"I have nothing left to give" A Phenomenological Study of Secondary Traumatic Stress and

Burnout in Urban School Teachers Related to The Socioeconomic Issues, Childhood Trauma,

and Low Academic Performance of Urban Students.

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Department of Community Care and Counseling, Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

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Abstract

This study examines the shared experiences of secondary traumatic stress and burnout in urban schoolteachers in Washington, D.C. This study focuses on the experiences of teachers working in a low-performing school in a low-income neighborhood and working with students with trauma as it relates to their experiences with secondary traumatic stress and burnout symptoms. This study focused on the lived experiences of ten urban schoolteachers in Washington, D.C. The teacher participants served a school population of 68% at risk of negative socioeconomic barriers such as exposure to violence, poverty, drugs, and an increased likelihood of exposure to trauma. The hermeneutic phenomenological research design was utilized to examine the lived experiences of urban schoolteachers experiencing secondary trauma stress and burnout in relation to student trauma, low academic performance, and low family engagement. Hermeneutic phenomenology allowed the researcher's biases and experiences to shape the interpretation of the themes found amongst the data and bring meaning to the phenomenon.

Keywords: *Teachers, childhood trauma, education, urban schools, burnout.*

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents and brother. My father has inspired, guided, and pushed me to reach beyond my goals and achieve my dreams. My mother's belief in my dreams and ambitions has been a point of pride and honor throughout this journey. My brother, Chris, has loved me and supported me since childhood, and this is a big reason why I chose to study counseling so I could give a voice to his past. To God be all the glory.

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List of Abbreviations

District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)

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Chapter One: Introduction

Overview

The quality of education in the United States has identified various external factors such as access to government/state funding, teacher salaries, access to qualified and experienced teachers, and community support. Another vital aspect of the quality of education is the well-being and satisfaction of teachers and other school personnel. Teacher burnout is a connected topic with various factors being explored to examine the phenomenon's causes. This study focuses on the phenomenon of secondary traumatic stress as a determining factor that leads to teacher burnout and high turnover rates. An examination of the literature indicates a fair amount of research focused on the causes of burnout, secondary stress in K-12 classrooms, and the implications of secondary stress on teachers. However, there is a gap in the literature addressing the impact of secondary stress on teachers working in urban schools categorized by community violence, poverty, and social inequalities and issues. Miller and Flint-Stipp (2019) address the concept of secondary trauma in pre-service teachers working in Title 1 schools as it relates to pre-service burnout. While this study sheds some light on the high rates of childhood trauma experienced by students in Title 1 schools, there still is a lack of discussion on its impact on in-service teachers. Secondary stress from working in schools in urban communities needs to be examined through a lens that includes the effects of not only student adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) but also family engagement and low academic performance with rising academic expectations from school administrators on teachers. The implications of this topic will impact trauma-informed practices in classroom management and training for teachers, family engagement programs in schools, the role of trauma-informed school counselors in urban school districts, and resiliency training for teachers.

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Background

Historical Context

Education has come a long way throughout history to further one's life and open up different opportunities. However, teacher attrition has become a significant issue worldwide for decades. Educational demands are growing, but the number of new teachers entering the field decreases as the rate of teachers leaving increases. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2016) predicted that the world would need 24.5 million primary teachers and 44.3 million secondary teachers by 2030 to fulfill the projected need. "In 2022, all world regions still need more teachers, especially those that have rapidly growing school-aged populations" (World Teachers' Day: UNESCO, 2022). Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) state that the US faces significant teacher shortages, and according to the national data at the time, the U.S. teacher attrition rate was 8% annually, with variations in rates regionally. It is clear in the literature that the growing teacher shortage is a significant issue and one that is becoming more severe.

However, it is understood that COVID-19 changed the context of many fields, especially education, and how we approach teaching and distance learning. Teaching is often considered a high-stress profession even before the pandemic. "Teaching is amongst the six professions with the highest stress levels and lowest job satisfaction, leading to high turnover rate and teacher shortages" (Lücker et al., 2022). The pandemic exacerbated an already demanding occupation and increased teachers' work demands and stress levels, leading to higher burnout syndrome and turnover rates. Some studies even estimate that nearly half of all new teachers leave within five years of working (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Lizana et al. (2021) found that teachers experienced more stress than other occupational groups during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, decreasing their quality of life. One study found that up to 58% of teachers and principals considered leaving the profession due to burnout and stress (Powers, 2022).

Secondary traumatic stress also became a more significant issue contributing to teacher burnout and shortage problems. Reports of childhood trauma continue to increase. About 60% of children in the U.S. will experience at least one traumatic event before the age of 18 (Finkelhor et al., 2015). This means more teachers are working with traumatized children. Teaching is a compassionate job and requires interpersonal relationship building; listening to traumatic experiences from children is emotionally taxing and takes a toll on the teacher's mental health. This issue is especially significant in urban communities due to the high prevalence of community violence exposure, poverty, and socio-economic barriers experienced by children. While research exists to address the issues of burnout, teacher burnout, attrition, childhood trauma, and secondary traumatic stress syndrome, none are present that address the phenomenon of the experiences of urban teachers dealing with these critical issues.

Social Context

The social consequences of teacher burnout and secondary traumatic stress are prominent because they affect not just teachers but students, the national education system, major corporations, and the economy. When burnout syndrome affects teachers enough to decide to leave the profession at the alarming rates that the U.S. is experiencing, it becomes a major concern for school leaders and educational policymakers. Teacher attrition negatively affects students' academic progress (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Schleicher, 2018; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). The well-being of teachers impacts their quality of life and directly impacts the student's experience and the quality of the education being received (Glazzard & Rose, 2020). Teachers struggling with burnout syndrome often experience depressive symptoms like emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1998; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). When teachers feel emotionally drained and lack resources to adequately

support them and their students, they are more likely to struggle with class preparations and classroom activities (Madigan & Kim, 2021).

Teacher turnover can commonly lead to an influx of less experienced and less qualified teachers being hired to fill the gaps. This influx of less qualified teachers negatively impacts students' academic progress who need help to receive a quality education. This impacts schools and districts because it limits their ability to provide quality education to their students and fulfill their academic mission toward their communities (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). In the United States, some schools are unable to replace teachers who leave, and this causes a critical deficit in education. "Finally, teacher turnover inevitably imposes financial human resource costs on schools or local school districts because of the need to hire replacement teachers" (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). These effects impact higher education and the workforce because fewer students are academically prepared or knowledgeable in core subjects, which requires companies to spend more money and time training new hires.

Theoretical Context

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Maslach and Jackson's (1981) multidimensional theory of burnout. This theory is used to provide a theoretical context to the phenomenon of teacher burnout. This is then used to make connections to contributing factors like secondary traumatic stress syndrome, childhood trauma, and academic achievement in urban schools. These topics are connected and supported by literature and current research while adding to the framework of the multidimensional burnout theory. The multidimensional theory of burnout, as developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981), includes three significant aspects of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment or cynicism. These three components of burnout are used to examine the background and social

contexts of teacher burnout in the U.S. They are also used to examine the phenomenon the researcher experienced as a teacher and the perceived experiences of fellow teachers working in urban communities. This research will add to the literature that addresses teacher burnout, secondary traumatic stress in teachers, childhood trauma and urban schools' academic progress, and trauma-informed practices for students and teachers. Plenty of research has resulted in policies like trauma-informed practices that aim to address the complexity of dealing with students with traumatic histories. "School-based trauma-informed care (TIC) represents a novel way of supporting children with trauma histories." (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020). However, there is a lack in the literature that examines teachers' experiences working in urban communities where childhood trauma is more pervasive and detrimental to the well-being of teachers and students' academic progress. This research aims to fill that gap and open the discussion about teacher mental health in urban schools.

Situation to Self

I am an African American woman in a community counseling doctoral program focusing on traumatology and an elementary classroom teacher. I teach at a Title 1 school that serves an economically disadvantaged community. I have spent years teaching students who have a significant academic deficit and families who are minimally involved in their student's education. Violence, poverty, drugs, and gang-related activity characterize the community. My motivation for conducting this study is rooted in my personal experiences as an educator in a low-income, low-performing school in an urban community. This phenological study will examine the reality of this topic through the multiple perspectives of the participants. I am using an ontological assumption throughout this study and report the different perspectives as themes to develop meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My personal experiences motivate this study

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because I, as a researcher, seek to understand the world I work in (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using the social constructivism paradigm, this study develops subjective meaning from the different experiences and perspectives of participants.

I have listened to many stories from students that depict traumatic experiences. I have heard stories from fellow teachers of traumatic stories shared by their students and their families. As a teacher, I am legally mandated to report any suspicion of child abuse and neglect to child protective services. I have made reports several times and heard stories from other teachers about their experiences as mandated reporters. Many students within this community are suspected of having higher adverse childhood experiences than other students in areas with higher ratios of average family income. Teachers are expected to work in education for a minimum of 30 years to earn the benefits of retirement; however, in my experience, I have noticed fewer and fewer teachers willing to stay in the classroom for half of that time due to teacher burnout and compassion fatigue. In the short six years that I have been teaching, I have found myself in tears and with a heavy heart over the low quality of life of my students, the responsibility to listen and report their trauma, their low academic performance, and the growing expectations of me to close the gap.

Problem Statement

A local elementary and middle school in Washington DC's Ward 5 has a higher yearly teacher turnover rate; roughly ten out of 40 teachers (25%) leave and must be replaced. Teachers appear and share that they are increasingly unhappy, overworked, and stressed. Teachers transitioning from less challenging schools to this community quickly exhibit signs of burnout and stress.

Teacher retention is a significant issue today around the world, with a prediction that the world will need 69 million new teachers by 2030 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016). This rate of teacher shortages impacts students, communities, and national economies due to the serious financial costs of training and hiring new teachers (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016). More studies are focused on this issue, the possible contributing factors, and the impacts and implications of teacher turnover. Burnout theory has been applied to many of these studies examining the causes of teacher turnover. Still, despite new research and recommendations for policymakers, the teacher shortage continues, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted education resulting in higher reports of teacher stress (Kaden, 2020; Ormiston et al., 2022). However, studies suggest that there are several contributing factors to teacher burnout and turnover phenomena. While more researchers are examining teacher burnout, none are focusing on how geographics play a role in this phenomenon. Teachers in urban schools experience levels of stress and burnout that severely impact their mental health, functioning at work, and the country's mass exodus of teachers (Camacho et al., 2021). In a mixed-methods study sampling 162 urban schoolteachers, "results revealed that multiple personal factors and responses to situational challenges predicted burnout" (Camacho et al., 2021). Oberg et al. (2023) state that teachers' experiences working with increasingly traumatized student bodies suggest links to "increased levels of compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout."

The problem is a lack of discussion and research on burnout syndrome and secondary traumatic stress experienced by teachers in urban communities characterized by violence, poverty, and other socioeconomic barriers. "The majority of children living in the USA have experienced at least one adverse experience" (Fleckman et al., 2022). While there is research on teacher burnout and some studies on secondary trauma in teachers, there is a distinct gap in

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discussing these issues concerning teachers in urban communities with increasingly traumatized student bodies. "Educators receive little training or support to cope with the stressors associated with their direct work with youth exposed to trauma" (Fleckman et al., 2022). While there are many studies on trauma-informed practices in schools, both rural and urban (Chizimba, 2021; Christian-Brandt et al., 2020; Morgan, 2021; O'Gorman, 2017; Ormiston et al., 2020), these studies focus on practices schools use to support students, but little is understood about how exposure to student adverse experiences impact the lives and work of teachers. The demographics and geographical region are contextual in teachers' experiences because teaching involves interpersonal skills or the ability to connect with others and form effective relationships. So, what context does an urban community play in teacher burnout when comorbid with secondary traumatic stress? This study aims to highlight the shared experiences of teachers within this urban context.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe teachers' experiences working with students in urban, low-income, and low-performing schools in Washington, D.C. This phenomenological study aims to describe the experiences of secondary traumatic stress and work-related burnout of teachers working at a local elementary and middle school campus in Washington DC's Ward 5. At this stage in the research, experiences of secondary traumatic stress and burnout in urban teachers will be defined as the shared experience of burnout symptoms and secondary traumatic stress from working with at-risk student populations with trauma histories. The theory guiding this study is Maslach and Jackson's (1981) multidimensional theory of burnout, which is used to explain the stress associated with the role

and responsibilities of K-12 teachers and then narrowed to focus on teachers working in urban

communities and their experiences with secondary traumatic stress and burnout.

Significance of the Study

This research is significant because teacher burnout is causing a considerable teacher

shortage around the country, and this research will potentially increase awareness and

representation of the mental health of teachers, specifically working in Title 1 urban schools with

communities plagued with violence, crime, poverty, drugs, and gang activity. The framework of

this study is phenomenological philosophy. Phenomena are not defined as problems, so this

phenomenological study aims to illuminate teacher burnout in urban schools and examine the

trends among the different experiences of teacher participants. A review of this study will reveal

existing problems that need further examination and research to address and solve.

In a community needs analysis (Grazette, 2020), a review of various demographics,

employment, educational attainment, and health statistics of Washington D.C. revealed a

disproportionate number of adolescents between ages 12-17 who self-reported experiencing

major depressive episodes according to the health indicator dashboard (ourhealthydc.org, 2020).

"Interactions with traumatized students is one cause of STS; others derive from other traumatic

encounters in schools and communities" (Lawson et al., 2019, p.421). A larger factor

contributing to the increasingly traumatized study body in the city is the prevalence of crime,

specifically violent crime. In 2022, the total number of violent crimes reported in the city was

2,443, and eight months into 2023, the violent crime rate is up 38% from the previous year, with

3.369 reported violent crimes so far (Metropolitan Police DC, 2023). These factors, coupled with

the severe teacher shortage throughout the country, put an increased strain on teachers' well-

being and occupational functioning.

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Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of urban schoolteachers working in low academically

   performing schools?

This first question is aimed at examining urban schoolteachers' experiences in low

academically performing schools and the increased responsibility to close significant educational

gaps. Subsequent questions asked during the interview stage will highlight teachers' perceptions

of academic progress in their classrooms concerning their at-risk student populations. This

question assumes that the participant has experience working in a low academically performing

school because all participants completed a screening survey (Appendix F) that determined

eligibility to participate, so each participant has reported experience in the topic.

2. What are the experiences of burnout in teachers working in urban communities?

This question focuses on the lived experiences of burnout symptomology in teachers in

urban communities. This aims to examine teacher burnout trends through teachers' shared

experiences, which contribute to the proposed phenomena of this study. Subsequent questions

focus on the behaviors described by teachers concerning burnout, how the symptoms are

experienced, and their perceptions of its impact on their careers and personal lives; "In

phenomenology, perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that

cannot be doubted." (Moustakas, 1994, p. 50).

3. What are the experiences of urban schoolteachers who have heard traumatic stories from

   their students?

Like the other two questions, this question aims to examine the experiences of teachers as

it is lived concerning their responsibilities as educators to usher student social-emotional

development amidst increased numbers of traumatized students. Sub-questions will focus on the

emotions felt during teacher experiences hearing their students' traumatic histories. Sub-questions will also focus on the lived experiences of teachers experiencing secondary trauma from their students through the interpersonal relationships developed between teacher and student.

4. What are the experiences of secondary traumatic stress in teachers working in urban communities?

This third question asks about teachers' experiences in urban communities with secondary traumatic stress during their teaching careers. This question aims to inquire about urban teachers' experience as it is lived and examine the perceived phenomena of these experiences being shared by other urban teachers. This question breaks into several questions during the interview process that focus on the symptoms of secondary traumatic stress experienced in and out of the workplace.

Definitions

1. *Burnout-* Burnout is an individual response to chronic work-related stress that develops progressively and can become chronic, leading to health issues, including psychological impairments such as cognitive, emotional, and behavioral impairments (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022).

2. *Emotional exhaustion-* Emotional exhaustion is the feeling of being emotionally drained from overextending (Maslach, 1998; Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

3. *Depersonalization-* Depersonalization is the cynical, negative, and highly detached response to others, resulting in a loss of idealism (Maslach, 1998; Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

4. *Cynicism-* The cynical, negative thought process towards tasks, people, and idealism (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022).

5. *Turnover-* The process of employees leaving the workforce and new employees replacing them. Specifically, teachers leaving education and new teachers filling those vacant positions or positions left vacant (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

6. *Secondary Trauma-* Secondary trauma exposes the person to the details of a traumatic event experienced by someone close to them (Essary et al., 2020).

7. *Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)-* STS is the condition of experiencing significant stress-related symptoms due to secondary exposure to a traumatic event (Essary et al., 2020).

8. *Trauma-* Trauma is often defined by a single traumatic event or experience that is easily explained, such as an assault, rape, a flood, fire, etc. (Friedman, 2018).

9. *Compassion Fatigue-* Secondary stress experienced by mental health professionals or care service providers due to the exposure to traumatic stories shared by clients/students (Figley, 1995).

10. *Trauma-informed multi-tiered systems of support in schools-* An evidence-based instruction with a trauma-informed initiative that delivers along a continuum of students' behavioral, mental, and academic needs (Ormiston et al., 2020).

11. *Family engagement-* The behaviors of parents/caregivers at home and school that are meant to support their children's educational progress (El Nokali et al., 2010).

Summary

Teacher turnover and shortages around the world continue to be a significant issue for many nations, including the U.S. With almost 69 million new teachers predicted to be needed by

2030 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016), the discussion about why teachers are leaving the profession at such high rates is important. The greatest impact of this phenomenon affects student academic achievement and career outlooks. While more research points to burnout syndrome as a leading contributor, some studies suggest secondary traumatic stress is connected to the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Burnout syndrome is commonly viewed as a major contributor to teacher turnover, with connections being made between burnout symptoms and teachers' intentions to quit (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Some studies have found that the prevalence of burnout among teachers varies between 5 and 30%, depending on the measurement of burnout (Szigeti et al., 2017). The problem that this study addresses is the literature gap concerning examining the first-hand experiences of teachers working in urban communities and their assumed experiences with burnout and secondary traumatic stress in relation to their profession. This gap in the literature is important to address because geographics play a role in education and how urban communities in the U.S. experience higher rates of violence and crime. This study aims to examine the relationships between a range of factors (low academic performance, student traumatic histories, and low family engagement) and teacher burnout and secondary traumatic stress in the lived experiences of urban teachers. This study hopes to provide school leaders in urban school districts with evidence that the issue of teacher burnout and turnover is experienced differently in urban schools and requires a different approach to support both teachers and students.

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Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

This chapter will address the literature covering the major themes of this research and the various contributing factors and relationships correlated with teacher burnout and secondary stress. This chapter will be broken into eight sections covering this research's distinct aspects and components. The first of the eight sections of this chapter will cover this study's theoretical framework, which guides the examination of the literature. The following sections cover background on burnout theory, teacher burnout, secondary traumatic stress in teachers, trauma and the neuroscience of trauma, childhood trauma, low academic performance in urban schools, the impact of family engagement in education, and trauma-informed practices in schools.

Theoretical Framework

Maslach and Jackson's (1981) multidimensional theory of burnout is used in this study to understand the stress associated with the role and responsibilities of K-12 teachers. The foundation of this research is based on Maslach's burnout theory. Fundamental theoretical principles include educational equality and equity, trauma-focused cognitive behavioral theory, and shared social experiences/phenomena. The conceptual framework of this study is grounded in teachers' experiences in urban areas, secondary traumatic stress in teachers, the academic achievement gap's impact on teacher burnout, and employee turnover.

"There is a cost to caring" (Figley, 1995); this was a statement concerning professionals in the mental health field who are exposed to the traumatic stories of the clients and patients they work with. Figley (1995) coined the term "compassion fatigue" to describe the secondary stress experienced by mental health professionals due to the exposure to traumatic stories shared by clients. Figley (1995) stated that those with a large capacity for feeling and expressing empathy

are at significant risk of compassion stress. This study applies this definition of compassion

fatigue to teachers known to feel and express copious amounts of empathy and compassion

toward the children they serve. This study is guided by the theoretical framework of Maslach's

burnout theory. Maslach and Jackson (1981) developed the multidimensional theory of burnout,

and Figley (1995) built upon Joinson's (1992) identification of compassion fatigue and applied it

to mental health care professionals.

<div align="center">**Related Literature**</div>

Burnout & Burnout Theories

To better understand the significance of burnout syndrome and its impact on teachers,

specifically teachers working in urban communities, it is essential to provide some background

on burnout and how burnout theory plays a role in this study. Edú-Valsania et al. (2022) state

that burnout has become one of the most critical psychosocial occupational hazards in our

society that it has led the World Health Organization (WHO) to include burnout syndrome in the

International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as a phenomenon that only exists in a work-

related context. Burnout is an individual response to chronic work-related stress that develops

progressively and can become chronic, leading to health issues, including psychological

impairments such as cognitive, emotional, and behavioral impairments. It is important to note

that burnout is not a personal issue that develops independently; it is a direct consequence of

specific characteristics of work activity and environment (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022).

