in beginning teachers (Harmsen et al., 2019). Providing support and workload reduction for teachers during the first three years of teaching, not just in the first year, supports teachers and reduces their stress long-term (Harmsen et al., 2019). While providing opportunities for mentorship or coaching supports teaching, improves the school culture, and fosters relationships, communication, and collegial support (Camacho et al., 2021). Establishing school-based initiatives aimed at the well-being of all school staff, not just individuals, is essential before signs of stress and burnout emerge, as stress is contagious (Fitchett et al., 2021; Hakanen et al., 2006). By conducting well-being profiles of their staff, schools can tailor interventions to their specific needs (van der Vaart & de Beer, 2021). Providing interventions that address teacher well-being and self-care to increase psychological capital, improve job satisfaction, and support teachers in handling the demands of their work long term (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Soykan et al., 2019).

Principals should be aware of and proactively address signs of burnout in their staff (Abos et al., 2019a). While social support is preventive of burnout, it is not helpful in the case of chronic burnout, and chronic burnout interventions should focus on reducing workload and interpersonal conflict (Llorca-Pellicer et al., 2021). Leadership behaviors that support teacher autonomy while listening to and supporting teachers enhance teacher self-actualization and provide social-emotional support to help remediate their stress (Abos et al., 2019a; Camacho et al., 2020; Eyal & Roth, 2010). Ensuring that leadership practices are effective and support teachers by providing them with opportunities to feel challenged while also promoting teacher autonomy can increase work engagement and motivation as well as help build resilience (Abos et al., 2019a; Bjorndal et al., 2021; Carroll et al., 2021a; Li et al., 2021; Masoom, 2021; Wronowski, 2018). Poor management strategies can result in stress, and school leadership should

assess whether their practices are effective or are causing teacher stress (Kyriacou, 2001). The administration should support teachers in building resilience to increase teacher well-being, reduce stress, and retain qualified teachers (Fitchett et al., 2021).

Additional suggestions for reducing teacher work-related stress as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic include the creation of policies at the state and local levels that are based on current research on teacher stress and well-being (Lynch, 2021). School districts should allocate more money towards employee assistance programs to address teacher traumatic stress, and school administration should monitor their teachers and staff on an ongoing basis, providing them with professional development on trauma-informed practices for themselves and their students (Lynch, 2021). School districts should train their school leadership to provide instructional and emotional support for their teachers (Kosir et al., 2020). While teachers suggest enhanced training and professional development in online learning, better access to technology and training, and the development of action and communication plans in the event of emergency remote teaching (An et al., 2021). Additionally, teacher training programs should provide more training to students on information and communication technology to increase teacher self-efficacy in online learning (Kosir et al., 2020).

Teacher stress impacts the entire school. In a study of teachers who participated in an 8-week stress reduction program, their students reported fewer difficulties in the classroom and greater teacher support (Carroll et al., 2021b). Students' perception of their academic self-efficacy increased due to the teacher's participation in the stress reduction program (Carroll et al., 2021b). Stress can be a challenge or a threat; teacher well-being can mean thriving despite high work demands and stress (Soykan et al., 2019). Though chronic stress can lead to burnout, the warning signs for burnout are inconsistent, and individuals can move between burnout and

engagement (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). The goal of school-based interventions should be to help teachers manage the demands of their job, address their psychological distress, ensure they have sufficient resources to meet their work demands, and support teacher well-being (Soykan et al., 2019; Stapleton et al., 2020).

Summary

Self-determined behavior involves the ability to choose one's actions and control the outcome of those actions. Individuals need to feel a sense of connection to others, to feel capable of accomplishing a task, and have the autonomy to choose their actions and outcomes to fulfill their basic psychological needs. Chronic stress inhibits the ability to fulfill one's basic psychological needs (Aldrup et al., 2017; Llorca-Pellicer et al., 2021). School culture plays a significant role in teacher stress. A school culture that promotes the fulfillment of teachers' basic psychological needs promotes workplace engagement, motivation for teaching, persistence and resilience, self-efficacy, and teacher well-being. Self-determined behaviors may be seen as a form of perseverance or resilience and may indicate teachers' willingness to remain engaged in their profession and less likely to succumb to chronic work-related stressors. Leadership should cultivate a school culture that fosters resilience and well-being to reduce the impact of work-related stress.

Teacher stress is considered a primary source of attrition and is connected to burnout and teacher well-being. While positive work relationships, professional fulfillment, a supportive school culture, and supportive school leadership reduce attrition (Flores, 2020). Systems need to be implemented to assess teacher burnout early and often, and feedback used to create programs and policies that reduce teacher stress, foster teacher resilience, and increase workplace engagement. Teacher commitment should be the collective responsibility of all people within the

school community. Without intervention, the negative consequences of teacher burnout will have a lasting impact on the teaching profession.

Resilience enables teachers to cope with daily stress and acts as a buffer, reducing the impact of stress while increasing workplace engagement and organizational commitment. Resilient teachers are those who thrive in stressful, demanding work environments. They are those who view challenges as opportunities for growth and embrace change. School culture, leadership practices, and supportive colleagues can bolster teacher resilience, impacting their perception of stress and ability to cope.

A greater understanding of teachers' experiences with stress and their ability to cope with daily stressors is necessary to create strategies and systems that will positively impact teacher well-being, reducing teacher stress and building their resilience. More information is needed on the psychological resources teachers employ to cope with the demands of their work, and research is necessary to understand the connection between teacher stress and the fulfillment of their basic psychological needs (Abos et al., 2019b; Buric et al., 2019; Kim & Buric, 2020; Merida-Lopez et al., 2022; Soykan et al., 2019). Research focusing on how successfully coping with stress benefits the teacher throughout their career, from student teaching through retirement, is necessary to successfully navigate the work-related stressors associated with teaching and build resilient behaviors. What if schools implemented systems that supported their teachers without draining their resources? What if proactively seeking solutions to teacher stress and implementing strategies to remediate that stress happened before teachers became stressed out, burnt out, and ready to quit? The proposed study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of secondary school teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience to address the gaps in the literature and to assist schools and school leadership in implementing strategies and

systems that support their teachers. The proposed study seeks to gain insight that will provide

information that can be used to create proactive solutions to teacher stress and remediate stress

before teachers become stressed out, burnt out, and ready to leave the profession.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe public high school teachers' experiences of work-related stress and resilience in the state of Connecticut (CT). First is a review of the research design followed by a restatement of the research questions. Next is a description of the setting and participants, followed by a discussion of the researcher's positionality. Finally, the chapter concludes with a description of the procedures, including the recruitment and data collection plans, followed by a discussion of the trustworthiness of the data.

Research Design

Qualitative research is a method of inquiry connected to the social constructivist framework and grounded in an understanding that meaning is constructed through social interactions and human experiences in the world (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative research seeks to understand and explore individual interactions with the world and their interpretation of these interactions, conducting research in the field where the participants live and experience their world, using participants' actual words as the source of data (Check & Schutt, 2012; Merriam, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2016). In contrast, quantitative research focuses more on variations or changes, examining multiple variables, and using numbers and attributes to describe or explain the data (Check & Schutt, 2012). My study required a qualitative approach as it sought to understand high school teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience. Teachers' experiences are best captured using a qualitative approach that portrays a thick and rich description of their lived experiences, shedding light on work-related stress and resilience and constructing meaning from these experiences that may benefit the academic community.

There are various approaches to qualitative research; each approach has a unique focus best suited to specific research problems (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenology is designed to capture the essence, what, and how of a lived experience or phenomenon (van Manen, 2016). Phenomenology seeks to capture pre-reflective experiences surrounding a phenomenon and to create meaning from those experiences to challenge preconceived notions and assumptions about the phenomenon, leading to new insight into these lived experiences (van Manen, 2016). In seeking pre-reflective experiences, the phenomenological researcher seeks to gain subjective insight into the human experience, using rich language to describe the lived experiences of the phenomenon under question (van Manen, 2016).

A phenomenological approach, specifically transcendental phenomenology, was appropriate for this study as it views the world through human experiences, seeking to capture the essence of these experiences to provide insight that enriches our understanding of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2016). Transcendental phenomenology seeks to bracket the researcher out of the study through explicit statements about their experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Understanding the subjective nature of objective reality and human intuition are the cornerstones of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). In transcendental phenomenology, the researcher seeks to describe the textural, what was experienced, and structural, how it was experienced, dimensions to describe the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018). In my study, I described my experiences with work-related stress and resilience to bracket out my prior experiences and present assumptions, thereby focusing on the participants' experiences with work-related stress and resilience.

Research Questions

Research questions were designed to uncover the phenomenon of high school teachers'

experiences with work-related stress and resilience in public schools in Connecticut (CT) in

recent years. The research questions sought to discover their experiences with work-related stress

and resilience through uncovering information on common sources of teacher work-related

stress. The research questions also explored intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation among

teachers experiencing work-related stress and resilience.

Central Research Question

What are public high school teachers' (grades 9-12) experiences with work-related stress

and resilience?

Sub-Question One

How do public high school teachers describe their experiences with work-related stress?

Sub-Question Two

How do public high school teachers describe their experiences with resilience in the

workplace?

Sub-Question Three

What motivates public high school teachers to persist in the face of workplace challenges

and stress?

Setting and Participants

In phenomenological research, participants do not need to be from the same setting but

should have experience with the phenomenon and possess certain similar characteristics (van

Manen, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). For my study, participants were high school teachers of

core content areas who entered the profession before the 2019-2020 school year (having at least

two years of teaching experience), in public high schools in the state of CT, within the US. Each participant did not have any prior connections to me and must have experience teaching in the classroom for a minimum of two years before the 2019-2020 school year.

Site (or Setting)

Due to the nature of the study, only a vague description of the setting is possible. Participants were chosen based on a specific set of criteria, including teaching at public high schools in the state of Connecticut (CT), as there is a need for qualitative research on high school teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience (Soykan et al., 2019). Connecticut has 205 public school districts and 170 public high schools (CSDE, n.d.; CT Data, n.d.). High schools serve students in grades 9 through 12 and may be in urban, suburban, or rural communities throughout CT. Schools throughout CT were included in the study to provide a broader range of teacher experiences with work-related stress and resilience. I have experience teaching in urban public high schools in CT, therefore, I have a vested interest in gleaning additional information generalizable to high school teachers across the US.

Participants

I selected 12 to 15 individuals to participate in my phenomenological study. Participants in this study were public high school teachers of core content areas with over two years of teaching experience who began their teaching career before the 2019-2020 school year. They were male and female from varying ethnic backgrounds and ages, with experience in CT in urban, suburban, or rural public high schools.

Researcher Positionality

The interpretive framework and philosophical assumptions of the researcher impact their research goals, outcomes, and experiences and provide the framework for how researchers

evaluate the data and make decisions within their research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A social

constructivist framework guides the research paradigm of my study. The following sections

outline the research paradigm for my study and include a discussion of social constructivism,

along with my ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions.

Interpretive Framework

A social constructivist framework was used to interpret the data within this study. Social

constructivism looks at the subjective meaning given to real-world experiences, focusing on the

multiple perspectives of reality that exist between the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Participants ascribe subjective meaning to their experiences based on historical and cultural

norms and social interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Social constructivists use inductive

reasoning to uncover patterns of meaning from the varying participant perspectives (Creswell &

Poth, 2018).

As a social constructivist, using a phenomenological research design, I sought to

construct meaning from my research participants' varied experiences and paint a picture of these

diverse experiences, shedding light on the changing classroom and school dynamics in the post-

pandemic era. My goal was to uncover high school teachers' experiences with work-related

stress and resilience, gaining insight into their lived experiences to inform the creation of

academic and workplace systems that will enhance teacher well-being through stress reduction

and resilience building.

Philosophical Assumptions

My philosophical assumptions are rooted in my belief in God as the Creator of the

Universe, the only source of absolute truth. These beliefs extend from training in my Christian

faith which began in my childhood and created the lens through which I view the world and

interpret the data within this study. The following descriptions explain my belief in the nature of reality, knowledge, and values.

