THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHER EXHAUSTION ON ATTRITION INVOLVING PRIMARY

TEACHERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by

Carson Kleinknecht

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The purpose of this single-case qualitative case study was to discover the perceived influence teacher exhaustion may have on educator attrition for primary school teachers in one urban school district in central South Carolina. Abraham Maslow's theory of human motivation was utilized as the theoretical framework for this study as it explains how an inability to meet the needs of teachers can result in teacher exhaustion and an increase in attrition. Maslow's theory assisted in understanding how the stress and exhaustion that teachers experience can influence teacher retention in primary schools. This qualitative case study utilized a central research question: In what ways do teachers who have left the profession perceive exhaustion and its possible influence on primary teacher attrition? Data for this study was gathered using individual interviews, focus groups, and letter writing. Open coding, the patterns method, and a thematic analysis were used to analyze and synthesize the data. Utilizing a thematic analysis, the four themes that emerged were (1) insufficient support, (2) feelings of inadequacy, (3) inability to meet basic needs, and (4) toxic work environment. The findings provide information on the exhaustion teachers experience and emphasize the need to implement measures to reduce exhaustion and burnout.

Keywords: attrition, retention, exhaustion, burnout

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, who supported me from the very beginning. Mom and Dad, you raised me to chase my dreams and believe in myself. My success is a testament to the love and dedication you have always shown. Barrett, you have always remained by my side and encouraged me never to give up. Through this experience, you wiped my tears, were a listening ear, and pushed me to keep going. I could not have accomplished this without you. Oakley and McCall, my sweet girls, I pray you both will one day realize your essential role in my completing this journey.

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Naples School District (NSD)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Teacher exhaustion has continuously influenced teacher retention (Papay et al., 2017; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). Historically, exhaustion has contributed to teacher burnout and affected teacher capabilities to fulfill their workplaces' demands (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). The inability to complete these workplace requests can cause teachers to experience an increase in stress, ultimately impacting their decisions to remain in the field of education (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Schaack et al., 2022). This chapter discusses the historical influence of teacher burnout and the social and theoretical contexts that have shaped the impact that burnout has on teacher attrition. Abraham Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation will aid in the research on how teacher exhaustion can cause burnout and its influence on teacher attrition. The purpose of this study is revealed, as well as the significance of the study. The research questions are supplied and used to create the framework of this study.

Background

Burnout occurs when consistent stressors cause psychological distress (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). In education, teachers are becoming exhausted and need support to complete their workplace demands. Coupled with the inability to cope, teachers who experience exhaustion and burnout choose to leave their classrooms and seek employment elsewhere (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Historically, teacher attrition has caused significant problems in education and schools' abilities to retain their teachers, and when teachers suffer from exhaustion and burnout, there can be detrimental impacts on teacher retention and student academic achievement (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021; Van den Borre et

al., 2021). Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation can provide more insight into possible influences on teacher burnout and exhaustion, which can impact teacher retention and education systems. This theory offers knowledge regarding the importance of basic needs and how ignoring these needs can prove damaging.

Historical Context

Teacher attrition has been an issue for schools for decades (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). Throughout the years, various policies and salary increases have been utilized to convince teachers to remain in their roles, however, the problem of teacher attrition remains formidable across this nation (Kelly, 2004; Van den Borre et al., 2021). While attrition has proven difficult amongst all experience levels, the ability to retain teachers in their first five years of teaching is the most challenging (Kelly, 2004; Van den Borre et al., 2021).

While the topic of teacher attrition has grown increasingly popular, it is an issue that has been noted throughout history (Kelly, 2004). In the 1990s, the United States experienced attrition rates as high as 14% (Ingersoll, 2001). During this time, teacher salaries were the most influential in teachers' decisions to remain in education (Kelly, 2004; Shen, 1997). In addition to the monetary aspects of teaching, attrition rates were significantly influenced by school environments and class sizes (Horng, 2009; Kelly, 2004; Shen, 1997). The most influential factors of teacher retention during this time were the school climate and teachers' abilities to feel respected, needed, and appreciated (Shen, 1997). When schools could reduce class sizes, teacher retention was positively influenced (Horng, 2009; Kelly, 2004). While the significance of salaries, class sizes, and the school environment on teacher attrition has been confirmed, poverty's influence on teacher attrition has been controversial (Heyns, 1988; Shen, 1997).

Teacher attrition and schools' abilities to retain their teachers have become increasingly

problematic (Ryan et al., 2017). Though teacher attrition has continuously been shown to be triggered by exhaustion, monetary disagreements, and burnout, the influence these factors have on teacher retainment has grown exponentially (Meredith et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2017; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). While educators with various experience levels may choose to depart from the profession, teacher attrition occurs the most frequently during one's first five years in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ingersoll, 2001; Ryan et al., 2017). In the first five years in education, upwards of 40-50% of teachers choose to leave their careers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ingersoll, 2001).

When educators choose to depart from a school, it is most commonly caused by the desire to pursue a teaching position at another school or to leave the field of education entirely (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Although districts and schools have continuously sought to discover how to retain their teachers, attrition rates have continued to rise (Meredith et al., 2020). While teacher attrition has been demonstrated to be one of the most problematic issues in education, supplying teachers with the proper resources and support can help to alleviate the exhaustion and burnout they experience (Benoliel & Barth, 2017; Iida et al., 2020; Maslow, 1943). By studying the history of teacher attrition and its causes, districts can create and execute improvement plans to meet their teachers' needs, resulting in higher teacher retention rates (Benoliel & Barth, 2017).

Social Context

When teachers become exhausted and develop burnout, they are incapable of fulfilling all that is demanded of them (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Schaack et al., 2022). While many reasons can induce teacher burnout, lacking emotional and resource support is among the highest causes (Brunsting et al., 2014; Meredith et al., 2020). Teacher exhaustion has continued to increase as teachers now face increased school violence, student behavioral challenges, and teacher

shortages, resulting in increased class sizes (Jensen & Solheim, 2020; McCullough et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2021). To thwart teacher exhaustion and its influence on teacher attrition, teachers must feel supported and believe their needs matter (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Maslow, 1943). When districts and schools fail to meet the needs of their teachers, the deleterious effects can be noted far beyond the constraints of the classroom (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020).

Although teacher exhaustion adversely affects teacher turnover and schools' abilities to retain their teachers, one of the most consequential impacts is its direct correlation to student academic achievement (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). An inability to meet the needs of teachers can create an unfavorable workplace environment for educators and an undesirable school environment for students. When teachers experience burnout, they become psychologically and physically incapable of providing satisfactory instructional experiences for their students (Atik & Özer, 2020; Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

While teacher exhaustion can cause problems for schools, its detrimental impacts on student academic achievement are also apparent (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Wang, 2022). When teachers suffer from exhaustion and burnout, teacher and student relationships are strained and unhealthy (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021). While students are commonly placed with a teacher for one academic year, their involvement with a teacher experiencing burnout can affect student achievement for several years (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Teacher burnout can hinder teachers' abilities to form positive relationships with their students, result in students developing a disinterest in their academics, and impede their interest in creating relationships with their future teachers (Atik & Özer, 2020; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021).

Teacher exhaustion and attrition are national issues; if the proper actions are not taken, it could result in long-term consequences (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). Districts and schools must prioritize the needs of their teachers and seek ways to improve teacher motivation and retention. Studying teacher attrition and how it can be prevented is essential to retaining teachers and preventing adverse social and academic effects on students (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020).

Theoretical Context

Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation and the hierarchy of needs supply the theoretical framework that aids in understanding teacher attrition and how it can be prevented. The theory of human motivation (1943) provides a model for understanding exhaustion, determining how it develops, and exploring how it can negatively impact attrition. The tiers in Maslow's theory that must be met before reaching the top tier are physiological, safety, belongingness, and esteem. Once these four tiers have been achieved and needs have been met, the need for self-actualization can be attained. At this level, one can address improvements that need to be made to aid in personal growth. In alignment with Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation, teachers must have each of their primary needs met for them to perform optimally in the workplace and classroom (Atik & Özer, 2020; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021).

By meeting teachers' needs and ensuring they feel safe and supported, districts and schools can provide the guidance teachers need to fulfill their workplace demands (Herman et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Zee & Koomen, 2016). As educators become more comfortable and confident, they can meet their own needs as well as their students' needs. This newfound confidence can increase teachers' inclinations and abilities to tailor their instruction to meet the needs of their students, improve academic success, establish better relationships with

their students and peers, and supply them with the necessary tools to cope with undesirable situations (See & Morris, 2021; Sincer et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

While Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation has been utilized to improve the understanding of human needs, Peter Blau (1986) developed the social exchange theory to explain the need for humans to have their work and efforts recognized to perform optimally. When analyzing teacher exhaustion, the social exchange theory (1986) shows that for teachers to complete their workplace demands, they must feel supported and acknowledged for their efforts (Chen et al., 2022). The correlation between a lack of resource support and teacher exhaustion is a significant predictor of teachers' decisions to leave the field of education (Chen et al., 2022; Rajendran et al., 2020). When districts cannot meet the needs of their teachers and provide them with the support necessary, teacher attrition rates rise, and damaging effects become visible (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Maslow, 1943; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

When teachers' needs are unmet, they cannot deliver optimal instruction to their students (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). The ineptitude to meet the needs of teachers has resulted in a national predicament where schools are experiencing heightened rates of attrition (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Van den Borre et al., 2021). Copious research has been dedicated to teacher burnout, attrition, and its adverse effects on student achievement (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). This study will supply further research on teacher exhaustion and how it can be prevented by examining teachers who have chosen to leave their school district due to exhaustion and burnout.

Problem Statement

The problem is that primary teachers' exhaustion hinders schools' abilities to retain teachers, leading to heightened teacher attrition rates. For nearly 40 years, teacher burnout caused by exhaustion has proven problematic in education (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). Exhaustion may cause burnout and can be experienced in many occupations for various reasons. With educators, it is most commonly caused by an inability to cope (Meredith et al., 2020). When teachers experience burnout, the exhaustion they experience overwhelms them, and they lack the resources necessary to overcome the exhaustion their workplace demands have caused. This exhaustion can cause educators to feel emotionally exhausted and disappointed in their abilities to perform as classroom teachers (Schaack et al., 2022). As more teachers suffer from burnout, their decision to exit the classroom can affect students' academic achievement (Madigan & Kim, 2021).

While teacher exhaustion is an issue that schools face, this topic has been studied and discussed for decades (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). Historically, it has been found that the school environment and experiences have been among the most significant predictors of teacher burnout (Meredith et al., 2020). Increased workload and uncertainty in completing workplace demands have increased the exhaustion teachers experience. Currently, a gap exists regarding how teacher attrition can be prevented. Past research has yet to make a significant difference in the rates of teacher burnout and its effect on attrition. By researching exhaustion, burnout, teacher attrition, and its causes, stakeholders in education can adequately prevent it from transpiring in the future (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). This case study examines teacher exhaustion's influence on primary teachers in one urban school district and pursues ways to prevent it from occurring. This study also explores strategies

for future implementation and offers suggestions to improve support and resources to avoid exhaustion from being experienced in the future.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover the perceived influence teacher exhaustion may have on educator attrition for primary school teachers in one urban school district in central South Carolina. Teacher exhaustion was generally defined as experiencing extreme stress due to the inability to meet one's mental or physical needs (Maslach et al., 2001). This case study examined primary teachers who had experienced exhaustion in one urban school district. This study sought to describe teacher experiences that led to their decision to leave teaching and how it could have been prevented. Throughout this study, the experiences of teacher burnout leading to attrition for primary teachers will be revealed. In addition to determining teacher burnout's effect on attrition, this study was also able to posit strategies to prevent it from occurring. Abraham Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation was utilized as the theoretical framework for this study. This theory assisted in understanding how the exhaustion teachers experience can affect schools' abilities to retain their teachers.

Significance of the Study

Teacher attrition has become increasingly problematic for Naples School District (NSD), an urban school district that has recently experienced increased teacher attrition. Teacher attrition is commonly caused by teacher burnout and teachers' desire to seek employment elsewhere (Ji & Yue, 2020; Rajendran et al., 2020). Using Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation, this qualitative single-case study sought to describe teacher experiences that led to the decision to leave the profession and inquire their thoughts on how it could have been prevented. This study

examined teachers who have chosen to leave NSD due to exhaustion and burnout and gathered knowledge regarding how it could have been prevented.

Theoretical Significance

The theoretical significance of this study aligns with Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation. This alignment was established using Maslow's findings that for humans to reach self-actualization and optimal levels of motivation, they must have their basic needs met (Maslow, 1943). When teachers experience exhaustion or burnout, they are incapable of completing workplace demands and creating positive classroom environments for their students (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Toropova et al., 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Utilizing Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation improved understanding of why teachers suffer from burnout and choose to leave the profession. This theoretical framework also provided an opportunity to contribute to previous research on teacher attrition and how it can be prevented.

Empirical Significance

The empirical significance of this study enhances existing literature in case study research regarding teacher attrition. This case study offered opportunities for teachers who have left the profession to speak regarding their experiences and how their leaving could have been prevented. Substantial research has been directed toward teacher burnout and attrition and its impact on academic achievement (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). A gap in qualitative literature existed regarding how teacher attrition can be prevented. This case study allowed teachers to share their experiences and provide feedback regarding how their leaving the classroom could have been averted.

Practical Significance

The practical significance of this study encourages districts and schools to implement changes and create workplace environments that respect the needs of their teachers. For teacher attrition to be prevented, teachers must feel supported, and schools must recognize their needs (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Maslow, 1943; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). This study allowed participants to use their voices to speak about their experiences in the classroom and gather information on the factors that led to their departure. While past employers of NSD were utilized for this study, the data collected regarding teacher attrition can be impactful far beyond the confines of their school district. Prioritizing research on the prevention of teacher attrition allows districts and schools to recognize their teachers' needs and avoid the detrimental impacts that attrition can have on their schools and student achievement (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020).

Research Questions

Research questions allow researchers to focus concisely on participants' experiences and narrow the focus to the specific problem being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study utilized questioning to discover the effect that teacher exhaustion has on educator attrition for primary school teachers in one urban school district in central South Carolina. Throughout this study, a qualitative case single-case study format allowed teachers to speak about their experiences and how burnout may have influenced their decisions to leave NSD. Providing an improved understanding of teacher experiences with exhaustion and how it affects teacher attrition was discovered through the utilization of research questions.

Central Research Question

In what ways do teachers who have left the profession perceive exhaustion and its possible influence on primary teacher attrition?

Sub-Question One

How do teachers who have left teaching perceive that their physiological needs were a factor in leaving the profession?

Sub-Question Two

How do teachers who have left teaching perceive that their safety needs were a factor in leaving the profession?

Sub-Question Three

How do teachers who have left teaching perceive that their belonging needs were a factor in leaving the profession?

Sub-Question Four

How do teachers who have left teaching perceive that their esteem needs were a factor in leaving the profession?

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Definitions

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1. *Exhaustion* – Experiencing extreme feelings of stress as a result of the inability to meet one's mental or physical needs, which include physiological, safety, belonging, and esteem (Maslach et al., 2001)

2. *Self-efficacy* - A person's confidence in themselves and their abilities (Daniilidou et al., 2020)

3. *Teacher attrition* – Educators who have chosen to leave their school employer (Taylor et al., 2023)

4. *Teacher burnout* – An inability to cope with stress caused by workplace demands (Meredith et al., 2020)

5. *Teacher retention* – The rate of teachers who choose to remain employed at a school (Larkin et al., 2022)

6. *Teacher turnover* – When teachers choose to leave their school or the teaching profession as a result of an inability to have their needs met (DeMatthews et al., 2022)

Summary

Throughout history, districts and schools have witnessed a progressive increase in teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2001; Kelly, 2004; Van den Borre et al., 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). When humans are shown respect and support, they are more apt to exude the motivation necessary to complete their workplace demands (Maslow, 1943; See & Morris, 2021). This study offered opportunities for participants to share their experiences with teacher burnout and why they ultimately chose to leave their teaching position at NSD. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover the perceived influence teacher exhaustion may have on educator attrition for primary school teachers in one urban school district in central South Carolina. By utilizing participants who have experienced exhaustion and have personal ties with teacher attrition, teachers were offered an opportunity to contribute to the existing knowledge of attrition and how it can be prevented.

Teacher exhaustion and attrition are national issues that, if not addressed, can have lasting effects on academic achievement (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). This study plays a significant role in assessing the causes of teacher exhaustion and how it can prevent teacher attrition from occurring. By addressing the perceived causes of burnout and employing strategies to address the needs of teachers, the adverse impacts

teacher attrition can have on districts, schools, and students can be diminished (Benoliel & Barth, 2017; Jensen & Solheim, 2020; O'Brennan et al., 2017).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A review of the literature was conducted to explore teacher exhaustion and burnout. This review analyzes teacher burnout and its influence on teacher attrition. This chapter offers a review of the research on this topic. The first section discusses Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation will be reviewed. Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation will be analyzed using the hierarchy of needs, which consists of five levels of needs. This review will review each of the five needs: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Following the theoretical framework will be a review of recent literature on teacher exhaustion, its influence on students, and teacher attrition. Lastly, the literature surrounding teacher exhaustion, its impact on students, and teacher attrition will be discussed. Finally, a gap in the literature is identified regarding how rates of teacher exhaustion can be reduced and prevented from occurring.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was based on Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation and the hierarchy of needs. This theory assists in understanding teacher burnout, its causes, and how its effects can prove detrimental to students' achievement and schools' abilities to retain their teachers. Maslow's theory comprises five levels of needs and states that for one need to be met, others must be effectively obtained first. Self-actualization can only occur after physiological, safety, belongingness, and esteem needs are met, and motivation will be exuded. When stress levels are heightened, motivation will, in turn, begin to deteriorate (Atik & Özer, 2020; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021).

Abraham Maslow developed the hierarchy of needs based on his theory of human

motivation (1943). The hierarchy of needs framework begins with physiological needs. Physiological needs include having hunger, thirst, and sleep to be successfully satisfied before moving to the next need level. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs has been continuously referred to in education as a way to explain how the physiological needs of teachers and students must be met to create positive and flourishing learning environments that are conducive to learning (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Toropova et al., 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021; Zee & Koomen, 2016).

The safety tier follows the physiological tier in Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Once the physiological level has been achieved, humans must feel safe and comfortable. If humans feel threatened or fearful, this will hinder their ability to approach the next tier. Teachers' physiological needs may be met in education, but in some schools, teachers do not always feel safe in their work environment (Bas & Tabancali, 2020; O'Brennan et al., 2017; Toropova et al., 2021). Unfortunately, when teachers feel unsafe or are ill-equipped to handle dangerous situations with students, they cannot fulfill their role as educators and burnout rates will increase. The inability to feel safe in the workplace environment can cause additional issues at home, causing an increase in exhaustion and effecting the ability to sleep. By referring to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory, schools will find evidence that many teachers' requirement for safety is not being fulfilled, leading to the unfulfillment of their belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization needs (Bas & Tabancali, 2020; O'Brennan et al., 2017; Toropova et al., 2021).

The third and middle tier of the hierarchy of needs (1943) is belongingness and love. Without their physiological and safety needs satisfied, teachers will be incapable of achieving their need for belongingness and love. When referencing teachers and the burnout they

experience, a lack of belongingness and love can negatively impact the school environment, leadership, parents and guardians, and the well-being of their students (Oberle et al., 2020; Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). Teachers must feel that they are needed in the field of education, have positive relationships in the workplace, and experience encouraging and timely feedback from their peers and administration before they will be capable of reaching the next tier (Benoliel & Barth, 2017; Jensen & Solheim, 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

Once humans have met their physiological, safety, and belongingness needs, they will reach the level of esteem (Maslow, 1943). This fourth tier of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs refers to the respect, confidence, and recognition one experiences, and in education, this need relates to self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, teacher burnout, and student success in the classroom go hand in hand. Self-efficacy is people's confidence in themselves (Herman et al., 2018; Zee & Koomen, 2016), and if teachers lack confidence in their teaching abilities, they will be incapable of fulfilling their need for self-esteem. Maslow's (1943) esteem tier is an essential component of establishing a positive work environment and a teacher's ability to provide their students with an education that will prepare them for the future (Herman et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Zee & Koomen, 2016).