So, it is understood and accepted that job burnout results from chronic interpersonal

stressors (Maslach, 1998). The multidimensional theory of burnout conceptualizes burnout by

outlining and defining three distinct core components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization,

and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1998; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Emotional

exhaustion is the feeling of being emotionally drained due to overextending oneself or giving a

too much towards something or someone. in this context—overextending at work. Emotional

exhaustion is often related to workload and personal conflict in the workplace. Depersonalization

is the cynical, negative, and highly detached response to others, resulting in a loss of idealism.

Depersonalization can develop in response to emotional exhaustion, act as a self-protective

barrier, and become dehumanized. The third component in the conceptualization of burnout is

reduced personal accomplishment, which refers to a decline in one's feelings of productivity and

competence at work (Maslach, 1998). The reduced personal achievement has been connected to

depression, and an inability to cope with work demands effectively.

Upon the development of the Maslach Burnout theory, Maslach and Jackson (1981)

developed a measurement tool to measure and examine the severity of experienced burnout in

individuals, thus creating the Maslach Burnout Inventory scale (MBI), which now has various

subcategories to cater to different occupational fields. Maslach and Jackson (1981) used the

Hassles Scale as inspiration in developing two dimensions to each statement in the inventory,

frequency and intensity. At each point, the frequency scale is labeled. It ranges from 1 (a few

times a year or less) to 6 (every day), with a zero value for participants who indicate they have

never experienced the feeling or attitude being described. Intensity is measured on a scale of 1 to

7, from "very mild, barely noticeable" to "major, very strong" (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). This

scale has been widely used in assessing and examining burnout syndrome amongst many human

services professionals. The following section, "Teacher Burnout," will highlight through the

literature how this scale was narrowed and focused for various occupations, including teachers.

Another perspective of burnout theory is that of Golembiewski and Munzenrider, who developed the burnout phase model after developing Maslach and Jackson's (1981) multidimensional burnout theory. Golembiewski (1989) describes burnout as having three theoretical and practical issues outlined by a series of vignettes he includes in his article. These issues concern the stages or phases associated with the buildup of stress or strain, identifying points at which interventions are appropriate and specifying the types of interventions appropriate at those points (Golembiewski, 1989 p.87). During the 1980s, burnout was widely accepted as a serious workplace issue. Golembiewski (1989) describes this severity in a study mapping the degree of burnout, its duration, and the consequences. The phase model suggests that while the phases of burnout are progressively worse, it does not imply that an individual will go through each of the eight phases to move into complete burnout.

In a study with a sample of around 13,000 people in the United States and Canada within thirty-six organizations, over 40 percent of respondents fell into one of the three most advanced phases of burnout (Golembiewski, 1989). Golembiewski (1989) states that this finding would indicate that many organizations "overrepresent" that they are good or better organizations to work for. Having these various theories of burnout and different assessment tools to measure burnout becomes increasingly valuable for researchers looking to assess and examine various aspects of burnout; however, the question of reliability and validity arises. To combat this, Golembiewski and Munzenrider (1984) outlined the data from their replication of the original burnout phases model research using a larger population. They determined that psychological burnout can be measured validly and reliably by a paper and pencil test which is economical and be used with larger populations, thus making it more accessible. "Overall, as expected, self-reports about organizational effects on people grow worse as burn-out progresses through more

advances phases." (Golembiewski & Munzenrider, 1984, p.290). As well as in a further analysis

of the burnout phase model, Golembiewski and Munzenrider (1990) examine the differences in

physical symptoms related to burnout. They utilize four measurements in this analysis: the phase

model of burnout, the modes of response to burnout, the total social support score, and

experienced physical symptoms. "The findings reinforce the primary role of the phases, with

moderating or intervening roles being more appropriate for social support and the modes of

active and passive." (Golembiewski & Munzenrider, 1990, p.182).

However, unlike older research like Golembiewski and Munzenrider's and Maslach and

Jackson's older work on the dimensions of the conceptualizations of burnout, recent studies

suggest a causal relationship and order between the three dimensions. "High levels of emotional

exhaustion led to high levels of cynicism or depersonalization." (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022, p.2).

This impacts how researchers continue to examine burnout and the stressors that lead to it.

Burnout syndrome is known to have various implications and consequences, such as

psychological, health, behavioral, and organizational consequences. "Different studies have

associated this syndrome with concentration and memory problems, difficulty making decisions,

reduced coping capacity, anxiety, depression, dissatisfaction with life, low self-esteem, insomnia,

irritability, and increased alcohol and tobacco consumption." (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022, p.10).

The negative consequences of burnout in organizations are caused by the reduction in

productivity, high employee turnover rates, work quality, generation of a poor work

environment, the development of counterproductive behaviors in employees, and absenteeism

(Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). "Burnout was found to co-occur with depressive disorders including

major depressive disorder, dysthymic disorder, and minor depression." (Leiter et al., 2014, p.11).

Burnout theory and the use of the MBI scale have reached international usage due it their effectiveness in assessing employee burnout syndrome. As stated, the MBI has been revised into several versions to focus on different occupational settings such as educators, therapists, health care workers, etc. New developments are made as more research is being approached using the MBI scale and the Maslach Multidimensional Model of Burnout theory to conceptualize further burnout. Addressing burnout prevention and treatment has been a focus of research due to the severe social and occupational implications of burnout in our societies. One focus studied has been on the interaction between personal and situational factors. One approach involves increasing the concept of job engagement, and this primarily focuses on job engagement as the positive antithesis of burnout. The following approach focuses on the relationship between the individual and the specific situation rather than either aspect independently. (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

Maslach (2003) later re-addresses the focus of job engagement as a new development in the conceptualization of burnout. Some studies suggest that job engagement can be viewed as the positive antithesis of burnout, with definitions including "energy, involvement, and a sense of efficacy" (Maslach, 2003, p.190). These definitions can be viewed as opposites to the three dimensions of burnout, and Maslach (2003) suggests that an important implication of this research is that it can impact the way that we as researchers frame the efficacy of interventions if the terms are built around building job engagement rather than reducing burnout. In discussing early predictors of burnout and prevention strategies, it is essential to mention the relationship between the dimensions of MBI in our conceptualization of burnout. There is a strong correlation between the three dimensions of MBI, and exhaustion and cynicism are the two primary measures of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). "Given the strong relationship between

exhaustion and cynicism, the operating assumption is that these two dimensions are consistent with one another and tend to reinforce one another mutually." (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p.501).

Maslach and Leiter (2016) further address our understanding of burnout and prevention strategies developed over the decades of burnout research. As stated before, engagement has been viewed by some as a positive antithesis to burnout. However, a different approach to understanding job engagement focuses on categorizing its three components: vigor, dedication, and absorption (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). This view marks a distinct and independent concept separate from its comparison to burnout and requires its assessment scale, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). With this different conceptualization of engagement, we, as researchers, can view the causes and outcomes of burnout in a new light. As burnout research has identified many organizational risk factors that contribute to burnout across many occupations and countries, six key domains have been identified (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values are the six key domains, and each identifies the risk of burnout and the possibility of job engagement. For example, the control domain poses a real chance of burnout when employees perceive that they do not have a say or a sense of autonomy in their work or the management of their work environment. "A clear link has been found between a lack of control and burnout." (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Conversely, control can also be a positive indicator of job engagement; when employees feel that they influence the decisions that affect their work and company and can express a sense of autonomy in their work, they are more likely to experience a heightened sense of job engagement.

While most literature supports the definition and conceptualization of burnout theory as a mental health phenomenon that relates to one's occupation, some researchers criticize this

notion. Burnout is widely understood as a work-specific condition that impacts an individual's

mental health as it relates to their job; however, this eliminates the ability to study burnout

syndrome outside of the occupational domain. The symptoms of burnout often impact areas of an

individual's life outside of their jobs. To investigate a multidimensional conception of burnout,

the work-restricted scope must be first deconstructed and be defined as a "multi-domain

syndrome" (Bianchi et al., 2014). "It is shown that the burnout phenomenon cannot be confined

to work because chronic, unresolvable stress- the putative cause - is not limited to work"

(Bianchi et al., 2014).

While the research on burnout syndrome can be easily found, and there are studies that

have used burnout theory as the theoretical framework for their research, some argue that

burnout theory is not the most appropriate framework to use when studying teacher burnout

specifically. The term "compassion fatigue" comes up a lot when reviewing the literature on

teacher burnout, and there is a difference between the two terms. Figley (1995) differentiated

between the two terms by describing compassion fatigue as a fixed condition and burnout

syndrome as a progressive condition progressing over time and exposure to job-related strain

(Hoffman et al., 2007). Figley (1995) defines compassion fatigue as a condition that emerges

suddenly without much warning and is acute with accompanying symptoms, including

helplessness, confusion, and isolation from support systems (Hoffman et al., 2007). These

symptoms are often disconnected from the actual causes, but it is argued that recovery is faster

than burnout syndrome. Hoffman et al. (2007) criticize examining the phenomenon of attrition in

special education teachers through the burnout theory lens does not include or explain those who

experience burnout symptoms but remain in the profession. Therefore, this examination of the

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mass teacher exodus needs a different lens, and the compassion fatigue framework may be a better tool or a valuable addition to further examinations of this phenomenon.

Teacher Burnout & Turnover

Teaching is a service profession focused on helping others learn and is respected in many parts of the world; however, "it has been ranked as one of the most stressful occupations" (Johnson et al., 2005; Ormiston et al., 2022). It is commonly believed that job-related burnout is related to turnover or the process of employees voluntarily or involuntarily leaving their jobs. In a study highlighting this relationship, Goodman and Boss (2002) hypothesized that because the phase model of burnout only measured the experience of burnout and not the stressors that lead to it, there was a gap (at that time) in the correlation between burnout and turnover. Goodman and Boss (2002) state that stressors encountered on the job can be alleviated before burnout occurs or worsens. Leaving an organization voluntarily can be seen as coping with those stressors. An older study indicated that employees who turnover compared to those who do not have a significantly higher score in the depersonalization dimension of burnout (Firth & Britton, 1989; Goodman & Boss, 2002). Goodman and Boss (2002) examine a sample size of 935 participants, and their findings support their belief that "people who voluntarily leave make a conscious cognitive choice to leave the organization as a means of coping." (p.45).

Edú-Valsania et al. (2022) outline three profiles and subtypes of burnout: frenetic, under-challenged, and worn-out. The Frenetic subtype is characterized by excessive workloads and workers who work until exhaustion. The subtype is often characterized by workers who show high involvement and dedication by working long hours and pouring more of themselves into their work. This subtype profile is associated with higher levels of burnout and lack of personal life or healthy work-life balance. The under-challenged subtype is characterized by mundane,

monotonous, and mentally unstimulating work, with workers who perceive their work as unrewarding and pointless. This subtype profile is associated with higher levels of cynicism in burnout and cognitive avoidance. The last subtype profile outlined by Edú-Valsania et al. (2022) is the worn-out subtype, and it is characterized by feelings of hopelessness and a lack of control over their work results and efforts. This profile is associated with higher levels of perception of inefficiency, and workers often display behavioral disconnection as a coping method.

The growing responsibilities that many teachers feel have been viewed as a contributing factor to the burnout theory among educators. Teachers' mental health significantly impacts teaching effectiveness, students' personal and emotional development, and academic achievement (Szigeti et al., 2017). Some studies have found that the prevalence of burnout among teachers varies between 5 and 30%, depending on the measurement of burnout (Szigeti et al., 2017). Szigeti et al. (2017) explain that the characteristics of burnout and depression are similar, especially in severe cases of burnout, and present a study in which the validity of these two constructs is tested to separate them. As mentioned, burnout has several associated constructs, such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Another construct associated with burnout is over-commitment, which can be viewed as an exaggerated involvement in work that is beyond what the organization requires (Szigeti et al., 2017). Overcommitment is commonly associated with teaching because it is a career that involves organizational responsibilities like effective instruction and classroom management, as well as an emotional and behavioral responsibility to help guide students through their social and emotional development. Teachers are often viewed as giving a lot of their time and themselves to their students and profession. "Overcommitted people are unable to withdraw from work obligations. Empirical studies have supported the theoretical assumption that this intense continuous effort and the lack

of ability to withdraw from work results in burnout, particularly with the fatigue and exhaustion component of burnout." (Kristensen et al., 2005; Philp et al., 2012; Szigeti et al., 2017; Takaki et al., 2006). Teacher stress only escalated during the COVID-19 pandemic when teachers had to transition to online instruction without adequate training and increased workload demands (Kaden, 2020; Ormiston et al., 2022).

> There is an abundance of evidence illustrating that attrition is a problem in almost all occupations. The evidence also suggests that teachers may be extreme outliers in this regard, with teachers leaving the profession at alarming rates when compared to other occupations. (Madigan & Kim, 2021)

Teacher retention rates in the United States have declined significantly over the past few decades. This phenomenon is also a significant concern for school leaders and policymakers in many countries. This is where the discussion of how burnout affects teacher turnover is. In a meta-analysis of burnout, job satisfaction, and teachers' intentions to quit, Madigan and Kim (2021) examine the relationship between burnout and teachers' intention to quit, the relationship between job satisfaction and teachers' intention to quit, and the between whether job satisfaction or burnout is more significant in predicting teacher turnover. Teacher attrition is a significant issue worldwide because it affects students, families, and the education system worldwide. By the year 2030, it is predicted by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2016) that the world will need 69 million new teachers. This is mainly because there are high teacher attrition rates around the world. "Some estimates suggest that almost half of new teachers leave the profession within five years" (Madigan & Kim, 2021, p.2). Replacing teachers not only impacts students but also has severe financial implications. This detrimental impact on student achievement and the economy is the cause behind the recent research focus and teacher attrition. Madigan and Kim (2021)

found that all three symptoms of burnout contributed to teachers' intention to quit, especially

emotional exhaustion. "When teachers have depleted resources and drained emotions, they tend

to struggle with class preparation and actual classroom activities (Chang, 2009; Madigan & Kim,

2021)

As discussed in the burnout theory section, the three symptoms of burnout are emotional

exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, with each symptom or

component that can lead to or impact the other. These components demonstrate how they predict

and contribute to burnout in any occupation. However, these components can be studied closely

in any occupation for predictors that are specific to that occupation. Some examples of these

predictors for teachers are self-efficacy, students' inattention, and a principal's negative

leadership style. Self-efficacy, in this case, refers to the confidence one has in managing job-

specific tasks and coping with challenges and stress related to their work (Gillet et al., 2022).

Teachers more confident in their abilities to manage a classroom successfully are more likely to

experience feelings of competency and have a lower chance of experiencing a high or increasing

burnout rate (Gillet et al., 2022).

Another predicting factor for teacher burnout and attrition is student inattention and

classroom misbehavior. "Numerous studies have shown that classroom discipline represents a

significant concern for educational systems and a critical aspect of an effective learning

environment" (Gillet et al., 2022; Kaufmann, 2020; Lopes & Oliveira, 2022). Classroom

management requires effective classroom discipline to maintain the structure and calm

environment necessary for students to learn. Classroom management/discipline is a non-

negotiable aspect of teacher work responsibilities and, thus, is a job demand a driver of burnout

(Gillet et al., 2022). Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory aligns with the assertion that

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students' lack of attention in the classroom can increase the risk of teacher burnout (Friedman, 1995; Gillet et al., 2022). Student inattention often negatively impacts teachers' self-efficacy. The role of a principal is crucial in predicting teacher burnout and preventing teacher burnout. Negative leadership behaviors like controlling, depreciative, and laissez-faire have proven detrimental to teacher burnout (Gillet et al., 2022).

As we discuss the phenomenon of teacher burnout and turnover, it is vital also to examine studies that focus on the voice of teachers and the firsthand experiences of burnout and its implications in the classroom and the education system. There are many stressors in education, and the most common forms of stress in these roles are role overload, ambiguity, and conflict. Role overload is when the responsibilities of a particular role go beyond the time and resources that the individual must spare. Role ambiguity occurs when the expectations for a role's performance are not clearly defined or understood, and it becomes difficult for the individual to guide their behavior to meet the expectations effectively. Lastly, role conflict occurs when role expectations for performance are incompatible with the actual performance of the role (Richards et al., 2018). These standard forms of teacher stress all relate to the work environment. Studies have shown that the work environment is a significant contributing factor and preventive factor to job-related burnout, proving valid for schools.

In a study that examined the personal and contextual factors related to teachers' experience with stress and burnout, the findings demonstrated that teachers with low-burnout experience perceived their work environments as nurturing and supportive. "Teachers who perceived a nurturing environment developed positive relationships with colleagues, felt trusted and supported, and recognized the difference they made in the lives of children" (Richards et al., 2018, p.775). Teachers with low-burnout experience also reported that working with students

made them feel like they were making a significant difference, leading to higher levels of work-related motivation. On the other side of the burnout spectrum, teachers with high-burnout experiences perceived their work environments as combative and constraining (Richards et al., 2018). Many high-burnout teachers reported a lack of community at work and felt demoralized and marginalized (Richards et al., 2018). Another common stressful factor among high-burnout teachers in this study was student and family apathy toward education. Many of these teachers explained that they felt frustrated and hopeless because of their students' inattention and the families' lack of engagement. Some teachers reported frustration and fear about their students' home environments and some families' negligence. All these factors relate to the workplace and how it plays a vital role in contributing to and preventing teacher stress, burnout, and turnover.

Teaching involves not only instruction, time management, administrative tasks, and data analysis skills; it involves social-emotional skills needed to build and maintain interpersonal relationships with colleagues and students. However, the effects of interpersonal relationships on teachers' mental health and job satisfaction are an area of recent focus. Rodríguez-Mantilla and Fernández-Díaz (2017) found in a study that teacher-student relationships have a significant effect on each of the three dimensions of burnout syndrome, while teacher-colleague and teacher-superior relationships have a moderate effect on the dimensions of exhaustion, inefficacy, and cynicism.

Is teacher burnout more prevalent or different in urban or diverse communities? In modern education, many school districts strive to include a lens of diversity and inclusion in the classroom, from neurodiversity training to cultural competencies. Some studies have examined the possibility of burnout being connected to a teacher's own implicit attitudes and bias toward ethnic minority students (Costa et al., 2023). "Most of the time, teachers belong to the ethnic

majority of the country they are teaching in (Banerjee, 2018; Costa et al., 2023), and they often

lack the skills and coping strategies necessary to handle the increasing cultural diversity of

classrooms" (Costa et al., 2023; Tatar & Horenczyk, 2003; Vedder et al., 2006). A lack of

experience working with cultures different than theirs is more likely to result in teachers

referring to negative stereotypes and attitudes and allowing their bias to guide their behavior

toward students (Costa et al., 2023; Gao & Mager, 2011; Gay, 2010).

Many studies examine the dimensions of burnout syndrome in teachers and other school

personnel using the framework designed by Maslach's burnout theory (1998). However, it can be

argued that this same framework may not be applicable to secondary teachers in modern

education. "In the present educational climate, there are a series of characteristics, the outcome

of the constant and vertiginous changes taking place in modern society" (Rodríguez-Mantilla &

Fernández-Díaz, 2012). Rodríguez-Mantilla & Fernández-Díaz (2012) argue that burnout theory

should adopt a new lens when looking at the educational world in the 21st century. A lens that

has a new perspective of new models of family structure, the growing impact of technology in

the world, changes in legislation concerning education, the impact of student motivation and

deterioration of student interest, and increasing loss of teacher authority in the modern classroom

(Rodríguez-Mantilla & Fernández-Díaz, 2012).

Secondary Traumatic Stress & Teachers

"There is a cost to caring" (Figley, 1995, p.1); professionals working with traumatized

people are exposed to traumatic stories and therefore are at a greater risk of being traumatized.

Figley (1995) coined the term "compassion fatigue" to describe the phenomenon of absorbing

the suffering of others in the workplace. Compassion fatigue is used interchangeably with

secondary traumatic stress or secondary trauma. Some experts consider secondary traumatic

stress or secondary trauma as a type or subtype of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Essary et al., 2020). The difference between PTSD and secondary traumatic stress is that PTSD involves a person directly experiencing a traumatic event. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th ed. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) defines PTSD as the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to one or more traumatic events. In contrast, in secondary trauma, the person is exposed to the details of a traumatic event experienced by someone close to them (Essary et al., 2020). "The symptoms of secondary traumatic stress often mimic those of PTSD. These include but are not limited to increased irritability, intrusive thoughts, avoidance, isolation, negative mood, hyperarousal, reactivity, and other emotional sequelae" (Rankin, 2022, p. 139).