Ontological Assumption

Ontology refers to the nature of reality, highlighting the debate between a singular reality and a socially constructed view of multiple realities (Patton, 2002). Qualitative researchers often believe there are multiple realities, looking at the multiple realities of their participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I believe there is only one reality, one source of absolute truth, the Word of God. God created one reality and all human beings live within it. Humans experience and perceive their realities differently, subjectively interpreting those experiences, and therefore have various perspectives to share. The combination of these varying perspectives provides a rich and thick description of the phenomenon, from which I used inductive reasoning to make meaning of these varying perspectives and experiences related to teachers' lived experiences.

Epistemological Assumption

Epistemology looks at knowledge and how we justify knowledge claims, subjectively or objectively, to understand the relationship between the researcher and the subject under question (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). In qualitative research, the participants' points of view, captured in direct quotes, are used as data from which the researcher creates meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research provides a subjective view of reality by capturing the varied perspectives of their subjects, perspectives based on their lived experiences and social interactions in the world (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, knowledge was acquired through the participants' experiences in the workplace and their interactions with me during individual interviews, focus groups, and thorough analysis of written journal entries.

Axiological Assumption

Axiology looks at the role of values, understanding that information has value (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I understand that my personal experiences and assumptions impact how I construct knowledge and interpret the data. I seek to become an insider, to deeply understand my participants' perspectives while also positioning myself within the research by sharing my experiences and biases to accurately represent the subjective nature of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a veteran teacher and leader, who worked in the public sector before March 2020 and was leading a private school through the COVID-19 school closures and changing protocols, I understand the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on students, parents, teachers, administration, the school culture, and the classroom environment. The COVID-19 pandemic created extreme stress and anxiety for many, drastically changing the landscape of the teaching profession. I intend to gain insight into teachers' experiences to understand how they are navigating the changing landscape and better understand their experiences with work-related stress and resilience.

Researcher's Role

As the researcher and a human instrument in the study, I had no prior relationship with the participants and was not in a position of authority over them. I had no previous experience in the school districts where the participants are employed. However, as a former public school teacher in CT, I have similar experiences to the participants in the study, which may be a source of bias. Additionally, in my experiences as a school principal, I was a part of equipping my school to navigate the school closures and return to school in the 2020 – 2021 school year, which may be another source of bias. In addressing these potential biases, I have bracketed myself out of the study by disclosing my prior experiences and assumptions about teachers' experiences in the post-pandemic classroom. My previous experiences may result in bias or assumptions when

interpreting the data. By making my prior experiences known and sharing my assumptions, I, as the human instrument, worked to keep my biases and assumptions from interfering with the data collection and analysis processes to fully capture the participants' lived experiences (van Manen, 2016). I shared my personal experiences as an educator to further explain how these experiences may impact my interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2018). As the researcher, my role was to select and interview the participants and to organize and analyze the data into themes that capture the essence of the phenomenon, seeking to clearly articulate and accurately capture the experiences of the participants.

Procedures

The procedures that werefollowed in completing this study are in alignment with Moustakas' (1994) recommended procedures for transcendental phenomenological study, beginning with the identification of the topic and a thorough review of the literature, followed by an identification of the participants and the eligibility criteria I would use to determine the fit of the participants. Using the literature review as a guide, the nature and purpose of the study were outlined, and a questionnaire was developed to determine participants' eligibility for the study. Upon obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, convenience sampling was used in selecting participants from the email list provided by the CT Department of Education (Appendix A). Upon obtaining IRB permission, I sent an email to the data manager requesting access to the CT Department of Education's teacher email list. I emailed a letter along with the demographic survey to all certified, core content area high school teachers in CT to recruit them for their participation in the research study. I used purposive sampling to intentionally select 30 participants that match my selection criteria and engage them in a thorough discussion of informed consent. Upon obtaining informed consent from 12 to 15 participants, I began

conducting semi-structured interviews. Interview procedures included an introduction and a brief acknowledgment of my experiences as a teacher and principal. Following the semi-structured interview, participants were asked to answer four online journal prompts and to provide their answers to me before their follow-up interview, which served as member checking. Throughout the interview process, I journaled my thoughts and connections to aid in the identification of major themes and convene a focus group, using convenience sampling, of five participants to discuss their collective experiences surrounding the major themes identified. In the end, each participant was interviewed two times, providing me with enough data to develop both textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon, which lead to a synthesis of these descriptions and an illustration of the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Permissions

I received IRB approval before beginning the study (see Appendix A). I emailed the Data Manager for the state of CT Department of Education, for access to the email list of teachers working in the state of CT and for permission to use the email list in my study (Appendix B). Upon receiving the teacher email list, I emailed a letter along with a brief demographic survey to the high school teachers. Survey data was used to identify potential participants who were be asked to review the study details and thoroughly discuss informed consent. I sought the consent of 12 to 15 participants for the study, as indicated by their signature on the electronic informed consent document (see Appendix C).

Recruitment Plan

The sample pool includes approximately 52,136 full-time, certified educators from 170 public high schools (representing 205 school districts) throughout Connecticut (CSDE, n.d.; CT Data, n.d.). Convenience sampling was used in selecting participants from the state of CT who

were listed on the email list provided by the CT Department of Education (Check & Schutt, 2012). Upon obtaining IRB permission, I sent an email to the data manager requesting access to the CT Department of Education's teacher email list. I emailed a letter along with the demographic survey to all certified, core content area high school teachers in CT to recruit them for their participation in the research study.

Purposive sampling, involving the intentional selection of participants that match a particular demographic, was used to determine the sample, ensuring that all participants have experience with the phenomenon and fit the demographic profile required by the researcher (Check & Schutt, 2012). The eligibility criteria required all study participants to be certified, full-time employed, core content area, public high school teachers with a minimum of two years of teaching experience, and who began teaching before the 2019-2020 school year. Upon completing the demographic survey, I reviewed the data, eliminating any respondents that do not fit the eligibility criteria. All remaining respondents were contacted with a brief overview of the research commitment to eliminate further potential participants who were not be able to commit to the research study fully. All remaining respondents were provided a rationale for the study and informed consent documentation for their review. Appointments werescheduled online to discuss the informed consent documents (Appendix C) and to answer any questions they may have. This process produced a sample size of 12 to 15 participants who will provide informed consent to participate in the study.

Data Collection Plan

I obtained permission from my Dissertation Chair and Committee and Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before collecting data (see Appendix A). After receiving approval, I began conducting semi-structured interviews online using Microsoft

Teams. After the initial interview, each participant wasasked to answer four online journal

prompts, which involved answering guided questions to capture their professional teaching

experiences. Journal entries were submitted to me one to two weeks before the follow-up

interview. During the time between the initial and follow-up interviews, I transcribed each

interview, looking for emerging themes in the data. Once all initial interviews were completed, I

asked participants to consider participating in a focus group to discuss some of the emerging

themes. A focus group of five participants was conducted and recorded using open-ended

questions as a guide. Following the focus group, I began reviewing each participant's journals as

a form of document analysis, looking for any other emerging themes. During the follow-up

interview, I examined the themes that emerge in each interview and journal entry with the

participant to ensure their experiences have been accurately recorded and interpreted.

Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary source of data collection in this

study. A semi-structured interview is a formal interview involving the researcher and one

participant at a time, conducted in a face-to-face, phone, or video conference format (Cohen &

Crabtree, 2006; Merriam, 2002). Predetermined, open-ended questions guide the researcher in

interviewing each participant while allowing the freedom to explore additional questions as

deemed necessary (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002). All semi-structured

interviews are recorded to allow the researcher to give their undivided attention to the participant

during the interview, without note-taking, and to review the recorded interview later for data

collection purposes (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Patton, 2002).

Semi-structured interviews are an appropriate means of data collection in this study, as I

sought to understand the participants' experiences (Patton, 2002). The use of prepared interview

questions provided me with a guide and ensure that the significant points are covered in the interview. The semi-structured nature of these interviews means that I am not confined by the pre-determined interview questions and may ask additional questions of participants as various themes become apparent during the interview. Approximately 12 to 15 teachers were interviewed. All interviews were recorded and take place using the video conferencing platform, Microsoft Teams. Following each interview, the video recordings were downloaded onto an encrypted hard drive and a password-protected Dropbox were used to protect any data held on my computer hard drive.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your educational background and career progression to your current position. CRQ

2. Can you tell me about a time when you felt successful, competent, and energized in the workplace? CRQ

3. Can you tell me about a time when you felt stress at work and how you felt during that experience? SQ1

4. What incidents and people connected to work-related stress stand out for you, and what are some common sources of work-related stress for you? SQ1

5. What feelings are generated by your experiences with the stressors you have mentioned? SQ1

6. What supports or changes do you feel would reduce your work-related stress? SQ1

7. Can you tell me about a time when you felt resilient at work? SQ2

8. What did the experience you just shared feel like? SQ2

9. How often do you feel resilient at work and are there particular experiences that have bolstered your resilience? SQ2

10. What supports or changes do you feel would bolster your resilience in the face of workplace challenges and stress? SQ2

11. Can you tell me about a time when you persisted in the face of workplace challenges or stress? SQ3

12. What did the experience you just shared feel like? SQ3

13. What motivates you to persist in the face of workplace challenges and stress and how often do you feel motivated at work? SQ3

14. What supports or changes do you feel would motivate you to persist in the face of workplace challenges and stress? SQ3

15. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with work-related stress and resilience? CRQ

Interview questions were designed to answer the central research question and sub-questions and are informed by sample interview questions recommended for phenomenological research by Moustakas (1994). My Dissertation Chair and Committee reviewed the questions and revisions and provided feedback based on their expert advice, before beginning the interview process. Interview questions were revised following the first interview, based on feedback from the participant and the resulting data collected from each question.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

The researcher manually organized the data, using inductive coding methods to create codes as they emerged from the data during the interview, transcription, and data analysis process (Saldana, 2021). Inductive coding is preferred over deductive coding for

phenomenological research, using the participants' voices and experiences to drive the codes

utilized within the study (Saldana, 2021). Following each interview, I inductively utilized in vivo

and focused coding within the first cycle of coding, as these coding methods capture the

participants' voices, using codes to create categories, or groups of alike codes, that are composed

of the participants' actual spoken words (Saldana, 2021). I reached out to each participant,

following transcription and using in vivo coding methods, to conduct member checking, ensuring

I had accurately captured the essence of the participant's experience with the phenomenon.

Adjustments were made to the transcripts as needed; they were read multiple times, using

focused coding to categorize the in vivo codes, then transitioning to pattern coding to determine

themes that emerge within the data (Saldana, 2021). The prominent themes, from

phenomenological reduction and pattern coding, were used to develop textural and structural

descriptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Saldana, 2021).

Focus Groups Data Collection Approach

Following the initial interview with each participant, I asked all participants to participate

in an optional focus group. All willing and available participants convened in a video conference

using a convenience sampling methodology to discuss the emerging themes within the data. The

focus group served as a source of triangulation while providing me with the opportunity to gain

further insight into the phenomenon, where participants were provided with the opportunity to

respond to questions based on the responses of others within the research study (Patton, 2002).

Focus group questions are listed below and are located in Appendix D.

During the focus group, I acted as a moderator in the discussion, detailing the ground

rules for participation in the focus group to including respectful conversations among members.

As the moderator, I posed a question and allow each focus group participant an opportunity to

respond to the question and then respond to one another. The focus group was recorded, and the recording was housed on an encrypted hard drive and in a password-protected Dropbox.

Focus Group Questions

1. Describe the demographics of your school and the subject matter that you teach. CRQ

2. Describe the common workplace stressors at your school and your experiences with this stressors. SQ1

3. Describe your experiences with resilience in the workplace and aspects of your workplace that bolster your resilience. SQ2

4. Describe what motivates you to persist in the face of workplace challenges and stress. SQ3

5. What changes would you like to see in the workplace that would bolster your resilience, increase your work motivation, and reduce your stress? CRQ

Focus group questions were designed to answer the central research question and sub-questions. My Dissertation Chair and Committee reviewed the questions and revisions and provided feedback based on their expert advice, before conducting any research. Focus group questions were revised following interview question responses based on the researcher's first and second cycle coding and the need for clarification or additional information on important aspects of the data or to answer the research questions.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

Inductive coding methods were used to create codes as they emerge, capturing the participants' voices and experiences (Saldana, 2021). The transcript was read multiple times using in vivo and focused coding methods to capture the participants' voices and group similar codes into categories (Saldana, 2021). Pattern coding was used to determine themes that emerge

within the data (Saldana, 2021). The prominent themes, from phenomenological reduction and pattern coding, were compared to the themes generated from the semi-structured interviews and used to develop textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Saldana, 2021).

