Teacher Wellbeing and National Context

By

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Abstract

This Master of Teaching Research Project is a qualitative study that examines teacher wellbeing in different national contexts. The existing literature on teacher stress suggests that there are several factors that contribute to teacher stress which include excessive administrative demands, negative relationships with administrators, and lack of preparation. This study validates the existing literature while highlighting specific strategies that supported three teachers in overcoming the experience of burnout. This study identifies key strategies in promoting positive wellbeing in teachers. This study contributes to the literature related to teacher wellbeing as it highlights a correlation between the support and expectations in which each teacher had access to in their national context, and teacher wellbeing. This study makes recommendations for various stakeholders in order to promote positive wellbeing in both teachers and students in different national contexts.

Key Words: Wellbeing, Mental Health, Teacher Burnout
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Research Context

With the advancement of formal education, the responsibilities assigned to teachers have also developed. In addition to the traditional role of creating lessons and formulating assessments, teachers are now expected to complete administrative tasks whilst accommodating a range of different needs. Consequently, the term burnout, which has been coined to describe feelings of emotional exhaustion caused by one's profession, are often coupled with the teaching profession (Brunsting, 2014; Dombrovskis et al., 2011; Evers & Tomic, 2003; Harrell, Leavell, Tassel, & McKee, 2004; Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2006; Lloyd, 2012; Sato & McLaughlin, 1992). Studies suggest that within Canada, approximately 30% of novice teachers abandon the profession (Karsenti & Collin, 2013). In the United States, the number is as high as 46% (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2014). This data might suggest that teacher burnout is experienced by teachers globally. However, several international studies have found that in some contexts, teachers do not typically experience emotional exhaustion, and the burnout rate can be as low as 5% in the first five years (Coulter & Abney, 2009; Karsenti & Collin, 2013; Hakanen et al., 2006). These findings raise questions as to what conditions impact North American teachers’ overall wellbeing.

A wealth of existing research has investigated how burnout is manifested within teachers, what the implications of this manifestation become, what can mitigate the experience of burnout. Based on such studies, burnout among teachers has been most commonly related to chronic feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation in the workplace, and lack of self-efficacy (Demeroutiet al. 2009; Harell et al., 2004, Liston et al., 2006; Lloyd, 2012; Sato & McLaughlin,
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1992; McCormick & Barnett, 2014). The literature describes a range of symptoms of teacher burnout, however, the aforementioned findings are the most dominant among the research.

1.1 Research Problem

It is evident that teachers in North America are still grappling with unmanageable amounts of demands and tasks, in addition to other various predictive factors (Drewett, 2005; Harell et al. 2004; Van Maële & Van Houtte, 2015). As a result of these predictors, teachers are developing burnout more commonly than ever before and as a result, leave the profession (Lloyd, 2012). Not only does the instance of burnout negatively impact a teacher's physical and emotional health, burnout also directly diminishes the quality of teaching which students receive as well as the standards set out by the Ontario College of Teachers (Coulter & Abney, 2009; Evers and Tomic, 2003; Karsenti & Collin, 2013; Hakanen et al., 2006). The growing numbers of teacher burnout are not only affecting the teachers involved but also student learning. Through the analysis of literature, it is evident that much of the research related to teacher burnout examines teachers directly within the school milieu. As a result, there is limited resources which study the effectiveness of teacher education programs in preparing its students. Of the literature that is related to this topic, the findings are inconsistent. Through examining the literature, it would be beneficial if studies further consider why some nations experience teacher burnout at disproportionate rates, in comparison to others, while also examining how these nations employ the preventative strategies suggested in the literature. This work could inform an understanding as to the extent that national context plays a role in developing teacher capacity to cope with the stresses that accompany teaching and schooling, and decipher ways in which Canadian teacher education and development might respond in turn.
1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to learn how a small sample of elementary educators from different national contexts managed to overcome the experience of burnout, and to learn what factors and resources supported them in doing so. Given the diversity of teacher burnout rates on a global scale (Coulter & Abney, 2009; Karsenti & Collin, 2013; Hakanen et al., 2006), I am interested in recruiting teacher participants who teach in Ontario and others who teach in international contexts. This will inform an understanding of how burnout is overcome in different national contexts. Thus, my research is also interested in learning teacher perspectives on how national context plays a role in the development and overcoming of burnout. A further purpose of my research is to share my findings with the educational community in order to further support emotional and mental health of teachers and elevate student learning in Ontario.

1.3 Research Questions

The main question which is guiding the direction of my research is: How did a small sample of elementary educators teaching in different national contexts overcome the experience of burnout, and what factors and resources supported them in doing so?

Subsidiary Questions:

- What are these teachers' perspectives on the relationship between teachers’ emotional and mental health and students’ experience of schooling?
- What key factors contribute to these teachers’ levels of stress and how do these impact their teaching practice?
- What experiences and support resources helped to prepare these teachers to enact strategies for reducing stress and overcoming burnout?
**1.4 Reflexive Positioning Statement**

The topic of teacher health is of interest to me as it seems that much research and literature dedicated to education often investigates an abundance of different topics related to schooling, yet seldom investigates teacher health. As someone who has been involved within the human service sector in both hospital and school settings, it is evident that professionals within the field who develop symptoms such as vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, post traumatic stress, and burnout are more common than commonly understood.

During my placement within a hospital setting, I experienced a situation that led to post-traumatic stress. As a result, I was unable to effectively support the patients I was working with. This situation is what stemmed my interest in understanding how impactful practitioner health actually is, in any milieu. Bringing this experience with me into the teaching field, I have been actively interested in learning how one's profession is directly correlated to physical and emotional health, and how this health then affects those we work with. Together, my professional experiences, as well as my passion for travelling and aspirations to work abroad cultivated my interest in examining teacher health in both my country of origin, but also internationally. Thus, I am keen to understand the possible factors which influence teacher health within different contexts, and am eager to learn about exemplary practice which I can share with colleagues and the education system I will be working within on a more micro level.
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1.5 Preview of the whole

In order to respond to the research questions, I will be conducting a qualitative research study using purposeful sampling to interview 3 teachers, working in different countries about their experience of overcoming burnout and their perspectives on the role of national context in preventing/responding to teacher burnout. In Chapter 2, I review the literature that highlights predictors and protective factors related to teacher burnout. Additionally, I review the impact that burnout has on various groups of individuals. I also reflect on what the literature has outlined about the correlation between burnout and teacher preparation programs. Lastly, I review burnout rates and teacher health based on different international sources. In Chapter 3, I go into specific details about the research design. Then, in Chapter 4, I report my research findings and discuss their significance in relation to the information gathered from the literature review. In Chapter 5, I identify the implications of the research findings for my own teacher identity and practice, and for the educational community. I also formulate a series of questions raised by the research findings, and point to areas for future research. References and a list of appendices are found at the end.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter I review the literature in the areas related to burnout among teachers. More specifically, I review the significance of burnout in different contexts. I start by reviewing the literature in the area of predictors of teacher attrition and I highlight common themes outlined in the research. From there, I explore the implications which burnout imposes on both teachers and students. Next, I review research that provides the public with strategies to prevent and intervene on teacher burnout. I then critically examine the literature highlighting a correlation between burnout and teacher education programs. Finally, I review research that inspects teacher burnout within different national contexts in order to identify intervention and prevention strategies and factors known to have an impact on this phenomenon.