In a study in the United Kingdom, over 2000 PreK-adult teachers were surveyed. The findings showed that 78 percent of teachers suffered from consistent psychological, physical, and behavioral stress symptoms related to their jobs (Essary et al., 2020). A further case study on kindergarten to third-grade teachers who self-reported secondary traumatic stress expressed several factors contributing to their stress and emotional exhaustion from work. Factors include personal guilt, curriculum demand that lacks socio-emotional support for students, inability to equitably focus on student needs, and an internal struggle for emotional control when experiencing cluster symptoms (Essary et al., 2020).

Secondary traumatic stress results from "professional work centered on the relief of the emotional suffering of clients automatically include absorbing information about suffering. Often includes absorbing that suffering itself as well" (Figley, 1995, p.2). Secondary traumatic stress is seen because of behaviors and emotions resulting from the knowledge of a traumatizing vent experienced by a significant other and the stress felt from wanting to help the traumatized person

(Figley, 1995). In its initial stages, people working in mental health, medicine, emergency services, and law enforcement were the focus of secondary traumatic stress research. These professions were studied because their work is centered around directly relieving the emotional or physical suffering in others. However, studies have evolved to include education as a professional field where secondary traumatic stress can occur. The role of a classroom teacher does not explicitly include work involving trauma. However, child abuse statistics are increasing and becoming more prevalent; teachers are becoming the first line of defense in this battle. STS is becoming more commonly listed as a contributing factor in the teacher attrition phenomenon globally. Emotional exhaustion, stress including STS, and job-related burnout (Heffernan et al., 2022; Lee, 2019; Oberg et al., 2023) are all reasons teachers are giving for leaving or having left the profession recently.

The relationship between teachers and traumatized students becomes increasingly challenging to manage when teachers begin feeling a sense of inadequacy from the inability to rescue the student or alleviate the student's emotional pain. This creates a sense of powerlessness in the student and the teacher, which is made worse by the lack of supportive measures and practices necessary for both teachers and students (Rankin, 2022, p. 139). However, teachers are naturally expected to create these emotional bonds with their students to create a trusting relationship that becomes the foundation of classroom management. Jones & Jones (2016) state that effective classroom management is crucial to creating a classroom environment where students feel safe and valued. As a result of this relationship between teachers and students and the prevalence of child abuse and neglect, teachers are at significant risk of developing secondary traumatic stress because students often confide in teachers, "Despite the lack of formal training, more and more teachers are forced to become versed in the symptomatology of trauma

because of its prevalence in the public-school context" (Rankin, 2022, p. 139). Some literature

suggests that most teachers will experience working with traumatized students. Still, many

studies support "that teachers do not feel sufficiently skilled or knowledgeable to be able to

support these students in the best manner" (Alisic, 2012; Oberg & Bryce, 2022; Oberg et al.,

2023). Many teachers report that they do not understand the impacts of trauma and adverse

childhood experiences on academic achievement (Alisic, 2012). This further exacerbates

symptoms of STS and burnout. In one study, data indicated that as teachers reported their STS

symptoms increasing, so did socio-emotional issues within the class with their students (Simon et

al., 2022). This data further strengthens the claim that teachers' well-being impacts students'

socio-emotional functioning because of the interpersonal relationships integral to the classroom

(Simon et al., 2022).

One study examined this phenomenon of students sharing traumatic experiences with

their teachers amongst preservice or student teachers at Title 1 schools. As mentioned in chapter

one, Title 1 schools are identified by the US government to receive financial assistance because

they serve high percentages of low-income families and are often categorized by academic

disadvantages. Findings affirmed that student teachers reported increased stress and emotional

exhaustion levels due to listening to their students' stories and worrying about the quality of life

for their students. Secondary traumatic stress can tire teachers out quickly and increase emotional

exhaustion. However, it is especially damaging when coupled with a lack of support and

increasingly demanding environments (Miller & Flint-Stipp, 2019).

The increasingly demanding school environment continues to add to the role of a teacher,

which already encompasses many academic and interpersonal responsibilities. Teachers are

expected to connect with students on an emotional level to create healthy relationships that positively impact the classroom and school culture. This interpersonal responsibility requires compassion and focuses on modeling healthy social-emotional behaviors to students. This aspect of the role is extremely important but especially crucial in schools with higher populations of traumatized students (Oberg et al., 2023). However, how does this responsibility affect teachers? Studies examining teachers' experiences working with traumatized students suggest connections between a lack of trauma-aware training and increased emotional fatigue, secondary traumatic stress (STS), and burnout (Oberg et al., 2023). Working with traumatized students potentially creates an emotional strain on teachers (Brunzell et al., 2018; Luthar & Mendes, 2020; Oberg et al., 2023) because it often leaves them feeling caught between their primary role of providing academic instruction and their secondary role of taking care of the emotional well-being of their students (Alisic, 2012; Brunzell et al., 2018; Oberg et al., 2023).

Due to more research focused on STS in teachers, some studies have data to support preventative measures for schools to implement and help support at-risk teachers. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is more commonly discussed in educational research as a successful multi-tiered classroom and school culture management system. However, some studies assert that this system can be used as a proactive strategy to help improve teacher efficacy and decrease teacher burnout (Hydon et al., 2015; Kelm & McIntosh, 2012; Ross et al., 2012). This strategy is only successful as a proactive measure when teachers buy into the system and implement it with fidelity (Corbin et al., 2022), which can be viewed as an added responsibility.

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Trauma & The Neuroscience of Trauma

To better understand the significance of secondary traumatic stress, we must first dissect what trauma is and how it impacts our brains and daily functioning. Trauma stems from emotional, mental, and sometimes physically strenuous events. These traumatic events often become traumatic memories and impact the cognitive and emotional development of the individual for the rest of their life (Friedman, 2018). Trauma is often defined by a single traumatic event or experience that is easily explained, such as an assault, rape, a flood, fire, etc. These types of traumatic events are considered trauma, whereas complex trauma involves more than one traumatic event. Complex trauma occurs when a person has been exposed to multiple traumatic events coupled with the impact of exposure to those events. It is important to note that the distinction between trauma and complex trauma is significant clinically and necessary to understand better the severity of its impact on the brain and an individual's daily functioning. The concept of complex trauma can also be defined as multiple trauma experiences that lead to increased trauma symptoms, and as the amount of different traumatic experiences increases, the individual is more likely to demonstrate a cumulative impact of trauma (Follette et al., 1996; Oberg et al., 2023).

Trauma and its impact on our neurology is not a new area of research, and it is widely understood that when trauma occurs, the brain plays a prominent role in how the trauma is processed. To better understand how trauma affects the brain, we need to discuss what happens in the brain when trauma occurs. Within our brains, the limbic system structures act as a constant guard on the lookout for potential environmental hazards and threats. "The primary way the limbic system detects threats is through interpretation of environmental data input received from the five senses" (Uhernik, 2017, p. 79). Exposure to trauma can result in the consolidation of

memory fragments of the trauma event or exposure. When danger occurs, the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, beginning with the hypothalamus, is stimulated to release regulator chemical messengers called corticotropin, which releases factors within central nervous system neurons. This activates the pituitary gland, which signals the adrenal glands to release a further burst of stress response hormones. This hormone release galvanizes the body to action, causing the heart rate to increase and increasing blood flow to the lungs, brain, and muscles throughout the body—the major areas of the brain that are impacted are the amygdala, hippocampus, and prefrontal cortex. "Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that an individual experiences as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being" (Uhernik, 2017, p. 79). When an individual faces imminent danger, a cascade of physiological events may occur, and the desired outcome for immediate survival is a fight, flight, freeze, or even fainting.

Understanding the functionality of these different physiological parts of the brain is crucial to trauma-focused therapists and other mental health practitioners. This is because a clear understanding of the brain and its features leads to a clearer picture of how trauma and traumatic experiences affect the mind and the brain's basic functioning. Uhernik (2017) outlines the neuroscience findings that indicate what best practices should be implemented for individuals and communities based on the trauma experienced and the part of the brain affected. This information can impact our understanding of how trauma impacts learning in children. In a study that investigates the association between community violence and college academic performance and examines the roles that posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptomology and sleep

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quality play in it, Kallsen et al. (2020) state that the findings indicate that there is a correlation between community violence exposure and lower GPA.

Trauma impacts the brain's daily functioning, consequently impacting the learning process. Neurologically learning is impacted because areas of the brain are stuck in fight or flight mode. The emotional stressors associated with trauma also derail the learning process and often lead to poor academic achievement. Lee et al. (2016) outlines a study investigating the role of shame in association with previous traumatic experiences, academic satisfaction, and psychological distress. Findings indicate a direct association between potentially traumatic experiences and depressive symptoms and an indirect association with characterological shame (Lee et al., 2016).

Some people believe that children are more resilient to traumatic experiences than adults because of their growing brains. However, this belief is inaccurate and a dangerous thought process because children are more susceptible to lasting damage and prolonged health issues due to trauma than adults, primarily due to their developing brains. Goodyear-Brown (2012) asserts that the brain of an infant and young child is still organizing, sensitive, and more malleable to experience than that of a mature adult brain. So, while traumatic experience harms the functioning of an adult, it will adversely become the neurological organization of an infant's or child's brain (Grazette, 2021).

Childhood Trauma and Urban Schools

Finkelhor et al. (2015) estimate that about 60% of U.S. children will experience at least one traumatic event before they turn 18 years old. To better understand the complex relationship between teacher burnout, secondary traumatic stress in teachers, and urban schools, we must address childhood trauma. The prevalence of childhood trauma in the United States has created a

need in the classroom for teachers to create safe and therapeutic environments for children. This is especially true in communities that are plagued with violence and crime. Urban communities in the U.S. that are predominately comprised of people of color experience greater rates of violence and crime; "disadvantaged, segregated communities have experienced a large portion of the national decline in violent crime but remain disproportionally affected by high violent crime rates" (Sackett, 2016). These communities' children are likelier to experience or witness a traumatic event, with about 83% of children living in urban communities reporting experiencing one or more traumatic events (Collins et al., 2010). When children live in homes where there is domestic violence or intimate partner violence, they are directly experiencing complex trauma because the traumatic experience is ongoing and constant. "Intergenerational trauma and systemic oppression trauma also disproportionately impact marginalized populations" (Goodman, 2014; Ormiston et al., 2022). Therefore, the impact of exposure is more severe and complex. As a result, children express the accompanying behaviors in the classroom, leaving the teacher to address and soothe the child. "For children who have experienced trauma, the most important protective factor in their lives is a positive, supporting relationship with a safe, attentive, caring adult" (Oberg et al., 2023; Post et al., 2020). However, maltreated and abused children often exhibit increased difficulty forming new relationships with peers and adults and struggle to adapt to normative social behavior (Shields et al., 1994; Slade & Wissow, 2007; Toth & Cicchetti, 1996).

Children who experience complex trauma are often negatively impacted by it for their lives, placing them at risk for additional traumatic exposure. As well as cumulative impairments such as chronic medical illness, legal issues, vocational issues, family problems, and psychiatric and addictive disorders (Cook et al., 2005). Sanderson (2013) states that repeated acts of

violence, abuse, and humiliation within attachment relationships can have more pervasive

immediate and long-term effects because of aversive factors such as the betrayal of trust,

violation of dependency, and the destruction of human connection. Trauma associated with

attachment relationships, such as a familial, intimate partner, caregiver, educator/coach, etc., are

devasting to children because of the aversive dynamics of dependency and abuse (Sanderson,

2013).

A prevalent and particularly destructive form of childhood trauma is childhood sexual

abuse. Sexual abuse is a highly traumatic experience and is especially damaging when it occurs

during childhood. Castro et al. (2019) define childhood sexual abuse as an activity aimed at

providing sexual pleasure, stimulation, or sexual gratification to an adult who uses a minor for

this purpose by taking advantage of their superiority. Goodyear-Brown (2012) defines childhood

sexual abuse as sexual abuse that extends to contact and noncontact activities resulting in the

sexual gratification of an adult or more mature child or adolescent. Sexual abuse is a traumatic

experience for any individual at any age because it violates one's body for the sole purpose of

someone else's gratification. Childhood sexual abuse is especially troubling because of the

devastating consequences for the child. Studies show that childhood sexual abuse negatively

affects the emotional, cognitive, and social development of the child (Fergusson & Mullen, 2008;

Kaplow et al., 2008). "Attention problems, in particular, are one of the most frequently

diagnosed deficits associated with CSA" (Kaplow et al., 2008; Weinstein et al., 2000). These

attention problems in childhood increase the risk of several long-term outcomes like antisocial

behavior during adolescence and substance abuse issues during adulthood (Bor et al., 2004;

Kaplow et al., 2008). Trauma like childhood sexual abuse can develop into PTSD or PTSD-

related symptoms that follow them into adulthood. Symptoms lie in emotional dysregulation, avoidance, intrusive memories, interpersonal instability, shame, and more (Su & Stone, 2020).

Childhood sexual abuse associated with attachment relationships tends to classify as complex trauma because they are often repeated traumatic experiences instead of a single traumatic event. As mentioned before, trauma associated with attachment relationships, such as a familial, intimate partner, caregiver, educator/coach, and other trusted personal relationships, are devasting to children because of the aversive dynamics of dependency and abuse. "Survivors have to deny the traumatic nature of the abuse to hold onto a positive image of the abuser on whom they depend to have their basic human needs met" (Sanderson, 2013, p. 19). This can lead to traumatic bonding and a distortion of reality (Grazette, 2021).

According to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) (2021) in the United States, in 2016, child protective services (CPS) found evidence for a claim of child sexual abuse that indicated about 57,329 children were victims of sexual abuse. RAINN (2021) states that one in nine girls and one in 53 boys under 18 years old experience sexual abuse from an adult. Eighty-two percent of victims under 18 years of age are female, and females between the ages of 16-19 are four times more likely to be victims of rape, attempted rape, and sexual assault (RAINN.org, 2021).

It is commonly known that most childhood sexual abuse cases involve an attachment relationship. RAINN (2021) states that CPS reported that in 2013 93% of cases of child sexual abuse that were reported to law enforcement involved abusers that the victim knows, with 34% being family members, 59% being acquaintances, and 7% being strangers. These statistics only account for cases in which abuse was reported. Many victims and families do not report the abuse occurring, which makes the magnitude of this issue far more prevalent than studies report,

this means an increasingly substantial percentage of traumatized children in schools. We discussed in the previous section the impact trauma has on the brain and how it impacts the learning process for children, so these statistics also indicate that a significant percentage of students struggle academically due to trauma (Grazette, 2021).

Low Academic Performance in Urban Schools

The achievement gap in the United States is a long-studied topic. From its research, we have learned numerous factors contributing to the gap and the barriers preventing minority groups from catching up to their white counterparts. However, though this topic has been widely studied and theoretical models have been designed to address it, the question is why the gap not only exists but continues to widen. Over the past decades, research on the educational achievement gap has identified socioeconomic barriers, inequality in educational resources, limited funding, and racial discrimination. Beatty (2013) states that external factors such as socioeconomic background, race/ethnicity, location/environment, and family structure and dynamics can help students excel academically or further perpetuate the disadvantages they face every day. Of these varied reasons, racial discrimination is the one factor often observed and further studied because it is the most prevalent cause of educational inequalities in the United States. Racial discrimination usually has negative educational impacts and can be observed in several ways, such as culturally insensitive curriculums, racial biases from teachers and school leaders, and disproportionate disciplinary actions on minority groups.

Some of these racial biases can be seen as teachers being ill-equipped to understand and address the traumatic backgrounds that many students have. This is primarily due to a lack of trauma-informed education in teacher preparation programs. Zeiders et al. (2021) claim that police discrimination can be associated with lower academic performance and grades among all

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adolescents, which can be observed in secondary urban classrooms. Police discrimination and racial profiling are traumatizing to children and adolescents of color and perpetuate the impact of racism through generations. Those who endure it carry it with them, and those who challenge it expend a great deal of personal energy, often throughout their professional lives. This consistent experience with racism and its ongoing toll can foster doubt, produce anxiety, and be exhausting (Pizarro & Kohli, 2020.

This adds to the concept of racial trauma or urban trauma, which teachers of color are more likely to absorb and experience secondary traumatic stress. Urban trauma refers to the multigenerational, historical, and race-specific trauma tied to the history of slavery, coupled with systematic disadvantage has resulted in ongoing oppression and inequality (Akbar, 2017). In an examination of the challenges related to increasing the educational outcomes and future success for African Americans in group homes and foster care, Miller Dyce (2015) found that a key factor in addressing the challenges presented in increasing educational outcomes for African American male students in out-of-home placements is culturally competent teachers and administrators.

A Gardening Metaphor (AGM) is a changing framework designed to accelerate the process of closing the racial achievement gaps in the United States. The framework indicates that efforts to identify and assess these resources should evaluate and identify the needs of Black children, consider the political context, introduce rigorous curriculum, connect educational goals to students' cultural and racial identities, establish an effective school and community collaboration, and ensure that school leaders have an equity mindset toward educational goals (Taylor et al., 2021). Data shows that teachers with higher ratings have more significant

associations with African American students' achievement than teachers with lower ratings (Schenke et al., 2017).

Some researchers have asserted that acquiring basic linguistic skills contributes to the achievement gap between Black and White students. However, Weddington (2010) argues that basic linguistic skills and cultural differences cannot continue to be used as an explanation for the racial achievement gap in America because the causes are multi-dimensional. Weddington (2010) asserts that regardless of how students speak at home, reading, computing, and achieving academically are obtainable when the classroom environment nurtures students' unique needs and learning styles. However, this assertion that other factors like low income and other socioeconomic barriers are the leading cause of the gap is inaccurate. Von Hippel et al. (2018) state that evidence indicates that the inequality gap in education occurs before kindergarten. When investigating the achievement gap via test scores from kindergarten to seventh grade between Black and White students Bond and Lang (2018) state that while socioeconomic differences influence the gap, the results of this study indicate that they are not an explanation for it. Whereas excessive testing measurement error during early grades may be the cause. These studies suggest a clear correlation between the educational gap and racial disparities in the US education system.

Walsh and Theodorakakis (2017) assert that despite the adverse effects of childhood poverty, proper interventions and support within schools and communities can successfully mitigate the academic impact and help close the achievement gap. However, this does not negate those factors like poverty, parental educational attainment, and community violence still play an essential role in the achievement gap. "African American adolescents are exposed disproportionately to community violence, increasing their risk for emotional and behavioral

symptoms that can detract from learning and undermine academic outcomes" (Busby et al., 2013, p.250). How can these factors be addressed to help close the gap and move toward educational equity?

The literature supports that students in urban communities characterized by increased poverty, violence, and lack of socioeconomic resources are more likely to perform lower academically than their white suburban students. "Analyses indicated that community violence exposure was associated with poor academic performance. These relations were mediated by symptoms of depression and disruptive behavior" (Schwartz & Hopmeyer Gorman, 2003, p.163). Teachers are expected to develop a grade level's worth of growth in students, but how is this a realistic goal in urban schools that are plagued with socioeconomic issues and traumatized children when research supports that trauma disrupts the learning process; "children who have been abused or neglected show impaired perceptual reasoning and reading ability. Cognitive deficits that may trigger a decline in school performance and snowball into professional disadvantages." (Hupe & Stevenson, 2019, p.365).

Family Engagement in Education: Why Does it Matter?

When discussing the literature on the achievement gap and low academic achievement in urban schools, we must also discuss another critical factor impacting student achievement: family involvement and engagement. Family engagement in education has been defined as "parents' behaviors in the home and school settings meant to support their children's educational progress" (El Nokali et al., 2010, p. 989). It is widely accepted in academia that students with higher parental involvement often have higher rates of academic achievement in school. In a study examining the relationship between parental involvement and high academic achievement in adolescents, Xiong et al. (2021) found that the parents of poor-performing students were less

likely to get involved in their education. In contrast, high-performing students' parents were more involved in the education process. Family engagement in education is often vital to the academic success of students. When parents are involved and engaged in their student's education, it models a sense of ambition and motivation to meet their educational goals as well as rise to the expectations their families have of them. Teachers are also more engaged with students with involved parents than those without. Barger et al. (2019) share that parental educational involvement also indicated positive associations with children's social-emotional adjustment and a negative correlation to delinquency. Data shows small positive correlations between parents' reoccurring involvement in their children's education and the child's academic performance, motivation, and engagement (Barger et al., 2019). Smith et al. (2014) state that parents across cultural groups engaged in their children's educations can model an appreciation for education for their children at home, while teachers who work to form relationships with parents demonstrate that they value the lives and culture of the students.