The self-efficacy teachers have in themselves is an essential and crucial component of a teacher's ability to provide a solid education to their students (Herman et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Zee & Koomen, 2016). While in their classroom, self-efficacy can predict and influence how teachers form positive and nurturing relationships with their students. When teachers demonstrate high self-efficacy, they have improved mental health, are happier in their workplace environment, and experience less stress, exhaustion, and burnout. The teacher's self-

efficacy can also impact students' achievement levels, motivation to learn, willingness to participate, and self-efficacy (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020).

Maslow's (1943) final level on his hierarchy of needs is self-actualization. At this level, one chooses to better themselves and take the necessary steps to grow and flourish. Self-actualization is reached when one feels that their basic needs have been satisfied, and this level makes one feel motivated and fuels the desire to perform at their highest potential. In regards to teachers, when self-actualization is reached, teachers are motivated and driven to be the teacher their students need to succeed in their academic efficacy and their life beyond the constraints of the classroom (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Papay et al., 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020).

Related Literature

Teacher exhaustion is a national issue that has grown increasingly challenging (Papay et al., 2017; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). While teacher exhaustion has increased, schools' ability to retain their teachers has become more complex. This literature review aims to synthesize research on exhaustion and its influence on primary teacher attrition. This review was completed to develop a clearer understanding of the research conducted on teacher exhaustion, how it is caused, and how it affects teacher attrition. Literature related to the history of teacher exhaustion, how it is caused, its impact on academic success, and improvement strategies will be analyzed in this section.

Teacher Exhaustion

For nearly 40 years, teacher exhaustion has been problematic in education (Papay et al., 2017; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). Teacher exhaustion is generally defined as experiencing

extreme stress due to the inability to meet one's mental or physical needs (Maslach et al., 2001).

When teachers experience exhaustion, the burnout they experience overwhelms them, and they

often lack the resources and support necessary to overcome the stress caused by their workplace

demands. This burnout can cause educators to feel emotionally exhausted and disappointed in

their abilities to execute their obligations as classroom teachers (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Schaack

et al., 2022).

Teachers who experience exhaustion can become unhappy with their performance in the

classroom and are not equipped with the proper resources to overcome their exhaustion (Herman

et al., 2018; Ozoemena et al., 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). As teacher exhaustion rates

increase, schools also notice a surge in teacher attrition rates and their abilities to retain teachers

(Kelly, 2004; Van den Borre et al., 2021). Schools observe that teacher burnout rates are steadily

increasing, and teacher retention is becoming more complex. As teachers experience more

burnout symptoms, schools witness a negative impact on academic achievement and the lasting

influence that teacher attrition can have on their schools (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan &

Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020).

While teacher burnout is an issue that schools face, this topic has been studied and

discussed for decades (Papay et al., 2017; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). Historically, the

leading causes of teacher burnout were triggered by circumstances teachers were placed in, their

experiences in the classroom, and their school environments (Brunsting et al., 2014; Maslach &

Leiter, 1999; Meredith et al., 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Role conflicts, ambiguity, and

work demands have also caused an increase in teacher exhaustion and burnout. Such factors

could indicate that as teachers experience new work demands, they may feel pressure to choose

between one request and another due to the perception of a preconceived lack of accomplishment

(Brunsting et al., 2014; Maslach & Leiter, 1999; Meredith et al., 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). While ample research has been dedicated to teacher exhaustion, the majority has been conducted through the utilization of quantitative design constructs and fails to explore how the inability to meet the basic needs of educators can lead to teacher exhaustion (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Meredith et al., 2020; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021).

Teacher Exhaustion in Primary Teachers

While exhaustion and burnout resulting in attrition are problematic in many professions, reports of exhaustion in education have drastically increased among teachers (Ji & Yue, 2020; Meredith et al., 2020; Rajendran et al., 2020). Teacher exhaustion can be noticed throughout all grade levels and positions in the school setting, but reasons for exhaustion can differ depending on the students' stages of development that teachers are responsible for (McCullough et al., 2022; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). While all students possess needs (Maslow, 1943), their needs and how they must be met are age-dependent (Chu & Gong, 2023; McCullough et al., 2022). Amongst those students who possess higher intensities of needs are primary school students.

Many students in primary grades are arriving at school for the first time. Many of these students have not experienced an educationally based setting and arrive at school possessing needs that have yet to be met before arrival (McCullough et al., 2022; Petrovic et al., 2022). Regarding primary-aged students, it has been confirmed that over 25% of primary students begin elementary school possessing behavioral complications (Granger et al., 2021; McCullough et al., 2022). Because of this factor, primary teachers are tasked with observing and documenting concerns they have regarding their students' behaviors and academic performance for the first time. Initiating this process can be taunting, and teachers are tasked with raising their concerns

and adapting their classrooms to meet the various needs of their students (McCullough et al., 2022; See & Morris, 2021).

Primary teachers are responsible for initiating, acknowledging, and raising concerns about the preliminary findings regarding the behavioral and academic apprehensions they notice in their students (Chu & Gong, 2023; Granger et al., 2021; McCullough et al., 2022). The weight of these workplace demands can take a toll on primary teachers' mental health and their ability to meet the diverse needs of their students. While the role of raising their concerns is crucial to the future academic and behavioral success of their students, schools are failing to supply their primary teachers with the proper resources, support, and coping strategies necessary to complete their job successfully while continuing to make their own needs a priority as well (Chu & Gong, 2023; McCullough et al., 2022).

The inability to supply primary teachers with the support they need to meet the needs of their students can lead to higher rates of burnout, exhaustion, absenteeism, and withdrawal (Chu & Gong, 2023; Ji & Yue, 2020; Kim & Burić, 2020; Meredith et al., 2020; Rajendran et al., 2020). Current research shows that teachers lack the training and resources necessary to manage their students' needs, behaviors, and classroom disruptions correlated with their students' behaviors (Chu & Gong, 2023; McCullough et al., 2022). Although teacher exhaustion and attrition are prevalent in primary teachers, much of the current research explores burnout and exhaustion caused by teacher-student interactions and is studied through the use of observations and surveys (Chu & Gong, 2023; Granger et al., 2021; McCullough et al., 2022). For school districts and schools to adequately address teacher exhaustion and attrition, there is a need for research using qualitative methods that will allow data to be collected through the exploration of

teachers' personal experiences and develop an improved understanding of how their experiences with teacher exhaustion can be amended.

Teacher Exhaustion in Exceptional Needs Teachers

While policy changes have increased over time, the occupational demands asked of teachers have remained problematic (Glickman & Tamashiro, 1982; Papay et al., 2017; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). Exceptional needs teachers in primary grades have also experienced increased occupational demands and have found it challenging to manage their growing demands and all that is requested of them (Brunsting et al., 2014; Hester et al., 2020; Park & Shin, 2020). Special needs teachers who teach exceptional needs students are more likely to suffer from burnout than teachers who teach students without unique needs and requirements (Hester et al., 2020; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). The burnout that special needs teachers experience can be attributed to behavioral issues in the classroom, the demands of accountability policies, and the personal problems they face outside of the school setting (Brunsting et al., 2014; Hester et al., 2020; Park & Shin, 2020).

Depending on their students' needs, special education teachers face many challenges. Special needs teachers working with students with emotional disorders are increasingly more prone to experience burnout and exhaustion (Hester et al., 2020; Park & Shin, 2020). These teachers typically report an increase in exhaustion and a disinterest in socializing with others but an increase in personal achievements (Brunsting et al., 2022). The classroom dynamics and workplace demands can lead to higher rates of teacher exhaustion and, in turn, an increase in attrition involving exceptional needs teachers (Brunsting et al., 2014; Park & Shin, 2020).

While behavior issues and policies can cause exhaustion in special needs teachers, these teachers must also complete additional demands that general education teachers do not (Park &

Shin, 2020; Sun et al., 2019). Special needs teachers must document and submit comprehensive

paperwork, schedule meetings with individual education plan members, and effectively

implement education plans as critical components for educational success among students

(Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Park & Shin, 2020; Sun et al., 2019). These additional demands of

special needs teachers are associated with schools' abilities to retain teachers and heightened

attrition rates. While current literature provides research on the significance of teacher

exhaustion in exceptional needs teachers and its influence on attrition, research fails to suggest

interventions to prevent teacher exhaustion in special needs teachers.

Self-Efficacy and Teacher Exhaustion

Self-efficacy, teacher exhaustion, and student success are critical components of

education (Herman et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Self-efficacy

is people's confidence in themselves and immensely influences one's capability to accomplish

their responsibilities. Regarding teachers, self-efficacy is a driving factor in their ability to

provide their students with quality education successfully. Self-efficacy is essential in the

classroom and can impact teachers' relationships with their students. Teachers exhibiting higher

self-efficacy have proven to experience more positive mental health, an increase in their ability

to complete work-related tasks, show less anxiety, and experience lower rates of burnout

(Herman et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Zee & Koomen, 2016). For students, their

teacher's self-efficacy can also impact their achievement levels, motivation to learn, and self-

efficacy.

Self-efficacy is essential to a teacher's ability to provide meaningful instruction for their

students (Herman et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Zee & Koomen, 2016). While several

factors cause teacher burnout, a lack of self-efficacy can provide significant insight into the

reported burnout levels and impact teachers with various experience levels. Regarding self-efficacy, it has been discovered that first- and fifth-year teachers had higher self-efficacy rates than veteran teachers (Glickman & Tamashiro, 1982). During one study, it was found that as teachers gained more experience in the classroom, their self-efficacy, in turn, decreased. When interviewed, teachers leaving the profession reported high-stress levels and personality changes and scored lower in self-efficacy, ego, and problem-solving skills (Glickman & Tamashiro, 1982).

While some studies found that more experience is related to lower self-efficacy (Glickman & Tamashiro, 1982), recent studies have found that this is not always true (Schunk, 2021; Toropova et al., 2021). Recent studies found that more experienced teachers with more professional development exuded higher self-efficacy rates than novice teachers (Schunk, 2021; Toropova et al., 2021). These recent studies conclude that teachers with lower self-efficacy tend to evade more time-consuming lessons and lack patience with their students. Contrary to lower self-efficacy, teachers with high self-efficacy are more present for their students, value their students' work, and have positive and welcoming classrooms (Schunk, 2021; Toropova et al., 2021).

Several factors impact teachers' self-efficacy and their ability to complete their role as an educator (Herman et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Teachers must feel confident in teaching curriculum content and create a positive classroom environment (Jensen & Solheim, 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Self-efficacy is directly correlated to job satisfaction, and when teachers possess higher rates of self-efficacy, they will also experience higher rates of job satisfaction (Beymer et al., 2023; Jentsch et al., 2023). When teachers feel comfortable and knowledgeable regarding how to complete occupational demands, they gain

confidence in their ability to provide a positive classroom environment that meets the needs of their students.

Teachers who possess high self-efficacy and confidence can exhibit a heightened ability to provide differentiated instruction, increased academic achievement, improved relationships with students and colleagues, and the capability to adapt and cope with unpredictable circumstances (See & Morris, 2021; Sincer et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Significant research has concentrated on how self-efficacy can predict how satisfied teachers are in their occupations and educator performance. While this research is compelling, a gap in the literature exists concerning how teachers can be supported and how their basic needs can influence their self-efficacy and experiences with teacher exhaustion.

Causes of Teacher Exhaustion

While self-efficacy plays an essential role in the prevention of exhaustion, many other factors influence the exhaustion and burnout experienced among today's primary teachers (Herman et al., 2018; Ji & Yue, 2020; Rajendran et al., 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Studies show that the most significant cases were caused by increased occupational demands, school environment, and intensification of emotional exhaustion (Ji & Yue, 2020; Rajendran et al., 2020). In addition to work demands, external requests can also cause an increase in burnout. It has been found that elementary school teachers reported having more classroom management and stress issues than secondary teachers (Rajendran et al., 2020). Although teachers in lower grades experience problems with higher stress and misbehavior, the two groups' emotional exhaustion is similar. An inability to supply teachers with the appropriate resources to manage their work demands can negatively impact schools' and students' academic achievement (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021).

Occupational Demands

Throughout history, burnout in all occupations has become increasingly prevalent. When someone experiences burnout, they exhibit mental and emotional exhaustion, withdrawal from others, and feel incapable of making a significant impact (Ji & Yue, 2020; Meredith et al., 2020; Rajendran et al., 2020). When a person experiences burnout, they struggle with mental clarity and lack motivation. Although the symptoms of burnout can be noted in most occupations, there are occupations whose work demands more; therefore, burnout is more common, and among these occupations that report high burnout rates are those in education (Papay et al., 2017; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021).

In recent years, cases of teacher burnout have steadily increased (Papay et al., 2017; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). With a surge in teacher burnout, it has become increasingly difficult to contain the adverse impacts, and unfortunately, students and their academic success have also suffered (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021). While teachers suffer from burnout symptoms, their emotional toll on students is evident and apparent (Arens & Morin, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). Throughout the years, research has verified teacher burnout's negative impact on academic success (Atik & Özer, 2020; Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021).

With policies and requirements constantly changing, occupational demands for teachers have become unbearable for many educators to withstand (Ji & Yue, 2020; Meredith et al., 2020; Rajendran et al., 2020). While occupational demands continue to increase, teachers are experiencing decreased support from their schools and need more training to handle classroom misbehavior (Jensen & Solheim, 2020; Pas et al., 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). Teachers must be adequately trained and supported in behavior management, which will, in turn, decrease

the causes of teacher burnout (O'Brennan et al., 2017). When teachers are inadequately prepared

to handle abnormal behavior, there will continue to be an increase in burnout rates among

teachers (Bottiani et al., 2019; Rajendran et al., 2020).

Occupational demands include increased workload, large class sizes, mandatory

professional development, and a lack of time to complete tasks (Jensen & Solheim, 2020; See &

Morris, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). When teachers suffer from teacher burnout, they are

overwhelmed and unable to complete daily tasks correctly and efficiently (Baka, 2015; Toropova

et al., 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). These additional demands lead to issues that have

proven to hinder teachers from accomplishing occupational demands and negatively impact the

academic achievement of their students. When teachers are unhappy with their positions,

students can recognize and duplicate their teachers' undesirable behaviors (Atik & Özer, 2020).

As teachers experience burnout, their students will, in turn, distance themselves from

their teachers, peers, and school (Atik & Özer, 2020). This behavior can negatively influence

their current and forthcoming academic accomplishments in school and interfere with their

experiences in the classroom (Atik & Özer, 2020; Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim,

2021). Although there has been commendable research on how occupational demands can lead to

teacher exhaustion and reduced academic achievement, a gap exists in the literature. Research

fails to address which occupational demands are the most influential in causing teacher

exhaustion and how workplace demands can be reduced or adjusted to prevent exhaustion and

attrition from occurring.

School Environment

Teachers must strategically create a classroom environment that allows for high levels of

engagement and a positive outlook on learning (Waxman et al., 2021). A positive classroom

atmosphere should provide instruction on what students need to prosper and grow academically. This learning environment should encourage students to achieve academic goals through positive peer collaborative opportunities and experiences (Jensen & Solheim, 2020; Waxman et al., 2021). While positive and constructive learning experiences are necessary for academic success, teachers find this additional occupational demand challenging to manage and fulfill. Therefore, their attempts to satisfy this demand result in more cases of burnout, making their ability to create a safe and prosperous atmosphere more challenging (Tao et al., 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021).

While various factors hinder a teacher's ability to create a positive classroom, the teacher-to-student ratio has proven to be a factor that produces a substantial obstruction (Falch et al., 2017; Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). Despite existing research showing the impact of decreased class sizes and additional teachers on reducing teacher burnout (Falch et al., 2017), schools find it difficult to provide additional support for their teachers (Jensen & Solheim, 2020). Unfortunately, class sizes continue to increase, and teachers find it more challenging to develop appropriate classroom environments conducive to learning (Jensen & Solheim, 2020). With more teachers experiencing burnout and leaving the teaching profession, the ability to retain teachers is becoming increasingly problematic. As teachers leave the classroom, schools face teacher shortages and cannot fill teacher vacancies. The inability to fulfill these positions results in higher class sizes and, therefore, higher cases of teacher burnout (Falch et al., 2017; Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021).

Establishing positive school environments is essential to reducing teacher attrition and retaining teachers (Iancu et al., 2018; Waxman et al., 2021). While establishing prosperous school environments is necessary for ideal learning, schools' ability to provide this type of

environment can be difficult. As reports of school violence continuously rise, schools find that

providing a safe school environment for their teachers and students has become increasingly

complicated (Ingersoll, 2001; Yang et al., 2021). Regarding burnout, the highest cases are among

teachers who experience increased violence and unsafe working conditions in their schools

(Ribeiro et al., 2022). As rates of school violence rise, teachers become frightened and

uncomfortable, and schools cannot meet their staff's safety needs (Maslow, 1943; Yang et al.,

2021).

There is a strong correlation between teachers' school environments and their ability to

complete their assigned workload (Farmer, 2020; Toropova et al., 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et

al., 2021). The constant changes and inconsistencies in the educational field have frustrated and

overwhelmed teachers. As teachers become stressed and overwhelmed, it can become more

challenging to create a positive classroom atmosphere that provides collaborative opportunities

for their students (Jensen & Solheim, 2020; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021; Waxman et al.,

2021). As teachers experience burnout, their willingness to provide engaging and collaborative

opportunities for their students diminishes, and, unfortunately, this avoidance can create more

stress and emotional exhaustion in teachers. This negative cycle and ignorance of creating

positive school environments must be broken (Farmer, 2020; Madigan & Kim, 2021).

An inability to break this cycle of adverse and unfavorable workplace environments for

teachers can harm the education system and students' future successes (Farmer, 2020; Madigan

& Kim, 2021). According to recent research, student behavior and school environments are two

of the largest forecasters of teacher burnout (Farmer, 2020). A failure to establish safe school

environments will lead to higher rates of teacher exhaustion and attrition (Farmer, 2020). Though

research has proven the significant influence that school environments can have on teacher

exhaustion, there is a gap in the literature regarding how meeting educators' basic needs can prevent exhaustion and how schools can improve the retention of teachers through interventions and support.

Emotional Exhaustion

Teachers feel consumed by occupational demands and their inability to meet their students' needs (Toropova et al., 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). Teacher burnout will continuously rise when an increased workload and lack of support are coupled with emotional exhaustion and student misbehavior (Fang et al., 2023; Rajendran et al., 2020). Teachers are asked to complete copious amounts of paperwork (Sun et al., 2019) and must navigate misbehavior in their classrooms but are not given the time or support necessary to accomplish it (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). Unfortunately, schools fail to meet their teachers' emotional needs, leading to emotional exhaustion among their teachers (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Rajendran et al., 2020; Schaack et al., 2022).

While paperwork, time constraints, and student behavior are all correlated to increased emotional exhaustion, these factors are a minute portion of the emotional exhaustion reported by teachers (Fang et al., 2023; Rajendran et al., 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020; Sun et al., 2019). Amongst all the workplace demands teachers combat daily are the requests to cater to their classrooms' diverse needs (Salgado et al., 2022). Today's schools are noticing a drastic increase in cultural diversity and the need to diversify instruction to meet the needs of their students. Unfortunately, many teachers are unequipped with the proper resources to provide a culturally appropriate education for their students (Jensen & Solheim, 2020; Pas et al., 2012; Salgado et al., 2022; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). The lack of support from their schools to cater to the diverse population of their students can cause additional strain and emotional exhaustion in teachers.

Over time, the inability to meet teachers' emotional needs will increase teacher exhaustion, burnout, and turnover (Fang et al., 2023; Schaack et al., 2022). Teachers begin to feel emotionally exhausted, and this experience will directly impact their students and academic achievement (Arens & Morin, 2016). When teachers are emotionally exhausted, they cannot form positive relationships with their students, impacting students' ability to complete their schoolwork as needed. Eventually, the inability to meet their students' needs can prevent them from forming trusting relationships and performing their academic tasks successfully (Arens & Morin, 2016; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). With the majority of research exploring emotional exhaustion being qualitative and collecting data through questionnaires, more research should explore emotional exhaustion through qualitative methods to allow for individual interviews and focus group opportunities.