2.1 Defining Burnout

The term "burnout" was initially coined by Freudenberger (1985) to describe the negative emotional response that a group of female social workers had experienced subsequent to working in the field for several years. Based on the observations of this sample of professionals, Freudenberger (1985) focused the majority of his research in psychology on establishing how to define burnout, along with identifying specific phases of it. He explained that burnout could be classified as a "state of mental and physical exhaustion caused by one's professional life" (Freudenberger, 1974, p. 357). Since this initial definition, much research has gone into understanding burnout within different professional disciplines including, the teaching profession (Coulter & Abney, 2009). More recently, Brunsting (2014) emphasises that burnout occurs when an individual is experiencing work-related stress for long periods of time. Indeed, much of the
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research available that defines burnout reflects the idea that it is related to emotional exhaustion caused by one's profession (Brunsting, 2014; Dombrovskis et al., 2011). While the literature focuses on burnout in a range of disciplines, the purpose of this review is to highlight research conducted on this matter as it relates to the teaching profession.

2.1.1 Burnout and the teaching profession

Burnout has become a very familiar concept within sectors relating to human services, but is particularly prevalent in the educational field (Evers & Tomic, 2003). Harell et al. (2004) defend this notion by emphasising that teachers, specifically those who have been in the profession for under five years, reported high levels of stress and emotional illness leading to long term absences. There is a wealth of literature which suggests that burnout is prevalent in teachers who are new to the field (Harell et al., 2004, Liston et al., 2006; Lloyd, 2012; Sato & McLaughlin, 1992). However, burnout also emerges among mid-career teachers as teaching is known to evoke high levels of stress (Huberman, 1993). In his study, Kyriacou (2001) found that one quarter of the teacher participants associated the teaching profession with high levels of stress. The frequent stress experienced by professionals has actually become the number one cause of teachers leaving the profession (Lloyd, 2012). Despite the growing awareness and literature related to teacher burnout, Evers & Tomic (2003) have found that the rate of burnout is alarmingly increasing within the teaching profession in North America. Given the growing numbers of teachers experiencing emotional exhaustion, research on this phenomenon is also increasing. Much of this research is interested in identifying the causes of teacher burnout. The literature highlights a multitude of sources which can contribute to the experience of burnout, however, many studies repeatedly agree on a number of main themes. The first reoccurring theme is that teachers are unable to successfully complete the frequent and varying demands that
they assume on a daily basis. The literature also suggests that it is specific job factors such as, frequent behaviour management, and additional paperwork that cultivate the experience of emotional exhaustion among teachers (Golembiewski et al. 1983; Harrell et al. 2004, Kyriacou, 2001; McCormick & Bennet, 2011). Similarly, organizational factors such as inadequate support from colleagues, administrative staff and insufficient access to adequate resources put teachers at high risk of developing burnout (Brunsting, 2014; Martin, 2010; Zhang & Yu, 2007). Additionally, the literature outlines that teachers who have difficulty managing student behaviour as well as adopting their own self-regulation strategies are also at high risk of developing burnout. Golembiewski et al. 1983; Harrell et al. 2004, Kyriacou, 2001). Thus, the literature identifies a range of causes which may contribute to the development of burnout. It is important to note, however, that it is not individual causes which create burnout, but the experience of numerous factors on an ongoing basis over a period of time, which creates burnout (Caprara et al, 2003; Chan, 2011; Chang, 2009; Demerouti et al., 2009; Linston et al, 2006; Tsouluhas, 2005). The literature also highlights that not only does burnout affect the physical and emotional health of teachers, but it also has detrimental effects on students' learning and negatively impacts the quality of teaching within North America (Dombrovski et al., 2011; Evers & Tomic, 2003; Karsenti & Collin, 2013).

2.1.2 Recognizing burnout in teachers

It is evident that an adverse amount of teachers have indicated strong feelings of stress as it correlates to their professional lives. Given the amount of teachers struggling with stress within the work place, researchers have begun to focus on recognizing and understanding the indicators of burnout in order to effectively manage stress (Harell et al., 2004, Liston et al., 2006; Lloyd, 2012). It is clear that burnout manifests in recurring ways among teachers (Friedman,
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1991; Golembiewski, 1983; Hakanen et al. 2006). According to Freudenberger (1986), signs of burnout can be both physical and behavioural. Physical signs of burnout include illnesses or ailments, which can include chronic feelings of fatigue, common illnesses such as a cold for extended periods of time, headaches or reactions to the skin. The research also indicates that teachers who are experiencing burnout often display specific behaviours. Some of the indicators include a lack of patience, and displaying low tolerance for students and their behaviour (Freudenberger, 1986). Recent research conducted by McCormick & Barnett (2014) suggests that there are three dimensions of teacher burnout. The first dimension is the idea of emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion within educators has often been correlated to work overload, as well as negative feelings about the work. The literature classified depersonalization as an indicator of burnout. Depersonalization has been described as consistent detachment from relationships and the teaching profession, and teachers have reported disengagement within the classroom as a result of depersonalization (Demerouti et al. 2009). Moreover, the research commonly outlined that teachers' attributed a sense of lacking in personal accomplishments, specifically within their practice as common indicator of burnout. Teachers highlighted that they felt they were not adequately supporting all students in reaching their maximum potential and this contributed to high levels of stress (Evers & Tomic, 2003).