Journal Prompts Data Collection Approach

Journal prompts (Appendix E) further triangulated the data and provided each participant with the opportunity to consider their responses carefully and thoroughly, ensuring the opportunity to fully divulge their experiences related to the phenomenon. Four journal prompts were provided to each participant, based on the central research question and sub-questions, immediately following the initial interview. Each participant had a minimum of two weeks to complete the journal prompts online, with journal prompts being submitted to me one to two weeks before the follow-up interview. Journal prompts were used in the follow-up interview, as I ask additional questions based on the emerging themes and journal responses to gain clarity and ensure I have accurately represented the participant's experiences. The follow-up interview served as a form of member checking to ensure the accuracy of my data, and the interpretation of the participant's experiences following the initial interview and completion of the journal prompts.

Journal Prompts

1. What do you feel is the biggest contributor to your work-related stress? SQ1

2. In your opinion, what role does resilience play in managing work-related stress? SQ2

3. In your opinion, what role does motivation play in managing work-related stress? SQ3

4. How have your experiences with work-related stress and resilience impacted your motivation to teach and remain in the profession? CRQ

Journal Prompts Data Analysis Plan

The journal prompts were read multiple times using in vivo and focused coding to capture the participants' voices and experiences with work-related stress and resilience (Saldana, 2021). Pattern coding was used to determine themes that emerge within the data, and prominent themes were compared to the themes generated from the semi-structured interviews and focus group to develop textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Saldana, 2021).

Data Synthesis

Triangulation of the data was achieved using three different sources of data, semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and journal prompts. Each data source were assigned a unique identifying number and stored in an encrypted hard drive and a password-protected Dropbox to provide secure and confidential data storage. All transcripts were read multiple times and coded manually, by the researcher, using in vivo, focused, and pattern coding.

I conducted a frequency analysis to determine the major emerging themes. Major themes were used to develop textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon based on cross-referencing the data from the initial and final interviews, the journal prompts, and the focus group. A synthesis of the data produced a rich and thick description of the essence of the phenomenon.

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Trustworthiness

</div>

The trustworthiness of a study is an indication of the integrity of the study, and integrity adds to the usefulness of the study to others in the field, adding to the body of knowledge and challenging current assumptions and practices (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Trustworthiness encompasses credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethics. The following

sections outline my attempt at establishing the trustworthiness of the study. Techniques used included memoing and coding, the use of concept maps, triangulation, member checks, peer debriefing, audit trails, and reflexivity. The section on trustworthiness ends with a discussion of ethical considerations undertaken within the study.

Credibility

To establish the credibility of this study's findings, I used triangulation, member checks, and peer debriefing. Each of these methods were used to increase the validity and reliability of the data and to ensure that the essence of the phenomenon was accurately captured and represented. Triangulation refers to using multiple forms of data, interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts to answer the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). While member checks, conferring with participants to ensure I accurately captured the data, were conducted via journal prompts and during the final interview. Finally, peer debriefing between myself, my Dissertation Chair, and my Committee was used to ensure that the data analysis is based on the data, not personal assumptions and experiences.

Transferability

I sought to establish transferability using thick descriptions that captured the participants' emotions and specific details surrounding their experiences with the phenomenon of teacher stress and resilience (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Documentation of my thinking, with memoing, throughout the research process, and the use of concept maps to visually represent and connect the emerging themes surrounding the phenomenon added to the trustworthiness and credibility of the data (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Through capturing these thick descriptions, I soughtto create conditions under which the results can be transferred to high school teachers in other regions of the United States who have experience with workplace stress and resilience.

Dependability

Dependability is also referred to as reliability and involves the reliability of the instruments used within the study to ensure that valid conclusions are drawn, therefore aiding in the creation of generalizable results (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Thorough procedural descriptions were provided, enabling the reader to replicate this study. Procedural descriptions are clear, concise, and supported by the literature. An inquiry audit was conducted by my dissertation committee and the Qualitative Research Director.

Confirmability

Confirmability, also known as objectivity, was established using triangulation, audit trails, and reflexivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Triangulation was achieved through interviews, journal prompts, and a focus group, while memoing and journaling provided an audit of my thoughts throughout the data analysis process. The audit trail provided evidence of changes in thought as more data becomes available, and reflexivity adds to the credibility of the data by making the my thought process visible (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My background and experiences with the phenomenon of workplace stress and resilience weremade visible in the study in an attempt to bracket herself out of the study and to illustrate how my background experiences impact my interpretation of the data, thereby reducing potential biases and increasing the confirmability of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

The following ethical considerations weretaken to ensure an ethical and trustworthy study. IRB and dissertation committee approvals wereobtained before beginning the study. All participants provided informed consent for participation, recording of interviews and focus groups, and the use of journal prompts. They were informed that participation in the study is

voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time without penalty. During the consent process, full disclosure of the purpose of the research and data collection procedures was disclosed to all participants. Disclosure regarding the use of encrypted files to store the data, password protection on computers, who has access to the data, and that data files will be destroyed after three years, per Liberty University's IRB, was also be disclosed during the consent process. Finally, pseudonyms wereused to provide anonymity and confidentiality to all participants, any persons mentioned during data collection, and the schools in which they work.

Summary

The present study sought to understand high school teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience in the state of Connecticut. A phenomenological approach was appropriate given that qualitative research is grounded in constructing meaning through social interactions, and phenomenology seeks to capture the essence of lived experiences (Merriam, 2002; van Manen, 2016). The data collection plan was in alignment with a phenomenological approach to qualitative research, using semi-structured interviews to gain access to participants' experiences with the phenomenon, along with focus groups and journal prompts, to develop a thick, rich, textural and structural description that captures the essence of the phenomenon. Finally, the data analysis strategies of transcribing, coding, and memoing the triangulated data aided in ensuring the trustworthiness of the study findings and enhance the generalizability of the study to other high school teachers in the United States.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to describe public high school teachers' experiences of work-related stress and resilience in the state of Connecticut (CT), using self-determination theory (SDT) as a framework for understanding teachers' work motivation, commitment, and propensity towards resilient behaviors. The chapter begins with a discussion of the study participants, followed by the results of the data, including themes and sub-themes. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief description of the participants' responses to the research question.

Participants

An email was sent to 7,839 high school teachers in the state of Connecticut (CT) requesting their participation in the study and inviting them to complete a brief screening and demographic survey. Of the 7,839 emails sent, 26 individuals completed the survey. One of the survey participants was ineligible to participate based on the survey data, and 12 of the survey participants provided consent for participation. During the interview process, one of the 12 participants was deemed ineligible because they did not meet the demographic requirements of the survey. All participants in this study are CT public high school teachers of core content areas with over two years of teaching experience who began their teaching career before the 2019-2020 school year. Table 1 provides demographic information on the 11 eligible teacher participants.

Table 1

Teacher Participants

Participant Name	CT High School Teacher	Subject Taught	Began before 2019-2020	2+ years high school experience
Brenda	Yes	Language Arts	Yes	Yes
Dean	Yes	Social Studies	Yes	Yes
Gary	Yes	Social Studies	Yes	Yes
Greg	Yes	Math	Yes	Yes
Hannah	Yes	Language Arts	Yes	Yes
Justin	Yes	Social Studies	Yes	Yes
Marissa	Yes	Science	Yes	Yes
Mary	Yes	Language Arts	Yes	Yes
Pam	Yes	Social Studies	Yes	Yes
Robert	Yes	Language Arts	Yes	Yes
Sarah	Yes	Language Arts	Yes	Yes

All names are pseudonyms for participant privacy.

Upon receiving informed consent, interviews were scheduled with each participant and held on Microsoft Teams. All semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed by Microsoft Teams, and journal prompts were emailed to each participant following the interview. Participants were asked to complete the journal prompts in one to two weeks' time and to return their responses to me. All participants were sent the journal prompts and eight participants completed the prompts. The focus group was scheduled, and all participants received an email requesting their participation. Five participants agreed to participate in the focus group and one

of the participants had a conflict come up last minute, leaving four participants. The focus group was also held on Microsoft Teams and was recorded and transcribed. As participants completed the journal prompts, follow-up interviews were scheduled to use as a form of member checking and to ensure I had accurately captured the participants' words and the essence of their experiences, a total of eight participants completed the follow-up interview.

All data collected, from the interviews, journal prompts, and focus group, were read multiple times and in vivo codes were determined during this process. Once all data sources had been initially coded, I began compiling the codes in a spreadsheet to assist in moving through second cycle coding. All initial codes were alphabetized and grouped in categories based on their relationship to one another. The categories that emerged were given an in vivo focused code that became the sub-themes within the study. The focused codes were used to aid in group like codes and creating the pattern codes listed as themes within the study. Much of the data from the journal prompts, focus group, and follow-up interviews confirmed the data collected during the initial interviews.

Results

The major themes and sub-themes identified in the data are presented in Table 2. All sub-themes are in vivo quotes that encapsulate the essence of the theme, to the extent possible. The sub-themes are grouped under the major themes which include sources of stress, teacher perception, coping mechanisms, teacher resilience, teacher motivation, and community and collaboration. Finally, outlier data and findings are presented at the end of this section.

Table 2

Themes and Sub-themes within the Data

Themes	Sub-Themes
Sources of Stress	Just Do One More Thing
	No Power, No Voice
	Management Style
	Colleague Issues
	Student Behaviors
	Teacher Development
	Academic Injustice
	Systemic Problems
	Let Teachers Teach
Teacher Perception	Felt Unseen and Unheard
	Lack of Support
	Trust Us to Do Our Job
	Not Valued
	Never Felt Stressed
Coping Mechanisms	Embrace Failure
	Not Taking Things Personally
	Reset
	Need Support System
Teacher Resilience	I Still Enjoy the Profession
	I Didn't Quit the Profession
Teacher Motivation	Being Creative
	My Kids (Students)
	Extrinsic Motivation
Community and Collaboration	Unsupportive School Culture
	Rely on Relationships

Sources of Stress

High school teachers' sources of work-related stress are numerous, including workload and new initiatives to scheduling and student behavior issues. The most frequent sources of stress, cited by participants, included new initiatives and workload, a lack of power or voice in decision making, administrative management styles, issues with colleagues, and student behavior. The less frequently cited sources of stress included teacher professional development, injustices for students, systemic problems, and the teacher evaluation system. When reflecting on a stressful workplace experience, Mary shared, "we had this superintendent who didn't seem to appreciate anything we did, she questioned everything, and if she took a disliking to you, she would find something. We had people out on administrative leave for months while they were doing investigations. We called it the 'reign of terror' and it really made me realize how important leadership was in a school district." Mary also stated that during this time, "you never knew if the target was going to be on your back… it was an environment where people were tattling on each other to keep the target off their back." Mary described this stressful experience as "demoralizing."

Just Do One More Thing

Approximately 55% of teachers spoke of changing initiatives, new initiatives, and top-down initiatives as a source of stress. In talking about new initiatives and workload, Marissa shared that she wishes that administration would stop saying, "I know it's one more thing, but you just have to do it." She wishes that, "somebody would push back on the demands from higher up, and say, 'if you want my teachers to do this then something has to come off of the table.'" While during the focus group, Mary stated, "I think that idea of having all of these masters (initiatives) is really stressful to me because initially I only needed to report to my

administrator and that's it, but all of these different things they are forcing on us to do is a big stressor for me."