School Leadership

Although occupational demands and the school environment can negatively influence the exhaustion that teachers experience (Jensen & Solheim, 2020; See & Morris, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020; Waxman et al., 2021), school leadership can be impactful in both decreasing or increasing teacher exhaustion as well (Ghanbari & Majooni, 2022). Several factors can cause teacher exhaustion, but school leadership is among the most significant. School leadership practices that lack support, communication, and empathy can cause teachers to suffer from amplified exhaustion and can ultimately lead to their pronouncement to depart from their schools or the classroom altogether (DeMatthews et al., 2022; Ergün & Coşkun, 2023; Ghanbari & Majooni, 2022; Scallon et al., 2023).

School leaders are essential in ensuring that schools perform optimally and successfully (DeMatthews et al., 2022). While several factors influence teacher exhaustion, leading to

attrition, leadership support is among the highest predictors (DeMatthews et al., 2022). When district and school leaders fail to support their teachers and supply them with the essential resources, rates of teacher exhaustion begin to increase (Ghanbari & Majooni, 2022). There is an association between the support and feedback provided by leadership, the amount of exhaustion teachers experience, and the attrition that schools report (DeMatthews et al., 2022; Van den Borre et al., 2021).

While teachers seek supportive leaders, they also require approachable leaders who establish positive lines of communication (Player et al., 2017; Scallon et al., 2023; Van den Borre et al., 2021). Rates of teacher exhaustion are likely to increase when principals and school leaders fail to establish a clear vision for their school and opportunities for communication. Educators require leaders to be open to suggestions and supply their teachers with essential information pertinent to their school environment (Player et al., 2017; Scallon et al., 2023). When teachers experience working for school leaders that do not possess positive communication skills, they are more likely to perceive their leaders as weak and incapable of providing the support necessary to effectively lead their schools successfully (Scallon et al., 2023; Van den Borre et al., 2021). There is a need for research on how school leadership can influence teachers' abilities to meet their needs. It is essential to support current research regarding the influence of school leadership on teacher exhaustion and how it can impact teachers' decisions to leave their classrooms.

Teacher Attrition

Educators are essential to preparing students for life beyond the constraints of the classroom (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Upwards 45% of teachers choose to exit their teaching careers in their first five years in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ingersoll, 2001). A

variety of factors can cause the exhaustion that teachers experience. Exhaustion can be caused by workplace demands, an inability to provide safe working conditions, and a lack of resources (Ji & Yue, 2020; Rajendran et al., 2020). As teachers become overwhelmed in the teaching profession, they find themselves unequipped to cope with all that is mandated (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Meredith et al., 2020). Unfortunately, an inability to meet the needs of teachers and supply them with the support they need has proven detrimental to schools' abilities to retain their teachers (Iancu et al., 2018; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Waxman et al., 2021). As educators experience heightened exhaustion rates, schools experience elevated attrition rates and their abilities to retain their teachers.

Causes of Attrition

While teacher attrition correlates to the exhaustion that teachers experience, several additional factors can lead to teachers' decisions to leave the teaching profession or relocate to a different school (Dos Santos, 2021; Ji & Yue, 2020; Rajendran et al., 2020). When districts and schools cannot equip their teachers with the resources and support they desire and require, teachers cannot fulfill their roles as educators (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Meredith et al., 2020). As schools fail to meet these needs, teachers question their career path and may seek employment elsewhere.

The nationwide teacher shortage can be attributed to several underlying factors (Dos Santos, 2021; Ji & Yue, 2020; Rajendran et al., 2020). While teacher attrition can be caused by teacher exhaustion, schools must recognize the factors that are also prevalently shown to increase teacher attrition. Teachers who choose to leave their school frequently feel overworked, undervalued, and not supported (Dos Santos, 2021; Heffernan et al., 2022; Newberry & Allsop, 2017). Teachers cannot complete all requested, and over 60% feel overworked (Heffernan et al.,

2022). These negative experiences regarding workload and unrealistic timelines cause extensive stress and burnout and, ultimately, can lead to teachers' decisions to leave the teaching profession.

While teacher exhaustion and intense work expectations contribute to teacher attrition, additional factors can lead to more teachers leaving the profession (Dos Santos, 2021; Heffernan et al., 2022; Newberry & Allsop, 2017). When teachers choose to leave their place of employment, they often feel that their employers are not meeting their social and professional needs. Positive human interaction can influence a workplace environment and teachers' decisions to remain in the classroom (Newberry & Allsop, 2017). Even if teachers find themselves discontented and disinterested in their jobs, they are more likely to be willing to remain in the profession if they feel supported and have established positive relationships with their peers. While current research exists to explain the causes of attrition, future research should address why teachers move from one school to another and how their basic needs influence their decisions to leave.

Effects of Teacher Attrition

Teacher attrition refers to when teachers choose to seek teaching positions at another school, or they choose to leave the teaching profession entirely. Whether teachers are switching schools or the profession, schools and students, suffer the consequences (Zhu et al., 2020). Teacher attrition is a national issue that can have monumental and adverse effects on the future of education (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Van den Borre et al., 2021). While teacher attrition is problematic concerning academic achievement, it can also impact the climate and economic standing of schools (Arviv & Navon, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; McCluskey, 2022; Tao et al., 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021).

When teachers leave education or seek employment at another facility, students and their academics can be impacted (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Not only can teacher attrition cause class sizes to increase (Falch et al., 2017; Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021), but it can also cause schools to hire employees who lack teaching experience or to higher employees through alternative pathways where they have not been adequately trained (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Increased class sizes directly result from the inability to retain teachers and inhibit teachers' abilities to assist their students as needed (Falch et al., 2017; Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). While schools attempt to fill their teacher vacancies by seeking employees through alternative pathways, these inexperienced educators often cannot provide proper guidance and support to their students because they lack pedagogical and subject-matter knowledge (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

An inability to retain teachers or the obligation to fill teacher vacancies with teachers lacking certification can have lasting effects on both students and schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). While teacher attrition can impair student academic success, it can also impact schools economically (Arviv & Navon, 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). When teachers choose to leave their classrooms, districts and schools are left with financial costs and obligations. Teacher attrition and the inability to retain teachers cause schools to accrue additional costs caused by recruiting, advertising, interviewing, hiring, and preparing new employees for their workplace demands (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; McCluskey, 2022). As districts and schools experience teachers exiting their schools, they face costs of over $20,000 to find and train replacement teachers (Sutcher et al., 2016). These additional costs can cause a financial strain on schools and require funds to be shifted and allocated from other areas.

Research has proven that teacher attrition can have detrimental and lasting impacts on the school climate, quality of teachers, student success, and schools' economic standing (Arviv & Navon, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; McCluskey, 2022; Tao et al., 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). While teacher attrition can refer to teachers switching schools or exiting the teacher profession altogether, both situations are disadvantageous. Though research affirms teacher attrition's damaging impacts on schools, additional research should concentrate on how attrition impacts teachers and the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that causes attrition.

Influence on Students

One of the significant concerns of teacher burnout and attrition is its adverse effects on student success in the classroom (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). When teachers are unhappy and mentally unstable, they cannot provide the proper instruction their students need and deserve. There is a direct correlation between teacher efficacy, burnout reports, teacher attrition, and student academic achievement (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Teachers must feel supported and capable of successfully fulfilling their classroom educator role to fulfill their roles as educators. When teachers lack this support and cannot recognize their worth, their students and academic success will suffer the consequences. Ultimately, the inability to provide the appropriate support to teachers can negatively impact school morale and future academic achievements (Atik & Özer, 2020; Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

Academic Influence

Teacher exhaustion can impact academic achievement for the current school year and beyond (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). As teachers suffer from teacher burnout, the relationships between the teacher and their students can be negatively impacted. As a result of a strained

relationship, students' academic achievement can be affected for over seven years. When students experience a negative rapport with their teachers, there is a significant impact on their academic achievement (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021). A lack of positive relationships between students and teachers can cause students to lack motivation, become disinterested in school, and cause them to avoid future relationships (Atik & Özer, 2020; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). Students who develop meaningful relationships with their teachers demonstrate higher success rates (Birch & Ladd, 1998).

Depriving students of teachers that are emotionally stable can have long-term effects (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Madigan & Curran, 2021). Students must feel supported and have an instructor capable of providing substantial and effectual instruction. Eventually, students without exposure to high-quality education will become disinterested in the curriculum and their studies. Current research indicates that when students lose interest in their academics, the impact that it can have on their grades and their future education can be detrimental and have lasting effects (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Though research on how teacher exhaustion influences academic achievement exists, further research is needed to explore how primary teachers' experiences with exhaustion influenced their students' academic success.

Student Motivation

The ability of teachers and students to form trusting relationships is crucial to academic success (Atik & Özer, 2020; Birch & Ladd, 1998). Unfortunately, when teachers experience burnout, they cannot give their students the attention necessary to meet their needs. In turn,

teachers who experience burnout perceive their students as less academically capable (Tao et al., 2021). Students are capable of noticing their teachers' inability to meet their needs and suffer the consequences of their teachers' thoughts and behaviors (Toropova et al., 2021). Consequently, teacher burnout can cause students to lack trust and motivation and inhibit their learning experience.

High self-efficacy is essential to preventing teacher exhaustion and attrition in education (Kim & Burić, 2020). When teachers are pleased with their working conditions and feel supported, their satisfaction in the workplace and self-efficacy will increase (Herman et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Likewise, heightened teacher self-efficacy rates can positively impact student success in the classroom and beyond. Teachers with higher self-efficacy will also have students demonstrating higher self-efficacy, motivation, and academic success.

When teachers suffer from exhaustion and burnout, they are overwhelmed and unable to complete daily tasks correctly and efficiently (Madigan & Kim, 2021). The adverse effects of teacher burnout can prevent students from forming trusting relationships and their desire to succeed academically (Atik & Özer, 2020). When teachers are unhappy with their positions, students can recognize and duplicate their teachers' undesirable behaviors (Toropova et al., 2021). Consequentially, research surrounding student motivation shows that this behavior can negatively influence their current and forthcoming academic accomplishments in school (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Additionally, there is a paucity of information surrounding how teachers perceive exhaustion and its influence on student motivation.

Social-Emotional Impact

As educators experience burnout, students are impacted academically, socially, and emotionally (Atik & Özer, 2020; Oberle et al., 2020). Students witness their teachers' behaviors and form perceptions of their teachers' social-emotional competence (Oberle et al., 2020). The problem is that many teachers find it challenging to hide the stress they are experiencing and lack the coping skills necessary to compartmentalize their emotions (Brunsting et al., 2014; Herman et al., 2018; Meredith et al., 2020). As teachers experience burnout, their students will, in turn, distance themselves from their teachers, peers, and school (Atik & Özer, 2020).

As teachers suffer from exhaustion and distance themselves from their workplace environment, workplace morale, and student achievement will face damaging impacts (Atik & Özer, 2020; Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021). While many students arrive at school already lacking social and emotional strategies, the inability to supply teachers with resources to address the needs of their students can result in increased teacher exhaustion and the requirements of students not being adequately addressed (Granger et al., 2021; McCullough et al., 2022). When teachers are experiencing burnout, they are unable to supply their students with positive feedback, the proper interventions, or the necessary strategies students need to grow and flourish in the classroom. The inability to address these needs will result in a continuous cycle of teacher exhaustion and negative relationships between teachers and their students (Herman et al., 2018; McCullough et al., 2022). While current research reviews teacher exhaustion and its social-emotional influence, further research is needed to discover how supporting teachers with coping strategies to address their exhaustion and needs can improve job satisfaction and student experiences.

Improvement Strategies to Reduce Teacher Exhaustion

School districts have struggled to retain teachers for decades (Papay et al., 2017; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). As most individuals experience (Maslow, 1943), teachers and students must meet specific needs before performing optimally (Benoliel & Barth, 2017; Jensen & Solheim, 2020; O'Brennan et al., 2017). For schools to ameliorate teacher burnout and attrition, school districts and leaders must implement plans that will meet the needs of teachers and students. To solve this national problem, educators must be vocal and have opportunities to collaborate with their administration and other stakeholders without fearing retaliation (Benoliel & Barth, 2017; García et al., 2022; Tian et al., 2022). Schools can also provide teachers with opportunities to participate in professional development opportunities pertinent to their needs and wants (Amzat et al., 2021; See & Morris, 2021), supply them with coping strategies, improve their school climates, and encourage more parental involvement in their schools (Iida et al., 2020; Ozoemena et al., 2021; Vinopal, 2018). It is vital to the future of education that schools show teachers that they care for them, respect them, and find ways in which they can make the workplace one in which teachers seek to be daily (Benoliel & Barth, 2017; Jensen & Solheim, 2020; O'Brennan et al., 2017).

Transformational Leadership

Motivation increases when humans feel they are in control and can make an impact through their actions and choices (Maslow, 1943; See & Morris, 2021). Teachers must feel supported and strong leadership in a school is necessary to establish a positive work environment conducive to the well-being of teachers and students (Benoliel & Barth, 2017; Casely-Hayford et al., 2022; Tian et al., 2022). Leadership teams are essential in forming school environments that meet teachers' and students' needs. Teacher exhaustion can be attributed to school leadership styles (Ergün & Coşkun, 2023). Principals and their leadership practices significantly influence

student academic achievement, attendance, teacher exhaustion, and teacher attrition rates (Grissom et al., 2021; Tian et al., 2022).

When leadership teams employ transformational leadership practices, teachers feel supported, encouraged, and more driven to accomplish workplace demands (Bass, 1990; DeMatthews et al., 2022; Tsang et al., 2022). As educators experience strong and supportive leadership practices, they begin to feel more supported and that their needs are acknowledged and prioritized (Casely-Hayford et al., 2022; Maheshwari, 2022; Tsang et al., 2022). Effective leadership can result in higher teacher motivation, increased workplace morale, and improved job satisfaction (Beymer et al., 2023). When employed strategically and effectively, transformational leadership can lead to teachers experiencing psychological empowerment, the determination to complete workplace demands, and higher rates of resiliency (Grissom et al., 2021; Tsang et al., 2022).

Leadership teams and their effectiveness directly correlate to the school climate students and teachers experience (DeMatthews et al., 2022; Grissom et al., 2021; Tian et al., 2022). Schools can support their teachers and decrease teacher exhaustion by implementing participative leadership (Benoliel & Barth, 2017; García et al., 2022). This practice allows teachers to have their voices heard and speak from their experiences in the classroom. This implementation strategy can be effective in some schools, but it requires teachers to have additional duties and dedicate more time to their current occupational demands (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). If participative leadership is not employed correctly or effectively, these added demands can result in teachers feeling burdened, overwhelmed, and discontent with their workplace environment.

With additional demands, schools can examine the cultural aspects of their school to predict participative leadership's success (Benoliel & Barth, 2017). Typically, in public schools, participative leadership is more successful and has decreased teacher burnout. However, in ultra-orthodox schools, teachers report higher burnout rates when asked to participate in decision-making. This research (Benoliel & Barth, 2017) suggests that participative leadership may not help reduce burnout in all schools and that cultural aspects should be considered before implementing this practice. Studies have addressed the use of transformational leadership to improve job satisfaction and reduce teacher exhaustion; however, more research should seek to explain how transformational leadership can minimize teacher exhaustion in urban primary schools.

Professional Development

Teachers must feel supported and prepared to complete the requested tasks (Pas et al., 2012). Unfortunately, most teacher burnout cases are caused by a lack of support and misunderstanding of what is being asked of them (Jensen & Solheim, 2020; Pas et al., 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). Schools should recognize their obligation to prepare their teachers and provide opportunities for teachers to learn and grow (Sincer et al., 2019). By providing support through professional development opportunities, teachers can obtain the knowledge and confidence necessary to create positive learning environments for their students (Amzat et al., 2021). Providing teachers with professional development opportunities can increase confidence, knowledge, and school morale.

While professional development is undeniably necessary to stay well-versed in curriculum changes and mandates, schools should allow teachers to choose their development opportunities (See & Morris, 2021). Allowing teachers to dictate and control their options in

professional development can help create solid and respectful workplace relationships and environments. As most individuals have experienced, teachers have various needs, and professional development should be catered to these needs (Maslow, 1943; O'Brennan et al., 2017). Allowing teachers to control their growth areas will allow for a more positive work environment and potentially improved results in reducing teacher attrition (O'Brennan et al., 2017; See & Morris, 2021).

Professional development is an essential component of education and preparing teachers to address the growing changes in policies and curriculum (Sincer et al., 2019). How professional development is employed in schools is imperative in reducing teacher exhaustion and, if not offered correctly, could have undesirable impacts. Current research shows that professional development should encourage teachers to become confident in their teaching and the curriculum and allow teachers to address challenges confidently while utilizing practical coping skills (Amzat et al., 2021; See & Morris, 2021). In addition to the current research, studies should explore the effectiveness of professional development in reducing teacher exhaustion in primary teachers.

Coping Strategies

Teachers are overwhelmed and need help to meet their work demands while remaining satisfied with their working conditions (Herman et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). While professional development opportunities can provide teachers with the support and knowledge they yearn for (See & Morris, 2021), providing teachers with coping strategies can also reduce teacher exhaustion and attrition (Chesak et al., 2019; Iancu et al., 2018; Pyhalto et al., 2021). As teachers face stressful situations, they must be mentally and emotionally prepared to handle them confidently and appropriately. When seeking ways to reduce teacher burnout, schools can

increase mental health support for their teachers to assist them in coping with the stress they experience (Chesak et al., 2019; Iancu et al., 2018).

As schools seek ways to assist their teachers and reduce exhaustion, mindfulness training can be utilized to reduce teacher burnout and improve the mental health of their teachers (Chesak et al., 2019; Iancu et al., 2018). Mindfulness training can provide teachers with strategies to help them manage their anxiety and stress. These strategies promote positive mental health and can allow teachers with calming techniques to aid in combating their feelings of exhaustion (Amzat et al., 2021). When employed in schools, results found that incorporating mindfulness training with teachers experiencing burnout can help reduce the worry and stress experienced while also increasing workplace morale (Atik & Özer, 2020; Chesak et al., 2019). The benefits of mindfulness training can help to encourage more positive classroom environments, create impactful relationships, and boost academic achievement in students (Chesak et al., 2019; Iancu et al., 2018).

In addition to mindfulness training, schools can prepare their teachers to address exhaustion through coping strategies that address processing skills (Amzat et al., 2021). Supplying educators with information on how to combat exhaustion using positive coping strategies can all teachers to develop a more positive mindset and ability to address everyday challenges they face in the classroom (Amzat et al., 2021; Atik & Özer, 2020). Teachers will be more equipped to cope with stressors due to their work demands through reflection practices, learning to control emotions, and developing emotional regulation skills (Amzat et al., 2021; Pyhalto et al., 2021). Most studies explore how effective coping strategies reduce exhaustion but fail to discuss how they prevent exhaustion from causing attrition. It would be beneficial for future research to analyze how effective coping strategies are in avoiding attrition.

School Climate

School environments must be positive and supportive, enabling teachers and students to perform optimally (Iancu et al., 2018; Waxman et al., 2021). School and the workplace environment directly correlate to job satisfaction and teacher exhaustion (Beymer et al., 2023; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). While school violence and safety are both problematic in today's schools, supporting teachers and encouraging positive changes can help improve school climates and prevent teacher exhaustion (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Yang et al., 2021). With the most significant number of teachers suffering from exhausting reporting that it was caused by their working conditions (Ribeiro et al., 2022), school leaders must pursue ways to improve their school environments and the support they provide to their educators (Toropova et al., 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021).

The ability to prevent teacher exhaustion and its influence on teacher attrition can begin with improving school climates (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Various factors can cause teacher exhaustion, but exhaustion and job satisfaction have contributed to over 25% of teachers' decisions to leave education. School districts and leaders can work to improve the school climate and job satisfaction by assessing the specific needs of their teachers (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Madigan & Kim, 2021). Leaders should tailor how they improve their school environments based on their teachers' feedback and then create a plan to address what needs to be accomplished. Because of the number of studies using large populations, there is a need for more research regarding district-level factors that contribute to the school climate and how it influences exhaustion.