2.2 Predictors of Teacher Burnout

With the rapid increase of teacher burnout among educators, research has turned its attention the factors causing teacher stress and burnout. Factors vary between individuals as well as contexts, and they are commonly interrelated.
Factors related to the actual job itself have become the main contributor to teacher burnout (Golembiewski et al. 1983; Harrell et al. 2004, Kyriacou, 2001; McCormick & Bennet, 2011). The most prevalent job-related factor is the increased quantity and variety of demands teachers are responsible for (Caprara et al., 2003; Martin, 2010). Guglielmi & Tatrow (1998) examine this factor through the concept using a "demand-control model" (p. 63). The demand-control model highlights the correlation between the high demands and requirements of a teacher, but also suggests that the level of autonomy is related. Their research emphasizes that teachers who have the highest demands and the lowest autonomy are often more likely to burnout. Similarly, Guglielmi & Tatrow (1998) apply the "person environment fit model" (p. 62) to assess the job demands of a teacher. Unlike the demand-control model, instead of assessing the amount of autonomy a teacher has within the work place, this model emphasizes that teachers are at a high risk of burnout when they have a range of high demands, and when they do not have the ability to meet each of their requirements. Brunsting (2014) argues that many demands put upon teachers are given under strict time constraints, which contribute to the overall stress of a practitioner. Additionally, Zhang & Yue (2007) also underscore “role overload” as a contributing factor and emphasize the idea that not only do teachers have curriculum based responsibilities, but also additional non-educational responsibilities related to students, colleagues, parents and the public. Furthermore, research studies based in different local contexts, specifically research from the United States and China, also identified that in relation to the demands of the job, an additional stressor is that annual salaries are not sufficient and there is little room for career growth (Eklund & Kappan, 2009; Yong & Yue, 2007). Guglielmi and Tatrow (1998) look at such factors through an "effort and rewards model"
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(p.65). They emphasize that if the reward, which can be job benefits for instance, does not reflect the effort the teacher has invested, this can cause negative reactions towards the profession and in turn, cause burnout. Further research is needed to investigate how teachers are confronting these challenges and demands.

2.2.2 Work organizational factors

Job related factors seem to be the most obvious contributing factors to burnout, however, much research also suggests that the school organization and resources are just as significant (Hakanen, 2006). In relation to the quantitative demands, many teachers also do not have access to adequate resources (Elkund & Kappan 2009). Brunsting (2014) emphasizes that teachers in North America often assume a student centered pedagogy, but in order to meaningfully achieve this, schools must do a better job providing adequate resources. A range of research highlights that school communities do not have access to adequate tools for teaching, technology, or health and well-being resources (Brunsting, 2014; Martin, 2010; Zhang & Yu, 2007). Teachers also reported that they could not adequately assess and monitor the success of all students with large class sizes. More recently, much of the profession has adopted a team-based approach and teaching is often viewed as an interactive profession (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015). Nevertheless, research has found that lack of colleague and administrative support is a further cause of burnout. Martin (2010) outlines the importance of administrative support for practicing teachers and highlights that the quality of leadership within a school community greatly impacts the level of stress that a teacher will experience. The literature validates this idea through emphasizing that positive relationships that provide constructive feedback between administrators and teachers, allow for teachers to experience recognition and personal growth within the profession (Eklund and Kappan, 2009). Similarly, lack of support, trust and poor peer
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climate among colleagues can act as a contributing factor to burnout (Eklund and Kappan, 2009; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015). In sum, relationships within school communities are often a source of stress for teachers (Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998; Brunsting, 2014; Martin, 2010; Yong & Yue, 2007; Kyriacou, 2001).

2.2.3 Student factors

In addition to factors related to the actual work of teachers and the organization, literature has highlighted that the behaviour of students, as well as the reaction to this behaviour can be a major contributor to teacher stress. Brunsting (2014) notes that teachers are often exposed to challenging behaviours among some of their students. Based on the challenging behaviour presented, often teachers, particularly new teachers, have difficulty managing these behaviours and as a result, develop burnout and often leave the profession (Harell, 2004). However, Chang (2009) challenges this notion through emphasizing that it is not the behaviour that the students are displaying, but the judgements which teachers are making about the behaviour that are the source of stress. As teachers develop negative emotions in relation to student behaviour, these perceptions can lead to unpleasant emotions, which in turn can lead to burnout. McCormick and Barnett (2011) suggest that this consistent negative perception may lead teachers to have a sense of lack of accomplishment, which can further lead to emotional exhaustion or burnout.

2.2.4 Personal factors

In addition to external factors, which can be a predictor of burnout, the literature frequently highlights that some teachers have actually identified factors which contribute to burnout that are separate from the workplace (Andrew, 2010; Pillay et al, 2005; Tsouluhas, 2005). Andrew (2010), for example, emphasizes that a teacher's overall quality of life is highly
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correlated with their emotional health within the workplace. Furthermore, this article suggests that socioeconomic factors such as income and place of residence play an important role in the health and well being of a teacher (Andrew, 2010; Dombrovski et al., 2011). Since role overload has been identified as one contributing factor of burnout, research explains that teachers who lack coping and self-care strategies to manage demands are often more likely to develop high stress levels (Brunsting et al, 2014; Drewett, 2005; Martin, 2010). Based on this, many teachers have felt work obligations interfere into their personal lives and as a result cause emotional disturbances. Drewett (2005) also suggests that teachers who experience high levels of stress commonly lack self-care and coping strategies. Similarly, a teacher's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) has been a consistent term among the literature related to teacher burnout. It is evident that a teacher's beliefs in their own skills often contributes to competency within the school setting (Caprara et al, 2003; Chan, 2011; Chang, 2009; Demerouti et al., 2009). Pillay et al. (2005) suggest that a teacher's view on their own competency directly influences the manifestation of burnout. In their study, they founds that if teachers do not believe to be competent in their work, they are more likely to experience burnout. Thus, both external and internal factors impact the development of burnout in teachers. It is important to consider that it is not a single factor that causes burnout individually, but a collection of these factors included in day-to-day activities over a prolonged period of time Rudlow (1999).

2.3 Implications of Teacher Burnout

In addition to understanding how teachers develop stress and burnout, educational research has also looked at how burnout impacts teachers and students. As aforementioned, it is clear that there is a correlation between teacher stress and motivation. Dombrovski (2011) highlights the idea that teachers who suffer from burnout often lack motivation within the
classroom. In his study, he found that lack of motivation has often lead to diminished quality of lessons. This, he and others have pointed out, could subsequently lead to a loss of motivation and interest in subject material by students (Dombrovski et al., 2011; Evers & Tomic, 2003). Research has also found that despite a lack of motivation, many teachers feel obligated to physically go to work when they are not emotionally well, engaging in the "presenteeism" phenomenon (Demerouti, 2008, p. 56). Demerouti (2008) suggests that often teachers who are coping with burnout feel pressure to be present within the classroom, even when they are ill. The research further explains that despite the positive intentions, this may not always be beneficial to the teacher, organization or students. Together, lack of motivation and "presenteeism" are correlated to the development of depersonalisation. Pillay et al. (2005) further suggests that teachers who are experiencing feelings of depersonalisation often distance themselves from students and colleagues. Depersonalization has been categorized as behaviour which seems distant or disengaged (Pillay et al., 2005). Additionally, this can cause poor attitudes towards students and the work itself. Evers and Tomic (2003) emphasize that poor attitudes within the school milieu are detrimental to the overall school community, as students are able to recognize burnout and in turn, adopt this negativity which has the ability to diminish the class climate. With the continuous increase of teachers leaving the profession, this can negatively impact the teaching standards in North America (Karsenti & Collin, 2013). Based on the literature, it is evident that burnout not only has implication on teachers who are experiencing it, but on the school community as a whole.