No Power, No Voice

A major sub-theme within the theme of sources of stress was "no power, no voice." Approximately 82% of teachers shared feeling as though they lacked the power or autonomy to make decisions and that their voices were not heard by administration. Greg spoke about his relationship with his principal saying that he has to "fight back" against administrative policies. He feels that "once you stop challenging administration, you've lost the battle." And that while he and his principal respect one another, the principal "has the hammer so he's going to make the decisions he wants to make." While Pam shared that in her school "they (administration) threaten the teachers that don't have tenure" when sharing about the need for mental health days as a teacher. She went on to say, "but the newer teachers they don't have that kind of leave and their afraid, and the administration don't go a long way to make them not afraid to take sick leave."

Management Style

Administration was a source of stress for 100% of the teacher participants. The most common source of stress from administration was their management style. While some teachers recognized that school administrators "mean well," many others described administrators that didn't enforce the rules, or a "lack of follow through," and a "lack of coordination between leadership." In discussing his principal's management style, Robert shared that his principal chose a "mafia theme" as his "central theme for meetings." Robert went on to share a time when his principal made a mafia reference over the intercom threatening that his staff would "end up like Santino" if they "let their kids out early." Mary also described her superintendent as someone who would "crush your soul" when describing a time when her school district had a

superintendent that seemed to be out to get teachers and many teachers wound up on administrative leave while investigations were conducted.

Colleague Issues

Approximately 45% of the teacher participants cited varying issues with colleagues. These issues varied from "higher than normal absenteeism" and a "teacher shortage" to working with "disgruntled colleagues" and "close-minded adults." In discussing the "higher than normal absenteeism among faculty," Gary cited a day when "30 teachers were out" and asking himself, "is this a morale issue or a pandemic issue?" Gary believes that "teacher morale is still an issue especially in the wake of the pandemic." And, during the focus group, Pam stated that her school was "down 16 teachers" this year, "and a lot of them are in tough (subjects) like math and they don't have them, they're down in science, and in social studies they're down three. You can't find them. Social studies used to be, we were a dime a dozen, and now you can't find one."

Student Behaviors

While all of the participants cited the adults in the building as a greater source of stress than the students and their students as a source of motivation, student behavior issues were still a source of stress for approximately 73% of the teacher participants. Stress inducing student behaviors include behavior changes post-pandemic, drug issues, cell phone usage, apathy, disrespect towards teachers, and power struggles. The majority of student behaviors cited were issues that were outside of the teachers' ability to manage without administrative support. Robert noted that due to a lack of support for teachers by the administration, "students know they can make threats to your profession." While Mary stated that "the other big stressor that we have right now is our student behavior. We're running the gamut either from complete and total apathy and work avoidance to the disrespect of teachers, which is appalling."

Teacher Development

Approximately 36% of teachers cited their professional development time as a source of stress. They would like better use of their time and more autonomy in professional development. During the interview, Justin stated, "I just wish there was more choice and autonomy in professional development because the one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work. I would like more independent professional development to let me seek out what I need." While, during the focus group, Mary stated that the professional development offered at her school was "so horrendous that I would much rather teach students" and "if we ever taught our students the way they (administration) teach us, we wouldn't be in the field (of education) very long."

Academic Injustice

Academic injustices in schools were cited as a source of stress for approximately 36% of teacher participants. The cited injustices include the social promotion of students, the lowering of academic standards by administrative policies, lack of resources for special education, and the school to prison pipeline. When discussing some of these injustices, Hannah revealed that "they're (students) not getting a free and appropriate education, they're just floating along, and the district is just passing them through." While Brenda shared, "The special ed department and the support provided by them, or lack thereof, is also a source of stress."

Systemic Problems

Approximately 45% of teachers spoke of systemic problems like scheduling issues, administrative turnover, top-down initiatives, and a lack of collaborative time and space for teachers. When discussing administrative turnover issues, Sarah stated that "administrators don't stay more than a year or two." While Marissa feels that "we really had a chance with the pandemic to make some big changes and I think we lost the opportunity," citing the priority

placed on policies and personal protective equipment (PPE) over truly targeting the learning gaps.

Let Teachers Teach

Pressure and criticism from administration was a source of stress for approximately 36% of teacher participants. Some mentioned the new teacher evaluation system and feelings of being micromanaged by administration. During the interview, Marissa noted the joy of "taking risks" and trying new things in the classroom until changes were made to the teacher evaluation process. Marissa stated, "once they started ranking you proficient, exemplary, it became less about taking risks." And Brenda, while sharing the details of a particularly stressful school year, cited feeling as though "there was a lot of pressure in the building to be perfect."

Teacher Perception

Teacher participants cited administration as a source of their stress. Teacher perceptions of administration were generally negative, with a few outliers who spoke favorably about their administrative team. The major sub-themes of feeling unseen and unheard by administration, lacking administrative support, feeling as though administration doesn't trust them to do their job, and 45% of participants echoed feeling they were not valued by administration. When talking about supports and changes that would reduce her stress, Brenda shared, "I think if when I met with the principal and assistant principal, for my mid-year or my end of year meeting, if they genuinely said, 'what can I do to make your job easier? Is there anything you need from me?' Nobody ever asks."

Felt Unseen and Unheard

The desire to be seen and known or seen and heard by administration, as well as the power of receiving meaningful recognition, was a common thread in 64% of conversations with teacher participants. Sarah shared, "a lot of the stress that I feel at work comes from administration not understanding what we do or how or why we do certain things." Brenda mirrored Sarah's sentiments in sharing her desire to be acknowledged by administration for the work she has done with her students stating, "there's not a lot of opportunities for positive acknowledgement."

Lack of Support

Approximately 55% of teachers spoke of the need for more support from administration. Support included wanting administration to be approachable, to have administrative supportive with student issues, and needing time and space to collaborate with colleagues. Sarah shared, "I think that administration doesn't listen, a lot of times, to what teachers need." And when discussing a lack of time and space for teachers to collaborate, Greg said, "I don't think it's a good support system and that's one of the things that has to change. I remember when I was a new teacher, I got a lot of support from all the people who are retired now, but they were great. They were fantastic to me, and it made me want to come to work."

Trust Us to Do Our Job

Teachers shared they felt as though administration didn't trust them as professionals. The sub-theme of trust was cited by 55% of teacher participants who felt micromanaged and that they didn't have autonomy in their teaching. Dean shared that he would like administration to be "as hands off as possible." He is looking for more "independence" and recognized that "trust is necessary" for administration to provide teachers with more independence. While Hannah

recalled a time when the administration told her, "We trust you, you do it," giving her permission to write a rigorous curriculum for her students that is now implemented throughout the district. She described the experience of being trusted by administration to write her own curriculum as being "exciting" and "awesome" and shared that her students "loved it!"

Not Valued

Some teachers shared feeling trusted and respected by parents and students, but not by administration. While some felt the teaching profession has gotten a bad name and that teachers are not respected by society. Approximately 45% of teacher participants expressed feeling as though they were not valued. Teachers expressed feeling as though they were "treated like a child" and not respected as professionals, and that they were not valued by administration. Hannah shared, "what gets me excited is being respected as an expert at what I do instead of being treated like the children I teach." She contrasted this experience with feeling "unappreciated" and that she was being "treated like a child trying to get away with something" by administration. While Mary retold a time when she was "made to feel expendable" by administration, and shared that, in the current culture nationwide, she feels "teachers have become the punching bags for society."

Never Felt Stressed

Approximately 45% of teacher participants shared that they never felt stressed in the workplace, and even felt supported by administration. It was interesting to note that while they mentioned situations that were stressful, these participants had the perception that they were not stressed. At the conclusion of our interview, Sarah shared that she struggles to stay balanced in handling her role as a teacher, a mother, and a student. She stated, "I don't identify it as like real stress, but I definitely know that I'm not always in balance." When asked about the supports or

changes that would reduce his stress, Dean shared, "I really feel well supported here." While Gary shared a recent experience with a student who needed to be removed from his classroom for insubordination, mentioned that he had "supportive administration" when detailing how the Dean of Students handled the student and the situation.

Coping Mechanisms

In each interview, teacher participants shared the coping mechanisms employed to manage their work-related stress. Those mechanisms included embracing failure, not taking things personally, taking a reset, and their support system. Brenda shared, "there's a lot of teachers feeling really burnt out right now. There's not enough that's being done to address the burnout." While Marissa mentioned that in working with her therapist she is trying "to set those boundaries." And Greg stated, "I am motivated to reduce my stress because I want to have a positive work atmosphere."

Embrace Failure

Embracing failure means changing your perspective to see failure as a learning opportunity, understanding that there are things beyond our control and letting go of what is outside of our locus of control. Approximately 36% of teacher participants cited embracing failure as a means of coping with their work-related stress and a facet of their resilience. Justin discussed creating a strong "why" as a means of keeping him focused and the power of embracing a scientific mindset. In talking about the scientific mindset, Justin stated, "I felt kind of liberated, almost, with that permission to fail." He went on to say, "let's embrace failure and treat it as a stop, not a destination." In his journal prompt, Justin shared the role of resilience in managing his work-related stress. He stated, "How I combat the stress created from the scenario described in prompt one is that I close my door and do what I know is best for students. This

requires resilience because most times I have to seek out my own answers and figure out new approaches to planning and carrying out my lessons. Often these lessons do not go as planned and I have to adjust from period to period as I teach the same lesson. I cannot simply roll out the lesson and sit back, this requires energy for me to perform my five, one act shows that we as teachers have to perform every day. Using the scientific mindset has helped me to be resilient as it changes my mindset to look at the 'failure' of a lesson as an opportunity to adjust rather than a personal shortcoming of mine."

Not Taking Things Personally

Approximately 36% of teachers spoke of "coming to terms with things beyond one's control," and that it's important for teachers not to take student behavior personally. Participants in the focus group discussed student behavior, and Sarah said, "it's not personal! Our kids (students') behavior is a product of who they are." And Justin shared, "it's just perspective. It's just taking a step back" when describing how he approaches work-related stress and student behaviors.

Reset

The ability to reset each day or day-to-day was a powerful coping mechanism for approximately 73% of teacher participants. It was a means of finding resilience within the challenge of each school day, recognizing that tomorrow is a new day or next class period is a fresh start with a different group of students. A reset also means finding healthy outlets for one's stress and focusing on their personal health. Marissa shared, "it is important to go into each day as a new day; a fresh start; so that work related stress does not keep us from functioning." While Greg shared that he resets using "exercise… that's my greatest stress reliever." And Pam shared

that she would like to have "a time where teachers could either meet or go to the gym" as a means of resetting and being resilient within the workplace.

Need Support System

The value of a support system was a common thread in many of the discussions with participants. The support system could be within the school or outside of the school, but approximately 45% of teachers shared they would like more support from within the school. Greg said, "you need a support system to relieve that stress. Colleagues and mentors are a great support system to manage stress." While Sarah shared, "we (teachers) really need outside counseling and therapists to come in and to work with us." And Pam felt "a room for teachers to go to meditate during their preps" would be helpful in reducing teacher stress and bolstering resilience.

Teacher Resilience

The theme of resilience is woven throughout my research. Resilience was viewed by participants as a means of "bouncing back" or coming back from a negative experience. All participants shared they felt resilient "every day" or "quite often," and felt that resilience was necessary for all teachers if they are to be successful in the field of education. Robert believes "what makes something resilient is community. I don't feel resilient when I'm just soldiering ahead." He said, "resilience is what develops. It is a sense of shared community." During the focus group, Mary mirrored Robert's sentiments saying, "I feel like any of the times that I've been resilient is because I've had support from either another teacher or a coworker or my boss."

I Still Enjoy the Profession

Approximately 55% of teachers shared that they still enjoyed the profession, in spite of the struggles and stress. It was their enjoyment of the profession that provided them with feelings

of resilience. In sharing about supports or changes that would bolster her resilience, Brenda retold of her experiences of not feeling seen and heard and a means for rectifying those feelings. She went on to state, "we stay in the profession because we genuinely like working with kids." In sharing a time when he felt stressed in the workplace, Dean began by saying, "teaching is 95% joy. And that's when I'm teaching in the class with my students interacting. But the 5% that causes me stress is when the administrators get involved and require us to go through certain processes."