Parental Involvement

While much of teacher burnout is caused by teachers feeling overwhelmed, stressed (Herman et al., 2018; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021), and not receiving the appropriate support necessary (Pas et al., 2012), studies indicate that a lack of positive and supportive parental involvement can also play a role in burnout (Iida et al., 2020; Vinopal, 2018). Exhaustion experienced by teachers can be attributed to a lack of parental involvement and an inability to establish a positive parent-teacher relationship (Amzat et al., 2021). There is a direct correlation between how and how much parents are involved in their child's education and the rates of teacher burnout. In classrooms with little engagement from parents, teachers tend to be more stressed and experience higher exhaustion rates (Iida et al., 2020; Pas et al., 2012; Vinopal, 2018). Schools must encourage parents to communicate with teachers and be present in their child's educational journey to improve teacher burnout.

While parental involvement can positively impact teacher exhaustion and academic success, if not employed effectively, parental involvement can also be harmful (Chen, 2019). For parental involvement to be used successfully, teachers must receive support from their leadership teams and supply the proper resources (Iida et al., 2020). While parental involvement can improve academic success, it can burden teachers emotionally and add to their current workplace demands (Chen, 2019). Schools should inform and prepare their teachers to properly and effectively communicate with their students' parents to prevent adverse effects. Supporting teachers and encouraging positive teacher-parent relationships can make teachers feel less emotional exhaustion and reduce teacher attrition rates in schools (Chen, 2019; Iida et al., 2020; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). Additional research should be dedicated to parental involvement in urban primary schools to reduce teacher exhaustion and attrition.

Summary

Teacher burnout has proven to be consistently challenging in today's schools. Research has shown that teacher burnout negatively impacts the quality of education and student academic achievement (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). Schools must be diligent in the prevention and eradication of teacher burnout, as well as in preventing its detrimental effects on student success. Substantial research has been dedicated to the causes of teacher burnout, its long-term impacts on students academically and socially, and how it can be prevented (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). Using Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, the reviewed literature discussed the historical aspects of teacher burnout, the characteristics and causes of teacher burnout, its impact on students, and improvement strategies (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021).

This case study aimed to address the gap in the literature regarding how teacher burnout and attrition can be prevented. Teacher burnout has been studied, but past research has failed to make a significant difference in the rates of teacher burnout. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover the perceived influence teacher exhaustion may have on educator attrition for primary school teachers in one urban school district in central South Carolina. By researching teacher burnout, its causes, and how it impacts academic achievement, stakeholders in education can adequately address it and prevent it from happening in the future (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). Conducting a qualitative study provided information on the perceived causes of teacher exhaustion and supplied information for quantitative studies to further research and test.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this case study was to discover the perceived influence teacher exhaustion may have on educator attrition for primary school teachers in one urban school district in central South Carolina. The beginning of this chapter introduces the research design of a qualitative single-case study, the research question, and four research sub-questions. Following the research questions, the setting and participants are described. For this study, the participants included 12 teachers who have chosen to leave Naples School District (NSD) due to experiencing teacher exhaustion. The data collection utilized for this study was individual interviews, focus groups, and letter-writing submissions. This chapter also includes information on research positionality, the procedures followed, how the data was analyzed, and trustworthiness.

Research Design

This qualitative study aimed to discover teachers' perceived influence of teacher exhaustion on teacher attrition for primary teachers in one urban school district. Qualitative research was utilized to thoroughly describe teacher exhaustion and how it influences teachers' decisions to leave the profession. Using a qualitative design allowed me to speak with educators who have experienced exhaustion and determine how their exiting from the classroom could have been prevented (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative investigations include interviewing participants and using findings to identify reoccurring themes (Denny & Weckesser, 2022). In case studies, researchers use interviews to gather data as a human research instrument (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design offered opportunities to acquire information directly from the studied audience through individual interviews, research, and data. By utilizing multiple collection methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018), I was presented with thorough evidence regarding

the perceived causes of teacher exhaustion and how schools can prevent its influence on teacher attrition.

While employing this qualitative study, I gathered data using a single-case study framework (Stake, 1995). A single-case study design was chosen because of the nature of this study and how it analyzes a common case (Yin, 2018). A case study was also deemed appropriate because of the significance of providing a comprehensive review and description of teacher exhaustion to aid in its prevention. In this case, I studied exhaustion's influence on teacher attrition in primary teachers in one urban school district. This study focused on several individual teachers' experiences in the classroom and their decisions to leave the teaching profession. An instrumental case study's constructs were utilized to find how teacher burnout can be addressed and decrease teacher attrition (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). An instrumental case study offered insight into the increasing problem of teacher burnout and an in-depth understanding of how it is caused.

Using a case study also offered opportunities to focus on why burnout causes complications with teacher retention and how schools can prevent burnout from occurring. Following a case study's constructs, information was obtained regarding teachers' negative and positive experiences, the emotional effect of workplace demands on exhaustion, how their schools addressed their symptoms, and their decisions to seek employment outside of the NSD (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). This case study created an opportunity to study a group of primary teachers who have chosen to leave the classroom after experiencing burnout and how their leaving could have been prevented.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to discover the perceived influence teacher

exhaustion may have on educator attrition for primary school teachers in one urban school

district in central South Carolina. The following section will provide the central research and

sub-questions utilized as the framework for the data collection methods employed throughout

this study. The findings discovered from this study will seek to answer the research questions.

Central Research Question

In what ways do teachers who have left the profession perceive exhaustion and its

possible influence on primary teacher attrition?

Sub-Question One

How do teachers who have left teaching perceive that their physiological needs were a

factor in leaving the profession?

Sub-Question Two

How do teachers who have left teaching perceive that their safety needs were a factor in

leaving the profession?

Sub-Question Three

How do teachers who have left teaching perceive that their belonging needs were a factor

in leaving the profession?

Sub-Question Four

How do teachers who have left teaching perceive that their esteem needs were a factor in

leaving the profession?

Setting and Participants

This section includes information regarding where this study took place. In addition to details on the setting, a thorough description of why this setting was chosen will also be provided. Following information on the setting, the participants will be discussed. This discussion will include information regarding gender, race, teaching experience, and the participants' degree information regarding the study.

Setting

The site for this study included elementary schools in an urban school district in South Carolina. NSD is a pseudonym that will be employed when referencing the school district utilized during this study. Naples School District is the 15th largest school district in South Carolina and has approximately 16,300 students. Combined, NSD serves an estimated 75,000 students and employees. Out of the 25 schools existing in NSD, 14 of the schools are elementary schools that serve primary grades. The approximate enrollment of the elementary schools is 8,000. The leadership structure of NSD begins with the Board of Trustees, which consists of nine members who collaborate to make decisions on the districts' behalf. Following the Board of Trustees is the district superintendent, who, with the Board of Trustees, works to establish and employ a shared vision for the school district. The superintendent is followed by two assistant superintendents assigned to represent primary, middle, and high schools. The leadership structure of NSD suggests that principals in NSD report to their appointed assistant superintendent. This school district was selected for this study because of its history with teacher attrition and its ability to retain teachers. Recently, NSD has noticed an increase in teachers leaving education, with an average of 150-200 teachers departing each year. Elementary school teachers were utilized for this study because of the number of employees teaching at this level.

Participants

The teachers participating in the study had at least two years of teaching experience, suffered from burnout as defined by the World Health Organization (2019), and no longer taught in NSD. Of these 12 participants, multiple cultural backgrounds were represented. The study participants held bachelor's degrees in early childhood or elementary education. In addition to their bachelor's degrees, some teachers have obtained master's degrees. Participants were required to be 18 or older to participate in this study and left NSD within the past two years. Using a single-case study design (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018), I analyzed the experiences of the 12 participants and their involvement as a teacher in NSD. A single-case design allowed a common case, teacher burnout, to be thoroughly analyzed through an interview process. Formatting this study as an instrumental case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018) allowed me to gather data on how NSD can inhibit teacher burnout and increase teacher retention.

Recruitment Plan

This study sought to explain how teacher exhaustion influences a school district's ability to retain its teachers. Utilizing a snowball sampling method (Creswell & Poth, 2018), the participants for this study included primary teachers who were formerly employed by NSD and suffered from exhaustion, ultimately leading to their departure from the school district. A snowball sampling method was used to identify potential participants for this study and was deemed appropriate because of the ability to reach participants that may not be revealed otherwise (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using the snowball sampling method enabled more participants to be recruited for this study. The sample pool included any primary teacher who left due to burnout, and the sample size was 12 participants.

Participant recruitment was conducted using social media. A recruiting post summarizing

the criteria and procedures was shared using Facebook (see Appendix B). If interested,

participants could contact me through Facebook or phone and were provided with further details

if necessary. Once the participants expressed interest, they were asked qualifier questions to

assess their experience with exhaustion (see Appendix C). After identifying the participants

using the qualifying questions, a consent form was obtained before proceeding with the study

(see Appendix A). The participants were asked to provide details regarding their available

interview hours through email. After all consent forms were completed, individual interview

schedules were developed and shared with all participants. A sample size of 12 was chosen to

ensure that participants are from diverse backgrounds and possess various experience levels.

With 12 participants, obtaining information from a mixed population was conceivable (Creswell

& Poth, 2018).

Researcher Positionality

Before beginning the research process, researchers must identify the interpretive

framework that will be applied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Having the ability to recognize this

framework can lead to more organized and process-driven research. As a researcher, I identified

social constructivism as my interpretive framework. Throughout my journey, I have grown

interested in teacher burnout and how it can affect schools' abilities to retain their teachers.

Utilizing the social constructivism framework and the three philosophical assumptions enabled

me to conduct my study organized and systematically.

Interpretive Framework

The social constructivist interpretive framework allowed me to delve deeper into the root

causes of teacher exhaustion and its detrimental impacts on teacher retention. The social

constructivist framework provides researchers with a framework that allows for the study of the

individual experiences of others (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During my research, this framework was utilized to study teachers' experiences who have chosen to leave the former school district they worked for due to exhaustion.

Utilizing the social constructivist framework allowed me to learn more about how teacher exhaustion that leads to attrition can be prevented (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During my study, I focused on developing an improved understanding of how the inability to meet the needs of teachers can influence their decisions to leave NSD. Individual interviews and focus groups allowed participants to speak openly regarding their experiences. As the researcher and human instrument, I avoided potential bias by using bracketing (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Bracketing allowed me to systematically report my findings while refraining from inserting my own experiences or beliefs (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Philosophical Assumptions

Establishing a philosophical assumption allows researchers to organize their research methods and conduct their work efficiently and effectively (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These assumptions intertwine with the interpretive framework, allowing others to improve their understanding of the researcher's assumptions. Throughout my research, I share my ontological, epistemological, and axiological beliefs to dictate how my research methods were chosen and conducted clearly.

Ontological Assumption

As I continued my research on teacher exhaustion and its influence on teacher attrition, my ontological assumption provided me with opportunities to gather data from various people in the field of education. This assumption encourages researchers to document their findings using multiple perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The ontological assumption allowed more

extensive information to be gathered through interviews with former teachers of NSD who have chosen to leave the classroom. Interviews with participants who have experienced exhaustion permitted me to acknowledge that my experiences and beliefs may differ from those of others who have also experienced exhaustion (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

While I possess my own opinions and thoughts, I also understand and value my participants' input. My ontological position welcomed more honest and unbiased findings as a researcher through interviews and focus groups. While I possess my views and assumptions, I also acknowledge the validity and importance of my participants' views. Although I believe in one reality and as a Christian, my viewpoint seeks the truth as God defines, using various data collection methods, I developed themes to acknowledge differing perspectives.

Epistemological Assumption

In case studies, the epistemological assumption allows researchers to position themselves directly with the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since I am an educator, this philosophical assumption fits well with my study of teacher exhaustion. Having experienced exhaustion that led to a temporary leave from my school district, I have a personal connection to the purpose of this study. My epistemological position as a researcher was based on my interactions with the participants and my understanding of what is causing their symptoms of burnout. This assumption allowed me to gather information and opinions from those most impacted and find ways to improve their lives. While I value my assumptions, I also appreciate the knowledge that my participants were able to provide. The participants played a crucial role in sharing knowledge that will further research and improve teacher exhaustion and its influence on teacher attrition. My epistemological assumption and the knowledge of my participants allowed me to witness the

core perceived causes of teacher burnout and gather essential information on how teacher retention can be improved.

Axiological Assumption

Whereas ontological and epistemological assumptions tend to eliminate the inclusion of the researcher's opinion, an axiological assumption provides opportunities for more open dialogue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). With the axiological assumption, researchers can share information on how the narrative was formed based on their experiences and the participants' experiences. As a researcher, my axiological assumption empowered me to share how teacher burnout has impacted my life and fellow teachers who once taught in NSD. During this research stage, readers will need to understand my posture regarding teacher exhaustion and the recommendations I have to reduce rates of teacher attrition. As an educator conducting research, axiological assumptions permitted me to position myself as someone directly impacted by this national crisis while also seeking solutions that will lead to improved teacher retention.

Researcher's Role

As the researcher, I sought to describe how teacher exhaustion is perceived and why it influences teachers' decisions to leave NSD. My role in this study was crucial, and I served as a human instrument necessary to conduct the research. As a human instrument, I understood that taking precautions to prevent bias would be essential to the success of this study. I practiced reflexivity by sharing my experiences with burnout and stating my position on the topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I acknowledged the influence of my experiences with exhaustion on my decision to leave the classroom and the role that my interpretations of exhaustion played in this study.

My yearning to research teacher exhaustion resulted from my experiences and an inability to meet my needs. After beginning my fourth year of teaching, I started to experience feelings of anxiousness and defeat. While I sought help and guidance, my school of employment could not supply me with the support I desired. While my students did not suffer due to the exhaustion I experienced, my inability to balance my personal life and the needs of my students severely impacted my mental health and stability. My experience with exhaustion, increased class sizes, and student misbehavior ultimately led to my decision to leave the classroom for two years. Having experienced teacher exhaustion that led to my departure from NSD, my experiences and perspectives on teacher burnout allowed me to formulate my procedures and data collection based on my experiences. Throughout my study, I was a facilitator during data collection and used established questioning to prevent my experiences from influencing the information my participants shared.

Procedures

Throughout this section, information regarding site permissions will be shared. Following information on the site permissions will be information on how approval was gained from the Institutional Review Board. This section will also include information on the solicitation of participants, data collection, and data analysis. How triangulation was be achieved will also be discussed.

Data Collection Plan

The data for this case study included individual interviews, focus group interviews, and letter writing. Three data collection methods established the triangulation of evidence and credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using multiple data collection methods aided in theme development, the ability to identify the causes of teacher burnout, and how it can be prevented.

When completing a case study, relying upon various sources is essential to construct validity and reliability (Yin, 2018). The evidence provided due to these data collection methods allowed for the data collection process to be strengthened and more precise.

Individual Interviews

Individual interviews were essential to the findings of this case study. Individual interviews allow researchers to collect data from participants related to the studied topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). When employing a case study, researchers can use interviews to guide conversations and gather data on an identified topic (Yin, 2018). During this case study, interviews were conducted one-on-one to obtain knowledge of the participants' experiences.

The individual interviews were conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams and recorded to aid data collection. Ensuring security and confidentiality was crucial, and all participants were required to use a unique code to join their Microsoft Team meeting, and I was only assigned recording permissions. These interviews were conducted with each of the 12 participants included in this study and consisted of 14 questions (see Appendix D). The interviewees must have experienced burnout symptoms that ultimately influenced their decision to leave NSD and seek employment elsewhere. Before beginning the interview, the participants were provided with information regarding why the interview was taking place and their role in the data collection process.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please state your name, current occupation, and years of experience. CRQ

2. How long did you teach in NSD? CRQ

3. Why did you choose to leave NSD? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, SQ4

4. How could NSD have prevented your leaving their district? CRQ

5. What burnout symptoms did you experience? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, SQ4

6. How does teacher exhaustion influence NSD's ability to retain its teachers? CRQ

7. What could be the leading cause of teacher exhaustion in NSD? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, SQ4

8. How can NSD improve its ability to retain teachers? CRQ

9. What are NSD's strengths in supporting their teachers? CRQ

10. How did an inability to meet your physiological needs lead to your departure from NSD? SQ1

11. What role did safety play in your decision to leave NSD? SQ2

12. Explain how the need for belonging influenced your feelings of exhaustion. SQ3

13. Describe how your self-esteem was affected by the exhaustion you experienced. SQ4

14. What else would you like to share regarding your teaching experience in NSD? CRQ

The questions included in the individual interviews allowed teachers to reflect on their experiences while teaching in NSD. These questions gathered information on their burnout symptoms, the challenges they experienced, and why they chose to leave NSD. Additionally, the questions allowed the participants to provide suggestions based on their experiences and the changes necessary for their return. Committee members reviewed the questions utilized during individual interviews to ensure that the questions were clearly written and easily understood before the interviews transpired.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Following the interviews, the recording transcriptions were reviewed for accuracy, and the findings were organized using codes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Open coding was used to analyze the data collected during the interviews. The interviews were transcribed and read multiple times during the first step. Memoing was used while reading to aid in the future

coding process (Yin, 2018). After rereading the interview transcriptions, codes were then

assigned. After the initial coding was conducted, the codes were placed into categories, and

themes were identified. Many categories were determined using open coding, but codes were

reduced after rereading the transcripts several times (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I utilized member

checking and bracketing to ensure proper documentation and to prevent bias (Creswell & Poth,

2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Focus Group Interview

The focus group interviews were conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams and

consisted of eight questions (see Appendix E). It was crucial to ensure security, so all

participants were given a unique code to join their Microsoft Team meeting, and I was only

granted recording permissions. A virtual platform provided convenience to participants no longer

living locally. The purpose of focus groups is to gather data collected from participants with

shared experiences (Yin, 2018). Conducting virtual focus groups allowed participants to share

their experiences collaboratively and enabled me to record and transcribe the interviews

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using focus groups aided in triangulation and in gathering additional

information on how teacher burnout influences teachers' decisions to leave NSD.

Focus Group Questions

1. Please describe your experience working in NSD. CRQ

2. Please describe the burnout symptoms you experienced. SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, SQ4

3. Please describe how exhaustion impacted your decision to leave NSD. CRQ

4. How did your physiological needs influence the exhaustion you experienced? SQ1

5. How did your need for safety influence the exhaustion you experienced? SQ2

6. How did your needs for love and belonging influence the exhaustion you experienced? SQ3

7. How did your need for esteem influence the exhaustion you experienced? SQ4

8. What would you like NSD to know about your experience working for them? CRQ

The questions included in the focus group interview allowed the participants to report their symptoms of burnout cohesively and collaboratively. These questions enabled teachers to share their experiences working for NSD and their opinions regarding how burnout hinders NSD's ability to retain their teachers. The participants were encouraged to collectively discuss their decisions to leave NSD and seek employment elsewhere.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

After the focus groups, the recordings were transcribed and reread to ensure the transcriptions were precisely developed. The Microsoft Teams recorded transcriptions were reviewed for accuracy and analyzed using the patterns method (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This method created patterns amongst the data and developed categories. The transcriptions then identified patterns that emerged during the focus group interviews. The patterns were organized into themes and subthemes and coded based on frequency. When organizing the codes, diagrams displayed the findings and allowed the reoccurring themes to be identified (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Letter Writing

Letter writing was the final data collection method, allowing additional information to be obtained from the participants. Letter writing enabled participants to share their feelings and create triangulation with the other data collection methods (Yin, 2018). This method provided additional time for the participants to reflect on their experiences with teacher burnout and how it

impacted their decision to leave their teaching positions. This collection method allowed the

participants to share their advice and how they believe they could have changed the trajectory of

their teaching careers. The 12 participants were given an identical prompt (see Appendix F) and

two weeks to complete their letters. After completing their letter, the participants were asked to

provide their letters through email.

Letter Writing Prompt

After having experienced burnout as a teacher, what would you tell yourself as a first-

year teacher to prepare yourself for teaching and prevent exhaustion from occurring?

Letter Writing Analysis Plan

After the participants submitted their letters, an analysis was conducted. When beginning

this analysis, the letters were read multiple times, and memoing was utilized while the reading

occurred (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Memoing consisted of recognizing sentences related to

teacher burnout and its impact on the participant choosing to leave NSD. After memoing, a

thematic analysis method was adopted to present themes made evident in the letters. Codes were

assigned for each sentence included in the letters to aid in developing themes. The reoccurring

themes were refined and identified.