2.4 Prevention and Intervention Strategies for Burnout

Similar to the wealth of research related to causes that contribute to teacher stress, prevention strategies highlighted within the literature are also in abundance. Based on this, I
have systematized these strategies into three separate categories; professional development, supports and resources, and emotional and personal development.

2.4.1 Professional development

The literature frequently highlights that in order to veer away from developing unmanageable levels of stress, teachers must become educated on ways to manage the range of factors that contribute to it. McCormick & Barnett (2011) suggest that teachers must develop student behaviour management techniques in order to minimize the stress within the classroom. The research further suggests that teachers participate in professional development workshops to further expand upon behaviour management techniques they can use.

As I mentioned, teachers often develop burnout as they feel they are not able to complete the range of responsibilities which are required of them. Zhang & Yu (2007) suggest that teachers develop effective time management techniques in order to avoid emotional exhaustion. The research highlights that teachers who are able to effectively prioritize duties are less likely to feel emotionally overwhelmed (Drewett, 2005). Similarly, Zhang & Yu (2007) suggest that teachers should become comfortable with defining their role responsibilities. This can happen through understanding the limits and responsibilities which they can realistically undertake.

Liston et al. (2006) emphasize that teacher burnout can be avoided through developing effective and consistent approaches to teaching. The research further goes onto to emphasize that teachers who develop a comfort with the material that they are teaching, as well as their own personal style, are less likely to develop burnout. Thus, this research suggests teachers who develop an understanding for their preferred method of teaching, and consistently employ this method, are less likely to burnout. However, Zhang & Yu (2007) challenge this through
suggesting that instead of utilizing a consistent strategy, in order to prevent burnout teachers must welcome reforms. This can happen through altering teaching style and experimenting with a diverse range of teaching techniques.

Given the variety of suggestions in relation to prevention of teacher burnout, it is evident firstly, that teachers are able to attend a multitude of professional development workshops on a range of different topics. Additionally, the research often stresses that this professional development is a definite protective factor of burnout (Kyriacou, 2001).

2.4.2 Supports and resources

Teachers reporting inadequate support and resources was another common theme when assessing causes related to burnout (Brunsting, 2014; Martin, 2010; Zhang & Yu, 2007). As a result, the literature identifies a range of supports which can be beneficial to teachers, and prevent the emergence of burnout. The most common form of support which can diminish the experience of teacher stress, is support from administrators (Drewett, 2005; Harell et al. 2004; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015). The research suggests that active involvement from administrators acts as a protective factor for stress and also develops a positive school climate. Similar to this, Drewett (2005) emphasizes that with a positive school climate, teachers are able to feel more comfortable in communicating and collaborating with colleagues and parents. As a result of this, teachers develop trusting relationships within the community, which act as a buffer for burnout (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015).

Hakanen (2006) focuses much on the idea that adequate resources act as a preventative factor for burnout. Hakanen (2006) refers to resources as an entity that can be physical, social, or organizational and assist in reducing job demands, work to achieve goals, or encourage personal
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growth. Thus, it is evident that with adequate resources available, they can support teachers in
many of the areas which have often been identified to cause burnout. Drewett (2005) supports
this through emphasizing that resources within a community act as firm support for teachers, and
essentially ease the responsibilities that they assume. As the term resources has been loosely
defined, resources can act as supports in a range of different areas pertaining to the teaching
profession, including physical, technological or emotional. Thus, it is evident that with the
inclusion of a range of resources within the school community, teachers will utilize these
resources and as result, student learning will be enhanced and teacher burnout will be reduced
(Yong & Yue, 2007).

2.4.3 Emotional and personal development

As burnout has been defined as a state of emotional exhaustion (Brunsting, 2014 &
Dombrovskis et al., 2011) the literature has identified that development related to one's
emotional intelligence often protects teachers from experiencing burnout (Chan, 2011; Chang,
2009; Drewett, 2005; Eklund & Kappan, 2009; Harrell et al., 2004; Tsouluhas, 2005). Similar to
the suggestion of teachers attending professional development workshops, the research has
identified that teachers who participate in workshops related to emotion and stress management,
are less likely to burnout. Chang (2009) suggests that teachers should develop mindfulness
techniques in order to be aware of emotional triggers. Additionally, teachers should engage in
emotional development courses in order to establish emotion management techniques that are
appropriate for them (Kyriacou, 2011). Chan (2011) conducted a study which investigates the
impact of gratitude within the teaching profession. The study included a sample of sixty-three
teachers over an eight-week period, in which the teachers were expected to "count their
blessings" (p. 889). Using a pre and post test design, the results suggest that an increase in
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gratitude does in fact increase life satisfaction and a sense of personal accomplishment, and in contrast, decreases emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation. Similarly, to alleviate the negative perceptions which have been outlined as correlated with burnout (McCormick & Barnett, 2011), Eklund & Kappan (2009) suggest that teachers frequently remind themselves of the reasons why they have chosen the profession in the first place. Yong & Yue (2007) elucidate this through emphasizing that developing a proactive attitude towards work veritably improves a teacher's mental state. Together, it evident that the literature suggests that actively developing a positive mindset can assist teachers in managing stress.

In addition to coaching one's mind to develop a positive outlook, in the same way, the literature frequently highlights that engaging in self-care techniques can act as both a preventative or intervention strategy for burnout. Drewett (2005) outlines an array of different self-care techniques that teachers are encouraged to employ. Some techniques listed among the literature include regularly engaging in physical health activities, maintaining healthy nutrition, and frequently engaging in personal pleasures. The research stresses that it is imperative that teachers adopt techniques to assist them balance work expectations, while still devoting time to self care strategies (Chang, 2009; Drewett, 2005; Eklund & Kappan, 2009; Kyriacou, 2001; Luk et al., 2010; Tsoulunas, 2005; Zhang & Yue, 2007). Additionally, Luk et al. (2010) state that one's "quality of life" (p. 496) is a strong indicator in whether the development of burnout will occur. They support this concept through categorizing quality of life based on socio-economic factors, such as income and place of residence. The research highlights that increases in salary and stable living conditions, positively impact a teachers emotional health. However, it is important to question if this protective factor acts as a feasible method of deterring burnout for the majority of teachers.
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Through assessing the research, it is evident that it has indeed identified numerous preventative factors which may reduce the experience of emotional exhaustion. The literature has suggested that additional resources be made available for teachers, and also accentuates the importance of both professional and emotional development in order to evade burnout. The suggestions highlighted in this section are imperative for teachers to be aware of in practice, in order to reduce burnout. Conversely, it is also important to note that the literature highlights a wealth of preventative strategies in avoiding burnout, however, there is limited information about how teachers who are currently undergoing burnout can overcome it. Additionally, there is a restricted amount of explicit information that can guide teachers about how to actually adopt the preventative suggestions made among the literature. Thus, the profession would benefit from developing more research which further investigates and supports the aforementioned recommendations.