I Didn't Quit the Profession

Approximately 82% of teachers shared stories of persistence. When they did so they often showed pride in their resilience and the fact that they didn't quit even when it would have been easy to do so. When talking about a time she felt resilient to overcome a challenging work environment, Brenda exclaimed, "I showed up and I made it happen. I did what I needed to do. I prepared. I collaborated with colleagues… I didn't quit the profession." In sharing a time when she persisted, Mary stated, "I think the fact that I'm still teaching shows that I persisted. I still feel like I have work to do. I still feel like I have a lot to offer… it's still a job that I love so I'm still here."

Teacher Motivation

Teachers shared various sources of motivation and persistence for the teaching profession. Those sources of motivation included the ability to be creative in their teaching, their students and being intrinsically motivated, and extrinsic motivators like pay and recognition. In sharing a time when she felt competent, energized, and successful, Brenda shared, "what energizes me is my students enjoying something I came up with and learning something and being able to teach it, because that's what they end up having to do once they're done with this

assessment, they have to present it. And so, when my students are able to teach something, I know they genuinely understood it and they learned it."

Being Creative

Having the autonomy to be creative and to take risks in the classroom was a major motivator for teachers, with 36% of teacher participants citing creativity as a motivator. While some teachers felt they were not empowered to do so in their current school, many re-told times in their career when they were able to be creative and do things that positively impacted their students. In sharing his motivation to persist in the face of workplace challenges and stress, Gary said, "I like to integrate my own engaging activities in the classroom." In sharing a time when she felt successful, competent, and energized, Hannah shared, "I rewrote an entire curriculum for a course to have more rigor and to have more cultural relevance for students." She called this experience "exciting" and stated that her students "loved it," citing the joy and importance of meaningful curriculum that empowers students.

My Kids (Students)

Students were at the core of every conversation I had with the teacher participants, with 100% of teachers citing their students as their primary source of motivation. They all genuinely enjoy working with their students and supporting them in their learning. During the interview, in asking about her source of motivation, Sarah exclaimed, "my kids, it's 100% my kids! I love my students! I love seeing them successful!" Others mirrored her response sharing their love for their students. While Robert presented another facet of the joy of working with students when he shared his source of motivation was the ability to mentor students. Robert said, "when a student came to my room in the middle of the day during my noninstructional period. Knocked on the door and said, 'hey, can I vent to you?' And I said, 'sure come on in.' And he came in and sat

down and pulled the chair up and shared a relationship communication challenge that he was having with his girlfriend and wanted to vent and ask for advice."

Extrinsic Motivation

Approximately 36% of the teacher participants mentioned extrinsic motivators like pay, benefits, and recognition. In sharing what motivates her to persist in the face of workplace challenges or stress, Marissa stated, "I'm the breadwinner. And I have the insurance and sometimes that's my motivation. If I left, I wouldn't have summers off. I wouldn't have the hours that I have. And we have a schedule that works, and my kids are well adjusted." Greg shared, "you enjoy when you get an attaboy when you're told you're doing a good job from administration or central office" in his explanation of the supports or changes that would motivate him to persist.

Community and Collaboration

The importance of community and collaboration was strongly woven into all of the conversations with teacher participants. Teachers shared how their community, or lack thereof, or the collaboration with colleagues was a key in their resilience, motivation, persistence, and success. When discussing persistence in a difficult work environment, Brenda stated, "the act of figuring out how to get through that and working with my colleagues, people I trusted, and I believed in… I felt like I bounced back really easily." While Robert shared what it was like teaching in a school in New York during 9-11. Robert said, "but we felt as a community. We felt comforted as teachers together, it was already a positive community, was not a judgmental negative school at all. And I think going through that challenge together and knowing that we were cared for by the administration and the support staff and the secretaries and that we had done a good job caring for the students."

Unsupportive School Culture

Approximately 27% of teachers explicitly mentioned an unsupportive school culture as a source of stress and a detractor from their resilience and persistence in stressful work environments. In sharing the incidents and people connected to her work-related stress, Sarah shared, "we have a school that has a culture that is often abrasive, and it doesn't feel supportive." While Brenda provided perspective on her school's culture post-pandemic saying, "one-on-one personability has been lost. And it's unfortunate because I think a lot of teachers after COVID are really frustrated, and I have a friend who dyed her hair very dark, and she has light hair, and she said, 'it's just how I feel about this place right now.' And it broke my heart."

Rely on Relationships

The importance of relationships with colleagues, students, and leadership was also a common thread throughout the data with 91% of participants citing the importance of collegial relationships. Teachers shared the benefits of these relationships and the dangerous of working in an environment that wasn't conducive to relationship building and collaboration. In sharing about a time when she felt resilient, Mary stated, "teaching right now, so much of it is collaborative and if I can't get what I need from collaborating with my department… I can't get the support that I need from them, then I have relationships with other coworkers that I can go to who will sort of boost me up." She went on to say, "the idea that we can teach in a bubble, just doesn't really exist anymore. We can't. We need each other. And for me to think that I can do all of it on my own is just, like my ego is not that big. I can't do it. I'll be the first to tell you I need help."

Outlier Data and Findings

There was one unexpected finding that did not align with the major themes presented. Approximately 27% of participants expressed a desire to not have to be motivated or viewed motivation as a stressor. When asked about the supports or changes that would motivate him to persist in the face of the workplace stressors and challenges, Robert shared that he needs "a break from motivation." He said, "I think my motivation is dialed up to 10. I don't think I could be more motivated." He went on to share, "I think moments of allowing yourself to let go of that intense motivation that a lot of educators really do have, even the jaded ones, you know, the most jaded ones, probably were the most motivated at one point." While in her journal prompt, Mary shared, "my motivation is what makes me do a good job everyday" when describing the role of motivation in managing her work-related stress. But she went on to state, "Sometimes I find that my motivation to succeed and to 'be the best' is what causes some of my stress."

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Research Question Responses

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Research questions were written to uncover the essence of high school teachers' experiences with work-related stress and resilience. A brief description of the essence of teachers' experiences and perceptions are provided. Each research question response includes an in vivo quote from participants to illustrate the essence of the response.

Central Research Question

What are public high school teachers' (grades 9-12) experiences with work-related stress and resilience? The participants' perspective is that teachers must be resilient to be successful in the workplace and to be able to persist in the face of the various workplace stressors and challenges. Participants described their stressful experiences as being frustrating, draining, and demoralizing. In contrast, at times they felt excited, exhilarated, and blessed. Brenda used the word "fire" to describe feeling successful, energized, and competent, and went on to state, "I

don't know that I've had another time like that, which is unfortunate because you would think as time goes on that happens more, but I guess it always depends on the leadership in the building."

Sub-Question One

How do public high school teachers describe their experiences with work-related stress? Most of the participants cited new initiatives and top-down initiatives, or the administration as their main sources of stress. The new initiatives were viewed as another thing added to their already full plates, citing a lack of power or voice in the decisions made by the administration. One participant pointed out the lack of buy-in from teachers and another viewed the initiatives as a master. Mary stated, "I think that idea of having all of these masters is really stressful to me because, initially, I would only need to report to my administrator and that's it. But all of these different things that they are forcing on us to do is a big stressor for me because I want to do them. I want to do a good job and if I can't do a good job then I internalized that." And Pam shared, "it's difficult dealing with bad administration. It really is. And then you call in sick if you want a day. You'll use more leave than maybe you would want to. But for your mental health… It's a tough day calling in sick. I don't like doing that, but I've done that more this year than I ever had."

Sub-Question Two

How do public high school teachers describe their experiences with resilience in the workplace? Teachers expressed that they were resilient "every day" or "quite often." Resilience was viewed as a means of bouncing back and a necessity for success as an educator. Robert stated, "resilience is rebounding. Resilience requires acknowledgement of a negative experience and coming back from it in a sense." Justin exclaimed, "you can't be an educator and not be

resilient… every single day I have to be excited to try something new. But if you're not, you're going to go crazy."

Sub-Question Three

What motivates public high school teachers to persist in the face of workplace challenges and stress? The resounding answer to the question of motivation was their students. All of the teacher participants shared their love for their students, the joy of teaching, and their desire to make a difference. Greg stated, "I am also motivated to reduce my stress, because I want to enjoy my last years of teaching. I want to have a positive experience and feel good about what I do. I want to think I will leave a legacy as a teacher who was a hard worker, who cared for his students."

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Summary

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The purpose of this study is to describe public high school teachers' experiences of work-related stress and resilience in the state of CT, using self-determination theory (SDT) as a framework for understanding teachers' work motivation, commitment, and propensity towards resilient behaviors. A total of 12 participants provided consent for participation in the study, while only 11 participants were deemed eligible following initial interviews. Data was triangulated using semi-structured interviews, journal prompts, and a focus group. The data collected from the journal prompts and the focus group confirmed the data collected from the semi-structured interviews. Finally, follow-up interviews were used as a form of member checking to ensure the accurate portrayal of teachers experiences with work-related stress and resilience.

Upon collecting the data, participants' responses were coded using in vivo codes as the first cycle of coding. The in vivo codes were used to create focused codes and the focused codes

were organized to produce pattern codes. The pattern codes became the major themes, and the focused codes became the sub-themes that emerged within the data. The major themes were sources of stress, teacher perception, coping mechanisms, teacher resilience, teacher motivation, and community and collaboration. In vivo quotes were used to illustrate the sub-themes. Teachers' perceptions of feeling unseen and unheard, lacking administrative support, and feeling as though they were not trusted or valued, were pervasive throughout many of the interviews. While the most common sources of teacher stress were new initiatives and administration. In spite of the participants' varied backgrounds and professional experiences, they were unified in stating that the major source of their motivation was their students. The data suggests that teachers that remain in the teaching profession do so because they genuinely care about their students and desire to make a difference in the world.

The data from this study confirms the extant literature on teacher resilience and attrition. A positive personality, characterized by optimism, proactivity, and genuine caring for students, along with motivation, remaining focused on things within their control, and support from colleagues and leadership have been cited as reasons teachers stay in the profession (Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019). In this study, 100% of teacher participants cited their students as the main source of motivation and persistence. Approximately 36% of participants cited embracing failure and not taking things personally, 45% cited the need for a support system, and 91% cited their reliance on relationships as a means of supporting their resilience, motivation, and persistence in the face of work-related stress. These facts suggest that behind every stressed teacher is a person who genuinely cares for their students and entered the profession because they desired to make a difference, thus leaving a legacy.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe public high school teachers' experiences of work-related stress and resilience in the state of CT, using self-determination theory (SDT) as a framework for understanding teachers' work motivation, commitment, and propensity towards resilient behaviors. This chapter begins with the discussion, including an interpretation of the findings, implications for policy and practice, theoretical and methodological implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research. The chapter ends with a conclusion, providing a summary of the entire study.

Discussion

The findings of this study were interpreted in light of the themes that developed within the research and are supported by the extant literature on the subject of teacher work-related stress and resilience. Implications for policy and practice are discussed, followed by the theoretical and empirical implications. Finally, I discuss limitations and delimitations of the study and make suggestions for future research based on this study's findings.

Interpretation of Findings

This section begins with a brief summary of the thematic findings and the interpretation of the themes. I identified six themes and 25 sub-themes. The themes and sub-themes were analyzed in light of the research questions to develop my interpretation of the data. I then made connections between the participants experiences and current literature to describe high school teachers' experiences of work-related stress and resilience.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The six thematic findings within this study were common sources of teacher stress, teachers' perceptions of their work environment, coping mechanisms employed by teachers, teacher resilience and motivation, and the importance of community and collaboration. In reviewing these themes, the following interpretations were uncovered and will be discussed in further detail within this section. The themes of sources of stress and teacher perceptions provide evidence to suggest that teachers' greatest stressors are things outside of their control. While the themes of coping mechanisms, teacher resilience, teacher motivation, and community and collaboration point to a need for resilience as a pre-requisite for the teaching profession, especially knowing that teachers' greatest stressors are outside of their control.

Stressors Outside of Teachers' Control. Teacher participants cited various sources of work-related stress, which is consistent with the literature. Teachers' experiences are variable because they are shaped by individual and environmental factors (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). While the sources of stress varied a common thread existed among them, the majority of stressors cited by participants were things beyond their control. The most commonly cited sources of teacher stress were new initiatives and administration; while teacher perceptions provided insight into why administration was viewed as a source of stress.