Parental involvement in education is widely understood and recognized as important to a student's academic success. However, parental involvement continues to be weak in many communities. This issue is even more prevalent in urban schools where they have grown isolated from their communities. Warren et al. (2009) state that community-based solid organizations with deep roots can bridge the gap between the community and schools.

Though the research shows the advantages of family involvement and engagement in education, many communities report shallow parental participation in schools. Statistically, African American families in urban communities have low rates of family engagement in their student's academics; "Nearly 65% of Baltimore children live in single-parent households, and many are exposed to significant hardships associated with urban poverty that can make it harder

for children to learn and for parents to engage in their children's education" (Data Resource Center for Child Health & Adolescent Health, 2014; Gross et al., 2020). However, in a study focusing on the experiences of African American parent engagement in their children's academics, McCarthy Foubert (2019) found that many of the families' narratives revealed that they advocated and tried their best to protect their children from antiblack concepts within the education system, but many expressed disappointments in the results. McCarthy Foubert (2019) reports that many families shared the exact sentiment of "damn if I do, damned if I do not" concerning doing everything right to ensure their children's academic success and still failing to protect them from racial disadvantages in the American education system. The fathers in this study shared similar experiences of educator resistance to their desire to participate or educators' surprise at their consistent presence and active involvement (Posey-Maddox, 2017). Case (2020) states that African American caregivers/families are more likely than any other racial group to enroll their students in after-school programs, but because their voices are rarely heard and studied, after-school programs continue to struggle to connect with African American families. In a descriptive case study of a Detroit-based gym with an after-school program, Case (2020) found that family engagement at this program was high, and families reported wanting to engage and participate solely because they saw the benefits their children were receiving from the program and expressed that they felt the program went above and beyond for their children. Other factors, such as socioeconomic barriers, also account for low parental involvement in urban communities.

This issue of low family engagement becomes a question of whether it plays a role in teacher burnout and disengagement with the job. The literature indicates that a lack of family engagement relates to lower levels of academic achievement in students, and this relationship is

more likely to occur in low-income and urban communities. The effects of the relationship between low family academic engagement and low academic performance in urban communities lack research concerning its impact on teacher stress and burnout. Ball et al. (2020) assert the importance of the two guiding paradigms in concern to school-based family engagement practices: trauma-informed approach and strengths-based perspective. Ball et al. (2020) also find that effective family engagement practice strategies include providing immediate and ongoing support, establishing rapport, establishing trust, and empowering families. In a study on the effectiveness of teacher-training programs that focus on family engagement Smith and Sheridan (2019) found that out of the 39 studies of teacher-training programs examined, findings indicate that teacher-training programs had a significant positive effect on all teacher-family engagement outcomes.

Sanders-Smith et al. (2020) state that several barriers to effective family engagement were identified in a study focusing on the issues around parent engagement in education. Barriers include language barriers between parents and schools, policies discouraging volunteering, security, and ineffective connection strategies. When interviewing teachers about the strategies used to overcome these barriers, many stated attempts, such as being flexible in parent meetings to accommodate family work schedules better. However, the teachers interviewed did not indicate any sense of value toward the social and cultural capital that their families have and can offer.

Trauma-Informed Practices in Schools

A teacher must create a safe environment within the classroom context and nurture students' academic and socio-emotional needs. However, some school and community environments can be incredibly challenging, especially if teachers know each student's

background and how to manage their behaviors. However, educators are often expected to "treat" students with trauma regardless that most educators are not qualified or trained in counseling or trauma-informed practices. Often, they are given the dual reasonability of the child's social-emotional health and academic performance. More educational research is being focused on trauma-informed practices within the classroom to combat the classroom management issues that arise in urban schools because of more students with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Chizimba (2021) found that while there is a growing awareness of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma-informed practice, there is a need for a defined and standard definition of ACEs to establish a universal understanding across fields.

In a study on school-based trauma-informed care training, findings suggest that trauma-informed care within a school context is a novel way to disrupt the negative trajectory of at-risk students (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020). The trauma-informed care program in this study includes three elements: teacher training, coaching for teachers by behavioral specialists, and clinical interventions for students. However, it is noted that while research and implementation of this program are growing around the country, there is still little discussion about teacher wellness and mental health and its role in trauma-informed care in schools (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020).

Some schools have left the responsibility of addressing the mental health needs of traumatized students on school counselors' shoulders. However, some studies report that school counselors are often not trained or equipped to handle student trauma effectively. The role of school-based counselors is often not uniformly defined, and the need for school-based counselors with specialized skills in the practice of family therapy and trauma is needed to support students (O'Gorman, 2017). Ormiston et al. (2020) report that recent surveys indicated that ¾ of school psychologists do not feel confident in their knowledge or training of trauma to work with

children who have experienced trauma. However, trauma-informed multi-tiered systems of support in schools (TI-MTSS) require school psychologists to be well-equipped to implement student support successfully (Ormiston et al., 2020). Studies show that there is a disproportionate number of disciplinary measures and punitive punishment delivered to students of color; this potentially impacts the mental health of teachers of color working in urban communities predominately comprised of African American and Latinx students. Morgan (2021) states that effective practices that help alleviate the disproportionate rate of students of color being punished severely in schools are the implementation of restorative practices in the classroom.

A literature review indicates the importance of thoughtfully planning and implementing trauma-informed practices and strategies that are culturally appropriate and responsive to the communities that schools serve. Schools must develop a comprehensive plan to identify the needs of the school system, review strategies for behavior management, and acknowledge that time and patience are required. Phifer and Hull (2016) state that to be effective, school trauma-informed programs need to implement a system-wide change from changing mindsets, policies, classroom practices, and instructional practices. This includes the training and reeducation of teachers. King et al. (2021) investigated the perceptions of teachers working in disadvantaged communities with students who had higher ACEs after professional development in mindfulness training. Teachers reported that after their training, students were calmer and more relaxed after completing the program. However, this is not a widespread practice in urban schools because of a lack of funding, preparation time, qualified facilitators, and teacher buy-in due to elevated levels of job-related stress (Brown et al., 2022). A culturally responsive school utilizes students' experiences of oppression, racial bias, culture, and heritage as cornerstones of pedagogy (Blitz et al., 2020).

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Summary

It is understood that burnout is a significant issue worldwide concerning job performance, productivity, and job satisfaction. A review of the literature has shown that burnout is considered one of the most critical psychosocial occupational hazards of modern society and a social phenomenon still being studied to be better understood and addressed. Maslach (1998) created the multidimensional theory of burnout, which effectively conceptualizes the concept of work-related burnout by defining its three core components. These components are known as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1998; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Using Maslach's Burnout theory, we are better able to understand the concept of burnout within the education system.

Like occupations within the mental health field, individuals working in education often report that an elevated level of emotional engagement is required at the job. Teachers are often required to give a lot of themselves because they work with children. Teachers practice effective instructional methods in the classroom and model appropriate social and emotional development for their students. At this point, there is a plethora of research about how teachers often give more in their profession due to either intrinsic motivation, such as self-fulfillment, or due to extrinsic factors, such as school-based missions and other requirements passed down from school leadership outside of instruction. And this conversation of how teachers often give more of themselves to their profession often leads to the discussion of work-related stress and burnout and, more recently, teacher turnover in the past three decades. The research shows that teachers are leaving the field of education at alarming rates, and the cost of replacing teachers is getting increasingly detrimental to the education system in many countries. This phenomenon of teacher turnover is also detrimental to student academic achievement.

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In addition to this phenomenon of teacher burnout and turnover, literature on secondary traumatic stress and its role in the classroom in both students and teachers is also examined. As well as the science behind trauma and how it impacts the brain in context to help children learn and the implications of the cognitive impairments that trauma causes that further relate to added teacher stress and emotional exhaustion.

After an extensive review of the literature, there also appears to be evidence of a relationship between childhood trauma and the achievement gap in the United States education system. It is widely acknowledged that there are large significant disparities in the US that pertain to legal and economic inequalities, such as access to equitable, affordable housing and fair trials in court. The literature supports that these social issues impact not only disadvantaged students but also the mental health of the teachers who serve those communities.

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Chapter Three: Methods

Overview

Burnout is one of the most critical psychosocial occupational hazards in our society. It has even led the World Health Organization (WHO) to include burnout syndrome in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as a phenomenon that exists only in a work-related context (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). The education system worldwide, especially in the United States, is experiencing this phenomenon as more teachers suffer from burnout symptoms. Teachers are leaving the classrooms at alarming rates, and the effects of this type of large-scale turnover have proven social-emotional development and organizational finances. The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of urban teachers with numerous factors such as low academic performance, student ACEs, and low family engagement. Also, the examination of urban teacher experiences with burnout and secondary traumatic stress. This is in the hope that a discussion will be opened to address these issues and to provide added support to teachers working in urban schools to develop tools for school administration to raise job engagement to combat burnout.

This chapter outlines the methods and procedures of this phenomenological study from the research design selected and the rationale in context to this study, the guiding research questions, setting, the participants that will be observed and interviewed, the procedures of this study as aligned to the procedural method of hermeneutic phenomenology. The remaining section of this chapter includes a description of the researcher's role, data collection methods, interview questions, surveys/questionnaires, an analysis of documents, and a section presenting the trustworthiness of this study.

Design

This study will take a qualitative approach by using a hermeneutic phenomenological research design. The nature of this research concerns the lived experiences of urban teachers and the phenomenon of teacher burnout and secondary traumatic stress in educators. This focus on phenomena and examining participant experiences align with a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is the process of observing the world and interpreting and making sense of things as they occur in their natural settings. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) define qualitative research as a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible; the observer then turns the word into a series of representations such as interviews, field notes, recordings, photographs, etc. However, placing a greater emphasis on the design of qualitative research and its uses of distinct inquiry approaches is a definition applicable to research methodologists, highlighted by Creswell and Poth (2018). "Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2013, p.44). Creswell (2013) continues his description by stating that qualitative researchers collect data in a natural setting that is sensitive to the people and places under study to study this problem.

To study the phenomena of burnout and secondary traumatic stress in urban teachers, it is best to observe within the physical contexts of a school, interview teachers actively working in urban communities, identify common themes, and interpret the meanings teachers have ascribed to them. This phenomenon will be examined through the lens of hermeneutic phenomenology. Before the rationale for this specific approach can be discussed, it is essential first to outline what phenomenology is and its significance to qualitative research. Phenomenology, or a phenomenological study, describes the common meaning of several people's lived experiences

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of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The focus is placed on describing what all the participants in the study have in common in terms of their experiences with a phenomenon. The primary purpose of phenomenology can be described as reducing individual experiences to a description of the universal essence of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Phenomenology originally draws from the writings of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), a German mathematician. This research design has a heavy philosophical foundation, and it was further expanded upon by Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenology is a favored design used in the social and health sciences, specifically psychology, sociology, nursing, and education. Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty are the first major phenomenologists. They each had a distinct perspective on the philosophical arguments of what phenomenology is at its core. However, each of their perspectives shared common beliefs that "the study of the lived experiences of persons, the view that these experiences are conscious ones, and the development of descriptions of the essences of these experiences, not explanations or analyses" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 122).

This study utilizes the hermeneutic phenomenological approach described by Van Manen (2016). Van Manen (2016) defines hermeneutic phenomenology as "a method of abstemious reflection on the basic structures of the lived experience of human existence." He further breaks down this definition by defining the separate terms used in his definition, such as abstemious, lived experience, and hermeneutic. Abstemious in this context means that the reflection on experience tries to avoid being influenced by theoretical, emotional, polemical, and suppositional views (Van Manen, 2016). Hermeneutic phenomenology can be understood as a method of study that reflects on the human experience of a phenomenon through the lens of lived experiences and aims to interpret the shared meanings of those experiences through descriptive themes.

The hermeneutic phenomenological approach was selected for this study because the personal biases of the observer are recorded and included as pre-understandings about the phenomenon prior to data collection and analysis, as well as during and after. This type of design approach allows personal biases to be included and can offer a more robust sense of the researcher's role. This is applicable because the observer is also an urban teacher who has experienced secondary traumatic stress and burnout.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of urban schoolteachers working in a low academically performing Tile 1 school in Ward 5 of D.C. who report symptoms of burnout?

2. What are the lived experiences of these schoolteachers of who have heard traumatic stories from their students and report symptoms of secondary traumatic stress described as feelings of fatigue or illness, cynicism, irritability, reduced productivity, feelings of hopelessness, anger, despair, sadness, feelings of re-experiencing the traumatic event, nightmares, anxiety, avoidance of people or activities, or persistent anger and sadness?

Setting

The setting of this qualitative study is a local education agency in the District of Columbia. Benning Education Campus (pseudonym) is part of the District of Columbia Public School system, hereafter referred to as DCPS. Benning Education Campus is an elementary and middle school that serves about 414 students from preschool to 8th grade. Benning Education Campus is in Ward 5 of D.C. As of March 2022, Ward 5 has a population of 86,794, with 54% of residents identified as African Americans, 31% as white, and the remaining 15% as Asian, Native American, and multiracial (2022 demographics, 2022). The average household income in Ward 5 is $104,296, with African American households averaging $69,873 per year and white

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households averaging $179,284 yearly (2022 demographics, 2022). This census data is applicable to this study's setting because it provides context for the demographics of the student population of an urban school as defined in this study.

Of the 414 students at Benning Education Campus, 85% are African American, and 15% are Latino. 19% of students are English language learners, 16% receive special education services, and 68% are considered at risk due to socioeconomic factors like poverty, exposure to violence in the community, or in the foster care system. There are 73 classroom teachers at the school level and ten service providers like school psychologists, social workers, counselors, special education coordinators, speech pathologists, and occupational therapists. The administration team at the school level consists of one principal, two vice principals, and an office manager. At the executive level, the organizational structure of DCPS consists of a core leadership team comprising a chancellor, two deputy chancellors, and 12 other leadership members. Under the supervision of the core leadership team, nine instructional superintendents oversee the management of several schools. The administration team at Benning Education Campus is supervised by one of the nine instructional superintendents.

Participants

This study utilizes a purposeful sampling strategy because it is appropriate for the nature of this study as it requires participants who are best to inform the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The sample size of this study is between 10-12 participants. "Dukes (1984) recommends studying 3 to 10 participants" (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study uses a combination of sampling procedures such as convenience, criterion, and homogeneous sampling. Convenience sampling is used because it saves time, money, and effort (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Still, in this study, information and credibility are less at risk as often with this sampling strategy.

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Sampling is convenient because the study's setting is the researcher's workplace. However, the information and credibility are valid because the setting and participants are still appropriate and applicable to the study.

Criterion sampling is also used and provides added quality assurance (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The criterion allows the researcher to narrow the participants to urban teachers at Benning Education Campus who have lived experiences working with students with traumatic histories and have experienced symptoms of secondary traumatic stress. It also narrows the scope to identify urban teachers and administrators at the school level who have experiences with work-related burnout (Appendix F). These focuses can also be considered a homogenous sampling strategy as it "focuses, reduces, simplifies, and facilitates group interviewing" (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using homogenous sampling also identifies participants who share similar experiences with the same phenomenon, which in this study is the experience of secondary traumatic stress and burnout as it relates to being an urban teacher. This purposeful strategy aims to select participants who can provide information-rich data on their shared experiences (Palinkas et al., 2015).

All participants are classroom teachers at Benning Education Campus in the urban community of Ward 5 in the District of Columbia. A purposeful approach aims to include a range in teaching experience, age, ethnicity, instructional discipline (e.g., Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies), and instructional level (e.g., elementary, middle). It was anticipated that participants had varied years of teaching experience, anywhere from one year to 30 years. The ethnicities of participants varied between African American, White, and Asian, with the majority identifying as African American, as that is most prevalent racial group in the setting that are

classroom teachers. Most participants were anticipated to be female because most teachers at the school were female.

Procedures

Permission to execute this study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Liberty University once the proposal defense was approved (see Appendix A). A separate permission form from the IRB was submitted to the principal at Benning Education Campus to request permission to interview its employees. No field research was conducted prior to securing approvals from both institutions. A recruitment flyer outlining the criteria for research participants was posted on the walls of the school campus, and a recruitment letter was sent to all teachers at the school (Appendix B). The flyer and email templates were submitted for approval to the IRB before field research was conducted.

The Researcher's Role

As the human instrument in this study, I must explain and outline my role in the setting and any biases or assumptions I bring to the study (Van Manen, 1997). I am an elementary reading and social studies teacher in Washington, D.C. I work full-time as a classroom teacher at the research site, Benning Education Campus, and I have worked at this school for six years. I am Caribbean-American and have spent most of my life in the U.S. I spent a few years of my childhood and early education in my family's native country of Trinidad & Tobago. I grew up in a two-parent household alongside my older brother and five members of my mother's family. My family and I lived in Maryland and Virginia for most of my childhood and adolescence. My father worked in the medical field, and my mother was a full-time stay-at-home mom. My childhood can be described as warm, loving, and full. I was happy and secure. Around age ten, I started noticing that most of my school friends were part of single-parent homes; however, in the

suburbs of Maryland, there were few classmates with trauma that I was aware of. My parents

moved me and my brother to Virginia when I started middle school, and we remained there until

I graduated and went to college.

During my undergrad years, I majored in Anthropology my first two years before

switching to Sociology when I discovered how little Anthropologists made coming out of

college. I kept Anthropology as a minor instead and declared a 2nd minor in Japanese studies. I

wanted to pursue a sociological research career because I was fascinated with the social sciences.

My parents supported my dreams and were proud that I was in college because education was a

priority in our household. However, during this time, my brother stopped attending classes in

community college and was trying entrepreneurship with a kiosk at a local mall. My parents

supported his ambitions but continued to remind him that school was more important and that he

needed to finish.

In 2010, I was in the middle of a midterm exam when I got a call from a bail bondsman

informing me that my brother had been arrested the night before and needed to be bailed out. The

night before, my brother was driving with his friends in the passenger and back seats when they

were pulled over by police about their headlights. An argument ensued over the color of the

headlights and who the ticket should be written to since the friend in the passenger seat was the

car's owner. The traffic stop ended in shattered glass, cuts, a dislocated arm, and a broken sense

of reality. A story that often repeats in this country when the passengers are black or brown. My

family and I struggled to comprehend that my brother was a victim of police brutality in our

quiet state of VA, but as time and court cases passed without justice, it became clearer. My

brother's personality changed, and he coped with drug use that escalated from 2010-2019. This

was my firsthand experience witnessing the impact that trauma could have on someone's life.

The symptoms he exhibited closely relate to that PTSD, and I found myself nervous around police, police cars, sirens, red and blue lights, my brother's phone calls, and any calls at night. I was unaware then that I was experiencing symptoms of secondary traumatic stress.

In 2012, I went to study abroad in Japan to work on my minor. I was grateful for the opportunity because I had dreamt of visiting Japan for years, and it also provided an escape from my brother. During that time, I struggled to listen to my brother talk about his traumatic event and express his anger and pain. During my study abroad, I volunteered at a local elementary school in Akita, Japan, and helped with their English lessons and fell in love with it. I decided to pursue a career in teaching after graduation. I graduated in 2013 and applied for an assistant teaching job in Japan, and moved in 2014 to work there full-time. I taught English as an assistant language teacher in Japan for a year before returning to the States to be with my family. I enjoyed teaching in Japan, but it stopped being fulfilling after a while because the students were self-sufficient academically and had little social-emotional connection with teachers. I longed to work with students that looked like me and could relate to me.

In 2018, I returned to the classroom in an urban setting in the nation's capital Washington, DC. The students were loving and energetic, but their backgrounds completely differed from my upbringing, and I struggled to relate to their stories of home. Teaching in Washington, DC, exposed me to how many students and their families experience traumatic events and do not receive or even seek services for help. As a few years passed, I experienced burnout symptoms like emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. When COVID-19 shut schools down in 2019-2020, I felt a deep sense of relief, but when schools shifted to virtual learning, my symptoms worsened. Trying to cope with my students' trauma, their family issues and low engagement, the increased workload, my brother's PTSD and drug usage, and my

mental well-being and graduate school responsibilities, I struggled tremendously. I reached out to my school administration for help and was candid about my struggles, and while they expressed empathy, they offered no solutions or methods to alleviate my stress.

I was the human instrument in this study, and the participants were professionals from my workplace. One participant in this study was a principal and had authority over me and others. All other participants were colleagues who worked in the same conditions and served the same student population that I have. My role at the research site, Benning Education Campus, was as a general education classroom teacher. My lived experiences guided me and allowed me to better understand my experiences and the lived experiences of my participants as I collected and analyzed data.