Data Analysis

Although three data collection methods were utilized in this study, similar analysis

methods were adopted to ensure proper triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While each of the

three data collection methods initially required a separate analysis, each analysis was conducted

similarly to aid in synthesizing data. While analyzing the data collected from the individual

interviews, focus groups, and letter writings, the goal was to create codes that later revealed

themes. By utilizing memoing and codes, themes emerged and revealed reoccurring findings

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure accuracy across each method, qualitative data analysis software NVivo was used to search for reoccurring themes during the synthesis portion of the study. This program allowed the themes from each data collection method to be uploaded and compared. After the three analyses, the themes were reviewed and synthesized (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Trustworthiness

Historically, researchers have consistently sought to develop criteria that can be implemented to ensure trustworthy and reliable research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Various perspectives have been contributed to provide qualitative constructs for research. Although several authors have contributed, Lincoln and Gubas' (1986) work portrays terms that can be applied to qualitative research that is developed using a naturalistic approach. Using the terminology provided by Lincoln and Gubas' (1986), this section offers details regarding how this study followed various techniques to create credible and reliable research.

Credibility

Credibility is created by truthfully sharing findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). To establish credibility, researchers must share their obtained evidence precisely and accurately. Throughout this case study, credibility was displayed through my reports and practices. During my research, I established credibility through triangulation, prolonged engagement, and member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Triangulation

This study established triangulation throughout the data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). I strategically identified appropriate data collection methods by identifying a relevant theory and thoroughly reviewing the literature. Throughout this process, information was

gathered regarding teachers' experiences with exhaustion and how it influenced their decisions to leave NSD. The data collection methods were strategically chosen to provide cohesive evidence regarding teachers' experiences. After conducting the individual interviews, focus groups, and collecting the letters, similar data analysis was utilized to further the triangulation of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Following the analysis, the data was used to synthesize the findings cohesively and further the credibility.

Prolonged Engagement

Lincoln and Guba (1986) suggest implementing several methods to ensure the establishment of credible research. Using individual interviews, focus groups, and letters provided by the participants, the evidence portion of this research provides a saturation of findings and data. This method created opportunities to be immersed in the study and with the participants while allowing me to further credibility through the separation of my own biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Establishing prolonged engagement allowed me to build trusting relationships with the participants and become more aware of situations that could distort the collection of credible evidence (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Member Checking

Member checking is one of the most influential aspects of creating credibility in research (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Utilizing my experience with teacher exhaustion, I had the opportunity to establish a unique connection with my participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checking was used during both the individual interviews and focus groups. While participants answered the questions, member checking was used to pursue additional clarification regarding their statements (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). While the individual interviews and focus groups had established questions, both methods were informal and utilized member checking, allowing

additional questions to be asked if necessary. This method allowed for an increase in credibility because participants could elaborate when necessary. Following the transcription of the interviews, I supplied my participants with their transcriptions to allow for additional member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Providing my participants with copies of their transcriptions helped to ensure accurate research findings.

Transferability

Transferability provides evidence that the findings can be utilized and applied elsewhere (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Transferability for this study was established by providing detailed descriptions of how the study was conducted and thorough explanations of the findings. I provide explicit depictions of how former NSD teachers were impacted by exhaustion and how their negative experiences influenced their decisions to leave the district. All interview questions were provided during data collection, and transcripts can be read to learn about the delivery method. The description of the study can aid in improving the degree of transferability and ability to replicate the study in the future (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Dependability

Dependability involves ensuring that a study is accurately conducted and that the findings align throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Providing detailed procedures and results ensures that this study is dependable and can be easily replicated. Beginning with the literature surrounding teacher burnout allowed this study to be based on gaps in the literature to identify solutions. Using gaps in the literature as the basis of this study allowed for a starting point to be established and a framework to be created. To enhance the dependability of this study, a committee of experts thoroughly reviewed and provided suggestions to be applied. Taking

measures to ensure the accuracy of my findings aided in establishing valid and dependable results (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Confirmability

Confirmability is how the results from a study are obtained and collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). A high level of confirmability should be obtained exclusively from the participants and not influenced by researchers. I established confirmability during this study through external audits, audit trails, and triangulation. Conducting an external audit increased confirmability by utilizing the research expertise of my committee members to review my findings and raise questions where needed (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). I used audit trails to provide specific details regarding the steps taken during the study, detailed notes, and specific data collection methods. The third confirmability method, triangulation, was utilized through a triangulation of data sources and analysis methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Each of the three data collection methods produced findings that required a similar analysis method and the opportunity to review the data in various ways.

Ethical Considerations

In addition to following the framework of Lincoln and Guba (1986), I took precautions to ensure that ethical considerations were addressed. I obtained IRB approval from Liberty University before beginning the data collection process. Once IRB approval was granted, I initiated my search for participants and obtained consent from each participant before launching data collection. The consent document provided my participants with information regarding their rights and any risks involved in participating in my study. The participants were made aware of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time and were reassured of the confidentially that

would take place. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure the proper security of their identities. While interviews and the focus groups were recorded, only participants could join the Microsoft Teams meetings. The recordings will be deleted after three years. My participants were provided details regarding the data collection process and reassured that all data would be secured in an electronic file system requiring a password.

Permissions

Before beginning this study, I sought permission to conduct this study by submitting a proposal to Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). After obtaining approval, I began to work towards obtaining my participants (See Appendix K). Because of the nature of my study, physical site permissions were unnecessary. Once I identified my participants, I then requested that my participants complete a consent form that informed them of information regarding their voluntary participation and how their identification would be secured (see Appendix A).

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

This chapter details the research design, setting, participants, my role as the researcher, procedures, data collection, and trustworthiness of this study. The data for this qualitative study was obtained through individual interviews, focus groups, and letter writing. As the researcher, I served as a human instrument to organize the study, establish the procedures, and analyze the findings. The participants in this study provided information regarding their experiences with teacher burnout and how it influenced their decision to leave NSD. Throughout this study, trustworthiness was ensured through credible, dependable, confirmable, and transferable practices (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). In addition to trustworthiness practices, ethical considerations were a priority to protect the participants' safety and maintain confidentiality.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover the perceived influence teacher exhaustion may have on educator attrition for primary school teachers in one urban school district in central South Carolina. The data for this case study was collected utilizing 12 participants and included individual interviews, focus group interviews, and letter writing. The teachers participating in the study had at least two years of teaching experience, suffered from burnout as defined by the World Health Organization (2019) (see Appendix C) and no longer taught in NSD. This chapter presents participant descriptions, themes, and sub-themes that emerged and explains how the findings answer the identified research questions.

Participants

The participants for this study consisted of 12 teachers who chose to leave NSD due to the exhaustion they experienced. All participants held bachelor's degrees in early childhood or elementary education. In addition to their bachelor's degrees, some participants obtained master's degrees. Individuals were required to be 18 or older to participate in this study and left NSD within the past two years. Each of the 12 participants took part in an interview, focus group interviews, and submitted a writing prompt. Examples obtained from data collection can be found in Appendix G and H. Table 1 presents each participant's teaching experience, years in NSD, highest degree earned, and area of expertise.

Table 1

Participants

Participant	*Years Teaching*	*Years in NSD*	*Highest Degree Earned*	*Content Area*
Alex	5	4	Master's	Elementary
Mia	7	7	Master's	Early Childhood
Lauren	5	5	Master's	Early Childhood
Maria	10	8	Bachelor's	Early Childhood
Lana	8	6	Bachelor's	Elementary
Kim	14	12	Master's	Elementary
Ava	9	5	Master's	Early Childhood
Susan	6	2	Bachelor's	Early Childhood
Jade	7	5	Master's	Early Childhood
Ruth	8	6	Bachelor's	Early Childhood
Lydia	32	25	Master's	Elementary
Leah	12	3	Master's	Early Childhood

Alex

Alex taught in NSD for four years before leaving to pursue a teaching position in a

neighboring district as a virtual special education teacher. Including her years in NSD, Alex has

five years of teaching experience. Alex has a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a

master's in special education. After serving as a special education teacher in NSD, Alex's

decision to leave resulted from experiencing high stress, a lack of respect, and constantly feeling

overwhelmed. During her time in NSD, Alex felt isolated and felt she had to prove her competence as an educator continuously.

Mia

Mia has seven years of experience serving as an early childhood educator. Mia has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and a master's in instructional technology. After teaching at NSD for seven years, Mia chose to leave NSD and is currently staying home with her children. Mia chose to leave NSD because of financial reasons and workplace demands. Her time serving as an educator in NSD is marked with negative feelings, overwhelm, and feelings of inadequacy. Mia shared that if NSD had provided additional monetary and behavioral support, she would have been more likely to remain in their district.

Lauren

Lauren is an educator with five years of teaching experience, all of which were spent teaching for NSD. Lauren possesses a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and a master's in elementary education and teaching. After experiencing an excess of emotional trauma in NSD, Lauren chose to leave the teaching profession and pursue employment as an education consultant for an educational technology company. While working for NSD, Lauren felt overwhelmed with her inability to meet administrator expectations and the lack of support she received regarding student behavior in her classroom. While she once felt joy working for NSD, the exhaustion she experienced led to feelings of dread and fear regarding her inability to meet all of her workplace demands.

Maria

Maria was an educator for ten years before leaving the profession to stay home with her child. Maria worked as a teacher in NSD for eight years before seeking employment in another

district. Maria's bachelor's degree is in early childhood education, and during her time as an educator, she taught kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. Throughout her time in NSD, Maria recalls experiencing positive and negative feelings that varied depending on the school at which she was employed. Ultimately, Maria's decision to leave NSD and the teaching profession was caused by copious feelings of overwhelm and inadequacy as a professional.

Lana

Lana has a bachelor's degree in elementary education and has eight years of teaching experience. Lana was employed by NSD for six years and served as both a classroom teacher and reading coach during her time with the district. While Lana chose to pursue a career outside of education after leaving NSD, she now serves as an administrative assistant at a school specializing in autism. She chose to leave NSD because of the lack of pay and her experience with burnout. Lana recalls feeling anxious, dreading going to work, and constantly feeling like she was not doing enough for her students or administrators. Lana's decision to leave the district and pursue employment elsewhere could have been prevented if NSD had provided more professional and mental support and a pay increase.

Kim

Kim holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's in administration, and she worked for NSD for 12 years. During her time at NSD, Kim was employed as a classroom teacher for ten years before pursuing a position in a leadership role. Kim's decision to exit the classroom and become an administrator was in an attempt to improve her mental health and escape the violence she experienced in her classroom. While Kim enjoyed teaching, she did not feel safe or equipped to handle the students' misbehavior and fights in her classroom. Kim was hopeful that her transition to a leadership role would help her regain her confidence as an

educator. However, she continued to experience exhaustion and overwhelm, causing her to resign from NSD and seek employment in another district.

Ava

Ava's career as a teacher began after receiving a degree in early childhood education, and she has nine years of teaching experience. After working for NSD for five years as a teacher and obtaining her master's degree, Ava's experience with exhaustion and burnout led her to seek employment in another field. While Ava is happily employed as a youth services librarian at a public library, she did not always find joy in her past employment experiences. When Ava worked for NSD, she lacked the administrative support she needed to continue her career as an educator. Ava recalls feeling hopeless, inadequate, and extremely overwhelmed because of the lack of support she received during her time with NSD. Unfortunately, NSD's inability to meet Ava's needs as an educator led to her departure from the school district.

Susan

Susan's interest in education led her to pursue a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. After receiving her degree and teaching in a neighboring district for four years, Susan chose to seek employment at NSD after receiving recommendations from her peers. Regrettably, Susan's employment with NSD only lasted for one year after she experienced numerous mental breakdowns and crippling feelings of inadequacy. While Susan is continuing her career as a teacher in the private sector, she can still vividly recall the rapid decline in her mental health and her inability to meet her own needs while teaching in NSD. During her time in NSD, Susan felt micromanaged and that the administration failed to treat her as a professional. Thankfully, Susan has regained her love for education and confidence as an educator.

Jade

Jade holds a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and a master's in Montessori. While Jade has seven years of teaching experience, only five were spent teaching in NSD as a Montessori teacher. Jade's love for children and Montessori teaching led her to continue her career as a Montessori teacher in another school district after choosing to leave NSD. Jade showed resilience for her students, but her decision to put her students first caused her to ignore her needs. During her time in NSD, Jade received insufficient support, which caused her to experience exhaustion, and ultimately, the stress she experienced led to her having a medical emergency and having to be hospitalized. While her time in NSD has ended, Jade feels that increased support and respect for teachers could have led to her remaining with the district.

Ruth

After receiving a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, Ruth pursued her teaching career at NSD. Ruth taught in NSD for six years before leaving the district and becoming a private school teacher. After completing her sixth year with NSD, Ruth yearned for a change and a positive environment to continue her teaching career. When NSD employed her, Ruth felt that she was incapable of controlling anything in her classroom and that her administration did not trust her abilities as a teacher. Her inability to make decisions for her students led to intense frustration and overwhelm. Ruth felt that the administration placed unmanageable workplace expectations on teachers and that she never experienced positive recognition. Her lack of relationship with her administration made her feel inadequate and defeated.

Lydia

Lydia is an experienced educator with 32 years of experience in education. Her love for students and education led her to receive two bachelor's degrees in elementary and deaf education before pursuing her master's degree. Lydia taught for seven years before deciding to teach for NSD. Her employment with NSD lasted for 25 years before she decided to leave the district years shy of retirement. Lydia's experience with exhaustion became unbearable, and her feelings of hopelessness caused her to leave prematurely. While Lydia does recall positive experiences teaching in NSD, she shares that workplace morale has rapidly declined since she first began her teaching career in NSD. Lydia's workload and workplace expectations became unmanageable in her last few years in the district. Her constant feelings of being overwhelmed led to a decline in her mental health and her ability to meet her physiological needs.

Leah

Leah has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and a master's in children's literacy. Leah has utilized these degrees throughout her 12 years as an educator, three years being spent teaching at NSD. While she chose to leave NSD for multiple reasons, her decision was impacted mainly by her lack of support from the administration. Leah felt she was constantly scrutinized and incapable of pleasing her administrative staff. The administration's inability to support Leah made her feel exhausted and irritable at work and home. Leah felt defeated and anxious, and as a result, her self-esteem suffered. When Leah sought help, she discovered that support was non-existent, and the administration was unwilling to make changes to improve the workplace for their teachers.

Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover the perceived influence teacher

exhaustion may have on educator attrition for primary school teachers in one urban school district in central South Carolina. This section provides the results gathered and analyzed through the data collection and analysis. The results from this study include four themes and 13 sub-themes.

Three data collection methods were utilized to ensure triangulation, including individual interviews, focus groups, and a writing prompt. The individual interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams with 14 open-ended questions. During this case study, one-on-one interviews were conducted to obtain knowledge of the participants' experiences. Focus groups also aided in triangulation and in gathering additional information on how teacher burnout influences teachers' decisions to leave NSD. The final data collection method was a writing prompt that provided additional time for the participants to reflect on their experiences with teacher burnout and how it impacted their decision to leave their teaching positions. This collection method allowed the participants to share their advice and how they believe they could have changed the trajectory of their teaching careers. Following data collection, data analysis was conducted to reveal themes. Memoing and open coding were used to reveal themes using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo (see Appendix I). This software allowed the interviews, focus groups, and writing prompts to be coded before utilizing the codes to create themes and sub-themes (see Appendix J).

Table 2

Themes and Sub-Themes

Themes	Sub-Themes
Insufficient Support	Lack of Parental Support
	Lack of Administrative Support
	Lack of Peer Support
Feelings of Inadequacy	Lack of Recognition
	Diminished Confidence
Inability to Meet Basic Needs	Disregard for Physiological Needs
	Decline in Self-Care
	Decline in Mental Health
Toxic Work Environment	Negative Workplace Morale
	Isolation and Fear
	Lack of Respect
	Safety Concerns
	Unmanageable Workload

Insufficient Support

During this study, the participants unanimously indicated that they received insufficient support while teaching in NSD. While support can take many forms, the participants felt that a lack of parental, professional, and peer support was the most detrimental to the exhaustion they experienced. Much of the feedback included comments like Ruth's, who stated, "We're not even being noticed. It will be ignored even if we do all this extra work." During the virtual focus

group session, participants were asked, "What would you like NSD to know about your experience working for them?" Leah responded, "Everybody loves to feel supported, and we want to work for people who support us. Our work ethic will be better the more support we receive." After experiencing insufficient support while employed by NSD, Jade wrote in her prompt to "lean on each other" to combat feelings of exhaustion. Unfortunately, remarks similar to Ruth, Leah, and Jade's were consistent and appeared 392 times across all three data sources. Within this theme, three sub-themes appeared: lack of parental support, lack of administrative support, and lack of peer support.

Lack of Parental Support

Unfortunately, many participants in the study found themselves frustrated and isolated when it comes to the relationships they have with their students' families. Maria found that the lack of parental support she received from students' parents caused her to develop anxiety. She shared, "The parents were unsupportive, and I constantly felt I was babysitting their children. I was made to feel that everything was my fault and not the students." Like Maria, Lana felt that "it was just day in and day out of fighting battles with students and parents." This sub-theme appeared 27 times across all data sources.

Lack of Administrative Support

Throughout all forms of data, the participants unanimously agreed the challenges they faced with their administration caused an increase in the exhaustion they experienced. The codes "administrative issues," "lack of professional support," and "lack of administrative accountability" were clustered together to form this sub-theme. This sub-theme appeared 283 times across all data sources. Kim did not feel supported by her administrators when she had issues with student behavior. She commented that she "could not control her students' behaviors

anymore because of how the administration handled them. Students would get into fights, get

pulled to complete a crossword puzzle, and then come right back to class." During individual

interviews, the participants were asked, "How does teacher exhaustion influence NSD's ability to

retain their teachers?" Ava felt NSD's teacher turnover was primarily due to ineffective

leadership and replied, "Sometimes, you only have principals visit your classroom once a year,

and they do not see what teachers are going through daily."

Each participant mentioned the importance of administrative support and how a lack of

support increased their feelings of exhaustion. When employed by NSD, teachers felt that their

administration often ignored their professional and personal needs. The former teachers

mentioned a lack of support regarding curriculum, student behavior, and mental health. Jade felt

her administration was unaware of the intensity of events and problems and shared that she

"needed to feel more supported, seen, and heard regarding what was going on from day to day."

Many of the participants felt disconnected from their administration, and their lack of

relationship with their administrators led to increased confusion when navigating curricular

changes. Leah felt her relationship with the administration was the leading cause spurring her

decision to leave NSD and stated, "the confusion with planning reading and the lack of support

from administration caused an increase in my anxiety and daily thinking." Teachers often felt

alone due to an inability to form positive and supportive relationships with their administrators.

Ava felt unsupported while teaching in NSD and stated, "I went to my principal numerous times

for a few of my students with my concerns about their behavior, and I was just told to deal with

it myself in the classroom."

Lack of Peer Support

While participants shared the importance of having support from parents and

administration, many felt that having support from their peers was equally important. Peer support was often mentioned as a negative and positive factor in the exhaustion they experienced while employed by NSD and appeared 80 times across data sources. A lack of peer support contributed to some of the teachers' desires to leave, and at other times, helped the participants cope with the exhaustion they experienced. Mia provided input regarding the importance of having a mentor teacher and stated, "My mentor teacher was why I stayed in teaching as long as I did. She encouraged me and guided me until my last day teaching." Similarly, Susan felt she would have resigned from NSD much sooner if her mentor teacher "had not taken [Susan] under her wing" and supported her during her time at NSD.

The ability to form a support system with their peers proved beneficial to many participants' abilities to combat the exhaustion they experienced, but some participants found themselves entangled in negative relationships without the same support. Leah shared, "The lead team member would purposefully leave me and a few others out of situations in which we should have been involved." Unfortunately, this disconnect prevented some participants from receiving the support they needed to succeed as a teacher in NSD.

Feelings of Inadequacy

The teaching profession requires educators to serve others endlessly. On average, teachers are tasked with taking care of their students, reporting to the administration, communicating with parents, and many other acts of service. As teachers serve others and attempt to meet their workplace demands, teachers can feel discouraged and exhausted if their needs are ignored. NSD's "Students First" motto left teachers feeling as if they were often forgotten or insignificant.