One of the most commonly cited sources of stress was new initiatives. In sharing how he feels about the stress of new initiatives from administration, Greg stated, "I think it's anger. I think you do get angry when you first hear it, and you just shake your head. It's just frustrating when you have no power over it because we're the teachers who have to deal with these policies." Mary also said, "every year we get three or four new initiatives, and we never get any footing. It's always something new every year... We always ask them, what are they going to

take off of our plate? You're going to give us one more thing? What are you going to take away from us? And they don't." These statements support the literature that teachers are at a greater risk for burnout when they don't have autonomy and are not included in the decision-making process within their schools (Abos et al., 2019b; Kaynak, 2020; Wronowski, 2018).

Another commonly cited source of work-related stress was administration, namely the management style of the administration. Leadership style is a dimension of school culture that impacts teacher stress, and teachers' perceptions of the leadership style have been shown to impact teacher stress and motivation (Carroll et al., 2021a; Eyal & Roth, 2010; Hu et al., 2019). Teacher participants perceived that they were not seen, heard, or trusted by administration, and they were not well supported. Teacher perception impacts the stress response, whether the event is viewed as negative or positive, and the severity of the stress (Schussler et al., 2018; Tillman et al., 2020). Participant perceptions provided insight into why administration was viewed as a source of stress for most participants.

In sharing about a time when she felt successful, competent, and energized in the workplace, Brenda shared, "my principal really knew who I was and supported me." She went on to share, "I don't know that the support that I've received from my principal or from administration has been. (pause) I'm not always seen and so that can be difficult because I think most teachers just need like, you know, we don't need a lot. We just need a little like, 'hey, you're doing a great job, keep up the good work' and that'll get me going for another six months or so." Mary also shared, "I feel like all of us would be bolstered a little bit, or a lot of bit, if they would just trust us to do our job and trust us to do it to the best that we can."

The importance of feeling seen, heard, known, and trusted by administration cannot be understated, but teachers also need to feel as though they are included in the decision-making

process. Marissa shared about an experience earlier this school year where she provided feedback at the end of a professional development day. Months later, while discussing a student issue with her principal, the principal brought up her feedback. Marissa shared, "He's (the principal) like, 'you know, I read your form and it seemed like you're overwhelmed that we're switching from discourse to feedback (initiatives that changed from the beginning of the school year to mid-year).' And I was thinking to myself, I didn't say this because then he would have yelled at me, but I was thinking 'if you read my form in January and you were concerned, why are you only telling me about it now when you're calling me in for something completely different?'" She went on to say, "I feel like he's just throwing this against me, and I don't think that's fair. That's not the intent of the form. But I feel like sometimes I've put stuff on the surveys and I kind of feel like they ignore the results." According to the literature, when demands on teachers' commitment and resources increase, and they do not feel heard or that they have a say in decision-making, they feel powerless to make changes in their school system and are more likely to experience burnout and leave the profession (Abos et al., 2019b; Wronowski, 2018).

Many teacher participants also reported feeling unsupported or under supported by administration. This is consistent with the literature on teacher stress, as a lack of administrative support and work pressure, or feelings of being scrutinized by school administration, has been shown to increase teacher stress while perceived organizational support, from colleagues and leadership, enhanced teacher resilience and commitment to the profession (Camacho & Parham, 2019; Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019; Kaynak, 2020; Li et al., 2021). Robert shared about a recent experience with a student that threatened his personal and professional safety. He shared, "I think what carries the power of that threat and stress is knowing that, from experience, that

administration is not likely to follow up if a complaint is made and is not likely to do the work of providing a physically safe space for the teachers." He went on to say, "the students know that they can make threats to your profession, and they specifically act to do so, which is frightening." Student behaviors are within the teachers' locus of control, to the degree they are empowered and supported by administration to manage those behaviors. According to the literature, the ability to effectively manage one's classroom predicts a teacher's susceptibility to stress, and student misbehavior, aggression, and ineffective consequences are sources of teacher stress (Abos et al., 2019b; Alson, 2019; Camacho & Parham, 2019; Fitchett et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021; Murphy et al., 2021).

Resilience is a Pre-requisite. Teacher participants shared they were resilient "quite often" or "every day," highlighting the need for resilience as an educator. Stress is contagious but the absence of stress in the workplace is not an attainable reality (Fitchett et al., 2021; Soykan et al., 2019). These facts highlight the need for resilience as a pre-requisite for teachers entering the profession. Justin shared, "You can't be an educator and not be resilient!" The ability to bounce back from negative experiences and to employ coping strategies to mitigate the potentially harmful effects of stress are signs of resilience. I refer to the teacher participants in this study as stayers. The stayers are the ones who haven't left the profession or given up, they persist for a variety of reasons, the greatest being their students, and they find a means of moving forward even in the midst of less-than-ideal circumstances.

Teacher participants cited embracing failure, not taking things personally, resetting, and having a support system as necessary for persistence and resilience when confronted with work-related stress. Justin shared about the importance of realizing that you aren't going to be able to reach all of the students. He stated that you don't give up on any student, but you do the best that

you can with the student; "you have to try, but then you have to kind of realize that there are some kids you are not going to reach." He went on to share that he gives himself "permission to fail" and wants educators to "embrace failure and treat it as a stop and not a destination." Resilience is the ability to distance one's emotions from their work and to cope with failure (Klussman et al., 2008). The ability to perceive and regulate emotions, to make wise classroom instructional and management decisions, and to interact successfully with students and colleagues is related to greater teacher well-being and linked to developing teacher resilience (Merida-Lopez et al., 2022; Murphy et al., 2021).

A component of having "permission to fail" is learning not to take things personally. Sarah believes "we shouldn't, as teachers, take their (students') behavior personally because it's never personal, and I find that the teachers who struggle the most with student behavior take their (students') behavior personally." She went on to share, "I think the teachers who don't remember not to take it personally have a very, very difficult time. You know, I have one colleague and she's always talking about how her blood pressure is through the roof. And it's because she takes the behavior personally and she shouldn't." During the focus group, Justin mirrored Sarah's statement saying, "I just didn't take it personal, kind of like not taking it on. It's not me it's them (students) being kind of snarky. So that's kind of how I deal with it. Find a way to reset, not taking it personal, and then just moving on." Emotional intelligence and perseverance positively impact the psychological well-being and coping skills of teachers, while resilience is dependent on individual and environmental factors, and the individual's perception of those factors (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Kamboj & Garg, 2021; Schussler et al., 2018).

The ability to reset and move on is essential as an educator. Greg stated, "you have to be resilient for your kids (students)." He went on to retell a story of a current student who was

struggling in school. Greg made an intentional effort to reach this student and at the end of the school year the student told Greg, "You were the only teacher who didn't quit on me this year!" As a result of his persistence, the student is in another one of his classes this year and is doing well. Greg shared, "I stay persistent because I like to have success stories like I had with her (the student)." Brenda mirrored his response saying, "we stay in the profession because we genuinely like working with the kids." Dean also shared about persistence in working to reach behaviorally challenging students. He stated that he had to "make adjustments" and "talk with colleagues" to determine the best approach with these students. In the end he "didn't give up." Resilience is linked to a strong commitment to the teaching profession, self-efficacy, motivation, and the willingness to persist for the sake of their students (Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019; Flores, 2020). Watching students grow and develop motivated teachers and was viewed as a work-related reward, while support from colleagues, and positive relationships promote teacher well-being and positive mental health (Kaynak, 2020; Lucas-Mangas et al., 2020).

Brenda shared about the importance of community and collaboration among colleagues. In retelling a story of a particularly stressful work experience, Brenda stated, "I think the camaraderie with my department, if that wasn't there, I would have definitely not lasted. I think knowing you have a friend is huge. Knowing somebody's in the trenches with you taking grenades, you know, like we're all in this together, that mentality." Mary also spoke of the importance of community and collaboration saying, "my colleagues are definitely a big source of my resiliency." Robert mirrored these sentiments saying, "I think resilience is what develops. It is a sense of shared community and maybe it's shared community across authority levels. And in a good community that resilience is shared. I think the struggle is shared, the understanding is shared and communicated. That sort of communication that we're really in this together. Not just

in a platitude in an e-mail, but something that's much more real. I think that creates resilience."

Teachers are more resilient when they have supportive professional relationships with their

colleagues and students (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Kabito & Wami, 2020).

Implications for Policy and Practice

In this section, the implications for policy and practice will be discussed. First, I will

discuss the implications for policy based on the study's findings. Second, I will discuss the

implications for practice. While these findings were specific to teachers in Connecticut, they may

be applicable to teachers in other states throughout the United States.

Implications for Policy

Teacher participants cited new initiatives and unrealistic expectations as a major source

of stress. They noted feelings of pressure, not having enough time, a lack of teacher input in the

policies, and top-down initiatives. These findings have implications for school districts and state

and federal departments of education. The organizations and government agencies that are

creating the initiatives should consider how the initiatives will be implemented in the various

school settings and include teachers in the planning and implementation process. The inclusion

of teachers will help to inform them of the practical implications of their policies as well as aid in

gaining teacher buy-in at the school level. School districts should also evaluate the initiatives that

are currently in their schools before implementing anything new in order to avoid overlapping or

conflicting initiatives that will place undue pressure on teachers who are already feeling

overworked and stressed. Intervention strategies for teacher stress are an area of emerging

research as teacher stress may be the primary cause for the teacher shortage (Sanetti et al., 2020).

Schools should implement systems that support teachers and do not require schools to drain their

resources for another strategy, proactively seeking solutions to teacher stress to better support teachers before they are stressed out, burnt out, and ready to quit the profession.

Participants also cited the importance of resilience, the various coping strategies they employ, and the desire for access to resources that would reduce their stress. Higher education institutions have an opportunity to include coursework into their education programs for both teachers and administrators, as well as offering learning opportunities to local school districts. These institutions should include coursework on emotional intelligence, resilience, coping strategies, and relationship building for teacher candidates and school administrators. These course offerings could also be customized to be offered to local school districts to train their staff during professional development. These implications are in alignment with the literature. In understanding that resilience predicts burnout and stress, a need for instruction in coping strategies for teacher candidates was cited as a useful tool while in school, student teaching, and during their professional careers (Daniilidou et al., 2020; Gustems-Carnicer et al., 2019). Because today's teacher education students are tomorrow's teachers, it's important to teach them coping skills for handling workplace stress in order to improve their well-being (Gustems-Carnicer et al., 2019). Teaching students how to manage stress and then giving them an opportunity to implement those strategies during student teaching, followed by additional training and support on stress reduction upon entering the workplace and throughout their career, may help to remediate teacher stress.

Implications for Practice

The practical implications of the study's findings are targeted at schools, and possibly school districts, depending on the organization of the school district. Schools should include professional development on emotional intelligence, resilience, and coping strategies, as well as

providing teachers with more autonomy of choice in their professional development. They should work to create collaborative spaces for teachers, encourage collaboration with colleagues to include adjustments to the school schedule, and provide access to resources that support teachers' mental health. These implications are in alignment with the literature. School leadership should establish initiatives aimed at the well-being of all school staff before seeing signs of stress and burnout, instead of focusing their efforts solely on the individuals at the greatest risk for burnout, because stress is contagious and burnout is preventable (Fitchett et al., 2021; Kim & Buric, 2020).

School leadership should also take a critical look at the current initiatives and policies within the school before implementing anything new. They should work with their staff to analyze the initiatives and policies currently in place and have a collegial discourse to discuss their effectiveness before implementing new initiatives. Support from school leadership, subject matter experts, and peers has been shown to increase teacher motivation and self-efficacy in implementing new initiatives (Chiu, 2022). School leadership should include teachers in the implementation process in a meaningful way that increases their buy-in, and they should support their staff in implementing new initiatives.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

Theoretical and empirical implications are drawn from the data collected and the extant literature. Much of the data collected confirms the extant literature, providing both theoretical and empirical implications. This study provided teachers with a voice and makes a case for the need for greater focus on the basic psychological needs of teachers, and the need to support teachers to remediate their work-related stress and bolster their resilience.