Data Collection

Data was not collected, and participants were not contacted until necessary approvals were granted through Liberty University's IRB process. A separate permission form from the IRB was submitted to the principal at Benning Education Campus to request permission to interview its employees. No field research was conducted prior to securing approvals from both institutions. Then once informed consent was received from participants, interviews began, and data collection and analysis co-occurred. Data collection for this study consisted solely of participant interviews.

Interviews

The interviews consisted of semi-structured questions with participants who had direct experiences with the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018) (Appendix E). This study's purpose of semi-structured interviews is to provide evidence of lived experiences from first-hand accounts as necessary in phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). The research questions of this

study are supported by the interview questions, which provide a deeper examination of the research questions. Each question is meant to provide the research with a clear depiction of the phenomenon being studied and answer the overarching research questions.

Participants could be interviewed via Zoom or in person at the research site after school hours. Each interview was held in a private space and recorded using a digital recorder for in-person interviews or using Zoom recording for virtual interviews. All recordings were stored on a hard drive for privacy and safety. Each interview lasted about one hour and was confidential, and the identities of participants were hidden, and pseudonyms were used in the written transcripts. The interviews consisted of the following questions:

1. If I did not know anything about you, what would you want me to know about you?

2. What and/or who inspired your decision to become an educator?

3. What and/or who inspired your decision to work in an urban school?

4. What are your experiences with low academic achievement in urban schools?

5. Please describe your experiences with family engagement in academics in urban communities.

6. Describe the impact this kind of academic family engagement had on your experience as a teacher?

7. Tell me about the first time you heard a traumatic story from a student or their family, and describe your experience.

8. How often do you hear traumatic stories from or about your students?

9. How do students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)/trauma affect your experience as a teacher?

10. Please describe your experience with symptoms of emotional exhaustion as a teacher.

11. Please describe your experience with symptoms of depersonalization as a teacher.

12. Please describe your experience with feelings of reduced personal accomplishment at work.

13. Please tell me about a time when you felt your experiences with burnout impacted your responsibilities as a teacher.

14. Please tell me about a time when you felt your experiences with burnout impacted your life outside of work.

15. Please tell me about a time when school leaders or district leaders provided support with managing stress and burnout that you felt was helpful.

16. What else can you tell me about your experiences with student trauma, teacher burnout, and secondary traumatic stress that you feel may advance this study?

Question one is a background/demographic question designed to identify the characteristics of the person being interviewed (Patton, 2015). Question one is an open-ended question that allows the interviewee to categorize themselves and share the characteristics they feel are the most important and identifiable about themselves; "responses to open-ended, qualitative background inquires tell us about how the people categorize themselves in today's endlessly categorizing world" (Patton, 2015). Questions two and three are opinion/values questions that focus on understanding the interpretive processes of people (Patton, 2015). These two questions allow the interviewee to share what inspired them to pursue this career path and serve this specific community. These questions allow the researcher to listen and observe how the participant interprets their past experiences that led to their present. These questions are part of naturalistic inquiry (Patton, 2015) because they involve the researcher in close contact with the participants and their problems/experiences. In this kind of qualitative fieldwork, the researcher

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exercises empathic neutrality (Patton, 2015) while interviewing and engaging with participants. Exercising empathic neutrality at the beginning of the interview allows the participant to feel heard, understood, and not judged (Patton, 2015). This is vital to build rapport between the researcher and the participant.

Question four is a presupposition question (Patton, 2015) that assumes shared knowledge between the researcher and the participant. Based on the criteria met in participant selection, it is accurate to assume that each participant asked this question has experienced working with low-academically performing students in an urban school setting. Questions four through six each address the first research question of this study, which inquiry about the experiences of urban schoolteachers working in low academically performing schools. Questions five and six specifically ask the participant about their experiences with family engagement concerning student academic achievement; students with low academic performance tend to have families that are less likely to get involved in their education (Xiong et al., 2021).

Questions seven through nine shift the conversation to a sensitive area that might require vulnerability from the participant and a heightened degree of empathic neutrality. Due to the background and opinion/value questions, a good rapport between the researcher and the participant should be established (Patton, 2015). Allowing these questions to be asked with proper prefaces, transition announcements, and introductory statements throughout the interview to aid in the interview's flow (Patton, 2015). These three questions address this study's third and fourth research questions. Research question three seeks to examine the experiences of urban schoolteachers working with traumatized student populations, and research question four seeks to examine the experiences of secondary traumatic stress in urban schoolteachers because of indirect trauma exposure through their students.

Questions 10 through 14 are presupposition questions (Patton, 2015) that assume the participant has experienced symptoms of burnout. This assumption is made because this study utilizes criterion sampling to provide quality assurance (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The criterion narrows the participants to urban schoolteachers and administrators at Benning Education Campus who have lived experiences working with students with traumatic histories and have experienced secondary traumatic stress and burnout symptoms. Question 15 invites participants to share their opinion on how they experience their stress being managed by school leaders. This opinion/value question (Patton, 2015) is meant to solidify rapport through an empathic ear using empathic neutrality. This is not a leading question (Patton, 2015) meant to push the participant into a particular opinion; however, the researcher's explicit bias is present due to the researcher's role and personally lived experiences related to the study. This question aims to further develop a relationship with the participant through a conversation about the meaning of an experience (Van Manen, 1990). Question 16 is a final/closing question (Patton, 2015) that allows the participant to have the last say and offer any last information pertinent to the study.

Data Analysis

This study utilized a hermeneutic phenomenological design, so once interview data was collected and transcribed, themes were identified using the Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS), ATLAS.ti, and then themes were synthesized into writing using the evocative method (Van Manen, 2016). In phenomenological research, the concept of data analysis is understood differently because individual statements or concepts cannot encompass the description of a lived experience (Van Manen, 1997). The phenomenological inquiry seeks to understand the phenomenon rather than just in parts as typical analytical processes do. The first step in the data analysis involved reading the transcripts of each participant interview and removing unnecessary

language in the transcribing process (Dibley et al., 2020). After each interview was transcribed, the researcher made notes about what stood out, the researchers' impressions, the style of the participant's responses, and the initial coding of each transcript (Dibley et al., 2020). A basic list of emerging themes and patterns is developed at this early interpretation phase. Two reading approaches were used in exploring themes and patterns in the transcribed texts: the holistic and selective reading approaches. The wholistic reading approach was used during the initial reading of each transcript while thinking of how the text's main significance could be captured (Van Manen, 2016). The selective reading approach was used during the additional re-reads of the transcripts to identify key phrases or statements that revealed the described experience (Van Manen, 2016). In this reading approach, key phrases and statements were circled, highlighted, and used to capture meaning in written thematic expressions.

The next step in the data analysis phase was writing interpretive summaries written after each transcribed interview to summarize the participants' stories and pertinent points (Dibley et al., 2020). Next, it was important to ruminate or "dwell" (Heidegger & Krell, 1993) on the data and the interpretative summaries written to build and generate meaning and understanding for further interpretation. This process of dwelling is part of the hermeneutic circle, a continuous, reflexive process (Dibley et al., 2020) that, in this study, required a re-read of data as new themes emerged. The hermeneutic circle begins with the researcher's pre-understandings of the phenomenon being studied, interviews transcribed to texts, examination of the parts and the whole, dwelling on the data, re-reading the text as themes emerge, reading along, understanding, and building meaning from themes, and then interpretation (Dibley et al., 2020). The last step in the analysis process was creating a report on the interpretation of the phenomenon. The evocative writing method was used in this study to create a sense of personal proximity or

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nearness to the phenomenon (Van Manen, 2016).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in research can be easily understood as the evaluation of the worth of a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness addresses the credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability of a qualitative study, each aspect a means to demonstrate its worth and usefulness of the study to its audience. The credibility of this study is addressed through peer debriefing or peer reviewing of the data and research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) state that clarifying research bias or reflexivity allows the researcher to disclose their bias, experiences, values, and understandings concerning the study. This was done in this study to establish dependability and confirmability. A rich, thick description was used to establish transferability (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

The credibility of a study establishes confidence in the honesty of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research process, data, and the examined phenomenon were peer-reviewed by the dissertation chair, doctoral mentor, and me, the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Prolonged engagement (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was also utilized to establish credibility. Prolonged engagement involved having follow-up interviews with participants to discuss interpretations of their interview, address gaps in understanding, and clarify and add salient information from the participants.

Dependability and Confirmability

Engaging in reflexivity and using an external audit (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) established the dependability and confirmability of this study. Reflexivity was addressed in the situation to self and researcher's role sections of chapters one and three,

respectively. The researcher's bias was disclosed as the researcher's experiences with the phenomenon are from a similar lens to the participants because I am a teacher working in an urban community and have experienced secondary traumatic stress and burnout symptoms concerning student traumatic stories. An external audit was used to examine the research process and findings to determine accuracy and validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Transferability

Participants were able to review and provide feedback during follow-up discussions and interviews on the data generated from their interviews, thus generating a thick description (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A thick description not only describes the behaviors of the participants but also describes the context of the behaviors interpreted by the participants. This allows outsiders to better understand the intentional, interpretative, and communicative meaning behind the behavior.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study examines the phenomenon of urban schoolteachers in Washington, D.C., who have shared experiences of teacher burnout and secondary traumatic stress in connection with working with highly traumatized student populations. The population of interest is specifically urban schoolteachers who have these experiences. The aim of the study is not to determine whether urban schoolteachers have experienced burnout and secondary traumatic stress or not but to examine teachers who have experienced these issues and examine the phenomenon observed by the researcher. The sample population for this study is between 10-12 participants to ensure that if limitations such as participant dropout occur, the study will still have a strong number of interview data to use.

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Ethical Considerations

No information collected in this study could harm participants in any way. Pseudonyms were used for the study site and all participants, which adheres to the basic ethical principles for respect for persons and beneficence (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). A list with all participants' identifiable information linking to pseudonyms is stored in a password-protected folder on a password-protected computer with a backup drive. No participants who were under the influence of any substance or believed to be were used. Participants were not contacted, and data was not collected until the IRB approved this study and I received an official approval letter (Appendix A). All data collected is confidential, and participants consented to being interviewed and recorded. National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979) states that one of the important applications of the general principles to the conduct of research is informed consent which gives an assessment of risks and benefits. All participants in this study signed consent forms (Appendix C), as well as the principal of the school site being used. Digital recordings and interview transcripts are kept in a password-protected folder on a password-protected computer. As the primary and sole researcher, I am the only person with access to these files and any data collected throughout this study.

This study respects the ethical boundaries between practice and research by adhering to research methods only and not practice. "research' designates an activity designed to test a hypothesis, permit conclusions to be drawn, and thereby to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge (expressed, for example, in theories, principles, and statements of relationships" (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral

Research, 1979). This study seeks to examine an observed phenomenon and develop themes from participant interview data. Therefore, it is within the definition of research.

Summary

This chapter explains and outlines the qualitative methods for this study. The hermeneutical phenomenology design was applied to this inquiry because it best utilized my lived experiences and connection to the phenomenon as a foundation. Burnout is considered one of modern society's most critical psychosocial occupational hazards, and this study examines this hazard through the lens of a niche population, urban schoolteachers. Four overarching research questions are designed to examine the phenomenon of secondary traumatic stress and burnout in urban schoolteachers in relation to student trauma and low academic achievement. Each question addresses the lived experience of urban schoolteachers. The research site is in Washington D.C. at Benning Education Campus, a pre-k through eighth-grade school serving an at-risk student population of 68%.

For selecting participants, purposeful criterion sampling provided added quality assurance and pertinent data. Semi-structured open-ended interviews comprised 16 questions, each addressing the participants' lived experiences and focused on one of the four research questions. Once interview data was collected and stored securely, transcripts were created, and the data analysis began with the hermeneutic circle engaged. The hermeneutic circle begins with the researcher's pre-understandings of the phenomenon being studied, interviews transcribed to texts, examination of the parts and the whole, dwelling on the data, re-reading the text as themes emerge, reading along, understanding, and building meaning from themes, and then interpretation (Dibley et al., 2020).

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Chapter Four: Findings

Overview

A thorough review of the literature on burnout syndrome concluded that it is one of the most critical psychosocial occupational hazards in modern-day society. The World Health Organization (WHO) included burnout syndrome in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as a phenomenon that exists only in a work-related context (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). Burnout is commonly experienced in professions that require compassion, like healthcare workers, mental health practitioners, and educators. Around the world, the education system is experiencing this phenomenon, especially in the United States as more teachers report suffering with burnout symptoms. Teacher attrition rates around the world are increasing each year, with significant numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic and after. The purpose of this study is to examine urban teachers' experiences with numerous factors such as low academic performance, student trauma, and low family engagement. Also, the examination of urban teacher experiences with burnout and secondary traumatic stress.

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological investigation was to explore and assign significance to the lived experiences of teachers working at a title 1 school in an urban community in Ward 5 of Washington D.C, working with student trauma, low academic performance amongst students, and low family engagement. This study sought to discover how these experiences shaped the participants' experiences with burnout and secondary traumatic stress symptoms. The theory guiding this study is Maslach and Jackson's (1981) multidimensional theory of burnout to provide context and understanding of the type of stress associated with the role and responsibilities of K-12 teachers.

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This chapter provides a narrative profile description of the 10 participants and the results of the semi-structured interviews presented in the themes that emerged from the analysis process. The study had four research questions, each aiming to determine what the experiences of teachers in an urban school are pertaining to their experiences working in a low academically performing school, the traumatic histories of students, teacher burnout, and symptoms of secondary traumatic stress. This chapter will also include the answers to these central questions.

Participants

Participants in this study were teachers who currently work at a Title 1 school like Benning Education Campus in Ward 5 of Washington D.C. or have worked there in the past five years. The years of teaching experience vary among the participants, from three to 26 years. The following information is a brief description of each participant, pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the participants (Appendix D).

Table 1

Profile of Participants

Pseudonyms	Gender	Years of experience	Job title
Asya	Female	4	Special education teacher
Naomi	Female	26	Math & science teacher
Aaliyah	Female	3	Math & science teacher
Chloe	Female	12	General education teacher
Michael	Male	5	Special education teacher
Alexandria	Female	20+	Elective teacher (library)
Mia	Female	7	Special education self-contained classroom teacher
Brianna	Female	10	Reading and history teacher

| Zendaya | Female | 3-5 | General education teacher |
| Madison | Female | 5-10 | Math & science teacher |

Michael

Michael is a special education teacher with about five to seven years of experience. During his interview, he discusses his dedication to his job and the importance of taking it seriously. He shares that his inspiration to become an educator came from his students, specifically their desires and aspirations for a better future. Michael also notes that working in an urban school was motivated by his frustration with the differential treatment of students of color in suburban schools. He describes his experiences with low academic achievement and the lack of family engagement in academics in urban communities. Michael explains that he often hears tragic stories from his students and their families, which takes a toll on him emotionally. He acknowledges experiencing burnout and depersonalization, especially when he sees administrators not fulfilling their responsibilities.

Michael also mentions feeling a reduced sense of personal accomplishment when external factors prevent him from focusing on teaching. He highlights that he has not received much support from school or district leaders in managing stress and burnout. Michael discusses his experiences with speaking his mind and how it has made his boss and evaluator afraid of him. He also mentioned his chronic anxiety and the need to take medication for it. He talks about his anger towards others for not addressing issues in education and how it affects their sleep. Michael mentioned a personal incident with a student named Patricia (pseudonym) that had a significant impact on them. Michael expressed concern about teachers burning out and not making it to retirement. However, Michael plans to continue teaching for the long term.

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Asya

Asya is a teacher in an urban school and is proud of her profession. She was inspired to become a teacher because of her desire to help others. Asya decided to work in an urban school after hearing about it from a friend and wanting to make a difference. Asya has experienced low academic achievement in urban schools, especially with students in special education. Asya shared that her student's attendance issues and external challenges impact their ability to focus and succeed. Asya shared that her experiences with family engagement in academics are limited, with only a small number of parents actively involved, and this lack of engagement has a negative impact on the student's behavior and performance. She has heard traumatic stories from students and their families, which has had a profound effect on the student's behavior and her ability to support them. Trauma is a daily occurrence, according to Asya, and is challenging to address. She shares openly that she feels ill-equipped to teach because the students come with a lot of trauma and a large academic gap.

Asya believes the trauma is so intense that it's difficult for the students to learn, which leaves her feeling defeated and an ineffective teacher. Asya openly shares her experiences with emotional exhaustion, feeling drained and worn out due to accumulated stress. The stress of teaching in an urban school has changed her behavior and made her emotionally drained. She also experiences depersonalization, feeling unable to function correctly, and a disconnect from work. She states that she sometimes feels negative about her work and unsuccessful due to the stress and being overwhelmed. Asya believes burnout impacts her responsibilities as a teacher, causing her to lack energy and forget things. It also affects her personal life; she shares that burnout often makes her upset and withdrawn. Asya feels that support from school and district leaders is lacking and believes that more cooperation and discussion between teachers,

administrators, and parents is needed. She believes that addressing the issue of teacher burnout is crucial for effective teaching and helping students with trauma.

Aaliyah

Aaliyah, a third-year teacher at Benning Education Campus, discussed her experiences as an educator in an urban school. Aaliyah explained that her decision to become an educator was inspired by her desire to make a difference and improve education in urban communities. Aaliyah describes the challenges of low academic achievement in her school, particularly in 7th grade. She mentions the difficulties of teaching certain concepts when students are lacking foundational knowledge. Aaliyah also discusses her experiences with family engagement in academics, noting that engagement tends to decrease as students move into higher grade levels. She mentioned feeling less burdened by engaging with families this year. Aaliyah describes her experiences with students sharing traumatic stories and the impact it has on their emotional well-being. She mentioned that she has heard traumatic stories more frequently in second grade compared to their current teaching assignment. Aaliyah also discussed her strategies for managing burnout, including taking a step back emotionally and focusing less on work outside of school hours. She notes that she prioritizes her own well-being and has learned to set boundaries to maintain a work-life balance.

Aaliyah mentions the only support from school leaders for stress management was in the form of a book on stress relief and an ice cream social during a faculty meeting. Overall, Aaliyah reflects on their experiences with burnout and the ways it has affected their responsibilities as a teacher. She believes that there should be training or support from administrators to navigate the fine line between being an invested teacher and protecting one's own mental health. Aaliyah expressed that if she had received training, she might have approached the challenges better and

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not tapped out in her third year. She also admits that she cared too much for some students,

which became overwhelming and taxing for her.

Madison

Madison is an educator who is married with two kids and has five to 10 years of teaching

experience. She was inspired to become a teacher because of her love for working with children.

She chose to work in an urban school because of her connection with the kids there and a desire

to provide them with extra love and support. She spoke about the challenges of low academic

achievement in urban schools, as well as the difficulty of engaging parents in the academic

process. The lack of family engagement negatively impacted her experience as a teacher. She

also discussed the emotional toll of hearing traumatic stories from students and shared one

specific example of a student who faced a challenging life due to their environment. Overall,

Madison expressed frustration with the lack of support from administrators and the burden of

unrealistic expectations placed on teachers. Despite these challenges, she remains passionate

about helping students and believes the system needs to change to better support teachers and

students.

Mia

Mia, a special education teacher with seven years of experience, discusses her

experiences juggling motherhood and being a teacher in an urban school. She shares her

struggles with low student academic achievement and the challenges of engaging families in

their children's education. Mia expresses frustration with a lack of parental involvement and

shares a specific example of a student who has not made progress in four years. She also

mentions her own burnout and feelings of being overwhelmed, and admits to contemplating

leaving the teaching profession. She describes a lack of support from school leaders and a

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reluctance to discuss these challenges openly. Overall, Mia feels stressed and is considering leaving the field of education.

Naomi

Naomi is a veteran teacher with more than 25 years of experience. Naomi shares that she initially wanted to pursue a career in medicine but ended up in education due to various circumstances throughout school and in her personal life. Naomi's decision to work in urban schools and the challenges she has faced with low academic achievement were primarily based on her experiences as a student in urban schools. She mentions specific incidents where students struggled academically and how it negatively affected her. Naomi recalls many occasions when she feels overwhelmed, which leads to even more emotional exhaustion. She states that to her, it is a never-ending cycle, and it's incredibly draining. Naomi openly expressed her negative feelings toward the educational system, stating that it makes her feel bad and that she hates how it makes her feel. Naomi also mentioned feeling unsupported by school leaders and administrators, particularly during stress and burnout. She discussed the overwhelming workload and lack of work-life balance and doubted trusting anyone in administration again. Naomi believes that the expectations and demands on teachers are causing teacher burnout and suggests that the education system needs to update and find a better solution.