2.5 Teacher Education

Among the literature, teacher education programs have been outlined as both a predicting factor to teacher burnout, but also as a preventative strategy (Linston et al., 2006; Lloyd, 2012; Vibulphol et al., 2015). As such, within this review of the literature, teacher education has been assigned its own category. Within this section, I will identify how teacher education has been associated with predictors as well as preventative factors of burnout. Additionally, I will highlight the importance of teacher education in relation to my research interests. Despite its brief mentioning's within the literature, it is also important to note that it has actually received limited attention in association to teacher burnout.

Throughout this review of the literature, there were several reoccurring phrases and ideas. To start, within both the predictors and preventative factors section, the idea of development was
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mentioned. Within the predictors section, the research often identified lack of development as an indicator of burnout (Chang, 2009; Brunsting, 2014; Dombrovski et al., 2011; Drewett, 2005; Lloyd, 2012; Martin, 2010; Tsouluhas, 2005; Zhang & Yu, 2007). On the contrary, literature related to prevention, suggest teachers should engage in professional development or learning (Chang, 2009; Drewett, 2005; Eklund & Kappan, 2009; Kyriacou, 2001; Luk et al., 2010; Tsoulunas, 2005; Zhang & Yue, 2007). Since the literature identifies teachers who lack necessary skills for teaching often develop burnout (Drewett, 2005), one may assume that research has investigated teacher education programs, as this is where teachers develop foundational skills (Liston et al. 2006). However, as previously mentioned, there is limited resources on this matter. The literature outlined in previous sections often investigates the effectiveness of specific schools or school boards in supporting burnout, but neglects critically assessing how teacher education programs play a role in burnout. Furthermore, much of the current literature which investigates teacher education programs does so in relation to examining the quality of teaching instruction, but neglects to deeply inspect its role on burnout (Field, et al. 2001; Joerger & Bremer, 2001).

2.5.1 Predictors and prevention of burnout in teacher education

Liston et al. (2006) argue that teacher preparation programs can be categorized as a predictor of teacher burnout. They state that teacher preparation programs do not adequately prepare teachers for the work in the field, and as a result develop burnout. The research further defends this notion through identifying different ways which teacher preparation programs have failed to adequately prepare its members. To start, they outline that teacher preparation programs have insufficiently prepared teachers for the specific day-to-day tasks that they must accomplish. Liston et al. (2006) advance this claim through suggesting that teacher preparation
programs devote the majority of instruction on theoretical pedagogy rather than practical teaching strategies. Thus, suggesting that as a result, when educators enter the field they are inadequately prepared to deal with their responsibilities and proceed to develop burnout. This research also outlines these programs do not prepare teachers for the emotional intensity of the profession nor does it provide them with skills for effectively handling conflict which arises in the milieu. Liston et al. (2006) suggest that novice teachers often experience "moments of disillusionment" (p. 355) as teacher preparation programs "elaborate" (p.355) the role which teachers play in the lives of students. As a result of this elaboration, Liston et al. (2006) suggest that teachers entering the field then become disappointed at the "reality" (p.355) of the profession, which then can provoke emotional exhaustion.

Based on the aforementioned observations, Liston et al. (2006) recommends different strategies which teacher education programs can adopt in order to enhance preparation for teacher candidates and in turn act as a protective factor for burnout. The recommendations provided include, encouraging programs to accept feedback from former students who experienced burnout from inadequate preparation. They also propose that teacher education programs concentrate on the emotional dimensions involved in teaching while providing teacher candidates with concrete methods of managing this. The research also suggests that programs should accurately portray the "realities" (p.357) of the teaching profession. In order to achieve this, Liston et al. (2006) emphasizes that programs must explicitly inform teacher candidates that the profession, in reality, differs from the "powerful visions and beliefs" (p. 357) teacher candidates often hold. However, Harrell et al. (2004) and Eklund & Kappan (2009) dispute this suggestion through affirming that the reduction of teacher burnout actually happens through firstly, maintaining these powerful beliefs about education throughout one's career, and secondly,
directly improving school communities, as oppose to lecturing teacher candidates about the negative "realities". Knobloch & Whittington (2002) add to this through indicating that teachers who are confident and adopt positive perceptions about the profession, are more likely to endure the adversities that teachers may face. Additionally, this research illuminates that teacher candidates who receive immense support, knowledge, preparation, resources and motivation from teacher educators do in fact develop efficacy which is used to decrease the symptoms of burnout (p.333). Thus, it is evident that despite the varying perceptions among the literature, teacher education programs do in fact have an impact on whether its graduates experience burnout or not.

Together the limited but variant research related to teacher education programs has been included not for the purpose of critiquing such programs, but to first, elucidate that there is limited research pertaining to this topic, and that the research which does exist is obsolete and thus, there is a need for further research. Second, to highlight that teacher education is indeed correlated to burnout and that in my research, I aim to discover aspects of teacher preparation programs that were deemed beneficial in reducing or overcoming burnout, while also identifying useful strategies that may have been omitted from programs which can be included in the future. Lastly, I aim to recognize if and how context, specifically national, influences the teacher preparation process, and if this context dictates the occurrence of burnout in teachers.

2.6. National Context

Research on teacher burnout has identified a number of factors that impact teachers’ experience of stress and burnout. Many of these are not only inter-related but also context dependent. In this section of the literature review I examine differences in the experience of
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teacher burnout in varying national contexts. This section will conclude by comparing characteristics of burnout and how nations can find guidance by assessing international counterparts and how studying national context in relation to burnout may reduce its prevalence in some environments.

The literature available pertaining to teacher burnout derives from various areas around the globe. Consequently, it is evident that teacher burnout is not only a phenomenon within North America, but globally (Hakanen et al. 2006; Mukundan et al., 2015; Sato & McLaughlin, 1992; Vibulphol et al., 2015; Zhang & Yu, 2007). However, when closely assessing the literature it is evident that the severity and regularity of burnout is more prominent within some contexts in comparison to others.