Participants often felt hopeless, and their attempts to do their best for their students were

often ignored or critiqued. Feelings of inadequacy were evident and prominent for all participants in this study and appeared 246 times across all three forms of data. Within this theme, two sub-themes appeared: lack of recognition and diminished confidence. Lana mentioned, "You cannot put your students first if you do not put your teachers first," and NSD's inability to consider the needs of their teachers results in teachers feeling incompetent, discouraged, and disinterested in continuing their careers in NSD. During the virtual focus group session, Susan recalled her experience, sharing, "It felt like at any second, I was going to fall into a puddle and cry. I was miserable, and my health suffered." In her writing prompt, Maria wrote, "I poured my heart and soul, along with many, many hours into my students and career only to feel second best and that I was never good enough."

Lack of Recognition

Participants agreed that they often felt forgotten and that their attempts to create a positive learning environment and experience for their students were often ignored or criticized for not being good enough. The codes "lack of recognition" and "feelings of inadequacy" were clustered together to form this sub-theme and appeared 167 times across all forms of data. Teachers shared that NSD failed to recognize their efforts through verbal praise or monetary compensation. Maria shared, "I was trying to be what they wanted me to be, and I gave it my all. Everything I did was nitpicked, and I was never appreciated for anything I did there." While the teachers did not expect an extravagant celebration in honor of their work, they felt that having their work acknowledged more frequently could have made a difference in the exhaustion they experienced.

The participants discussed the pressure that was placed on them to complete excess requirements without any form of compensation. Alex said teachers would "sacrifice their own

time and not get any reward." NSD's inability to recognize their teachers through financial recognition influenced four participants to leave the district. Mia left NSD after realizing that it would cost her more money to enroll her children in daycare than it would for her to become a stay-at-home mother. Mia shared, "I feel like if we made more money, then it would make sense to add additional things, but we are constantly given more things to do without them taking away other tasks."

Diminished Confidence

When teachers in NSD experience exhaustion, they report feeling buried in feelings of guilt and dread. The codes "lost passion" and "decreased professionalism" were clustered together to form this sub-theme and appeared 79 times across data sources. With an inability to meet their needs, the participants found that to muster the energy to prepare themselves for work each day was challenging. Lauren suffered from intense dread and shared, "I would wake up in the morning sad and dreading the day because I did not know what would happen at work. I would brace myself for something bad to happen." Like Lauren, Kim felt the exhaustion she experienced caused her to dread coming to work and question her effectiveness as a teacher. Kim said, "I lost my self-esteem in the classroom and confidence in being a great teacher because I was made to feel like every kid was just a test score." Unfortunately, many participants agreed that NSD's pressure to have top-scoring schools left them feeling as though they were inadequate and insufficient in their teaching abilities.

Inability to Meet Basic Needs

Many of the participants found that during their time working for NSD, their basic needs were not sufficiently met, leading to increased exhaustion. The participants often felt their needs were ignored because the district was determined to place students first. When reflecting on their

needs, 10 participants felt that their ability to perform effectively as a teacher was hindered due to their needs being overlooked by the district. The inability to meet their basic needs was mentioned 385 times across all three data collection methods.

The participants who were impacted by the inability to meet their basic needs often found that it was caused by their selfless acts of placing others' needs before their own. During the focus group, Lana commented, "There is an expectation to ignore your own needs and always put the students first, even if it is at the detriment of your health. I put my health last because I wanted to care for everyone else." When asked about the leading cause of teacher exhaustion in her interview, Susan said, "The leading cause of exhaustion is the inability to meet the needs of teachers." Ava also felt her needs were left ignored while employed by NSD, and in her letter of advice, she wrote, "You likely will not be able to use the restroom when you need to, so try and find somewhere nearby who can watch your class." Within this theme, three sub-themes appeared: disregard for physiological needs, decline in self-care, and decline in mental health.

Disregard for Physiological Needs

The participants often felt that the pressure on them caused them to ignore their physiological needs. The codes "disregarding basic needs," "sleep," and "inability to meet basic needs" were clustered together to form this sub-theme and appeared 74 times across the data. Through data collection, many of the participants mentioned how their inability to get time for themselves and the stress that accumulated from work caused physical, mental, and emotional problems to occur. Lydia found that the stress she experienced caused her to have problems sleeping. She shared, "There was no way to get ahead. I had to begin taking medication to help me sleep. I was tired all of the time." Susan also suffered from the inability to have her needs met and commented, "I did not have time to eat half of the time. I could never sleep enough. I

could have slept for a week, and it still would not have been enough." Jade also found herself ignoring her physiological needs and stated, "I never had time to use the restroom because no one would come and watch my class."

Decline in Self-Care

Over time, these intense feelings of exhaustion made participants question their professional efficiency. The codes "dread" and "guilt" were clustered together to form this sub-theme and appeared 100 times across data. These feelings of inadequacy left many of these past NSD employees feeling hopeless and defeated. Lydia stated, "You feel like there is nothing else left you can do, which leads to doubting your abilities and competence in teaching." As the exhaustion increased, Susan recalls how much her professionalism and self-esteem decreased. She shared that she was left passionless and could not bear to look at herself in the mirror because she "gained so much weight and looked thrown away." In agreement, Alex began feeling more anxious, and her appearance became insignificant as her exhaustion set in. She shared, "I did not care about how I dressed, looked, or what I ate. I was in a place where I could only push myself to get through each day at work."

Decline in Mental Health

As a result of feeling overwhelmed, many of the participants found that their mental health suffered. The codes "overwhelmed," "mental health," "stress, "and "anxiety" were clustered together to form this sub-theme and appeared 211 times across the data. All participants reported experiencing detrimental impacts to their mental health as a result of their time employed by NSD. Lana experienced anxiety and depression and shared, "By not prioritizing teachers' mental health, people are not going to want to work there. They cannot retain teachers because they will go somewhere that values their mental health or where they feel

appreciated." Ava also shared about the decline in her mental health and responded, "I had to start going to therapy just to deal with the night terrors I was experiencing from work. I would have nightmares about my students, parents, and administration because it was such an awful time in my life."

Toxic Work Environment

The 12 participants agreed that NSD failed to offer a workplace environment conducive to their success as an educator. Each participant indicated that NSD struggled to produce a positive and welcoming environment throughout individual interviews and focus group sessions. Only two participants did not mention their workplace environment in their writing prompt but did mention the significance of the other two data collection methods. The code "work environment" was mentioned 399 times throughout the data.

Participants often found themselves unmotivated and uncomfortable in the environment offered by NSD. During her interview, Alex declared, "Everyone seemed so sad. It seemed like we were all forced into what we had to accomplish, but we had no drive to do well because it was such a negative environment." During the focus group, the participants discussed their needs for love and belonging, and Leah declared, "I think the way administration picked favorites made our morale go down." Additionally, Lauren recalled the decline in her health she experienced in her writing prompt as she advised herself to put her health first and stated, "If administrators cannot respect your time and wishes, it is okay to explore other opportunities." While this positivity is helpful, Lauren wished she could have applied her advice before the emotional trauma she experienced. Within this theme, five sub-themes appeared: negative workplace morale, isolation and fear, lack of respect, safety concerns, and unmanageable workload.

Negative Workplace Morale

The participants each recalled a significant decline in their workplace morale while employed by NSD. The code "negative workplace" was found 96 times during data collection. Much of the decline in workplace morale was caused by the expectations placed on the teachers and the lack of support provided. Kim recalled how the stress and lack of support caused tension amongst her teaching team and how "the emotional turmoil the group of teachers had with each other was weighing deep and never taken care of." When asked in her individual interview how NSD could improve its ability to retain teachers, Ruth responded, "They need to give more positive reinforcement and support to teachers to let them know they are doing a good job. Teachers need to know they are appreciated."

Isolation and Fear

Many participants felt that the exhaustion they experienced in their workplace resulted from discomfort in their environment. The codes "feeling trapped," "isolated," and "fear of consequences" were conjoined to create a sub-theme that represents the loneliness and fear the participants experienced while employed by NSD. During the focus group interview, Ava shared that during her last year in NSD, she "felt like the odd man out." Lydia also felt isolated while teaching in NSD and shared how she feared sharing her concerns because of possible retaliation from the administration. She offered advice to NSD and shared, "I would have loved for there to have been a way for teachers to voice their opinions without feeling like they are going to be blackballed, labeled as a troublemaker, or not a team player." The three codes utilized to generate this sub-theme were detected 55 times throughout all data collection methods.

Lack of Respect

Each of the 12 participants indicated that the toxic workplace environment they worked in made them feel disrespected and mistreated. The codes "disrespect" and "mistreatment" were combined to form this sub-theme and were coded 81 times throughout the data. Ruth felt she lacked control over her classroom and teaching practices and commented, "We went to school to be teachers, yet we were being micromanaged every single second of the day." Alex also felt disrespected while employed by NSD and acknowledged, "They wanted me to complete all this extra work to prove I could do my job. It was demoralizing, exhausting, and unnecessary." Mia also felt that NSD's inability to support her professional experience as an educator left her feeling resentful and mistreated. During her individual interview, Mia stated, "I think that teachers are underpaid, and I believe we will continue to lose teachers until we see what we are worth because we are more than just a teacher."

Safety Concerns

When discussing safety and its influence on exhaustion, 11 out of 12 participants identified inadequate safety measures as problematic while teaching in NSD. The codes "fear of safety," "student behaviors," "unclear safety protocols," and "unsafe working conditions" were clustered together to form this sub-theme. Student misbehavior, working conditions, and fear of safety were prevalently mentioned during individual and focus group interviews, with three participants also mentioning its significance in their writing prompts. Altogether, inadequate safety measures were mentioned 86 times across all three data collection methods.

There were several reasons why participants felt unsafe while teaching in NSD. Participants were asked how safety influenced their exhaustion during the focus group interview. While Lana did not feel unsafe, she added, "The pressure of keeping the students safe led to

more exhaustion." Ruth felt similar during her interview and stated, "I felt safe, but did not feel supported when I voiced my concerns regarding my students' safety." Mia wrote advice in her writing prompt, reminding herself to "create boundaries" to keep herself safe in her classroom and workplace.

Student behaviors proved to be a common complaint amongst the participants. When asked what role safety played in their decision to leave NSD, Mia shared, "I had students who would come in angry, and there were many days when I was hit in the face, kicked in the stomach, or had my hair pulled." Kim was also physically harmed during her time with NSD and responded, "I was pregnant, and I worried about fights breaking out because I did not have any support." During Alex's pregnancy, she had a similar incident and shared, "I had an aggressive student that attacked me and two other students."

Unmanageable Workload

All 12 participants agreed that the unattainable expectations and unmanageable workload demanded by NSD caused strain in their careers and personal lives. The codes "unmanageable workload" and "unattainable expectations" were clustered together to form this sub-theme and appeared 81 times across the data. Mia shared, "The workload was insane, and things were continuously added to our plates. It quickly became overwhelming and definitely impacted my role as a teacher." When asked about her experience teaching for NSD, Leah responded similarly, saying, "I felt like when I came here, I was constantly trying to climb a ladder or attempting to obtain goals set by the district that were not attainable." Kim also wrote about the unmanageable workload in NSD in her letter, stating, "Every single second of the day was packed with meetings, conferences, phone calls, or dealing with discipline issues. There was no time in the day to plan lessons or grade assignments."

Research Question Responses

This qualitative case study utilized individual interviews, focus groups, and a letter prompt. One central research question and four sub-questions were used to gather information on teachers' experiences with exhaustion. The central research question was constructed to gather information on how teachers who have left NSD perceive exhaustion and its influence on teacher attrition. Sub-question one was generated to discover how teachers perceive their physiological needs as a factor in their decision to leave NSD. Sub-question two was used to discover how they perceive their safety needs as a factor in their decision to leave NSD. Sub-question three was used to discover how they perceive their belonging needs as a factor in their decision to leave NSD. Sub-question four was used to discover how they perceive their esteem needs as a factor in their decision to leave NSD.

Central Research Question

In what ways do teachers who have left the profession perceive exhaustion and its possible influence on primary teacher attrition?

Unanimously, the participants felt that exhaustion played a substantial role in their decision to leave NSD. During the individual interviews, focus groups, and writing prompts, the participants indicated exhaustion influenced their resignation from the school district. Each of the four themes emerged during data collection to address the central research question and how a variety of factors influenced the participants' exhaustion. The participants shared that exhaustion did influence their decision to leave NSD and that their exhaustion was caused by factors such as insufficient support, feelings of inadequacy, inability to meet basic needs, and a toxic work environment.

The theme, "Insufficient Support," and each sub-theme addresses the central research question regarding how exhaustion influences attrition. A lack of support was evident across all forms of data, and participants indicated much of their exhaustion could have been prevented if they had received more support from the district. Maria shared, "I never got the support I needed, and I never got recognized for the hard work I was putting in. I did not feel appreciated." The participants continuously shared how much of their exhaustion was due to the lack of support from their students' parents, administration, and peers. Mia felt she was not supported regarding behavior in her classroom and commented, "Something that would have prevented me from leaving would have been to know that I had an administration that would come in and support me with behavior."

When asked, "How does teacher exhaustion influence NSD's ability to retain teachers?" Lauren's response helped to answer the central research question. Lauren shared, "It is not getting better, and you can be a wonderful teacher giving it your all, but it still is not enough. I feel like at times, no matter what you do, it will not be enough." The participants felt their inability to keep up with workplace demands and a lack of recognition left them feeling discouraged, passionless, and exhausted. Collectively, the participants shared stories to aid in the theme, "Feelings of Inadequacy," which helps to address the central research question.

Many of the participants recalled feeling as though they would never be good enough for NSD, and their inability to prove themselves left them feeling defeated and discouraged. Much of the exhaustion the teachers experienced was caused by ineffective leadership. The participants felt that the administration failed to form effective lines of communication or support, and through data collection, the theme "Insufficient Support" emerged to aid in addressing the central research question regarding exhaustion.

Their work environment caused much of the exhaustion that the participants experienced. The participants' experiences with NSD and the exhaustion they experienced helped to form the theme, "Toxic Work Environment," which addresses the central research question and how their exhaustion led them to resign from NSD. Lana felt the district made selfish decisions and shared that the incentives they employed did not have teachers' best interests at heart. When the district offered an incentive for perfect attendance, Lana stated, "It just showed they did not care about burnout or exhaustion. Teachers were coming in so sick because they needed the money." While NSD's attempt to decrease the need for substitute teachers may have proven successful, this incentive also increased exhaustion in their teachers.

The final theme, "Inability to Meet Basic Needs," assists in answering the central research question. Throughout their interviews, the participants shared how their inability to have their needs met led to exhaustion and, ultimately, their decision to leave NSD. Teachers found that the stress and anxiety they were overcome by inhibited their ability to sleep or function appropriately during the school day. Jade shared that the exhaustion she experienced impacted her health. She shared, "The exhaustion I experienced led me to go into early labor. Ultimately, that was why I decided to leave NSD."

Sub-Question One

How do teachers who have left teaching perceive that their physiological needs were a factor in leaving the profession?

The first sub-theme was developed to aid in understanding how the inability to meet the physiological needs of teachers led to their decision to resign from NSD. The theme "Inability to Meet Basic Needs" supplies information that answers sub-question one. The participants reported that the exhaustion they experienced while teaching in NSD impacted their ability to

meet their basic needs. Participants mentioned the inability to use the restroom when needed and being so overwhelmed with work that they could not suitably supply their bodies with the nutrition necessary to complete their work. Lydia commented, "One of our basic needs is to have a break, and as teachers, we do not get breaks when we need them. Just having to use the restroom was an issue."

Many participants struggled to complete their workplace demands because of their inability to meet their basic needs. The stress they experienced inhibited their ability to get adequate rest, and many of the participants struggled to sleep at night. In addition to having trouble sleeping, Lauren found it challenging to eat adequately. Lauren shared, "I did not have time to use the restroom or eat lunch. If I tried to eat at lunch and a student needed me, I did not get to eat because the student mattered more."

Sub-Question Two

How do teachers who have left teaching perceive that their safety needs were a factor in leaving the profession?

The theme "Toxic Work Environment" and each sub-theme addresses sub-question two. Many of the participants in the study shared that the exhaustion they experienced could have been reduced if proper safety precautions had been employed in NSD. The teachers felt that they could not fulfill all of their occupational demands because of student behavior. Participants shared stories of student misbehavior and the lack of support they received.

The inability to support the teachers with student misbehavior led many participants to fear for their safety and sparked more exhaustion. Maria had an experience where her and her students' safety was threatened. She shared, "There was always a fight in my classroom, but I was told that I hit the emergency button too much and needed to learn how to handle it myself.

Children were throwing chairs, and I did not feel safe." Lauren agreed, "Safety was a big issue

for me. Students with behavior issues were able to destroy my classroom. With lockdowns, I felt

like there was no communication to teachers."

Sub-Question Three

How do teachers who have left teaching perceive that their belonging needs were a factor

in leaving the profession?

Collectively, the themes "Insufficient Support" and "Toxic Work Environment" answer

sub-question three and how the need for belonging can influence exhaustion. The participants

unanimously agreed that an inability to receive proper support from NSD increased their

exhaustion and influenced their decisions to leave NSD. The participants felt NSD failed to

provide practical professional support tailored to their needs. Alex shared, "I did not feel

supported, I was exhausted, and I had to do something different for my family." Parental support

was also sparse, and they could not form positive relationships with their students' families.

Maria did not feel supported by parents and stated, "It was a lack of parental involvement and I

got to the point where I just felt like a babysitter." While some participants could form

relationships with their peers, others found that drama and fighting among their colleagues

hindered their need for belonging.

Unfortunately, NSD's inability to encourage their employees and support their

professional needs made participants feel they did not belong. The participants shared that their

lack of relationship with their administration and workplace environment also hindered their

feelings of belonging. Lydia shared, "I was never made to feel like I was part of the faculty. It

was a negative place, and it was hard to muster up the energy to do my best when there was so

much negativity." Ava felt similarly, saying, "I had behavior issues in my classroom. I tried to

get support from the administration, and she told me to deal with it myself. I started to feel like I did not matter."

Sub-Question Four

How do teachers who have left teaching perceive that their esteem needs were a factor in leaving the profession?

The theme "Feelings of Inadequacy" addresses sub-question four and contributed to an inability to meet the participants' esteem needs, therefore leading to their departure from NSD. During their time teaching for NSD, many participants felt that the district placed the needs of the teachers last. The participants frequently spoke of trying to prove their worth and completing additional tasks to receive recognition from administrators. Lauren said, "I needed someone to come in and tell me I was doing a good job. Please ask me if I need help or a break because that would mean more to me than a candy bar and a soda."

NSD's inability to properly recognize their teachers' efforts and provide them with necessary support left the participants experiencing negative impacts on their self-esteem. As the participants recalled how their esteem was influenced, they also discussed the intense feelings of overwhelm they endured. The more overwhelmed the participants felt, the less they began to feel about themselves. When asked how her need for esteem influenced her decision to leave NSD, Jade responded, "I never felt like I was good enough. I did not feel like I was measuring up, and no one ever took the time to make me think differently."

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Summary

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This chapter analyzes the findings collected from a qualitative case study that was employed to discover the perceived influence teacher exhaustion may have on educator attrition

for primary school teachers in one urban school district in central South Carolina. This chapter

reviews participant demographics, themes, sub-themes that emerged, and how the developed

themes answer the research questions. As a result of the data collected and analyzed, four themes

and 13 sub-themes emerged to aid in answering the research questions that were employed.

The findings from this study were obtained through individual interviews, focus groups,

and a writing prompt. The data analysis was conducted after data collection, and themes and sub-

themes emerged to indicate how teacher exhaustion influences teacher attrition in NSD. Sub-

themes accompanied each of the four themes. The participants shared that insufficient support,

feelings of inadequacy, an inability to meet their basic needs, and a toxic work environment all

impacted their ability to perform acceptably as educators. NSD's inability to meet the needs of

these participants led to an increase in exhaustion and, ultimately, their decision to resign from

NSD.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover the perceived influence teacher exhaustion may have on educator attrition for primary school teachers in one urban school district in central South Carolina. Chapter Five discusses the data by interpreting what was found during the study and the implications of the findings. The findings will be reviewed based on implications for policy and practical use that can be utilized as a result of this study. Following these implications, empirical and theoretical implications will be discussed by analyzing the results based on the revealed themes. This chapter will then discuss the limitations and delimitations found throughout this study. Chapter Five will conclude by providing suggestions for future research surrounding teacher exhaustion and its influence on teacher attrition. Following this discussion, this chapter will provide a summary of the study in its entirety, as well as key aspects of this study that were discovered.

Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover the perceived influence teacher exhaustion may have on educator attrition for primary school teachers in one urban school district in central South Carolina. For this study, three methods of data collection were employed: individual interviews, focus groups, and a writing prompt. The participants included 12 participants whom NSD had employed within the past two years. To participate in this study, participants must have been 18 years or older, had at least two years of teaching experience, suffered from burnout, hold a bachelor's degree in early childhood or elementary education, and no longer teach for NSD. Following data collection, four themes and 13 sub-themes were revealed.

Summary of Thematic Findings

This case study aimed to discover how teacher exhaustion influences teachers' decisions to leave NSD. Following data collection and analysis, the information collected was used to detect recurring themes. Through data collection, the participants were given opportunities to reflect on their experiences working for NSD and the factors influencing their exhaustion and decision to resign. The four themes that emerged were (1) insufficient support, (2) feelings of inadequacy, (3) inability to meet basic needs, and (4) toxic work environment.

Each of the four themes contains sub-themes that aid in understanding why teachers chose to leave NSD. The theme of insufficient support was followed by three sub-themes: (1a) lack of parental support, (1b) lack of administrative support, and (1c) lack of peer support. Following this theme were feelings of inadequacy and two sub-themes, including (2a) lack of recognition and (2b) diminished confidence. The third theme discovered, inability to meet basic needs, was followed by the sub-themes (3a) disregard for physiological needs, 3(b) decline in self-care, and 3(c) decline in mental health. Collectively, all participants agreed that these factors influenced their exhaustion and decision to leave NSD. Following inability to meet basic needs, the theme of toxic work environment indicated the sub-themes (4a) negative workplace morale, (4b) isolation and fear, (4c) lack of respect, 4(d) safety concerns, and (4e) unmanageable workload. All of the participants reported that exhaustion was caused by the stress they endured and experienced.

Interpretation of Findings

This section will provide interpretations of the themes discovered during this qualitative case study. This study sought to determine how teachers who have left NSD perceive exhaustion and its possible influence on primary teacher attrition. Through data collection and analysis, the

findings produced themes that delve into why teachers choose to leave NSD and interpretations regarding how it could be prevented. The findings produce significant information on the exhaustion teachers experience and accentuate the dire need to implement measures to reduce exhaustion and burnout.

The Need for a Support System

Teacher exhaustion has become increasingly problematic. As teachers suffer from exhaustion, they cannot complete their expected workplace demands. Teachers are consistently given additional tasks without being provided with additional time to complete them. When teachers are exhausted, it is often caused by feelings of being overwhelmed, overworked, and underappreciated. The teachers in this study often spoke of the crippling exhaustion they experienced and the lack of support they received. For districts and schools to prevent teacher attrition from occurring, they must provide their teachers with the necessary support and guidance necessary to complete their workplace demands.

While several factors can cause teacher exhaustion, providing teachers with more support could often prevent it. Teachers must complete a plethora of tasks throughout their day, as well as adapt their instruction to meet the needs of their students (McCullough et al., 2022; See & Morris, 2021). With the inability to provide teachers with the support they need, teachers cannot perform at their highest potential. In alignment with Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation, educators must have each of their needs satisfied before they can reach self-actualization. Unfortunately, educators are not receiving enough sustenance from their schools and districts to meet the expectations communicated and demanded. In order to combat exhaustion and prevent its detrimental impacts on teacher retention, districts must meet the needs of their employees by providing additional professional and mental health support.

Recent studies concur that veteran teachers with more professional development exuded higher self-efficacy rates than novice teachers (Schunk, 2021; Toropova et al., 2021). Unfortunately, educators have communicated that NSD fails to provide them with support tailored to their specific needs and interests. They often feel that professional development opportunities are mundane and do not provide them with the knowledge or resources necessary to meet their needs or their students'. Teachers communicated that the support they received was often in vain or insufficient to carry out the tasks requested of them. Additionally, educators feel that the district fails to financially support their teachers, inhibiting their ability to provide the necessary resources for their students and causing teachers to feel disrespected in their field of expertise.

Cultivation of Positive Workplace Morale

When employees do not feel welcomed or respected, they question their purpose and importance. The workplace environment directly correlates to job satisfaction and teacher exhaustion (Beymer et al., 2023; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). In education, having a positive and supportive workplace is essential to creating an atmosphere where educators can teach efficiently, and students can become proactive learners. Schools and districts that fail to encourage their teachers will also fail to cultivate a functional workplace environment that proactively improves employee morale and relationships. The role of school district leaders and administrators is to lead schools, and their jurisdiction places immense pressure on them to lead their employees in a positive workplace that can prevent exhaustion.

The participants from this study unanimously agreed that ineffective administration and negative workplace morale were influential in the exhaustion they experienced and their decisions to resign from NSD. Educators yearn for employment options where they are cared for

and respected. A positive workplace is one where there are open lines of communication, collaboration, and symbiotic relationships. Unfortunately, teachers often find themselves in an environment where they fear retaliation for their opinions, are unable to effectively communicate with their administrators and peers and possess feelings of isolation. As teachers find themselves in an unsatisfactory workplace environment, exhaustion sets in, and consequently, teacher morale and attrition begin to deteriorate.

Positive and supportive leadership can positively influence colleagues' relationships, increase workplace morale, and increase job satisfaction (Beymer et al., 2023). Similar to the influence administration can have on workplace morale, the participants shared the prominence of positive relationships in being able to navigate a less than desirable environment and having a mentor teacher to assist them in combating their feelings of exhaustion. Frequently, participants mentioned their mentor teachers' positive impacts on their experiences teaching for NSD and how, if it were not for their support, they would have chosen to leave NSD much sooner. Unfortunately, many participants struggled to form relationships with colleagues other than their mentors, leaving them isolated and alone.

Environment's Perceived Link to Feelings Inadequacy and Declining Mental Health

The inability to supply teachers with ample support and maintain positive workplace morale can lead to feelings of exhaustion, inadequacy, and attrition. Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation further supports educators' needs to have their physiological, safety, love and belonging, and esteem needs met before having the capability to reach self-actualization. Through the lens of Maslow's (1943) theory, it is evident that an inability to meet the needs of educators can lead to teachers feeling inadequate and physically and/or mentally unable to complete the demands of their workplace. When teachers do not feel welcomed or respected in

their professional field, they can question their worth and purpose as educators.

As people experience burnout and exhaustion, their mental clarity and motivation are hindered (Papay et al., 2017; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). In agreeance with previous studies, the participants in this study all reported feeling inadequate during their time with NSD. These feelings of inadequacy were caused by the lack of communication, respect, and professional support they received. The participants often felt overwhelmed and disrespected by constant increases in workplace demands. Their feelings of being overwhelmed led them to doubt themselves as educators, consequentially, their self-esteem suffered exponentially. Because of the lack of workplace morale and supportive relationships, many participants began questioning their abilities to provide substantial and effective instruction for their students. The participants were ill-equipped to manage their workplace demands and caused an increase in exhaustion.

When teachers suffer from teacher burnout, they are overwhelmed and unable to complete daily tasks correctly and efficiently (Baka, 2015; Toropova et al., 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). As teachers experience burnout, their students will, in turn, distance themselves from their teachers, peers, and school (Atik & Özer, 2020). While some teachers may feel comfortable seeking assistance from their administration and peers, some do not. When some participants courageously articulated their concerns, they were disregarded or neglected, leaving them feeling insignificant and frustrated. After repeatedly being mistreated and ignored, many of the participants experienced a decline in their mental health, which led them to seek medical assistance to combat their feelings of inadequacy. Of the participants who sought medical advice or medication in response to their feelings of inadequacy, each of them was able to eventually discontinue their use of therapy or medication after they resigned from NSD.

Implications for Policy and Practice

  This section will discuss the implications for policy and practice regarding teacher exhaustion and its influence on teacher attrition. Solutions for stakeholders to prevent educator burnout and districts' ability to retain their teachers will be proposed. Stakeholders may include those in education at the district, state, and federal levels. Throughout this section, stakeholders will better understand the causes of exhaustion, receive suggestions on how burnout can be averted, and be encouraged to generate policies and practices that can be employed in the future.

Implications for Policy

  The findings of this qualitative case study present noteworthy implications regarding possible policies that could be employed to prevent teacher exhaustion and promote teacher retention. In support of previous research, the findings further attest to the significance of teacher exhaustion and its influence on teacher attrition (Chen et al., 2022; Rajendran et al., 2020). To combat exhaustion and attrition, stakeholders must be purposeful and persistent in applying policies that will consider the needs of teachers and improve workplace conditions.

  When educators are experiencing exhaustion, it is a result of their needs being insufficiently met (Fang et al., 2023). Policies and laws must be employed to support teachers and their mental health to increase support for teachers. Currently, support for mental health is lacking, and while the exhaustion teachers are experiencing is a result of the workplace, teachers are forced to seek medical help at their own expense. Laws and policies should be set to support teachers and allow them to seek help for which they will not be held financially liable.

  In addition to the financial burden teachers face when seeking mental health support, educators are often responsible for seeking professional development that will fulfill the requirements necessary to keep their teaching license. States should recognize the financial

weight they place on their employees, implement policies that provide professional development at no cost to teachers, and seek to create permanent licenses for their teachers after a specified amount of service years. Policies regarding the renewal of teaching licenses would prevent teachers from becoming overwhelmed by continuous licensure expectations and the fiscal weight it places on educators.

While finances can prove problematic, when accompanied by an inability to meet the needs of teachers, exhaustion can be exasperated. Education stakeholders can improve working conditions for teachers by implementing laws that provide teachers with guaranteed planning time and a limit on class sizes. To decrease exhaustion and increase support, law makers must be proactive in providing their teachers ample time to plan effective lessons for their students. With constant changes in curriculum, teachers must be given time and support to improve their understanding of the curriculum and receive the resources necessary for proper implementation. Additionally, when teachers are faced with a surplus of students, they cannot provide instruction relevant to their individual needs. Law makers must enact enrollment limits that will reduce roster sizes and allow districts to hire additional teachers when rosters exceed the allotted amount.

Implications for Practice

This qualitative case study presents reasonable implications to be applied to school settings to prevent teacher exhaustion and its influence on attrition. This study provides stakeholders with information pertaining to factors that are perceived to cause burnout among teachers and how it can be averted. While it is evident that teacher exhaustion and attrition are problematic in primary school teachers, the findings and suggestions apply to all grade-level

settings. The application using the information gathered from this study can be used to promote improved teacher wellness and teacher retention.

Districts and schools can work to increase the wellness of their employees through practices that encourage their teachers and prioritize meeting their needs through an intentional support structure. A practical implication for stakeholders would be to adjust the support they provide their teachers through mentoring programs. Teachers benefit from the relationships they form with veteran teachers, and lengthening mentoring programs can provide continuous support for teachers throughout their first five years of teaching. To prevent further exhaustion, schools, and districts must allow mentors and mentees to have time to meet during work hours instead of having them complete additional demands after their contract hours have ended. Providing novice teachers with time to meet with an experienced mentor and receive continuous support can reduce the exhaustion they experience and reduce teacher attrition.

Educators who feel supported can complete their workplace demands effectively and efficiently. Supporting teachers through wellness practices and mentor support is essential to preventing exhaustion, but teachers must also feel supported regarding student behavior. Districts can decrease teacher exhaustion by employing discipline practices that remove students who are consistently problematic. When teachers have severe discipline problems in their classrooms, they cannot meet their students' needs. Districts must establish discipline procedures that will address student behavior and prevent the damaging impacts it can have on teacher exhaustion.

While teachers can benefit from positive mentorships, districts must treat their employees respectfully through binding contracts. Currently, districts send contracts out months before the next school year begins. Because of this, schools are unsure of roster sizes, and while teachers

may agree to return for a specific position, contracts can be altered without the educators'

agreement. This behavior leaves teachers feeling disrespected as professionals and forced to

move teaching positions without their consent. If teachers disapprove and refuse to move, their

teaching certificates can be revoked. To rectify teacher exhaustion and its influence on attrition,

districts and schools must treat their employees as professionals and honor contracts as promised.

If teachers do not agree to move, they should not be penalized and should have the opportunity to

negotiate their contracts.

If schools and districts want to decrease attrition, teachers must be treated as

professionals and receive sufficient support from their schools and districts. Much of the

exhaustion teachers experience is caused by increased workplace demands not accompanied by

effective support. Roster sizes, copious amounts of testing, and student misbehavior bombard

teachers in primary schools. Schools and districts can support their teachers by providing

additional instructional aides to assist teachers with their workload and reduce the exhaustion

caused by increased workplace demands. This support method will allow teachers to emphasize

their instruction and skillfully manage tasks more efficiently.

Empirical and Theoretical Implications

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover the perceived influence teacher

exhaustion may have on educator attrition for primary school teachers in one urban school

district in central South Carolina. This section will discuss this study's empirical and theoretical

implications by comparing and contrasting the emerged themes with Maslow's (1943) theory of

human motivation and the literature in Chapter Two. Throughout this section, the findings will

be intertwined with existing research to provide information on the influence of teacher

exhaustion on attrition and how it may be prevented.

Empirical Implications

The empirical implications of this study show significant alignment with the literature review and how exhaustion influences teacher attrition. The literature powerfully supports the findings and themes revealed following data collection and further informs existing knowledge on how teacher retention can be achieved. The findings show the importance of teachers, administration, and workplace morale. As existing literature has shown, an inability to support teachers effectively can be detrimental to teacher retention and student success (Herman et al., 2018; Ozoemena et al., 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020).

This study extends research on teacher exhaustion and the role of districts and schools in the exhaustion experienced. Teachers often feel overwhelmed by their workplace demands and the lack of support they receive to meet their needs and their students (Toropova et al., 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). The participants in this study unanimously agreed that NSD was incapable of supporting and effectively providing them with the resources necessary to complete requests. While employed by NSD, the participants felt that NSD failed to acknowledge the intensity of teachers' workloads, and teachers voiced their concerns but were disregarded. The findings further support previous research that shows the influence that an increased workload and insufficient support can have on the exhaustion that teachers experience (Fang et al., 2023; Rajendran et al., 2020). Unfortunately, when schools cannot meet the needs of their teachers through sufficient support, there will be an inflation of exhaustion among teachers (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Rajendran et al., 2020; Schaack et al., 2022).

Existing research has demonstrated self-efficacy's significant influence on teacher exhaustion (Herman et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Zee & Koomen, 2016). In corroboration of the literature, the participants in this study verified how NSD's inability to

provide support influenced their exhaustion and the feelings of inadequacy they experienced. Although prior research has shown the influence that self-efficacy can have on teachers' abilities to complete work-related tasks (Herman et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Zee & Koomen, 2016), frequently, the participants shared how NSD continuously increased their workload, failed to recognize their achievements, and did not support their concerns regarding student behavior. In conjunction with the literature, the findings from this study reveal the need to support teachers and to set the conditions for self-efficacy; otherwise, exhaustion leads to attrition.

The alignment between prior research and this study's findings both suggest a strong correlation between ineffective leadership and teacher exhaustion (Ghanbari & Majooni, 2022). This study further clarifies the perception where administrators possess a significant role in increasing or decreasing burnout among teachers. In line with prior research (DeMatthews et al., 2022; Ergün & Coşkun, 2023; Ghanbari & Majooni, 2022; Scallon et al., 2023), the participants shared how their administrators in NSD failed to provide support, effectively communicate, or offer empathy. The literature and the findings from this study consistently reveal the dire need for leadership teams that are approachable and consistently seek how they can improve working conditions for their employees (Player et al., 2017; Scallon et al., 2023; Van den Borre et al., 2021).

While ineffective leadership played a significant role in the exhaustion experienced by the participants, the exhaustion was further magnified when they found themselves in a hostile workplace environment. Literature supports the findings from this study, and has shown the correlation between the school environment and their aptitude to accomplish their workplace demands (Farmer, 2020; Toropova et al., 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). The

participants found their exhaustion was amplified when their workplace environment was perceived to be unsupportive and negative. The teachers felt isolated, disconnected from their colleagues, and felt unwelcome to voice their concerns. While much of the literature pertains to how exhaustion inhibits teachers' abilities to deliver constructive learning experiences for their students (Jensen & Solheim, 2020; Waxman et al., 2021), the findings from this study extend research by showing how a toxic workplace environment can ultimately lead teachers to seek employment in a more supportive and positive workplace.

When teachers find themselves in a hostile environment that negates their needs, they become overwhelmed and incapable of completing all that is expected (Baka, 2015; Toropova et al., 2021; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). This study corroborates previous research through findings that reveal the perceived influence an unmanageable workload and expectations can have on how overwhelmed and exhausted teachers become. The participants felt that NSD had unrealistic expectations and failed to provide them with the necessary support and resources to work efficiently or effectively, leaving them overwhelmed and exhausted. The findings further show that when teachers become overwhelmed and are ill-equipped to fulfill workplace demands, they are more apt to become exhausted and unhappy with their employment (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Meredith et al., 2020).

Prior research has communicated the importance of offering a positive workplace environment where employees feel safe (Iancu et al., 2018; Waxman et al., 2021). This study furthers research on how teacher exhaustion and inadequate safety measures may correlate to teacher attrition. When schools cannot protect their teachers, they also cannot meet their teachers' needs, and exhaustion can increase exponentially (Yang et al., 2021). The participants from this study reported that student behavior and NSD's negligence made them feel unsafe. Participants

were often physically harmed by their students, and their administration failed to provide support or assistance to protect them from further harm. The exhaustion participants experienced due to inadequate safety measures adds additional findings to previous research, which showed the highest cases of exhaustion among teachers who felt unsafe in their workplaces (Ribeiro et al., 2022).

Significant alignment exists between the literature surrounding teacher exhaustion, and the findings gathered from this study. Through this qualitative case study, the findings strengthen previous research by communicating the causes of exhaustion as perceived by teachers and how it can influence attrition. The empirical implications provide further information and details on how a lack of support from districts and schools can impact their abilities to retain their teachers.

Theoretical Implications

Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation and the hierarchy of needs provide the theoretical framework for this study. This theory was utilized to aid in improving the understanding of teacher exhaustion and how it can influence teacher attrition. Using Maslow's (1943) theory to examine teacher exhaustion in NSD allowed for exhaustion to be analyzed through an inability to meet the needs of teachers. This theory consists of five tiers of needs that must be successfully achieved sequentially before reaching self-actualization. Once self-actualization has been achieved, one can reach their full potential. In alignment with Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation, educators must have successfully met their needs before effectively fulfilling their role as a teacher (Atik & Özer, 2020; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021).

Utilizing Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation, this case study examined teacher exhaustion and its perceived influence on educator attrition for primary school teachers in one urban school district in central South Carolina. In pursuit of achieving self-actualization,

educators must successfully have their physiological, safety, belonging, and esteem needs met. The findings of this study align with Maslow's (1943) theory and the importance of fulfilling each of these needs. Many participants could not meet their physiological needs while working for NSD. Participants shared that often, they were so overwhelmed with their workload and lack of support that they were forced to skip meals, could not stay adequately hydrated, and did not have opportunities to use the restroom. NSD's inability to meet their physiological needs left them feeling unsupported and overwhelmed.

Following the constructs of Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation, the findings from this study provide further insight into the importance of feeling safe in the workplace. When schools can meet teachers' basic needs, they will find that rates of exhaustion and attrition will begin to diminish (Herman et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Throughout this study, the participants verified the significance of feeling safe and its influence on exhaustion. Participants shared how NSD's ignorance of student behavior made them fearful and scared. Frequently, the participants spoke of instances where students physically assaulted them, and NSD failed to provide them with support or the promise to prevent future violence from occurring.