Chloe

Chloe is a teacher with 12 years of experience. Chloe is passionate about reading, writing, and sports, and described herself as an introverted extrovert. Chloe was inspired to become an educator by her upbringing and the great teacher she had in high school. She also volunteered in a low-income school during college, which opened her eyes to educational disparities. She spoke about her experiences with low academic achievement in urban schools

and how her idealistic beliefs about teaching changed as she learned about the barriers students face. Chloe had mixed experiences with family engagement in urban communities; stating that some parents were actively involved, while others were less engaged. As our interview touched on traumatic stories from students and their families, Chloe shared a specific story of a student whose half-brother was shot and killed. She felt overwhelmed but gained more experience in supporting students with trauma over time. Overall, Chloe's experiences with trauma in her students affected her as a teacher. She focused on providing support within the school setting and felt limited in what she could do. She experienced burnout and felt that school leaders and district leaders did not provide helpful support which eventually lead to her leaving teaching this year. Chloe expressed disappointment in the education system and believed that real change would require a complete overhaul.

Brianna

Brianna is of Trinidadian descent and enjoys being a DJ outside of teaching. Brianna is in her 10th year of teaching and says that she was thrown into the teaching profession by a friend's suggestion and has only worked in urban schools. She describes her experiences with low academic achievement in urban schools as mostly below proficiency. Brianna shared that her experiences with family engagement in academics are almost nonexistent, with her having to reach out to families and often not receiving a response. This lack of engagement has had a negative impact on her experience as a teacher, and she believes that if parents were more involved, academic outcomes would improve.

Brianna has heard numerous traumatic stories from her students, particularly relating to absent parents and poverty. These experiences didn't shock her since she was familiar with them from her own background. However, she shared that she hears traumatic stories from her

students on a weekly basis. The traumatic experiences and adverse childhood experiences of her

students affect Brianna's teaching approach. She has to be mindful of their triggers and adapt her

teaching accordingly. She shared that she experiences emotional exhaustion on an annual basis

and purposely feels distant from her job to maintain peace of mind. There are times when she

feels her efforts are not enough, leading to feelings of reduced personal accomplishment.

Brianna's experiences with burnout have impacted her life both within and outside of

work. She felt unworthy and took mental health days because of her job's demands. Burnout also

affects her personal life, causing her to want to stay at home and feel anxious about the

upcoming workweek. Regarding support from school and district leaders, Brianna feels that the

assistance provided is limited. Brianna states that while there may be counseling services or

professional development training on mental health, the workload remains the same and there is

a lack of tangible support. In terms of advancing the study, Brianna suggests focusing on how to

assist parents in managing their own trauma and mental health. She believes that addressing the

generational cycle of trauma can help improve the well-being of both parents and children.

Zendaya

Zendaya is an educator who decided to become a teacher after graduating from college

and has about three years of experience teaching first grade. Zendaya was inspired to work in an

urban school because she went to high school in the same area. She believes that proper

planning, preparation, and support can help students in low academic achievement areas succeed.

Zendaya shared that she has had little engagement from families in academic matters while she's

worked in urban communities, which has made it challenging for her as a teacher.

When discussing trauma in urban schools, Zendaya has heard traumatic stories from

students and their families, such as the loss of a parent or being involved in shootings, about

once or twice a year. These traumatic experiences have added stress and affected Zendaya's emotional well-being, resulting in symptoms of emotional exhaustion such as headaches and body aches. She feels connected to her students and her job as a teacher but shares that she sometimes struggles to balance her personal life due to exhaustion. Zendaya hasn't felt a reduced sense of accomplishment at work and states that she appreciates the support provided by school leaders, such as wellness days. She shares that at her school, teachers get wellness days once a month, where they are allowed to leave early. Zendaya believes that teacher turnover is high, especially in first grade, due to the lack of support and high expectations. She emphasized the difficulty of her job, especially when students are experiencing trauma, as it affects her emotions and makes it challenging to teach effectively.

Alexandria

Alexandria discusses her love for children and her passion for their learning. She explains that she was inspired to become an educator by her experiences working with children in daycare centers and public libraries. She also talks about her decision to work in an urban school, explaining that it was where the job was and that she didn't initially consider the school's location. Alexandria discusses her experiences with low academic achievement in urban schools, mentioning a neighbor who struggled as a single mother and didn't prioritize her children's education and how that was her first experience witnessing low family engagement as well. She further talks about her experiences with family engagement in academics, explaining that she tries to build relationships with parents and help them overcome barriers to their children's success.

Alexandria highlights the impact of family engagement or the lack thereof on her experience as an educator, mentioning that it can be both frustrating and motivating. She

explains that while she tries harder with students who lack support at home, she may not put as much effort into those who are not receptive to help. Alexandria mentions that she has not personally heard traumatic stories from students, but she recalls the experience of a student who lost her mother and describes how she tried to support and engage with her during that time. She also mentions that the school did not provide much support or counseling for the student.

Alexandria shared how she feels ill-prepared to handle students' trauma and believes that teachers need more training and support in this area. She feels that the issue of teacher burnout and secondary traumatic stress should be prioritized and addressed by school and district leaders. She hopes that the study will bring attention to this issue and result in measures being put in place to support teachers and help them better handle student trauma. She also believes that having a dedicated position or resource for teachers to seek support would be beneficial. Alexandria believes that school administration should prioritize self-care and suggests implementing a half-day break for educators to grieve or destress. She emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the real stress teachers experience, especially when dealing with children.

Results

The data presented in this section was collected from the semi-structured interviews as well as the details outlining the analysis process, which includes coding development and how these codes shaped the themes that emerged. Quotes from participants are attributed to each theme to provide a clear understanding of how teachers in the urban community of Ward 5 experience symptoms of burnout and secondary traumatic stress as it relates to their specific experiences to low academic achievement amongst students, student trauma, and low family

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engagement in education. Lastly, this section provides responses to the central research questions

and a summary of the themes presented and how they relate to the central research questions.

Theme Development

After carefully reading each interview transcript and journaling my pre-understandings

before and during the analysis process, I used in vivo coding using the qualitative analysis

software Atlas.ti since the inductive coding method was used. The analysis process began with

me looking for clusters of meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). 348 in vivo codes were initially

generated from all ten transcripts, which led me to review each code for redundancy and group

redundant codes. I further grouped codes on similar themes to verify emerging themes. There

were 28 separate in vivo codes associated with teachers' experiences with burnout symptoms, so

those codes were grouped together and coded as burnout. The emerging themes and associated

codes were reviewed several times to ensure that they represented comprehensive thoughts and

concepts rather than singular occurrences. This process continued until five overarching themes

emerged, (1) Burnout (2) Emotional Exhaustion (3) Trauma and Lack of support (4)

Disengagement and Frustration and (5) Work-life balance.

Burnout

As the first leitmotif, burnout was obviously a consistent recurring phrase, thought, idea,

and experience throughout all participants' responses. Each participant shared several

experiences with symptoms of burnout and expressed in detail the impact it has on their lives.

Teachers described the impact of burnout on their ability to perform their duties and overall well-

being. They expressed feeling physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted, and some

experienced self-destructive behavior and a sense of disconnection. Burnout symptoms also

affected their personal lives, making it difficult for some of them to fully engage with their own

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children and missing out on important moments with family. The excessive workload and lack of

support within the school system were identified as major factors contributing to burnout.

Teachers expressed frustration with the expectations placed on them and expressed confliction

about feeling guilty and manipulated for not being able to do more. The lack of work-life balance

and the constant pressure to meet deadlines and educate students in challenging circumstances

further exacerbated burnout. Teachers called for changes in the education system to address these

issues and retain dedicated educators.

Asya shared that her husband expressed his concern about how her personality has

changed since she started working in a Title 1 school in an urban community, "…when I used to

teach and say versus when I started teaching in the other urban school, I see the difference. Like

even my husband tells me that you haven't been the same since you've been teaching there." Mia

shared that her experiences make her resent having to go to work each day "So not wanting to

go, feeling tired.". Naomi got emotional during her interview several times when talking about

her experiences with feeling burnt out from work,

> "I said if I could describe to you what burnout feels like, I don't even know. Look, I'm
>
> starting to cry now just thinking about it. It's this dichotomy of feeling, absolutely
>
> nothing, and absolutely everything. Every little thing triggers me, bothers me, upsets me.
>
> And at the same time I feel nothing because I feel like I have nothing more to give. Like
>
> I'm empty, but everything bothers me."

When asked about her experiences with burnout impacting her life, Chloe stated that her

experiences with burnout symptoms, like mental and emotional exhaustion, were the driving

force behind her decision to quit, "This is actually one of the reasons why I like left and why I

decided not to teach this year…I felt like all I did was work and sleep. I was like mentally

exhausted, physically exhausted, and emotionally exhausted." Similarly, Madison expressed resentment towards the growing demands on teachers, "…told they're not doing enough while carrying the weight of the school and these kids academically, emotionally, socially and then wake up and do it all over again." Madison also left the classroom last year due to the stress and her growing discontent with the profession. However, Zendaya and Michael expressed that they still enjoy teaching. While they have had experiences with burnout symptoms, they still plan to commit to 30 years in the classroom, while Mia and Aaliyah contemplate leaving the classroom because of the stress. At the start of her interview, Aaliyah identified as "…a fairly new teacher, probably leaving teaching soon."

Lastly, Brianna and Victoria expressed hopelessness in some of their experiences with the stress of the work demands of teaching. Brianna shared an experience where her principal gave her negative feedback, and she "…felt so unworthy" and stated, "It completely killed my ego, and I was like, you know, why am I here? What was the point of me being here."

Emotional exhaustion

This second leitmotif became evident as participants shared their experiences with burnout, low academic achievement, family engagement, student trauma, and secondary traumatic stress symptoms. Out of the 348 codes, this theme emerged from 34 codes grouped together. The teachers interviewed expressed emotional exhaustion, burnout, and a lack of fulfillment. They mentioned struggling with motivation, difficulty in providing their best efforts, and feeling disconnected from their work. Michael discussed his lack of motivation near the end of the school year "…the last couple weeks of school, I really didn't pull kids anymore, cause I just didn't have the energy to do anything really." Zendaya mentioned the added stress of having to deal with students' trauma and difficult home lives; "… they don't have the words to express

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all that they're going through, so it comes out in their actions and their behavior. So, I believe, of

course, that affects me, that affects my stress." Some teachers also talked about challenges with

unengaged parents and unrealistic expectations from administrators, which added to their

emotional exhaustion. Brianna adamantly explained that most Title 1 families do not participate

in their students' education, "The family engagement is almost not nonexistent. Honestly, if there

needs to be an engagement, I have to reach out to them, and even then, sometimes I won't get a

reply." Despite these difficulties, the teachers expressed love for their students and a desire to

impact their lives positively. Mia stated, "I do love teaching…but I have definitely been thinking

about leaving the profession because even though I get so much positive from it, I feel like it's

beating me down." Asya expressed that she once believed that she would commit to 20-30 years

of teaching "But now that I've been teaching for five years at the urban school… I don't know

how much more I can. You know, I just feel like I'm not the same." However, Asya also shared

that seeing the students who really work hard helps her a lot, "…sometimes it's those kids that

uplift me and allow me to keep going."

The teachers interviewed also found support and motivation from students who excel and

show enthusiasm for learning. However, several teachers also admitted to contemplating leaving

the profession due to the toll it has taken on their emotional well-being, Naomi explained, "I feel

like I have nothing more to give." The teachers emphasized the need for understanding, support,

and a reduction in workload from administrators, as well as recognition for their efforts. They

expressed frustration with the lack of tangible support offered by the school system, such as

counseling services and professional development focused on mental health. Overall, the

teachers' experiences highlight the emotional challenges and need for support in the teaching

profession. Aaliyah, who attended a teacher preparation program in graduate school that

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specialized in urban teaching, stated that she felt unprepared and ill-equipped to deal with the many vicissitudes that occur in Title 1 urban schools.

> She expressed, "I think there's a very fine line between being like an invested teacher that cares for the whole child and is there for them in and out of the classroom and also not letting it affect your home life and your mental health. And I think if you're going to work in a neighborhood like this, I feel like there should be training for that or admin should be helping you navigate that very fine line."

Trauma & Lack of support

The teachers interviewed expressed frustration and symptoms of burnout. Like Aaliyah, they shared that the support and resources provided to manage stress are inadequate. She stated "But I think had I had that training, I would have approached it better. And maybe I wouldn't have fully tapped out my third year." The high turnover rate in schools is attributed to the lack of support and expectations placed on teachers. Teachers openly criticized administrators for not prioritizing the well-being of educators and for not understanding the challenges they face. When asked to share a time when school leaders or district leaders provided support with managing stress and burnout that she felt was helpful, Madison angrily answered "There's nothing. They don't do anything." She talked about how she and fellow teachers received emails about mental health facts and attended mandatory professional development meetings where administrators would talk about the hardships of students and then recommend that teachers take care of themselves but did not offer strategies or tools. Madison also shared that when she and other teachers were already struggling with stress, their workload would seemingly increase "…But wait a minute; in about 20 minutes, you have to attend this next meeting and type up your entire years' worth of lesson plans." Naomi expressed her hurt and anger towards her school

administrators when sharing her experience of having a mental breakdown at work; "who reached out to ask me if I was OK.? None of them." She started to cry while detailing her experience and lack of support,

> "They didn't even know if I was going to come home and commit suicide or hurt myself. Did anybody reach out to say, hey, are you OK?... Would you like the phone number to a crisis line? … there was none of that, there was nothing."

Additionally, teachers asserted that the education system puts excessive pressure and uniform standards on students, which negatively impacts their performance and makes it difficult for teachers to meet the expectations of the district. The lack of support regarding mental health and workload adds to the stress experienced by teachers and affects their ability to teach and support students effectively. Zendaya described her experience with the stress of teaching as "just mental fatigue. I have three children of my own and I'm married and so I feel like when I get home to them I have very little to give because I'm tired and I just need a break."

The teachers highlighted support issues concerning low student achievement, lack of parental involvement, and teacher burnout. The teachers expressed a desire for more support from school and district leaders and parents in addressing these challenges. They emphasized the need for cooperation and open discussion among teachers, administrators, and parents to improve the education system and support students with trauma. Michael explained the emotional conflict of teaching students with trauma who are also severely academically behind,

> "…if I had all the time in the world, I would let them process their trauma and take as much time as they needed in that moment. But I don't want them to miss out on being able to read either."

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The teachers also talked about the emotional toll of working with students who have experienced trauma, as well as feelings of inadequacy and the impact of burnout on their personal lives. Chloe shared her experience of dealing with a student who had experienced trauma after his half-brother was shot and killed. She explained how she tried to support him emotionally "I just felt very overwhelmed. Like I didn't know how to support him." Chloe also discussed the lack of support from school and district leaders in managing stress and burnout. She expressed her disappointment with the education system and believes real change is needed. She stated "schools give us a whole lot of tips and tricks for self-care, but until they actually change the circumstances in which we work, it's not it. It doesn't matter." Another teacher, Alexandria, also discussed her experiences with trauma in students and the lack of training and support for teachers in handling these situations. She suggested that school leaders should prioritize and address teacher burnout and secondary traumatic stress and proposed implementing measures such as dedicated positions or resources for teacher support. She shared "mental health stress on teachers, which is spoken of as a priority when in reality the investment is really not there other than you know, on the surface level." Alexandria emphasized the need for self-care and acknowledged the stress teachers face when dealing with students' traumas.

Teachers discussed how they often feel overwhelmed and unequipped to support students who have experienced trauma or adverse childhood experiences. Chloe, Alexandria, Michael, Asya, Zendaya, and Mia all shared how they struggled to help and support these students, especially because they have no personal experience with the type of trauma the student has gone through. When sharing about her student whose brother was killed, Chloe explained that she felt overwhelmed "…not knowing what to do for him, because that wasn't my experience, I had no experience with having a family member get shot and killed like it." The trauma that students

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bring into the classroom has a significant impact on teachers, often leading to burnout and feelings of defeat like Asya who said, "it even adds up to the feeling of defeat and the feeling of how can I help these kids, you know?" Many of the teachers believed that a holistic approach is necessary, including addressing the trauma within the school environment and the student's family and community. Brianna thinks that many of her students have experienced trauma due to their parents and family and that schools should focus on addressing the mental health of parents first; "We're all just traumatized and we're all just traumatizing each other, so I feel like parents definitely need more help when it comes to mental health." She stressed the importance of providing services and support for parents, as she believes that parental trauma often impacts the children's behavior and well-being. Teachers also reveal that hearing about traumatic stories from their students can lead to compassion fatigue and frustration as they struggle to understand how parents can perpetuate trauma onto their children. Chloe shared that her emotional exhaustion turned to anger towards parents, "I got like compassion fatigue in a sense, I would hear like ****** things happen to kids and not that I didn't feel bad for the kids, but I feel I started having a lot more like frustration and anger towards parents."

Disengagement and Frustration

The fourth theme that emerged from the data showed that the teachers interviewed expressed a lack of family engagement in academics, particularly in upper grades and their frustration with the level of disengagement. They mentioned that parents are unresponsive to communication attempts and are not involved in their children's education. Aaliyah teaches 6th-8th grade and mentioned, "I think I've met three out of my 96 parents." This lack of engagement affects the teachers' morale and ability to provide their students with the best education. The teachers also mentioned the importance of parent involvement in supporting their children's

academic progress. The teachers expressed frustration with the low academic levels of their students, external challenges like student trauma and low family engagement, and a lack of support. They shared that they feel defeated and question their effectiveness as teachers. Naomi shared her frustration with the growing demands on teachers and the growing obstacles in urban communities,

> "As teachers were expected to do 10,000 things to get students ready by the end of the school year, and then we get 10,001 pushbacks 10,001 obstacles that that stop us or hinder us. And the sad thing is, when sometimes that's parents like it's so frustrating. It's like everyone's against you doing your job. But you damn well better do your job."

When discussing experiences with family engagement and student trauma, Aaliyah shared that due to her frustration and emotional exhaustion, she disengaged from work, "It would be emotionally tiring, emotionally exhausting. But now, I don't take it on as much as I used to… I don't make myself available the way I used to." Aaliyah shared that when she taught second grade, the traumas her students experienced overwhelmed her because she was so emotionally involved, "Like I just cared for them too much...like it was just too much." She shared a sense of remorse for her experience with depersonalization at work but retorted, "I don't know if I know how to like care and not be all in. And when I was all in, it was just too taxing."

Madison shared that the school district is disconnected and disengaged from the Title 1 schools because their expectations are unrealistic for the students being served; "They come in maybe twice a year, and they have the audacity to have meetings with us about our data." She stated that district leaders give feedback without seeing the whole picture, "Yet they don't know our students, and they don't know us. And so it can feel very frustrating because they're not taking the time to get to know me or my kids or how they learn."

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Work-Life Balance

The concept of work-life balance was discussed and shared by every teacher interviewed. Teachers expressed feelings of being overwhelmed and stressed due to the demands of their job. Aaliyah talked about having too many lessons and insufficient time to cover everything. Asya, Mia, and Michael also mentioned the challenges of working with students who have special needs and the impact of external factors on student's ability to focus and grow academically. They discuss the difficulty of meeting deadlines and the never-ending list of tasks that need to be completed. Overall, the teachers feel that the expectations placed on them are unrealistic and that more support and understanding are needed. Mia, a special education teacher, shared her experiences juggling motherhood and teaching in an urban school. She discussed her frustrations with low student academic achievement and lack of parental involvement. Mia shared her own feelings of burnout and feeling overwhelmed and contemplating leaving the teaching profession, "It's beating me down, but like I said, I make a conscious decision to be a positive person day in and day out, but I'm tired."

Zendaya shared that her workload makes it difficult to be more active in her children's lives, "I know that there's much more that I could be doing with my kids; the twins are in first grade, which is the grade I teach…but when I get home, I just am tired." Aaliyah mentioned that she struggled with binge eating in her past, and when she started teaching in an urban community, her binge eating got out of control, "last year I got really, really fat towards the end like I gained like 20 to 25lbs… I would go home and just stuff my face and then go to bed." When talking about how her experiences with burnout affected her life outside of work, Aaliyah stated "I would go home, and I would continue to think about the students or the workday and that would really throw off my work life balance." Asya reminisced about how outgoing she

used to be and how she enjoyed hanging with her friends before she became a teacher in an urban community. She shared that now she spends a lot of time at home thinking about work, "Sometimes I'm cooking, sometimes I'm taking a shower, and I'm just processing things, and it's emotionally draining. I come home, and I am completely exhausted." Michael shared that he struggles to keep commitments in his personal life due to his fatigue, "I would come home, and I wouldn't move from the couch… commitments I had made, but I like literally couldn't meet them because I just couldn't get out of the apartment."