2.6.1 Burnout in different nations

The preventative factors previously outlined demonstrate a range of dissimilar suggestions. The literature presents preventative strategies for burnout which range from positive emotional development to obtaining better resources and higher wages. When attentively organizing the data, it is important to note that most studies identify a range of strategies but some actively expand on specific strategies which are deemed to be more beneficial to the sample studied. Thus, it was evident that studies that predominately focus on emotional development derive from research which was conducted with samples of teachers from Asian and European countries (Chan, 2011; Chang, 2009; Coulter and Abney, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Luk et al., 2010; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015; Zhang & Yu, 2007). In contrast, studies conducted within North America, predominately focus on preventative factors related to wages and resources (Drewett, 2005; Harell et al. 2004; Guglielmi&
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Through further investigation, it is also evident that the literature suggests that burnout rates are actually more prevalent in some nations than in others. For instance, the United States outline that there is a 75% burnout rate for teachers within their first three years of their career, and that the number of teachers leaving the profession is consistently increasing (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2014). In contrast, reports from studies conducted with a sample of Finnish teachers report that they do not experience excessive levels of stress, lack of motivation or burnout, and conversely experience feelings of contentment, enthusiasm and satisfaction towards their profession (Hakanen, 2006). Correspondingly, studies from European countries such as Germany, Portugal, and France report attrition rates to be lower than 5% (Karsenti & Collin, 2013). Through assessing these statistics it is evident that teachers practicing within North America experience much higher levels of teacher burnout, despite these available statistics, the educational field would benefit from developing more research into understanding how national context affects this matter.

2.6.2 Ontario certified teachers and burnout

With the plethora of research confirming that there are high burnout rates among teachers in North America, Coulter & Abney (2009) conducted research focused on understanding the burnout patterns of teachers who are members of the Ontario College of Teachers. The study was comprised of two groups of OCT members, those teaching in Ontario, and those teaching abroad. The level of teacher burnout was measured through the use of a "Burnout Test Form" (p.111). Based on the information gathered, the findings conclude that OCT members teaching abroad display significantly lower median burnout rates than OCT members in Ontario. The study concludes by encouraging teachers who are experiencing burnout, to instead of leaving the
profession, to consider the same work, abroad. Despite the findings which this study produces, it is still unknown why teachers in different contexts experience lower levels of burnout.

The analysis of teacher experiences from different national contexts elucidates the range of teacher experiences from around the globe. The purpose of my own research is to understand what factors mitigate the experience of burnout based on teachers from different national contexts. In addition to understanding these factors, I seek to compare and contrast values related to teacher burnout, so that I can suggest exemplary intervention and prevention strategies discovered from a different national context; and with this knowledge I aspire to assist members of the Ontario College of Teacher, in remaining in this profession, within Ontario. Further research is necessary to investigate this matter not only to shed light on the successes of the teaching profession in different national contexts, but also to guide teaching practice in North America, in order to reduce the instances of burnout among its Teachers.

2.7 Conclusion

In this literature review, I reviewed research related to predictors of teacher burnout, the impacts of it, intervention and preventative factors, teacher education programs and the significance of national context. The existing research raises further questions concerning how teachers enact the range of strategies advocated for in the and concerning how national context plays a role in the preparation and on-going development of teachers. There is a clear need for further attention to the relationship between teacher preparation, national context, and teacher stress and burnout. In light of this, the purpose of my research is to learn how national context plays a role in teachers’ experience of burnout and experience overcoming it
3.0 Introduction (Chapter Overview)

In this chapter, I describe the research methodology. To start, I explain my research approach and procedures as well as highlight the instruments that have been chosen for data collection. I also discuss the participants, which are included within my research. Specifically, I outline the sampling criteria, procedures and provide some information about the participants. I then explain the data analysis procedures and outline ethical considerations related to my study. Similarly, I highlight methodological limitations and strengths within the study and conclude by providing justification for key methodological decisions and the rationale behind them.

3.1 Research Approach and Procedures

This research study was conducted through the use of a qualitative research approach. To do this, I reviewed available literature and research studies related to this topic and conducted semi-structured interviews with three elementary school teachers. Lazarfeld (1979) highlights that while traditionally, the preferred method of research was quantitative, both qualitative and quantitative research methods are practical in different contexts (Silverman, 1993). Collectively, the literature related to the use of qualitative methodology in research emphasizes the extent that this method is valuable for providing in depth descriptions of phenomenon, and assists researchers in developing a comprehensive understanding for the subject studied (Silverman 1993; Sofaer 1999). The use of qualitative methodology within research ensures that the subject being studied is explored through different lenses and is multi-facetted as information comes directly from different sources without restrictions (Baxter &Jack, 2008). Silverman (1993) adds
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to this notion through emphasizing that qualitative research is natural and assists researchers in
learning firsthand about people and cultures.

Based on the literature which outlines the chief characteristics of qualitative research, it
is evident that this methodology is appropriately suited for realizing the purpose of my study.
This study was interested in developing a compressive understanding of specific emotions as
well as strategies that teachers used to overcome burnout. Thus, the qualitative research
methodology is believed to be the most suitable for the purpose of my study as it enables me to
develop a comprehensive understanding about these teachers' experiences of burnout and how
they overcame it. Jackson et al. (2007) highlight that qualitative research promotes rigorous
explanations of lived experiences and promotes a more humanistic approach. Similarly,
Silverman (1993) argues that researchers looking to learn from firsthand accounts should use
qualitative studies. Given these descriptions of qualitative research, it is evident that this is an
effective approach to conducting my research. The purpose of my research is to develop an in
depth understanding about teacher's lived experiences with teacher attrition. I am also interested
in developing an understanding about what factors assisted them in overcoming such stress and
how their national context played a role in such factors. Thus, in order to acquire this data to
support my research purpose, it is important to use a qualitative approach.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

In order to collect adequate data that responds to the research purpose and questions, the
instrument of data collection is the semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix B).
Silverman (1993) highlights that there are a range of data collection instruments that can be used
within the qualitative methodology framework, such as observation, documents and interviews.
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Given the nature and purpose of this study, I conducted three semi-structured interviews with teachers.