Theoretical Implications

The theory of self-determination (SDT) focuses on the connection between motivation and human behavior, distinguishing between controlled and autonomous behaviors and the individual's need for self-determination or control over their behaviors and the outcomes. The theory details the importance of the fulfillment of the basic psychological needs of human beings as a component of self-determined behaviors. Those needs are competence, relatedness, and autonomy.

SDT provides a framework for understanding the subjective nature of stress and the powerful impact of resilience in reducing the adverse effects of the stress response (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011). SDT highlights the connection between an individual's motivational orientation and their propensity towards stress or resiliency. Autonomously motivated individuals tend to exhibit more resiliency and to view stressful situations as challenges to be overcome (Weinstein & Ryall, 2011). There was no evidence in the data to confirm that participants were autonomously motivated or not, however, there were participants that did not feel stressed but were able to articulate stressful situations which may mean they were autonomously motivated.

While the results of this study did not confirm nor deny the impact of an individual's motivational propensity towards stress or resiliency, the basic psychological needs were evident within the data. According to SDT, individuals need to feel connected to others, capable of effectively accomplishing their tasks, and to have the autonomy to choose their behaviors and control the outcome in order to fulfill their basic psychological needs (Gagne & Deci, 2005). A supportive school culture promotes autonomous motivation, enhances well-being, and reduces teacher stress by creating an environment where teachers can fulfill their basic psychological needs (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011). The data from this study confirms this assertion.

While all of the participants felt competent in their subject matter knowledge, many reported a lack of support within their schools, which may confirm the need for competence as a basic psychological need. In her journal prompt, Brenda shared that "support (or lack thereof) from my administrative team and co-workers" were her greatest sources of stress, and that teachers need "someone to talk to and confide in" to support them in their resiliency. In the follow-up interview, Brenda shared, "I think it's important to be able to have someone in the school setting that you can go to and say what's going on and just to sort of validate your feelings." In the interview, Mary shared that collegial relationships were energizing for her, and they provided her with what she needs "in order to try something different." While in the focus group, she shared, "My administration is where I go to when I'm feeling stressed and overwhelmed." In each instance, participants shared their need for support, and the relational aspect of this need for support. Stress exposure is connected to relatedness and competence; less stress exposure results in more competence and more feelings of relatedness to students and colleagues (Aldrup et al., 2017). The need for support confirms the basic psychological need of competence, while the relational aspect of needing support further confirms the data connected to relatedness, which was a major theme throughout the study.

The need for relatedness and autonomy were the most evident within the data. Relatedness, which refers to feelings of connectedness to others, is evident in the sub-themes of not valued, felt unseen and unheard, and rely on relationships. Gary shared that he would like to see administration provide teachers with "more time to collaborate," further stating that his motivation comes from his students and having "genuine friends in the building." While Greg shared, "making those connections with them (students) makes my life happy." And Robert retold an experience where he described his school as a "community," sharing "we felt

comforted as teachers together" and "we were cared for by the administration." In contrast, Mary described administration that made her feel "expendable" as a major source of stress, describing the experience as "demoralizing." And Hannah shared feeling "unappreciated," "insulted," "devalued," and "disrespected" by administration when discussing her work-related stressors. Social support from colleagues is linked to increased fulfillment of all three basic psychological needs, while leadership style has been shown to have an even greater impact on relatedness than social support from colleagues (Jansen in de Wal et al., 2020; Kassis et al., 2019). Participants' desire to be seen, heard, and known by leadership further supports the extant literature and confirms the need for relatedness in the workplace.

In addressing teacher stress, allowing teachers to select their professional learning, providing them with support to implement the learning, and creating a collegial work environment are all means of supporting teachers and satisfying all three basic psychological needs (Chiu, 2022). The need for autonomy was evident in the sub-themes of no voice, no power, just do one more thing, and trust us to do our job. In addressing the changes that would reduce his stress, Justin shared, "I just wish there was more choice and autonomy in professional development because the one-size-fits-all doesn't work when it's presented, especially in a big district." He went on to share that he would like "more autonomy in professional development to make it more meaningful." And in the focus group, when discussing changes that would reduce his stress, he shared about the changing initiatives and the desire to have administration "just give us time to let something sit. Breath." He went on to share his desire for time to process the new initiative, see how it will fit within his classroom, and to have the time and space to implement the new initiative without so much administrative oversight. The feelings of being micromanaged were mirrored by other participants in the focus group. Sarah stated, "We are told

that we are expected to be professional in many ways, but then we are micromanaged with how we use our time. And so, we are told that we have to have professional learning, and we are monitored and observed with how we use every minute of our school day. But then our plates are overflowing and all of the responsibilities they put on us are overwhelming."

School leadership can create a school culture that is designed to meet the basic psychological needs of their teachers to positively impact teacher well-being (Alfayez et al., 2021). Support from school leadership, subject matter experts, and peers increases teacher fulfillment of basic psychological needs, motivation, and self-efficacy to implement new initiatives (Chiu, 2022). I believe my research supports the theory of self-determination. Teachers need to have their basic psychological needs fulfilled within the workplace in order to feel fulfilled, happy, and successful.

Empirical Implications

Teacher participants shared the sources of their stress, how they cope with work-related stress, and the changes or supports that would bolster their resilience and remediate their stress. Much of the data collected in this study confirms the extant literature on the topic of teacher work-related stress and resilience. Teacher participants spoke of the need for support and autonomy from leadership, the importance of community and collaboration, the need for training and autonomy in professional development, and the power of resilience.

Sources of Stress. Common sources of teacher stress, cited in the literature, include working conditions, lack of resources, miscommunication and unclear directives, administrative oversight, unrealistic deadlines and workload, student misbehavior and classroom management, high stakes testing, lack of collegiality in the workplace, and lack of autonomy in the workplace (Abos et al., 2019b; Camacho & Parham, 2019; Faheem & Rashid, 2020; Kaynak, 2020; Murphy

et al., 2021). Many of the sources of teacher stress listed in the literature are confirmed by the data within this study. Teacher participants cited all of the sources of teacher stress listed above except for high stakes testing.

In discussing the incidents or people connected to work-related stress, Sarah discussed her working conditions stating, "we have a school that has a culture that is often abrasive, and it doesn't feel supportive." In his journal prompt, Greg shared, "the biggest contributor to my workday stress is my administration's policies that make my job harder to do." He went on to discuss an administrative policy that was "unrealistic and not providing the rigor that they (administration) want in our classrooms." In sharing about a stressful workplace experience, Robert shared that earlier that day he was "physically and professionally threatened by a student." He went on to share that "administration is not likely to follow up if a complaint is made and is not likely to do the work of providing a physically safe space for teachers." As a result of his experiences in this school, Robert is looking for employment elsewhere.

Marissa shared about an experience with administration that involved miscommunication and unclear directives. She retold of a time when her school principal and department supervisor did not see eye to eye, even scheduling meetings at the same time and putting pressure on her to attend one or the other meeting. Marissa shared, "I was in the middle of both of them and they didn't understand." When she tried to explain to her principal that she already had a meeting with the department supervisor at the same time and in a different building, the principal told her, "You're just very resistant to do things!" And she was concerned that she would lose her job.

In discussing the changes or supports that would reduce her work-related stress, Mary shared that people were the missing resource in her school, stating, "we have no paras. We're down special education teachers. We haven't had a school psychologist in two years." She also

shared, "we have no substitute teachers, so we have study halls in the cafeteria now. So anytime a teacher is out, their classes get sent to the cafeteria." Sarah shared of the administrative oversight she experiences in her school saying, "we're expected to be professional, but we are not treated as professionals. We are micromanaged with how we use our time." And Greg shared that "the way the schedule is set up, there's not a lot of common meeting time" in discussing his desire for more opportunities for community and collaboration as a change that would reduce his stress.

In sharing his feelings surrounding the top-down initiatives as a source of stress, Greg shared, "it's just frustrating when you know you can't (pause) when you know you have no power over it." Sarah mirrored Greg's response when discussing the changes she would like to see in her school. Sarah stated, "we (teachers) don't have a voice." Workload, support from leadership, and school culture have been shown to be important indicators of teachers' well-being and resilience, while there is a significant negative relationship between stress exposure in the classroom and work enthusiasm (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Aldrup et al., 2017).

When demands on teachers' commitment and resources increase, and when demands outside of the classroom threaten their ability to accomplish in classroom tasks, and they do not feel they have any control to make changes, they are at greater risk for burnout (Wronowski, 2018). Teacher autonomy has been shown to enhance job satisfaction and to moderate the impact of student misbehavior on job satisfaction (Kengatharan, 2020). Teacher participant statements regarding new initiatives and feeling as though they don't have any power or voice confirm the literature. In discussing sources of stress, Gary stated, "let's put the brakes on all these new initiatives" and further shared that "these new initiatives don't necessarily help staff morale." Greg mirrored Gary's frustration in saying, "we're the teachers who have to deal with these

policies." Greg expounded upon this statement and shared, "I can put up with the BS of the administration if my classroom is good, if my students are good and my students are feeling well, and I feel that I'm teaching them to the best of my ability then I'm a happy person." While Marissa wishes administration would stop saying "I know it's just one more thing, but you just have to do it."

Coping with Stress. In sharing about a time when they felt successful, competent, and energized in the workplace, Brenda and Marissa shared experiences with their principals that made them feel supported to take risks and be innovative. Brenda shared about a time when she was supported by her principal to create a writing center, sharing that her principal "really knew who I was and supported me." She went on to describe her current administration and the lack of support or recognition she receives. Contrasting these two experiences Brenda stated, "that support that I had helps with that fire, however, since that, I don't know that I've had another time like that, which is unfortunate because you would think as time goes on that would happen more, but I guess it always depends on the leadership in the building."

While Marissa shared that "early in my career is when I felt better taking risks." She shared about a time when she had a principal that told her, "We want teachers to take risks" and went on to share "that was the only time I was told they want to see risk taking." She contrasted this experience with speaking of her current principal who "makes his presence known and is really kind of a micromanager. So, I really haven't felt good or happy or like taking risks." This data confirms the literature on the importance of support from leadership. Support from leadership and the ability for teachers to express their ideas have been shown to reduce teacher stress (Carroll et al., 2021a; Masoom, 2021). Teacher autonomy is the result of leadership that

provides opportunities for teachers to be creative and take academic risks, by listening to teachers and supporting them in the process (Abos et al., 2019a; Li et al., 2021).

In stating that she works in an "abrasive" school culture that "doesn't feel supportive," Sarah stated, "I joke and say that I can do whatever I want because nobody ever pays attention to me, no one ever comes to my classroom. I often will encourage people to come into our classroom, come and see what we are doing, see all of the wonderful things that we do." In discussing the supports or changes that would reduce her work-related stress, Sarah shared, "I think if the administration could sit down with us and share concerns." She went on to discuss a desire for administration to come to her classroom in a non-evaluative manner to just see what they are doing, and if they (administration) would "build a relationship with us," expressing her desire to be seen, heard, and known by administration as a means of reducing her work-related stress.

Mary shared she feels resilient when she has support from her colleagues. She stated, "that resiliency that I would have or the perseverance that I need in the classroom, I often find that I get that boost from outside of myself. I can't get it from myself. I need to get it from other people in my building." When asked how she feels about having opportunities to collaborate with her colleagues, Mary stated, "It makes me feel like I could go back into my classroom, and it gives me that energy that I need in order to try something different." She went on to share that "the idea that we can teach in a bubble doesn't really exist anymore. We can't. We need each other." These statements confirm the literature regarding leadership's role in cultivating an empowering and supportive school culture. Perceived organizational support from colleagues and leadership has been shown to enhance teacher resilience and commitment to the profession, while relationships with school leaders have been shown to influence teachers' physical health,

stress, and career decisions (Dos Santos, 2021; Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019). Creating a culture that empowers teachers in a collaborative learning environment, which includes support from leadership, opportunities for mentorship or coaching, allowing teachers to share ideas, and shared decision making, has been shown to reduce stress and increase teacher retention (Camacho et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2019; Kongcharoen et al., 2019; Wronowski, 2018). When leadership creates a culture of collegiality that provides teachers with opportunities to work together, they promote feelings of solidarity and empathy between teachers, strengthen workplace relationships, make teachers feel heard and supported by leadership, and reduce teacher stress (Bjorndal et al., 2021; Canrinus et al., 2012; van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014; Kyriacou, 2001).