Research Question Responses

This study sought to examine the lived experiences of urban schoolteachers in Ward 5 of Washington D.C. working at Title 1 schools as it results to their experiences working with the achievement gap, student trauma, and limited family engagement. The responses to the two central research questions emerge from the data from the semi-structured interviews of ten urban schoolteachers.

Research Question 1

The first central question posed in this study was, "What are the lived experiences of urban schoolteachers working in a low academically performing Tile 1 school in Ward 5 of D.C. who report symptoms of burnout?" The first theme of burnout responds to this question as participants indicated several symptoms of burnout that they experienced, such as "mental fatigue" in Mia, Zendaya, Asya, and Alexandria. Asya shared, "There's been times where I'm just unable to function, you know? I'm unable to give the best of myself. There are days when it's like I literally cannot even find what I need to start teaching." Naomi described her experiences with burnout as "I feel like I have nothing more to give. Like I'm empty." Aaliyah said "…if you're going to work in a neighborhood like this, I feel like there should be training for that" when

talking about the difficulties of maintaining ones' mental health when teaching in a Title 1 urban school. Asya shared that her burnout from working in an urban school has impacted her home life as her husband commented, "you haven't been the same since you've been teaching there."

The theme of disengagement and frustration also responds to this first question as the participants' experiences outline their collective frustration at the lack of family engagement in their urban Title 1 school. Aaliyah mentioned that she's experienced various levels of family engagement. When she taught second grade, the engagement was higher; in fourth grade, the engagement lowered, and now, as she teaches in middle school, "I've met three out of my 96 parents." Naomi expressed her frustration at the lack of parental involvement in her students' education and the various obstacles in Title 1 communities. Madison expressed her frustration at the lack of engagement from district leaders, while Aaliyah also explained that due to the high levels of stress she feels, she voluntarily disengages with her students and her role in an attempt to protect her well-being.

The theme of work-life balance responds to the first research question as participants outlined their struggles maintaining a healthy work-life balance due to the demands of teaching in an urban environment. Zendaya shared that she is often too tired to work with her kids academically at home, stating, "I just am tired." Chloe shared that on difficult days at work, she would cry on the way home, "I would have a horrible day like I would be crying all the way home and think I can't do this anymore." When explaining how her experiences with burnout led to her leaving the teaching profession, Chloe shared, "Like I'm not sleeping as well. I'm not eating as well and I was like, I just need to cut the cord here before I get to that point of being absolutely miserable again."

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Research Question 2

The second central question posed in this study was, "What are the lived experiences of these schoolteachers who have heard traumatic stories from their students and report symptoms of secondary traumatic stress described as feelings of fatigue or illness, cynicism, irritability, reduced productivity, feelings of hopelessness, anger, despair, sadness, feelings of re-experiencing the traumatic event, nightmares, anxiety, avoidance of people or activities, or persistent anger and sadness? The themes of emotional exhaustion, trauma, and lack of support each address this question. The participants all shared their lived experiences with secondary traumatic stress symptoms and the feeling of emotional exhaustion was common amongst them, and feeling as though they were not supported at work when dealing with student trauma and the academic impact that follows.

The theme of emotional exhaustion responds to this question as participants' experiences clearly described some of the symptoms of secondary traumatic stress. Symptoms like reduced productivity were observed in Mia, Michael, Aaliyah, Asya, Chloe, and Madison's experiences. When describing her experience with reduced productivity, she shared, "I didn't like put in the effort to plan or do centers or things like to the ability that I knew I could." Aaliyah said she stopped emotionally investing in her students because "it was too taxing." Chloe also explained that after having many students experience traumatic events, she decided to remove herself emotionally, sharing, "I very much started kind of removing myself from a lot of situations like yeah, I felt like for me it was like you either, get really sad about things or you kind of just laugh or joke about it."

Trauma and lack of support was a theme that also responds to this question as it outlines the lived experiences the participants have with symptoms of secondary traumatic stress as a

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result of exposure to student trauma. Part of this theme addresses the lack of support that every

participant described and discussed as part of their experiences. Naomi cried while expressing

her resentment towards her school administration for their lack of support when she suffered a

mental breakdown at work "there was nothing." Chloe and Asya both shared a sense of

hopelessness in their experiences working with student trauma, stating, "I don't know how to

help them." Asya also shared feelings of defeat, "it even adds up to the feeling of defeat and the

feeling of how can I help these kids, you know?" Brianna expressed feelings of being

"unworthy" in her experiences of trying to support students with trauma while still teaching

effectively. The stress of student trauma and lack of adequate support pushed Aaliyah into

unhealthy and unsafe old behaviors, such as binge eating and an overall decreased emotional

investment in her job. Teachers like Asya, Michael, and Mia shared that they feel they are not

making enough of a difference and have a negative view of their abilities as teachers.

Summary

The theme development process involved using in vivo coding to analyze the interview

transcripts. The analysis led to the identification of five overarching themes: burnout, emotional

exhaustion, trauma and lack of support, disengagement and frustration, and work-life balance.

The teachers interviewed expressed experiences of burnout symptoms, such as feeling

physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted. They also highlighted the impact of burnout on

their personal lives and the challenges they face in meeting the expectations of the education

system. Emotional exhaustion emerged as a significant theme, with teachers discussing their lack

of motivation, difficulty in providing their best efforts and feeling disconnected from their work.

They emphasized the need for support and understanding from administrators, as well as

recognition for their efforts. The teachers also expressed frustration with the lack of support and

resources to manage stress and burnout. They criticized the education system for not prioritizing

teacher well-being and not understanding the challenges they face. The theme of trauma and lack

of support highlighted the emotional toll of working with students who have experienced trauma

and the need for training and support for teachers to handle these situations. The teachers also

discussed the impact of disengagement and frustration caused by low family engagement in

academics. They expressed frustration with parental unresponsiveness and a lack of involvement

in their children's education. This lack of engagement affected teachers' morale and ability to

provide quality education. Overall, the themes identified shed light on the challenges and

emotional toll experienced by teachers and the need for support, understanding, and changes in

the education system.

In summary, the teachers interviewed in this study expressed burnout, disengagement,

and frustration in their experiences working in urban Title 1 schools. They described symptoms

of burnout such as mental fatigue, feeling empty, and being unable to give their best. They also

discussed the lack of support from district leaders and the challenges of maintaining a healthy

work-life balance. The teachers also shared their experiences with secondary traumatic stress due

to hearing traumatic stories from their students. They described symptoms such as reduced

productivity, emotional detachment, and feelings of hopelessness. The theme of trauma and lack

of support emerged, highlighting the impact of student trauma on teachers' well-being and their

perception of their effectiveness as educators.

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Chapter Five: Conclusion

Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore and examine the lived experiences of urban schoolteachers in a Title 1 school in Ward 5 of Washington, D.C. as it relates to their experiences with the low academic achievement, low family engagement, and student adverse childhood experiences. This chapter covers a summary of the study's findings, which include the theme development and responses to the central questions of this study. This chapter includes a theoretical and empirical discussion, the implications of the study, and the delimitations and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and a concise summary of the overall study.

Summary of Findings

This study explored the experiences of urban schoolteachers in low-performing Title 1 schools in Ward 5 of Washington D.C., focusing on burnout. The responses to Research Question 1 revealed the following key themes burnout disengagement and frustration, and work-life balance. The theme of burnout showed how participants reported various symptoms of burnout, such as "mental fatigue," feeling empty, and a sense of being unable to function. Teachers like Mia, Zendaya, Asya, and Alexandria expressed the emotional toll of burnout on their well-being. Asya's experiences even affected her home life, with her husband noting changes in her since she started teaching in an urban school.

The theme of disengagement and frustration emerged as teachers collectively expressed frustration with the lack of family engagement in their urban Title 1 school. Aaliyah highlighted varying levels of family engagement across different grade levels, with increasing frustration at

the obstacles present in Title 1 communities. High stress levels led some teachers, including Aaliyah, to voluntarily disengage with their students and roles to protect their well-being.

In the theme of work-life balance participants outlined the challenges they face in maintaining a healthy work-life balance due to the demands of teaching in an urban environment. Teachers like Zendaya admitted being too tired to engage academically with their own children at home. Chloe shared the emotional toll of difficult days at work, leading to tears on the way home and a decision to leave the teaching profession to preserve her well-being.

The second central question investigated the experiences of schoolteachers exposed to traumatic stories from students and the resulting symptoms of secondary traumatic stress. The responses revealed the following key themes: emotional exhaustion, trauma and lack of support. The theme of emotional exhaustion outlined how participants' experiences aligned with symptoms of secondary traumatic stress, including emotional exhaustion. Reduced productivity was observed in teachers like Mia, Michael, Aaliyah, Asya, Chloe, and Madison, who described struggles with planning and engagement due to the emotional toll of hearing traumatic stories.

The theme of trauma and lack of support highlighted participants' experiences with symptoms of secondary traumatic stress resulting from exposure to student trauma. Teachers expressed a sense of hopelessness, as seen in Naomi's resentment towards school administration for lack of support during a mental breakdown. Chloe and Asya shared feelings of not knowing how to help students who are dealing with trauma, contributing to a sense of defeat. Teachers, including Asya, Michael, and Mia, expressed a negative view of their abilities as educators, feeling that they were not making enough of a difference. Aaliyah's stress from student trauma and lack of support pushed her into unhealthy behaviors and decreased emotional investment in her job.

The responses to both research questions highlight the significant challenges faced by urban schoolteachers, encompassing burnout, disengagement, struggles with work-life balance, emotional exhaustion, exposure to student trauma, and a lack of adequate support. These findings underscore the urgent need for systemic changes and increased support within the education system to address the well-being of educators and enhance their effectiveness in the classroom.

Discussion

The findings of the study will be discussed in this section and examined alongside the theoretical and empirical framework of this study, as outlined in chapter two. Specifically, the discussion will focus on how the study affirmed, negated, or expounded upon previous research and literature. First, the results of the study will be discussed alongside the theoretical framework that was presented in chapter two. Next, the empirical framework presented in chapter two will be discussed in relation to the findings that align with each section discussed previously in chapter two.

Theoretical Discussion

This study utilized Maslach and Jackson's (1981) multidimensional theory of burnout as its theoretical framework to better understand the stress associated with professions that require compassionate service, such as healthcare workers, mental health professionals, and educators. Specifically, this study uses Maslach and Jackson's (1981) multidimensional theory of burnout to examine the stress experienced by K-12 teachers. The conceptual framework is grounded in teachers' experiences in urban areas, secondary traumatic stress, the impact of the academic achievement gap on teacher burnout, and employee turnover.

The study also draws on Figley's (1995) concept of "compassion fatigue," which refers to the secondary stress experienced by mental health professionals due to exposure to traumatic

stories from clients. Figley suggests that individuals with a high capacity for empathy are at greater risk of compassion stress. In this study, the definition of compassion fatigue is applied to teachers who often demonstrate empathy and compassion towards the children they serve, and the term secondary traumatic stress is used when applying this definition. Maslach's burnout theory guides the study and builds upon Joinson's (1992) identification of compassion fatigue in mental health care professionals.

All ten participants shared experiences as teachers through the lens of teacher burnout. Each participant shared real examples of experiencing symptoms of burnout as a direct result of the demands of teaching. All participants shared experiences of emotional exhaustion in relation to burnout and the role and responsibilities of teaching. To participate in this study, potential participants had to complete a screening survey that asked if individuals had experiences with a list of symptoms that were specific to burnout and secondary traumatic stress syndrome. All participants shared experiences of feeling physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted as a result of being a teacher, specifically in a Title 1 school in an urban community.

Maslach and Jackson's (1981) multidimensional theory of burnout compartmentalizes burnout syndrome into three distinct components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1998; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). One of the themes that emerged from the data was emotional exhaustion, as every participant experienced it in relation to work. Aysa shared, "yeah, I am tired. I'm emotionally drained," as she described how burnout from work impacts her life at home. Aaliyah referred to being emotionally invested in her students as "taxing" and "too much." Depersonalization is another component of burnout according to the burnout theory; the findings of this study aligned with this component. "It would be emotionally tiring, emotionally exhausting. But now, I don't take it on as much as I used to…

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I don't make myself available the way I used to," said Aaliyah when expressing how difficult the symptoms of burnout were on her mental health and how she makes an effort not to be emotionally connected to her students or be engaged with work anymore. Naomi described her experiences as "exhausting" and detailed how the stress from teaching in a Title 1 school impacted her first pregnancy; "it was exhausting because around that time, you know, I was pregnant, and so now here I am juggling the stress of, you know, I'm supposed to be in the joys of my first pregnancy." The last component of burnout is reduced personal accomplishment and an example of this can be seen in Aysa's experiences. Asya reported several times throughout her interview that she felt ineffective as a teacher and did not feel qualified or equipped to do the job to the expectations of the district; "I don't feel like I'm a good teacher." Brianna shared a time when she felt a sense of reduced personal accomplishment as a result of what she considered unrealistic expectations from her.

> She said, "It completely killed my ego, and I was like, you know…what was the point of me being here if I'm not good enough? So I ended up calling out the next like 2 days, and I took a mental health day because I just felt so unworthy."

Empirical Discussion

The literature review in chapter two explored seven areas relevant to this study: burnout and burnout theories (discussed in the previous section), teacher turnover, secondary traumatic stress in teachers, childhood trauma and urban schools, low academic achievement, and family engagement. The following sections discuss how this study affirmed and expounded on previous research. The seven sections discussed in chapter two present empirical examples in research that support the theoretical framework of burnout theory; here those sections are discussed in relation to the findings of this study.

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Teacher Turnover

This literature review discussed the connection between burnout in the teaching profession and the likelihood of teachers leaving their jobs voluntarily. Goodman and Boss (2002) argue that the phase model of burnout, which measures the experience of burnout itself, doesn't account for the stressors leading to burnout. Goodman and Boss suggest that addressing these stressors could prevent or mitigate burnout. In their study of 935 participants, Goodman and Boss found that teachers who left their positions voluntarily had higher depersonalization scores, indicating a lack of empathy and a cynical attitude. Goodman and Boss propose that those who voluntarily leave make a conscious choice to cope with stressors by leaving the organization. This implies that addressing job-related stressors could be crucial in reducing burnout and turnover among teachers. Participants' experiences and responses affirmed this research, with many sharing additional stressors from work and home that attributed to their burnout symptoms.

The literature underscores the concerning decline in teacher retention rates in the United States and globally, emphasizing the significance of understanding how burnout contributes to teacher turnover. Teacher attrition is a global issue with far-reaching implications for students, families, and education systems worldwide. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics predicts a need for 69 million new teachers by 2030, attributing this demand to high teacher attrition rates. Notably, nearly half of new teachers are estimated to leave the profession within five years (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Asya shared that she is not sure how much longer she will continue to teach due to the stress, while Chloe and Madison shared that they quit teaching this year for similar reasons. Aaliyah and Mia shared that they are considering making this school year their

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last. On the other hand, veteran teachers like Naomi and Alexandria have more than 20 years

invested and despite the challenges they share that reaching retirement is their motivation.

The literature on teacher turnover also delved into the three components of burnout

theory and how they are interconnected and can influence each other, contributing to burnout in

various professions. The literature emphasized that studying these components closely in specific

occupations, such as teaching, allows for the identification of occupation-specific predictors. For

teachers, examples of these predictors include self-efficacy, students' inattention, and a

principal's leadership style. The literature highlighted the positive correlation between teachers'

confidence in managing job-specific tasks (self-efficacy) and a lower likelihood of experiencing

high or increasing burnout rates (Gillet et al., 2022). Many of the participants affirmed this as

they each recalled feelings of reduced personal accomplishment because they felt unprepared or

ill-equipped to serve the needs of Title 1 students.

Secondary Traumatic Stress and Teachers

The concept of secondary traumatic stress (STS) is described as an inherent risk in

professions focused on alleviating emotional suffering in clients. Figley (1995) notes that

individuals in such professions, including mental health, medicine, emergency services, and law

enforcement, may absorb information about and even the suffering itself from their clients.

While initially studied in these fields, research has expanded to include education, recognizing

that teachers, despite not explicitly dealing with trauma, increasingly find themselves on the

front lines of addressing child abuse. The findings affirm and expand on this assertion in the

responses of all ten participants who shared their lived experiences of hearing traumatic stories

from their students frequently and having to navigate the students' trauma responses in the

classroom while trying to close the achievement gap. When asked about her first experience

hearing a traumatic story from or about a student, Brianna answered, "There are all so many. I can't really keep up, and I can't even remember the first one; there's so many of them."

The relationship between teachers and traumatized students poses challenges when teachers feel a sense of inadequacy in their inability to rescue or alleviate the emotional pain of their students. This perceived powerlessness is exacerbated by a lack of supportive measures and practices for teachers and students (Rankin, 2022). When describing her experiences with hearing about a student's traumatic history, Asya shared that when she hears it, she often thinks, "I don't have the energy or the strength to deal with this today... And yeah, sometimes I feel like, as an adult, I don't have what it takes to support these kids." Asya also shared that her students' traumas stay on her mind when she is home and expressed, "…it's emotionally draining." Chloe mentioned how she used to cry in her car on the way home, stating, "It got to a point where I was a miserable person."

Childhood Trauma and Urban Schools

The prevalence of childhood trauma in the United States has underscored the importance for teachers to establish safe and therapeutic environments in classrooms, particularly in communities marked by violence and crime. Urban areas, predominantly inhabited by people of color, often bear the brunt of higher rates of violence and crime. Despite a national decline in violent crime, disadvantaged and segregated communities continue to face disproportionately high rates of violent crime (Sackett, 2016). In her 26 years of teaching, Naomi has worked in several Title 1 schools and shared that the prevalence of violence in some communities was so high that identification was needed to enter or exit the neighborhood. She shared, "The whole neighborhood was on a lockdown for the whole summer like you couldn't get in and out of that neighborhood without showing ID…because there was so much drugs and violence."

Children in these communities are more likely to experience or witness traumatic events, with approximately 83% of children in urban areas reporting exposure to one or more traumatic events (Collins et al., 2010). The impact is compounded by intergenerational trauma and systemic oppression, particularly affecting marginalized populations (Goodman, 2014; Ormiston et al., 2022). Consequently, the effects of exposure are more severe and complex, leading children to manifest corresponding behaviors in the classroom and requiring teachers to address and soothe these challenges. Chloe talked about a kindergarten student she taught whose older brother was shot and killed, and her student would be disengaged in class, refuse to speak, and sometimes would roll around on the classroom floor. She believed that these behaviors were a result of experiencing trauma at a young age. She shared that she did not know how to help him and felt "so overwhelmed."

Low Academic Performance in Urban Schools

Walsh and Theodorakakis (2017) argue that while childhood poverty has adverse effects, effective interventions and support within schools and communities can successfully mitigate the academic impact and contribute to closing the achievement gap. Many participants discussed the need for inventions and instructional strategies that address the barriers and obstacles of students with adverse experiences and circumstances. However, factors such as poverty, parental educational attainment, and community violence still play crucial roles in perpetuating the achievement gap.

Addressing these factors to achieve educational equity is a complex challenge. The literature indicates that students in urban communities characterized by poverty, violence, and limited socioeconomic resources are more likely to perform lower academically than their counterparts in white suburban areas. The findings affirmed that students in urban communities

characterized by violence and poverty tend to perform lower, as seen in Aaliyah's experience where she shared how low her students perform in math, "Ohh my God, this year it's horrendous. Like my seventh-grade babies, they're all performing on a first, second, third, tops fourth-grade level." Naomi recalled one of her experiences with low academic achievement in a Title 1 school, "I was teaching 4th grade, and so I think the hard thing is watching kids get all the way up to my grade level and can't read and can't do basic first-grade math."

The realistic goal of teachers in urban schools, where socioeconomic issues and traumatized children are prevalent, is questioned, and the findings affirm this, whereas many participants questioned the districts' expectation of them to close the achievement gap. Research suggests that trauma disrupts the learning process, with children who have experienced abuse or neglect showing impaired perceptual reasoning and reading ability. Brianna shared that she has always worked in Title 1 schools inside Ward 5 and other wards throughout D.C. and states her experiences with low achievement in students have been identical. She mentioned, "I always meet them below proficiency. So it's pretty much identical. I don't think I've ever been in a school where the kids were on (grade) level."

Family Engagement: Why Does it Matter?

The correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement is widely acknowledged in academia. Xiong et al. (2021) conducted a study exploring this relationship, discovering that parents of underperforming students were less likely to be involved in their education compared to the parents of high-performing students, who demonstrated higher levels of engagement in the educational process. The study emphasizes the significant role of family engagement in contributing to the academic success of students. The responses from participants affirmed the literature here because all participants expressed the severity of the lack of family

engagement in education and its impact on students' attendance and achievement, as well as teachers' self-efficacy. Brianna emphasized, "The family engagement is almost nonexistent." When describing the impact it has had on her experience as a teacher, Brianna said, "it's exponentially negative. I feel as though if parents were more involved in their kid's education we can get a lot further with just better reading scores, writing scores, math scores like the whole." "It's not being reinforced at home in any way" Madison shared in response to her experience with the lack of families getting involved in their student's education."

The literature showed that when parents actively participate in their children's education, it serves as a model of ambition and motivation, encouraging students to pursue their educational goals and meet the expectations set by their families. This involvement not only influences the students but also has a positive impact on the level of engagement teachers have with these students compared to those without involved parents. Mia teaches a special education self-contained classroom with less than ten students and shares that even in special needs classrooms, family engagement is still low. She shares, "I probably have two families that are actually engaged in their children's academic success," however, the students of those two families do well and make consistent progress. She also shared that she reaches out to families once a week with different opportunities to engage in their student's education but despite her efforts, it has not yielded progress. She expressed, "I feel like a lot of the families have given up or they don't. They didn't care from the beginning and it's sad to say that's just what I see."

Implications

The significance and implications of this study are addressed in this section. This section outlines the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the findings of this study and

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includes recommendations for educational leaders at the school and district levels. Practical

recommendations are also discussed for teacher preparation programs in relation to the findings.

Theoretical

The exploration and examination of this study were guided by the theoretical framework

of the multidimensional theory of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) to examine the stress

experienced by K-12 teachers, with a particular emphasis on teachers working in urban areas.

This study also drew from Figley's (1995) concept of compassion fatigue to examine and

understand secondary traumatic stress in teachers. Three themes that emerged from the data in

this study, burnout, emotional exhaustion, and work-life balance, specifically aligned with the

components of the multidimensional theory of burnout. The participants recounted experiences

with burnout symptoms such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a sense of reduced

personal accomplishment. Each participant shared specific events when they experienced these

three components of burnout according to the multidimensional theory of burnout. Some

participants discussed the impact emotional exhaustion has had on their professional

performance and personal lives. Some mentioned how the various barriers and obstacles in their

Title 1 urban school, coupled with the lack of support, have led to depersonalization towards

work and their students. Others dwelled on how these factors triggered a sense of reduced

personal accomplishment that tears away at their confidence and belief in their abilities.

Colleges of education, teacher preparation programs, especially those geared towards

urban education and professional development seminars for teachers should create hands on

training that provide teachers with trauma-informed practices. These trainings should be

mandatory for all teachers and require frequent discussion in Title 1 urban schools. District

leaders should create surveys for teachers assessing their mental health and then use the data to

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inform policymaking. School leaders should also look at that data and use it to inform their

management style, family outreach efforts, and practical and effective mental health options for

staff.

Empirical

The themes in the findings of this study align with the themes found in the literature of

previous research. The participants affirmed that teacher burnout directly correlates with high

teacher turnover rates. All participants discussed how low family engagement negatively impacts

student outcomes and teachers' sense of self-efficacy. Recurring statements about student trauma

and the prevalence of it in Title 1 urban schools as well as statements concerning its strong

impact on teachers' mental health and motivation. The collective experiences of the participants

affirmed and expanded upon the literature concerning these specific experiences in the context of

Title 1 urban schools. In this sense, this study shed light on teacher burnout and secondary

traumatic stress as it relates specifically to Title 1 urban schools.

Practical

As an educator working in a Title 1 school in an urban community, the undertaking of

this study interested the researcher because it allowed the examination and exploration of the

phenomenon or experience the researcher and colleagues were also experiencing. It allowed for a

better understanding of the outlook of teachers dealing with burnout. The participants and

literature affirmed the researcher's presuppositions. A practical implication of this study would

be to allow teachers the opportunity to speak collectively and collaboratively with district leaders

by having district leaders work with a cluster of schools experiencing similar barriers. This

cluster of similar schools would use survey data collected from teachers on their concerns and

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expectations coupled with student academic data to inform school level changes to better support teachers, students, and families.

Delimitations and Limitations

This hermeneutic phenomenological study was conducted to address a gap in research about teacher burnout. This study examined the lived experiences of urban schoolteachers who report symptoms of burnout and secondary traumatic stress in relation to working with at-risk students, battling the growing achievement gap, and limited family engagement. To limit the boundaries of the study, one delimitation was only including teachers who had experience working at a Title 1 school in Washington D.C., in the past five years. This delimitation was used to ensure that the experiences of teachers in urban communities were applicable to the current culture and climate of Washington D.C. Washington D.C's crime rate has significantly increased within the last five years, which greatly impacts the youth in the city. This study only included participants who have experience working with students with traumatic histories or adverse childhood experiences. Another delimitation in this study was that only participants who reported experiencing the following burnout symptoms: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment were included.

This study also only included participants who reported experiencing the following secondary traumatic stress symptoms due to work: feelings of fatigue or illness, cynicism, irritability, reduced productivity, feelings of hopelessness, anger, despair, sadness, feelings of re-experiencing the traumatic event, nightmares, anxiety, avoidance of people or activities, or persistent anger and sadness. The last delimitation was the decision to conduct every interview virtually using Microsoft Teams instead of in person. This decision was made to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions because Teams enabled video recording and live transcription,

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which allowed me to review the video and audio as I reread the transcription of each interview to fix any errors.

These decisions were made to ensure that I was able to examine the phenomenon I observed as an educator accurately. I needed other teachers working in similar settings under similar circumstances to explore the phenomenon clearly and examine my experiences and presuppositions to see if the collective experiences of participants affirmed, negated, or expounded my presuppositions.

This study used a sample size of only ten, which may be seen as a limitation, whereas Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend studying 3-10 participants. One limitation of this study is that it is limited to one geographical area, Ward 5 of Washington, D.C. Each participant had experience teaching at a Title 1 school in the past five years. Another limitation is that while this study discusses the prevalence of student trauma within urban schools, it does not quantify the percentage of students in this urban area with adverse childhood experiences.

Recommendations for Future Research

Considering that this hermeneutic investigation only explored and examined the experiences of ten urban schoolteachers at Title 1 schools in Ward 5 of Washington D.C, investigating the experiences of a larger sample size across the district at multiple schools and comparing it with an investigation of experiences of teachers at non-title 1 schools in suburban communities. This comparison would allow us to examine the impact of working with student trauma in an urban context on teachers compared to teacher burnout without the factors of an urban community.

Another recommendation for further research would be to include the Maslach Burnout Inventory for educators (MBI-ES) further to examine the symptoms of burnout from a clinical

perspective using a mixed-method research design. Another mixed-method research recommendation would be utilizing the Adverse Childhood Experiences Assessment (ACE) to examine and possibly quantify the percentage of students with trauma and explore how different percentages of traumatized student populations impact teacher burnout.

Summary

This research study delved into the challenges faced by urban schoolteachers, particularly in low-performing Title 1 schools. The study included ten teachers and uncovered key themes related to burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Burnout themes include emotional exhaustion, disengagement, frustration, and challenges in work-life balance, which affirmed previous research in the literature. Teachers expressed symptoms such as mental fatigue and a sense of ineffectiveness in dealing with urban school demands. Secondary traumatic stress themes revolve around emotional exhaustion due to exposure to traumatic student stories and a sense of hopelessness stemming from a lack of support.

Two significant takeaways include the urgent need for systemic changes and increased support in education and the affirmed connection between teacher burnout and turnover rates. Recommendations for future research involve comparing experiences across districts, adopting clinical measures for burnout assessment, and quantifying the impact of student trauma on teacher well-being. Overall, the study underscores the importance of addressing teacher well-being to enhance educational effectiveness and outcomes. At the beginning of this study, the research was a fourth-grade teacher observing and experiencing this phenomenon and at the conclusion of this study, and left teaching because she did not want to reach the stage in burnout like Naomi where she felt that "I have nothing left to give."

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"I HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO GIVE" A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

APPENDIX A: LIBERTY UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 21, 2023

Melissa Grazette
Richard Stratton

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-326 "I have nothing left to give" A Phenomenological Study of Secondary Traumatic Stress and Burnout in Urban School Teachers Related to The Socioeconomic Issues, Childhood Trauma, and Low Academic Performance of Urban Students.

Dear Melissa Grazette, Richard Stratton,

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).

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

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, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

"I HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO GIVE" A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

APPENDIX B: ELECTRONIC CORRESPONDENCE TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Potential Participant,

As a graduate student in the Community Care and Counseling department at the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research to examine the phenomenon of urban teachers in Ward 5 of Washington D.C.'s experiences with secondary traumatic stress and burnout. This phenomenological study aims to describe the experiences of secondary traumatic stress and work-related burnout of teachers working at a low-income and low-performing school in Washington DC's Ward 5. I am writing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years or older, PreK-12 full-time educators who have worked at a Title 1 school in Ward 5, Washington D.C., in the last five years. Participants must have direct experiences with burnout and secondary traumatic stress symptoms as a result of working with traumatized students. Participants will be asked to have an audio and video-recorded, in-person or virtual interview via Zoom and then review the developed themes. It should take approximately 30-60 minutes to complete the interview and 15-25 minutes to review the developed themes. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

To participate, please click here: https://forms.office.com/r/ZYhY82yqyy to complete the screening survey. If you meet my participant criteria, I will contact you to schedule an interview.

A consent document will be given or emailed to you when your interview is scheduled before it is conducted. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Melissa Grazette
Community Care & Counseling Doctoral Candidate at Liberty University

"I HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO GIVE" A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: "I have nothing left to give" A Phenomenological Study of Secondary Traumatic Stress and Burnout in Urban School Teachers Related to The Socioeconomic Issues, Childhood Trauma, and Low Academic Performance of Urban Students.
Principal Investigator: Melissa Grazette, Doctoral candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years or older, PreK-12 full-time educator who have worked at a Title 1 school in Ward 5, Washington D.C., in the last five years. Participants must have direct experiences with burnout and secondary traumatic stress symptoms as a result of working with traumatized students. 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 this phenomenological study is to describe teachers' experiences working with students in urban, low-income, and low-performing schools in Ward 5 of Washington, D.C. This phenomenological study aims to describe the experiences of secondary traumatic stress and work-related burnout of teachers working at a local elementary and middle school campus in Washington D.C.'s Ward 5.

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. Have an in-person or virtual interview with me. The interview will be audio and video-recorded and will take approximately 30-60 minutes.
2. Have a follow-up interview/meeting to review the themes developed from your interview. This interview/meeting will not be recorded and will take approximately 15-25 minutes.

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 raising awareness of the mental health impact of teachers working with traumatized student bodies that could potentially open discussion concerning the growing teacher attrition rates.

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. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms/codes.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

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

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Melissa Grazette. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ████████ or ████████████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Richard Stratton, 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 IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email is irb@liberty.edu.

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

Your Consent

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

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

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

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

"I HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO GIVE" A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHICS

Profile of Participants

Pseudonyms	Gender	Years of experience	Job title
Asya	Female	4	Special education teacher
Naomi	Female	26	Math & science teacher
Aaliyah	Female	3	Math & science teacher
Chloe	Female	12	General education teacher
Michael	Male	5	Special education teacher
Alexandria	Female	20+	Elective teacher (library)
Mia	Female	7	Special education self-contained classroom teacher
Brianna	Female	10	Reading and history teacher
Zendaya	Female	3-5	General education teacher
Madison	Female	5-10	Math & science teacher

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APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT'S SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer: Melissa Elizabeth Grazette

Interviewee: Brianna

Date: October 25, 2023, 9:40 PM

The first question is, if I did not know anything about you, what would you want me to know about you? And this could be personal or professional.

Umm, I'm of Trinidadian descent, born and raised. And on the side, I like to do DJ.

What or who inspired your decision to become an educator?

No one, I was thrown into it.

How so?

Ohm, a friend of mine. She was a teacher and she told me to interview and I got the job and ever since then, I've been a teacher.

What or who inspired your decision to work in an urban school?

Uh, ███, a friend of mine. ███ Yeah, I've only worked in urban schools, yeah.

What are your experiences with low academic achievement in urban schools?

The experiences are pretty similar. Pretty much most of most of them. If not all. Most of them are. I always meet them below proficiency. So it's pretty much identical. I don't think I've ever been in a school where the kids were on level. No.

Can you describe your experiences with family engagement in academics in urban communities?

The family engagement is almost not nonexistent. Honestly, UM, if there needs to be an engagement, I have to reach out to them, and even then, sometimes I won't get a reply. I won't

get a response, so I have to keep calling, but it's never OK. I won't say never, but it's almost never where they will reach out to me.

Can you describe the impact that this kind of academic family engagement or lack thereof has had on your experience as a teacher?

Well, it's it's it's, it's exponentially negative, exponentially negative. I feel as though parents were more involved in their kids' education that we can get a lot further with just better reading scores, writing scores, math scores like the whole, the whole situation. It will be much better because I feel like when they leave me they just go home. They do their thing and then they come back to me the next day. It's just like a pattern.

So can you tell me about the first time you heard a traumatic story from a student or their family? And can you describe your experience?

My traumatic. There are all part so many. I can't really keep up and I can't even remember the first one, so there's so many of them. Umm, I think one of them so I explain it or just say ohh. I think one, I think a lot of the trauma comes from from a lot of my kids is the my mom's not in my life or my dad is not in my life or like that's traumatic in itself for them because they have nobody to really turn to. So it's always like, oh, I gotta go to grandma's house or there's nobody to help me with my homework. Or there's nobody feeding me at home. So it's it's a lot of poverty. It has to do with a lot of like poverty or like missing family members or just guardians taking care of them. So not not a very close-knit family bond going on with a lot of my students.

Can you describe your experience the first time you heard of traumatic story from a student and what that was like for you?

Umm for me from for me though in my experience I come from a background where my friends dealt with that so it was it didn't really shock me like like it was shocked someone. It wasn't a

culture shock for me. I was like, oh, I'm used to hearing this. You know? I just. It was. It was a

shock for me in the case where I was like, oh, I didn't know this was happening in America too.

How often do you hear traumatic stories from or about your students?

Ohh, I'll say about weekly. Yeah umm.

How does your students, adverse childhood experiences or their trauma affect your

experience as a teacher?

Hoping to go a lot of times I have to kind of coddle and I have to. I have also, I always have to

make sure I'm thinking of like their trauma. So like I I have to like approach different students in

different ways. So I have to pick and choose who I do what with. Cause I know there's some

triggers with some trial and there's some that don't really deal with certain triggers, so I have to

be picky with with how I teach and what comes out of my mouth a lot of times with certain kids

because I just never. Well, I now I know. I know how to deal with different kids, so yeah.

Can you please describe your experience with symptoms of emotional exhaustion as a

teacher?

Ooh. I mean, this year after year, after it's a annual thing, it's a it's an annual thing like I had one.

I had one the other day. You know where I felt overwhelmed and I'm and I'm stressed with life.

And then I have to come back to work and pretend like nothing's really going on. And you know,

especially, you know, at my school where, you know, teachers are dropping left and right. So you

know, I feel like I'm always on edge, and even if somebody drops the ball, I have to keep the ball

going because my.

Can you describe your experience with symptoms of depersonalization as a teacher?

Yeah, I feel like, right, I feel like and I feel like I purposely do that just so I won't have to take

that home with me.

So I so I purposely separate the job and much separate the job and my personal life on purpose. That way I can come up with some type of Peace of Mind cause I can't take my job with me at home because then I'll have no peace. So I purposely isolate my friends, isolate myself from coworkers, and so on and so on. And I just kind of do my job when I leave.

Can you describe your experience with feelings of reduced personal accomplishment at work?

Yes. UM, I feel like especially last year I dealt with that a lot where I felt like no matter what I did, it wasn't enough. So like admin and so on, we'll just keep asking for more and more and more and more and even when, even though in the kids are growing, it's still not enough because their achievement gap is so wide. So they're just like, OK, So what else can we do? And what else can we do? What else can we do? What do you like legit doing? The best that you possibly can and you're getting the kids to wear so their capacity, it's still never enough. So that's very frustrating because you're like, OK, so why am I here? Like if I'm not doing enough, then who's gonna do it? But I know the parents ain't gonna do it. So it's just never enough, it is never enough.

Can you tell me about a time when you felt your experiences with burnout impacted your life and impacted your responsibilities as a teacher?

Umm, I remember one day specifically where I was in a meeting with one of my vice principals or something like that and she was basically just telling me that she doesn't feel as I was doing my job to the, to the best of my capability or something like that, even though she's never in the building. But I see that there is a here not there and you know, like it killed it killed my ego like my egg. It completely killed my ego and I was like, you know, why am I just? That was the point of me being here. If I'm not good enough, so I ended up calling out the next like 2 days and I

took a mental health day because I was just. I just felt so. I just felt so unworthy. You know, I felt like a immense feeling of unworthiness and actually that same year I left that job because I was just like, why am I here? If you guys wanna appreciate me right. And I came in the middle of the year with these kids on this level and they're you. You're seeing that they're growing and it's still not enough, right? So I so it affected my job because I simply did not want to be there. I did not want to be there.

Can you tell me what time you felt your experience with burnout impacted your life outside of work?

Yes, I feel like it does it right now. I feel like a lot of times I don't wanna go anywhere. I wanna stay in the house and I wanna lay down because I mean, like the moment I step outside, I'm going to wish I was in house. I have to remember Mondays coming and I feel like a lot of teachers deal with Monday anxiety. Where we're just we're Saturday and we're enjoying ourselves and we're thinking, Oh my gosh, Mondays coming up. My Lesson plan? This kid, that kid. What am I gonna do if this happens in the? Like, we automatically start thinking about Monday, and it's only Friday evening, so.

Can you tell me about a time when school leaders or district leaders provided support with managing stress or burnout that you felt helpful?

That I felt was helpful? Oh, that's the key because all they ever really do is oh you know, we do have a free counseling service or we're gonna do a PD. We're going to do a PD on managing and taking care of your mental health, but they never they never decrease your workload. They don't give you no bonuses for the hard work you do right when the kids are fighting. They're not coming to the rooms to help you support them from separating any type of drama or anything like that. They're not taking out the fires or anything, it just gives you a nice little pound, the

back saying great job and take care of your mental health. Don't forget to do that, but that's about it, but not helpful. Nothing. Nothing you know be helpful. For me, money and they never bring that up.

So what else can you tell me about your experiences with student trauma, teacher burnout, and secondary traumatic stress that you feel may advance this study?

I don't know. I just feel like it's like the blind leading the blind. I feel like hurt people hurt people and we're all just going around in circles. Like, how do we how do you, how do we, you know help I think I think the biggest thing is that you should look into is like how do we like assist parents right? Because I feel like it's like a domino effect. Like parents, their feelings, they're they have their own trauma and then it goes to the kids and then the kids bring it into the building and it's just back to back to back to. We're all just traumatized and we're all just traumatizing each other, so I feel like parents definitely need more help when it comes to mental health. Like I don't know if there needs to be services for them or something like that. Something more open for them where they can be meetings for them or something, because it's definitely just generational curses just back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. So just more information on what can we do to, you know, assist parents because obviously they're going through their own traumatic. Experiences and they're giving it to their children and their children are taking it out on us because we're the closest thing to them. So yeah.

"I HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO GIVE" A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

APPENDIX F: PARTICPANT SCREENING SURVEY

A Phenomenology Study Screening Survey

This survey is meant to screen for applicable participants in a phenomenological study examining urban teachers' experiences with burnout and secondary traumatic stress in Washington D.C.

1. Have you taught at a low-income, low-performing school (Title 1) in Washington D.C in the past ten years?

Yes

No

2. Do you have any experience working with students with trauma?

Yes

No

3. Have you ever experienced the following burnout symptoms because of work?
   - Emotional exhaustion (a state of feeling emotionally worn-out and drained as a result of accumulated stress from your personal or work lives)
   - Reduced personal accomplishment (tendency to negatively evaluate the worth of one's work, feeling insufficient concerning the ability to perform one's job, and/or a generalized poor professional self-esteem)
   - Depersonalization (a distant or indifferent attitude towards work)

Yes

No

4. Have you ever experienced the following secondary traumatic stress symptoms because of work?
   - Fatigue or illness, cynicism, irritability, reduced productivity, feelings of hopelessness, anger, despair, sadness, feelings of re-experiencing the event (exposure to a student's traumatic story), nightmares, anxiety, avoidance of people or activities, or persistent anger and sadness

5. If you answered YES to questions 1-4 AND are interested in participating in this study, please type your name, email address, and phone number to schedule an interview. If you answered NO to any question OR are not interested in participating, please write N.A. in the box below.