Paine (2015) examines the use of interviews within research, and specifically differentiates between structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. This research highlights the limitations related to such instruments. Paine (2015) suggests that structured interviews limit data collection and provide participants with little platform to further elaborate on experiences. Conversely, he suggests that unstructured interviews may often go beyond the needs of the interviewee, and may provide data which does not reflect the research purpose. Given these critiques, Paine (2015) recommends the use of semi-structured interviews, as they act as a middle ground between structured and unstructured. The use of semi-structured interviews is valuable as it provides direct questioning that is thoughtfully correlated to the research purpose, but also allows participants to respond with flexibility (Dearnley, 2005; Paine 2015). The open nature of a semi-structured interview will provide participants with general guidelines about what the study is interested in learning, but will also allow for new concepts to emerge. Additionally, semi-structured interviews provide consistency among participants but allow for further discussion guided by the participant, which can provide significant nuances within the data and analysis (Dearnley, 2005). Collectively, the literature suggests that the advantage of using semi-structured interviews is that it provides the researcher with depth within the data collected (Dearnley, 2005; Paine 2015; Silverman, 1993). One object of my research was to develop vigorous insight into the experience of burnout and also to detect variations among the data. Thus, my prospective outcomes reflect the characteristics often related to semi-structured interviews. In order to understand how three teachers coped with the experience of burnout, while also highlighting significant personal factors, it was important to guide the
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discussion but also encourage participants to elaborate on experiences. When conducting the interview in such a manner, the data will not be able to speak to the research questions, but also provided a comprehensive understanding about each participant's personal experience with burnout and the factors that supported them through it. Given the conversational nature of semi-structured interviews, traditionally researchers conducted these interviews face-to-face with participants. However, with the advancement of technology, interviews can now be conducted through other means (Paine, 2015). Given the nature of my research as well as the varying locations of participants, the primary method of interviews was through the use of Skype Audio Call, and one face-to-face interview with a local participant. The use of audio-calling is a feasible method of instrumentation given the scope of participants. However, this method does provide limitations, as it eliminates the opportunity for non-verbal communication (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). It is also important to note that each interview was audio-recorded and the data was transcribed and coded.

3.3 Participants

It is imperative to determine a study sample who can speak to experiences that inform the research questions (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The following section will describe the sampling criteria which I have established for participant recruitment. Additionally, I review methods of recruitment, while also including a section for participant biographies.

3.3.1 Sampling criteria

The following criteria applied to teacher participants:

1. Teacher participants will have a minimum of five years teaching experience in the primary-junior grades.
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2. Teacher participants will self-report to have experienced stress related to the profession, to the point of burnout, and have overcome this experience.

3. One teacher participant will have completed pre-service teacher education in Ontario and currently work in Ontario; Other participants will have completed pre-service programs in the countries that they currently work in.

4. Teacher participants should display recent activity/leadership in teacher health initiatives.

As qualitative research methods are comprehensive in nature, they commonly comprise small, purposeful samples (Sandelowski, 1995). The sampling criteria for this study has been developed so that participants will be able to speak to their experiences that inform the research questions. The first criterion required teachers to have a minimum of five years experience. This criterion has been included, as it has been outlined within the literature that teachers are most likely to develop burnout within the first five years of their career (Collin et al., 2013). Consequently, teachers who have been practicing for more than five years will be more likely to have experienced burnout, as well as have developed concrete coping mechanisms for this experience. Participants must also have self-reported that they have experienced burnout during their careers, and have overcome this experience. This is included because I am interested in comprehensively understanding different aspects related to teacher burnout (risk factors, what the experience is like, protective factors, resources and if national context is related) and in order to learn about these themes, it was important that participants had experienced burnout and were able to offer insights related to my research questions. The third criterion demonstrates the specificity of the participants required. I chose to include teachers who had specific educational and geographical requirements, in order to collect data related to national context, teacher
3.3.2 Sampling procedures

In order to recruit participants who align with my sampling criteria, I used a purposeful sampling approach. Marshall (1996) emphasizes that there are three strategies used in qualitative studies. These include convenience, purposeful, and theoretical sampling. Convenience refers to the selection of the most accessible participants. Conversely, purposeful sampling has been outlined as recruiting intentional participants, who will likely provide in depth data on the subject being studied. Lastly, theoretical sampling refers to participants chosen to elaborate on existing theories (Marshall, 1996). Given the specificity of the sampling criteria outlined above, I used purposeful "critical case" sampling for recruitment (Miller, 1996, p.523). In order to effectively include participants with the specific sampling criteria, I also relied on convenient sampling, and actively explored different outlets simultaneously. I began by utilizing pre-existing connections within the field. I did this through discussing my research objectives with colleagues and using the "snowball" (Miller, 1996) method, as some colleagues suggested useful candidates for my study. I also actively participated in professional development programs related to teacher health in hopes of developing connections with prospective participants (Namageyo-Funa et al., 2014). Given the nature of my research study and the diversity of participants, my primary recruitment procedure was through the use of the Internet. The Internet has been suggested as an effective recruitment tool as it can easily provide researchers with information about members who are active in specific topics (Namageyo-Funa et al., 2014). In order to recruit the sample, I contacted educational organizations that provided contact information on their webpage. I also provided organizations and school boards with my contact
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information rather than asking for the contact information of specific individuals in order to ensure that participation is voluntary.

3.3.3 Participant biographies

In order to protect the anonymity of all participants, each individual will be referenced using a pseudonym.

Linda

During the time of participation Linda was a homeroom teacher of a Grade 4 classroom. Linda teaches in a rural area in the State of Kansas, in the United States of America. Prior to her current role, she had worked as an early child educator and worked as a Grade 1 and 2 teacher. Linda self-reported to have experienced burnout to the point of contemplating leaving the profession. Linda was able to overcome the experience of burnout through the use of specific strategies. As a result of Linda's experience she is now active in promoting wellbeing among teachers. She has a published book which supports teachers in adopting positive wellbeing and strives to support teachers in avoiding burnout.

Carolyn

Carolyn is a teacher in Ontario, Canada. Throughout her career she has worked in many positions within a range of grades between Grade 4-8. Carolyn has self-reported to have experienced burnout twice in her career as a teacher and overcame this experience. Carolyn reported to have used several strategies to support her in adopting positive wellbeing. In addition to her role as a teacher, she also works as an itinerate special assignment teacher. In her role she supports other teachers in strengthening their teaching while also supporting them in practicing
positive wellbeing. Carolyn is passionate about positive wellbeing and is committed to supporting teachers in Ontario practice and maintain positive wellbeing.

Anita

Anita works as a teacher in Bergen, Norway. Anita is passionate about fostering positive wellbeing in both her students and herself. She has self-reported to have experienced burnout and undertook purposeful training to support her in overcoming the experience of burnout. Since overcoming burnout, Anita has been committed to bringing awareness to the importance of wellbeing in teachers and stresses the importance of relationships among colleagues.

3.4 Data Analysis

Thorne (2000) suggests that the main characteristic of a qualitative study is that the data which is collected is subject to interpretation. Silverman (1993) outlines specific procedures necessary to develop such interpretations. He begins by emphasizing that transcribing is a vital component to data analysis process. Transcribing is the process of transferring audio interviews into written form, followed by in-depth study. In my own analysis, I began by transcribing the interviews which have been audio-recorded. Next, I coded each transcript individually and created categories based on this data. Silverman (1993) suggests that the coding process happens through the analysis of transcripts, and assists researchers in discovering relationships as well as highlighting themes within the data. This process was imperative for my research as these categories and themes identifies correspondences as well as variances among participant data. Additionally, the data analysis process is a critical step in uncovering information that responds to my research question. I also examined null data, or what the participants did not speak to in their interviews.
3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

When conducting research, it is imperative that the researcher is aware of the ethical issues that can develop. Given the value placed on ethical protocols, the literature highlights common ethical issues that arise within qualitative research, as well as providing information about conducting ethically sound research studies. The literature frequently discusses ethical issues related to confidentiality and consent, risks of participation, interpretation and storage of data, and right to withdraw (Bresler, 1995; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Jackson et al., 2007).