Throughout this study, the participants confirmed how NSD's negligence with regard to their physiological and safety needs left them feeling as though their presence was insignificant. The participants' recollections from their time with NSD often pertained to their feelings of isolation and feeling as though they did not belong. In alignment with Maslow's (1943) theory, the inability to provide support and a positive workplace environment for educators prevented them from experiencing love or belonging while employed by NSD. This study found that the exhaustion the participants experienced intensified when the administration was unsupportive,

insufficient resources were provided, and teachers' efforts were ignored. Maslows's (1943) theory of human motivati further clarifies why the participants experienced exhaustion due to NSD's failure to make them feel significant.

Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation exemplifies how NSD's inability to meet their teachers' needs can ultimately lead to their resignation. Educators must be confident in their understanding and ability to complete their workplace demands to perform optimally (Jensen & Solheim, 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Regarding Maslow's (1943) theory, the participants in this study could not confidently fulfill their roles as teachers because their self-esteem was lacking. While employed by NSD, the participants felt that the district and administrators were demeaning and, instead of recognizing their teacher's successes, chose to fixate on trivial matters. NSD's failure to recognize their teachers' efforts ultimately caused the participants to experience an increase in exhaustion and, according to Maslow's (1943) theory, unsuccessfully achieved the tier of esteem.

By meeting teachers' needs and ensuring they feel safe and supported, districts and schools can provide the guidance teachers need to fulfill their workplace demands (Herman et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Zee & Koomen, 2016). As educators become more comfortable and confident, they can meet their own and students' needs. This newfound confidence can increase teachers' inclinations and abilities to tailor their instruction to meet the needs of their students, improve academic success, establish better relationships with their students and peers, and supply them with the necessary tools to cope with undesirable situations (See & Morris, 2021; Sincer et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

When districts fail to meet the needs of their teachers, they will experience heightened rates of exhaustion and attrition (Chen et al., 2022; Rajendran et al., 2020). Maslow's (1943)

theory of human motivation provides further understanding of why teachers in NSD are incapable of reaching a level of self-actualization due to the exhaustion they experience. NSD's failure to meet their teachers' physiological, safety, belonging, and esteem needs has led to an inability for teachers to perform at their fullest potential. The utilization of Maslow's (1943) theory allows for clarification regarding how exhaustion and attrition are correlated in NSD.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations and delimitations must be considered while employing a qualitative case study to ensure proper validation and reliability. The limitations present portions of the study that are considered weaknesses and cannot be controlled. Delimitations are decisively made to provide specific guidelines and boundaries for the context of the study. Information regarding the limitations and delimitations is necessary to further explain the research scope and the defined goals.

Limitations

In order to provide further clarification regarding the constructs of this case study, it is necessary to provide information regarding the limitations. Case study limitations can include researcher bias and time constraints because of the requirement that teachers must have left the district within the past two years. While steps were taken to prevent limitations, some limitations did occur, such as the number of participants, the gender of the participants, and years of experience. Providing information on the limitations of this study aids in the explanation of weaknesses that occurred during data collection.

During this study, recruiting willing participants proved to be an unexpected challenge. Many potential participants did not meet the qualifications necessary for the study. The ability to

gather willing participants who met the necessary specifications resulted in a smaller sample size than anticipated. In addition to the number of participants, the ability to have a diverse gender population was problematic and resulted in the participants being represented by only females. Another limitation was the years of experience held by the participants. Most participants had 5-14 years of experience, while one had 32 years of experience. Only teachers with early childhood or elementary education degrees qualified to participate in this study, and because of this, exhaustion in middle and high school teachers was not incorporated. While measures were taken to reduce the potential of research bias, it is important to recognize that this is a limitation of qualitative studies.

Delimitations

This case study's ability to successfully obtain information on the influence of exhaustion on attrition in NSD was primarily due to the delimitations made. The delimitations made were purposeful and provided boundaries during data collection. Employing delimitations allowed the findings to address exhaustion and attrition in primary teachers specifically. Furthermore, it was most important to employ delimitations limiting the participants who would qualify to participate in this study.

When selecting participants for this study, it was necessary to define the qualifications participants must possess strategically. The participants had to have at least two years of teaching experience, suffer from burnout as defined by the World Health Organization (2019), and no longer teach in NSD. Additionally, participants had to have earned bachelor's degrees in early childhood or elementary education. Participants were required to be 18 or older to participate in this study and left NSD within the past two years. Setting these delimitations ensured that the participants had enough experience in the teaching profession and had left NSD recently enough

to recall their experiences with the district. Requiring the participants to answer qualifying questions guaranteed their time with NSD caused exhaustion and their decision to discontinue employment with the district.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover the perceived influence teacher exhaustion may have on educator attrition for primary school teachers in one urban school district in central South Carolina. The participants in this study included 12 teachers who chose to leave NSD due to the exhaustion they experienced. Each participant held degrees in early childhood or elementary education and served as a primary grade teacher during their time with NSD. During data collection, interviews, focus groups, and a writing prompt were used to gather information on the participants' experiences with exhaustion and how it led to their departure from the district.

Additional research could be beneficial considering the findings, limitations, and delimitations placed on the study. This study focused on the experiences of primary teachers in NSD. Future research could examine teachers in intermediate and high schools to gather information on how exhaustion influences attrition in teachers who instruct older students using the constructs of a case study. Furthering research, the field of education could benefit from analyzing the different experiences of teachers at various grade levels.

In addition to studying other educators' experiences, future research can seek to find ways to reduce exhaustion and attrition effectively. With teacher attrition rates on the rise, research should be dedicated to discovering how it can be averted through various strategies. A study of this kind would allow teachers to test strategies and report on their effectiveness in reducing exhaustion. Researchers could then provide a proactive approach to decreasing teacher

attrition and improving the workplace environment.

While a case study was used to examine exhaustion has influence on attrition, future research could utilize quantitative measures to analyze its influence on student academic success. A longitudinal study of this magnitude would observe students' grades in the years following their exposure to a teacher suffering from burnout and exhaustion. This study would follow and collect study data over several years to verify if teacher exhaustion influences a decline in student success. Furthermore, the findings could help encourage districts to be more proactive in providing the necessary support for their teachers to prevent exhaustion.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover the perceived influence teacher exhaustion may have on educator attrition for primary school teachers in one urban school district in central South Carolina. Through the use of Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation, the findings provide substantial information regarding how the inability to meet the needs of teachers can lead to heightened rates of attrition. This qualitative case study utilized interviews, focus groups, and a writing prompt to gather information on how exhaustion influences teachers' decisions to resign from NSD.

Using a thematic analysis allowed themes to emerge and information to be gathered regarding the burnout teachers experience. The findings from this study provide substantial insight regarding why NSD teachers are leaving the district and how it can be prevented. The participants were vital to the success of this study and provided NSD with suggestions that can help reduce exhaustion and retain teachers more effectively. By proactively reducing exhaustion through additional support and effective leadership practices, districts and schools can work to improve education and the well-being of their teachers.

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Appendix A

Consent

Title of the Project: The Influence of Teacher Exhaustion on Attrition Involving Primary

Teachers: A Qualitative Study

Principal Investigator: Carson Kleinknecht, Doctoral Student, School of Education, Liberty

University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years or older,

have at least two years of teaching experience, have suffered from burnout, hold a bachelor's

degree in early childhood or elementary education, and be no longer a teacher in Florence 1

School District (F1S). 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 case study is to discover the perceived influence teacher exhaustion may

have on educator attrition for primary school teachers in Florence 1 School District.

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:

1. Participate in a 15-20 minute virtual interview that will be video recorded.

2. Review your transcripts from the virtual interview to ensure accuracy. This will take approximately 10 minutes.

3. Participate in a 30-45 minute focus group interview. This interview will be virtual and will be video recorded.

4. Complete a typed or written journal prompt that will take approximately 10-15 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 a better understanding of how teacher exhaustion influences teacher attrition for primary teachers in F1S and how it can be prevented.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating 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 by replacing names with pseudonyms.

- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then deleted. The researcher and members of her doctoral committee have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Florence 1 School District. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

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

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

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

The researcher conducting this study is Carson Kleinknecht. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ███████████ ██████████████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Amy Schechter, 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 address 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 video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Printed Subject Name

_____

Signature & Date

Appendix B

Social Media Recruitment Post

ATTENTION FACEBOOK FRIENDS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctor of philosophy in education at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to discover the influence teacher exhaustion may have on educator attrition for primary school teachers. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, have a bachelor's degree in early childhood or elementary education, have two years of teaching experience, have suffered from burnout, and have chosen to leave Florence 1 School District within the past two years. Participants will be asked to participate in a 15-20 minute virtual interview and a 30-45 minute virtual focus group interview. Following your individual interview, you will be asked to review your transcripts to ensure accuracy, which will take about 10 minutes to complete. You will also be asked to complete a typed or written journal prompt that will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please direct message me or contact me at 843-992-3480 for more information. A consent document will be emailed to you one week before your interview.

Appendix C

Exhaustion Qualifier

1. Did you have feelings of exhaustion while employed by NSD?

2. Did you experience negative feelings or a decrease in your mental health while employed by NSD?

3. Did you experience a decrease in your professional efficacy while employed by NSD?

Appendix D

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please state your name, current occupation, and years of experience. CRQ

2. How long did you teach in NSD? CRQ

3. Why did you choose to leave NSD? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, SQ4

4. How could NSD have prevented your leaving their district? CRQ

5. What burnout symptoms did you experience? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, SQ4

6. How does teacher exhaustion influence NSD's ability to retain its teachers? CRQ

7. What could be the leading cause of teacher exhaustion in NSD? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, SQ4

8. How can NSD improve its ability to retain teachers? CRQ

9. What are NSD's strengths in supporting their teachers? CRQ

10. How did an inability to meet your physiological needs lead to your departure from NSD? SQ1

11. What role did safety play in your decision to leave NSD? SQ2

12. Explain how the need for belonging influenced your feelings of exhaustion. SQ3

13. Describe how your self-esteem was affected by the exhaustion you experienced. SQ4

14. What else would you like to share regarding your teaching experience in NSD? CRQ

Appendix E

Focus Group Questions

1. Please describe your experience working in NSD. CRQ

2. Please describe the burnout symptoms you experienced. SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, SQ4

3. Please describe how exhaustion impacted your decision to leave NSD. CRQ

4. How did your physiological needs influence the exhaustion you experienced? SQ1

5. How did your need for safety influence the exhaustion you experienced? SQ2

6. How did your needs for love and belonging influence the exhaustion you experienced?

   SQ3

7. How did your need for esteem influence the exhaustion you experienced? SQ4

8. What would you like NSD to know about your experience working for them? CRQ
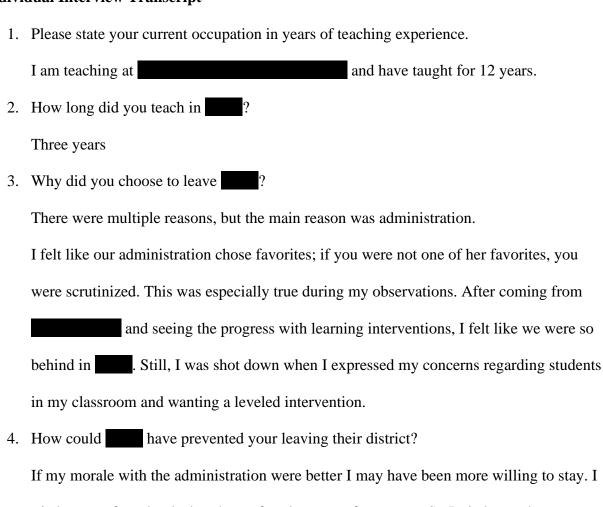
Appendix F

Letter Writing Prompt

After having experienced burnout as a teacher, what would you tell yourself as a first-year teacher to prepare yourself for teaching and prevent exhaustion from occurring?

Appendix G

Individual Interview Transcript

1. Please state your current occupation in years of teaching experience.

    I am teaching at ███████████████████████ and have taught for 12 years.

2. How long did you teach in ██████?

    Three years

3. Why did you choose to leave ██████?

    There were multiple reasons, but the main reason was administration.

    I felt like our administration chose favorites; if you were not one of her favorites, you were scrutinized. This was especially true during my observations. After coming from ██████████████ and seeing the progress with learning interventions, I felt like we were so behind in ██████. Still, I was shot down when I expressed my concerns regarding students in my classroom and wanting a leveled intervention.

4. How could ██████ have prevented your leaving their district?

    If my morale with the administration were better I may have been more willing to stay. I tried to transfer schools, but they refused my transfer request. So I tried to make a change, but they did not allow me, so I had to leave.

5. What burnout symptoms did you experience?

    Time was a big burnout for me because of the new HMH curriculum. I felt like I was staying an hour or more after school every day to plan for my team. I did not feel that my team helped me plan, which was a lot. I was exhausted all of the time, and I was irritable at home as well. I felt like I was overworked and had too much on my plate to accomplish.

6. How does teacher exhaustion influence ███'s ability to retain teachers?

Three of us on the same team left, and one of the other teachers went with me. Teachers need more help and support. Schools need a literacy coach to help plan reading because it is just too much. The confusion with planning reading and the lack of support from the administration caused an increase in my anxiety and daily thinking.

7. What could be the leading cause of teacher exhaustion in ███?

Administration support is a big. I would work for hours weekly on lesson plans and Google Slides to send them to my administrator with only negative feedback. Only receiving negative feedback would tear me down after knowing how hard I had worked on it and everything I had put in. So, I had zero support because I would get negative feedback on the lesson plans I sent in. This may have come from higher up, but I still did not think it was right. My Google Slides would have everything on it, from the standards to the essential questions, and they were interactive. I would always have pages that would be interactive with whatever I was teaching that day. It was intense because I was proud of my work but was always told it was not good enough.

8. How can ███ improve its ability to retain teachers?

They need to give more support. I know they make teachers go through the tiers with observations. I feel like support was not there whenever I would get a two for student environment because one of my students had his hood on his head. It was sad that you were put down for stuff like that. I think just supporting in ways that aren't benign and do not matter.

9. What are ████'s strengths in supporting their teachers?

   At ██████, they are good at trying to support us with specialty lunches, catering, or having food trucks come out. They were always great at spending money on stuff like that. The weekly team meetings with the administration were good if, when meeting, you could get your point across.

10. How did an inability to meet your physiological needs lead to your departure from ████?

    That goes back to how I was at home because if my needs were not met at school, I could not do what I needed to do for my family. Then, at home, I felt like my husband and I were arguing more, which was mainly on me. I was physically tired because of what was happening at work.

11. What role did safety play in your decision to leave ████?

    I didn't have much of an issue in regards to safety. I did have one student who would have to be carried away a lot in an ambulance and would say that he would hurt someone at school. I don't feel like that was taken care of by the administration. It was typically given to our guidance counselor, who would or would not be available due to her needs.

12. Explain how the need for belonging influenced your feelings of exhaustion.

    I would say with most of my team, yes. The only issue I had was with administration and maybe one team member. The lead team member would purposefully leave me and a few others out of the situation in which we should have been involved. With the administration, I never felt as if I belonged.

13. Describe how your self-esteem was affected by the exhaustion you experienced.

    I feel like I was belittled in some way. It felt like I knew I was doing a great job. Because where I came from, I felt like I was told that a lot and was definitely supported. So,

coming to ▮▮▮▮ and not feeling that same kind of support lowered my self-esteem. My self-esteem was affected because of the lack of support.

14. What else would you like to share regarding your teaching experience in ▮▮▮▮?

Listening to teachers and getting advice from outsiders could help a lot. I felt like when I came here, I was constantly trying to climb up a ladder or attempting to obtain goals set by the district that was not attainable. The district needs to begin trusting teachers and the training they have to do their job.

Appendix H

Letter Writing Example

Dear First-Year Teacher,

You're entering a profession with the capability of taking everything from you, if you let it. The to-do list will seem never-ending (because it is), and there will always seem to be something you're failing at. Stop and take a breath. It's okay if you don't finish everything. Prioritize what needs to be done each day, the rest will still be there tomorrow. You are not a bad teacher for leaving at a reasonable time each day. You are not a bad teacher if your classroom isn't Pinterest-worthy or completely clean and organized at the end of the day. Take your personal days! You deserve time to yourself to rest and recharge, and you can't pour from an empty cup.

Find the people who build you up and pour into you- this part is crucial! There will be days when you're not sure why you got yourself into this job, so having people in your corner makes the hard days a little easier and the good days a little better. There will be days when you're drained- mentally, physically, emotionally- and you're not alone in that feeling. Lean on your people and ask for help when you need it. When people come to observe your classroom, be honest about the struggles! Change won't happen until you take action.

Everything will not always be rainbows and sunshine, but look for those little glimmers of sunlight- they're what will get you through. Whether or not you hear it from your administration, school district, etc.- you ARE making a difference in the lives of so many.

Appendix I

Coding Frequency

	Inability to Meet Basic Needs	Toxic Work Environment	Feelings of Inadequacy	Insufficient Support
1 : Focus Group 1 Transcripts	48	35	27	51
2 : Focus Group 2 Transcripts	56	88	44	82
3 : Participant 10-Individual Interview Transcripts	9	13	15	27
4 : Participant 10-Writing Prompt	5	1	3	1
5 : Participant 11-Individual Interview Transcripts	18	12	15	13
6 : Participant 11-Writing Prompt	15	8	4	6
7 : Participant 12-Individual Interview Transcripts	6	12	6	27
8 : Participant 12-Writing Prompt	1	1	1	2
9 : Participant 1-Individual Interview Transcripts	15	26	7	9
10 : Participant 1-Writing Prompt	5	4	4	4
11 : Participant 2-Individual Interview Transcripts	23	26	14	12
12 : Participant 2-Writing Prompt	2	3	3	7
13 : Participant 3-Individual Interview Transcripts	16	19	6	15
14 : Participant 3-Writing Prompt	13	6	5	3
15 : Participant 4-Individual Interview Transcripts	12	25	10	15
16 : Participant 4-Writing Prompt	6	2	7	2
17 : Participant 5 Writing Prompt	11	3	2	4
18 : Participant 5-Individual Interview Transcripts	13	8	7	8
19 : Participant 6-Individual Interview Transcripts	14	32	4	21
20 : Participant 6-Writing Prompt	12	4	3	1
21 : Participant 7-Individual Interview Transcripts	9	32	16	36
22 : Participant 7-Writing Prompt	12	1	0	3
23 : Participant 8-Individual Interview Transcripts	43	27	29	30
24 : Participant 8-Writing Prompt	5	3	6	0
25 : Participant 9 Letter	3	0	1	1
26 : Participant 9-Individual Interview Transcripts	13	8	7	12
	385	399	246	392

Appendix J

Creating Subthemes

Insufficient Support		Feelings of Inadequacy		Toxic Work Environment		Inability to Meet Basic Needs	
Lack of Parental Support	-Lack of Parental Support	**Lack of Recognition**	-Lack of Recognition -Feelings of Inadequacy	**Negative Workplace Environment**	-Negative Workplace Environment	**Disregard for Physiological Needs**	-Disregarding Basic Needs -Sleep -Inability to Meet Basic Needs
Lack of Administrative Support	-Lack of Professional Accountability -Administrative Issues -Lack of Professional Support			**Isolation and Fear**	-Feeling Trapped -Isolated -Fear of Consequences		
Lack of Peer Support	-Peer Support	**Diminished Confidence**	-Lost Passion -Decreased Professionalism	**Lack of Respect**	-Disrespect -Mistreatment		
				Safety Concerns	-Fear of Safety -Student Behaviors -Unclear Safety Protocols -Unsafe Working Conditions	**Decline in Self-Care**	-Dread -Guilt
				Unmanageable Workload	-Unmanageable Workload -Unattainable Expectations	**Decline in Mental Health**	-Overwhelmed -Mental Health -Stress -Anxiety

Appendix K

IRB Approval Letter

IRB #: IRB-FY23-24-292
Title: The Influence of Teacher Exhaustion on Attrition Involving Primary Teachers: A Qualitative Study
Creation Date: 8-18-2023
End Date:
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Carson Kleinknecht
Review Board: Research Ethics Office
Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Exempt	Decision	Exempt

Key Study Contacts

Member	Amy Schechter	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	
Member	Carson Kleinknecht	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	
Member	Carson Kleinknecht	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	