The need for workplace programs and systems that support teacher well-being and reduce their stress was cited both within the literature and in this study's data. Brenda shared, "I think there's a lot of teachers feeling really burnt out right now. I just think that there's not enough being done to address the burnout… I think mental health and burnout are two factors that are not addressed enough." Mary shared that "right now everything is the push for the social-emotional learning of students, and I'd like to see some of that focus put on teachers, considering our social and emotional (health)."

Sarah was one of many teachers to speak of the need for therapists for teachers inside of the schools, or to state that they were seeing a therapist outside of school to cope with their stress. Sarah stated, "we really need outside counseling and therapists to come in and to work with us, and we need really explicit training in trauma-informed instruction and care." According to the literature, there is a need for work-based programs that are designed to address teacher psychological distress and well-being (Stapleton et al., 2021). Principals should provide access to

training in relaxation strategies, stress coping strategies, and trauma-informed practices for themselves and their students and provide access to counseling and therapeutic modalities for teachers (Abos et al., 2019a; Lynch, 2021; Tillman et al., 2020). While school districts should allocate more resources towards employee assistance programs to address teacher stress (Lynch, 2021). School leadership should support teacher agency to build resilience and establish initiatives aimed at the well-being of all school staff before seeing signs of stress and burnout (Fitchett et al., 2021). Teachers need to be supported to handle the demands of their work over the long term.

Resilience. The variable nature of teachers' experiences within their role as teachers is shaped by individual and environmental factors (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). Teacher perception impacts their stress response, the severity of stress, and their desire to leave the profession (Merida-Lopez & Extremera, 2022; Schussler et al., 2018). An interesting facet of teacher stress was uncovered during this study. Approximately 45% of participants stated that they didn't feel stressed, despite sharing sources of stress and stressful experiences. These participants' statements confirm the data regarding the variability of teacher experiences and their perceptions regarding stress. Dean shared, "I've always felt well compensated, well supplied. I've never been stressed in the classroom itself, but it's what's outside that sometimes is stressful." While Sarah shared, "I don't identify it as real stress, but I definitely know that I'm not always in balance."

A strong sense of purpose or "why" has been shown to be protective against the negative effects from stress (Schussler et al., 2018). Justin shared his "why" and stated that it "guides me," citing the power of a strong sense of purpose in remaining focused and resilient. Justin shared that his "why" motivates him to persist in the face of workplace challenges and stress

stating that "everyday it grounds me." In his journal prompt he stated, "By making my 'why'

tangible, I have it hung up in my classroom, I have identified the reason I get out of bed every

day and go to work. It also focuses my instruction. I would often ask myself in the middle of

lessons, 'Why the hell am I doing this lesson' or question why I am giving a specific assignment

in a certain way. Now that I have my 'why'… I have motivation to produce lessons and

assessments, and a classroom environment that works towards achieving my 'why.'" Resilience

is dependent on individual and environmental factors, the individual's perception of those

factors, and is linked to a strong commitment to the teaching profession, self-efficacy, and

motivation for teaching (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019).

All of the teacher participants cited their students as their source of motivation, which

confirms the literature. Flores (2020) found that teachers remained in the teaching profession

because of their love for teaching and their students. They also cited positive relationships at

work, and a supportive and encouraging school culture and school leadership as additional

reasons to remain in their school (Flores, 2020). Burnout has been shown to be lower in teachers

that reported positive relationships, growth, self-acceptance, and a strong sense of purpose

(Lucas-Mangas et al., 2022).

The resounding source of motivation for teacher participants was their students. Mary

shared, "there were times when I felt like I was reaching my students and meeting their needs,

and they were growing and being successful, and I was really making a difference." She went on

to share, "I always loved it when they would come back, my graduating seniors would come

back after their first year of college and say, 'you really prepared me for college. My English

classes are so easy. Even when I have to write papers it's so much easier because you really

prepared me for college.' That just makes my heart sing."

Greg shared, "I want them (students) to be successful. I want them to have a positive experience in my room and making those connections with them makes my life happy, competent, and makes it a successful year, I feel." He went on to share an experience with a student that required his persistence and patience. At the end of the school year the student told Greg, "You were the only teacher who didn't quit on me." He went on to share that the student "comes and visits me like three times during the day when she's not in my class. You don't realize sometimes the connection you make with people being persistent. And it just reminds me sometimes that you can't quit on kids because this is what happens when you don't quit."

Limitations and Delimitations

Securing participants was both a limitation and a delimitation. I chose to limit my participants to Connecticut public high school teachers of core content areas, defined as English, Math, Science, and Social Studies, in an effort to reduce the potential sample size. Additionally, I limited my participants to those who began teaching prior to the 2019-2020 school year and having at least two years teaching experience in a high school setting. I decided to include this eligibility requirement in the hopes of gaining insight from teachers who had experience teaching in a high school setting prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To secure participants, I was relying on the accuracy of the email list provided to me by the Connecticut Department of Education. The list was supposed to be inclusive of all high school teachers in the state, however, the list contained erroneous email addresses and also included guidance counselors. Out of 7,839 emails sent, only 26 people completed the brief screening and demographic survey, and countless emails were returned as undeliverable. The ability to secure enough participants, to achieve my goal of 12 to 15 participants who provided informed consent, proved to be a limitation. Had I included all public high school teachers, I may

have had an easier time securing more participants to further enhance the quality of my data. I received email responses from World Language and Technical Education teachers requesting permission to participate in my study, however, I was unable to include them as they did not fit my participant selection criteria. For this reason, my participant selection criteria proved to be a delimitation in this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

In consideration of the limitations and delimitations of the study, the following are recommendations for future research. Future studies should expand the participant selection criteria to include high school teachers of all subject areas. This would provide a richer description of high school teachers experiences of work-related stress and may result in additional participants to interview, adding to the richness of the data. Future studies may also want to focus on specific school districts, gaining permission from each districts' Superintendent to solicit their high school teachers, which may result in more accurate contact information and potentially more buy-in for potential participants.

In consideration of the study findings, future studies should focus on principals' experiences of work-related stress and resilience, seeking to gain insight into their experiences that would shed light on their management style, the implementation of initiatives, and how they support their teachers and staff. School leadership were among the top sources of teacher stress and gaining insight from the leadership would provide greater insight into these areas of work-related stress and resilience. The information gained from a study on leadership could provide insight that would benefit both teachers and principals in better understanding one another and working together.

Finally, future studies could employ an ethnographic research design that focus on a specific school district. In focusing on one school district or one high school, the researcher could gain insight into the shared patterns of all individuals within the school, from teachers, to administration, and support staff. Even including the parents, students, and other key stakeholders, providing even greater insight into the culture of the school as a means of remediating stress and bolstering the resilience of all of the individuals within the school.

Conclusion

The ongoing national teacher shortages and rising attrition rates demand a greater understanding of teachers' experiences of work-related stress and resilience (Buttner, 2021; Dos Santos, 2021; Torpey, 2018). Teaching has historically been cited as one of the most stressful professions, and teacher stress may be the primary cause of the current teacher shortages (Gallup, 2014; Johnson et al., 2005; Lizana et al., 2021; Metlife, 2021). The present study sought to describe public high school teachers' experiences of work-related stress and resilience in the state of Connecticut, using SDT as a framework for understanding teachers' work motivation, commitment, and propensity toward resilient behaviors, to provide insight that may support school leadership in the creation of workplace systems that better support teachers in building resilience.

A phenomenological approach, using semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and journal prompts, developed a thick and rich description that captured the essence of the phenomenon of high school teachers' experiences of work-related stress and resilience. A total of 12 participants provided consent for participation in the study, while only 11 participants were deemed eligible following initial interviews. Of the 11 participants, four participated in a focus group, and eight participants completed journal prompts and a follow up interview. Participants'

responses were coded and organized into themes as they emerged within the data. The major themes were sources of stress, teacher perception, coping mechanisms, teacher resilience, teacher motivation, and community and collaboration.

The major implications of the data suggest that teachers remain in the profession because they genuinely care about their students. Systems and programs should be implemented to better support teachers throughout the length of their careers, from teacher induction to retirement. School districts should consider the literature on teacher stress when implementing new initiatives and in creating professional development. Finally, school leadership should work to create a school culture that supports teacher autonomy and creates opportunities for all members of the school community to collaborate and support one another in achieving the goal of providing academic excellence for all students.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 1, 2023

Deana Diluggo
Nancy DeJarnette

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-695 High School Teachers' Experiences of Work-related Stress and Resilience:
A Phenomenological Study

Dear Deana Diluggo, Nancy DeJarnette,

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

November 1, 2022

Deana DiLuggo
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University, School of Education

Dear Mrs. DiLuggo:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled *High school teachers' experiences of work-related stress and resilience: A phenomenological study*, I have decided to grant you permission to access our email list for high school teachers in Connecticut (CT) and invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

_____ I will provide our email list to Deana DiLuggo, and Mrs. DiLuggo may use the list to contact high school teachers in CT to invite them to participate in her research study.

_____ I will not provide our email list to Deana DiLuggo, and Mrs. DiLuggo may use the list to contact high school teachers in CT to invite them to participate in her research study.

_____ The requested data will be stripped of all identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.

_____ The requested data will not be stripped of identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.

_____ I am requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

Data Manager
CT Department of Education

Appendix C

Consent Form

Title of the Project: High school teachers' experiences of work-related stress and resilience: a phenomenological study
Principal Investigator: Deana DiLuggo, School of Education, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a certified, public, high school teacher, employed full-time and teaching a core subject in a public high school in Connecticut, having at least two years of teaching experience, and beginning your career before the 2019 – 2020 school year. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

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

The purpose of the study is to explore high school teachers' experiences of work-related stress and resilience. The study will focus on teachers' experiences of work-related stress and resilience, gaining insight into their experiences, their motivations, and the impact of work-related stress and resilience on their professional and personal lives.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. Interviews will be conducted via Microsoft Teams. They will be recorded and transcribed for data analysis.
2. Review the interview transcription to ensure the accuracy of the data.
3. Maintain journal entries on experiences within the classroom to be submitted to the researcher before the final interview.
4. Participate in a follow-up interview with the researcher to clarify the data, discuss journal entries, and discuss any themes that emerged within the initial interview. A follow-up interview will be recorded and transcribed.
5. Review follow-up interview transcription to ensure accuracy of the data.
6. (Optional) Participation in a focus group with other teachers via Microsoft Teams. Focus group interaction will be recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

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

Benefits to society include contributing to the expansion of research on teacher work-related stress and resilience.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential using pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-protected external hard drive and in a password-protected file in Dropbox. Data may be used in future presentations and, after three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-protected external hard drive and in a password-protected file in Dropbox. 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 people outside of the group.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on 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 this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Deana DiLuggo. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ___. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Nancy DeJarnette at ___..

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted ethically 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 of the study records. If you have any questions about the study

after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

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

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

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix D

Focus Group Questions

1. Describe the demographics of your school and the subject matter that you teach. CRQ

2. Describe the common workplace stressors at your school and your experiences with these stressors. SQ1

3. Describe your experiences with resilience in the workplace and aspects of your workplace that bolster your resilience. SQ2

4. Describe what motivates you to persist in the face of workplace challenges and stress. SQ3

5. What changes would you like to see in the workplace that would bolster your resilience, increase your work motivation, and reduce your stress? CRQ

Appendix E

Journal Prompts

1. What do you feel is the biggest contributor to your work-related stress? SQ1

2. In your opinion, what role does resilience play in managing work-related stress? SQ2

3. In your opinion, what role does motivation play in managing work-related stress? SQ3

4. How have your experiences with work-related stress and resilience impacted your motivation to teach and remain in the profession? CRQ