Given the topic of research, there were minimal risks associated with participation in this study. As the topic was personal in nature and involved reflection on participant stress, it was possible that questions could have elicited emotional responses from participant and thus, made them feel vulnerable or uncomfortable (Labott et al. 2013). In order to minimize this risk, I began by providing the participants with a sample of interview questions beforehand, as well as frequently reminding them that they had the right to decline any question and/or withdraw from participating in the study (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Jackson et al. (2007) emphasize the importance of trust when conducting qualitative research. In qualitative research, participants offer in depth information about their lived experiences (Lazarfeld, 1979) and thus, require confidentiality. In order to ensure confidentiality, all participants were assigned a pseudonym and were notified of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research. Additionally, all identifying information, including markers related to their school or students, remained confidential and were not included in any public documents. Jackson et al. (2007) emphasize the importance of member-checks in order to
promote trust during the research process. With that being said, in order to accurately represent the data collected from the semi-structured interviews, participants had the opportunity to review transcripts and clarify statements before I begin data analysis. Additionally, in order to promote trust and confidentiality, all data was stored on my password-protected laptop and will be destroyed after 5 years (Labott et al. 2013). Moreover, participants were provided with a consent letter (Appendix A), which they were expected to sign, giving their consent to be interviewed and audio-recorded. This consent letter provided an overview of the study, addressed ethical implications, and specified expectations of participation.

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

When reviewing this qualitative research method as a whole, it is evident that there are both limitations as well as strengths related to qualitative methodology. The literature frequently criticizes the sample size of qualitative research. Jackson et al. (2007) argue that qualitative research studies cannot be generalized into a larger population as the sample size is often too small. As my research includes three interviews from teachers within different contexts, it is important to note that the data cannot be generalized for each location represented and therefore, this can be classified as a limitation. However, the literature challenges this notion through emphasizing that smaller sample sizes can be seen as a strength within the research as it provides researchers and the public with a deeper understanding on the topic of study (Carr, 1994; Sandelowski, 1995). Similarly, Labott et al. (2013) describe that smaller sample sizes elucidate individual perspectives and experiences. Thus, the use of small sample sizes will validate the voices of the participants in the study and can provide an in depth analysis of factors related to teacher burnout, which can assist other teachers inform their own practice.
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Given the restrictions outlined within this specific study design, the scope of the research can act as a limitation. The literature emphasizes the value in providing multiple perspectives within qualitative research (Dearnley, 2005; Namageyo-Funa et al., 2014). Given the depth of qualitative semi-structured interviews, Dearnley (2005) emphasizes that such interviews allow for a deeper understanding of different perspectives on a specific topic. Given the ethical parameters that have been provided for this research, the study can only involve teachers. This is limiting as this research is unable to collect data from principals or students about how they perceive teacher burnout, and how it affects their school life. Despite such limitation, as teachers are the main stakeholders in the experience of teacher burnout, it is most appropriate to conduct interviews with teacher participants. These findings can then inform the rest of the teaching community.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained the research methodology. I began by highlighting the research approach and procedures, while defining qualitative methodologies. I then justified that a qualitative research design is the preferred methodology for my research as it provides in depth lived experiences from participants. Next, I identified the primary data collection tool as semi-structured interviews. I did this so that the interview questions aligned with my research questions, while also providing the participant with some autonomy to guide the discussion, which can provide unforeseen insights. I then highlighted the sampling criteria for research participants, such as teachers who have experienced burnout but overcame it, while also explaining the sampling procedures, which I used to locate a sample of teachers. Subsequently, I outlined the procedures that were followed when analyzing the data. The procedures included transcribing, coding, and identifying categories within the data. I also elaborated on ethical issues
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that could have arose during my study, while also providing proposals to minimize risks. Lastly, I outlined limitations related to sample size, but also highlighted strengths in my research, such as the inclusion of in depth teacher experiences. Next, in Chapter 4, I report the research findings.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss my findings based on data collected from three face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with elementary educators from different national contexts, who self-report to have overcome the experience of burnout. The purpose of this research is to learn about factors that contributed to these teachers' experience of burnout and to learn about resources that supported them in overcoming it. With this knowledge, I hope to raise awareness on the value of teacher health, and help teachers develop strategies for mitigating stress. This chapter is organized into five main themes:

1. Excessive responsibility and lack of professional support lead to feelings of low self-efficacy and isolation.

2. Teachers’ stress led to depersonalization within their relationships at school, which negatively impacted their practice.

3. National context impacted participants' role as teachers and influenced societal views which contributed to their stress.

4. Self-care techniques and building positive relationships with colleagues supported teachers in overcoming burnout.

5. Recommendations for adjusting teacher practice which can support teachers in mitigating high levels of stress.
4.1 Excessive Responsibility and Lack of Professional Support Lead to Feelings of Low self-efficacy and Isolation.

In this theme teachers identified various responsibilities and a lack of professional support as a key contributing factor to the experience of burnout. Each participant outlined various responsibilities, such as excessive paperwork and administrative tasks, as factors that contributed to frequent stress. The teachers asserted that these additional tasks used time that should have been dedicated to primary teacher responsibilities, and as a result negatively impacted their wellbeing.

4.1.1 Additional responsibilities, including excessive paperwork and administrative requirements, contributed to stress.

Each of the participants validated the vast literature that identified job requirements as being the most prevalent factor to contribute to teacher stress (Golembiewski et al. 1983; Harrell et al. 2004; Kyriacou, 2001; McCormick & Barnett 2011). All participants described varying responsibilities in which they were expected to complete as a teacher. They identified their primary responsibilities as developing and implementing academic and social lessons, facilitating assessments and effectively supporting students on an emotional level. However, they emphasized that the need to complete tasks other than their primary responsibilities became a key contributor to stress. The participants argued that with the teaching profession comes an "unreasonable" amount of responsibilities, which often end up interfering with their personal lives and time. The additional responsibilities, impact relationships with family and friends and as a result contribute to burnout. Despite these varying responsibilities, they all identify
additional administrative obligations as the main factor that interferes with their time to complete primary tasks. Linda described her experiences as,

In my opinion, my job is to love the kids in my classroom, meet their needs, and take them to their maximum potential through not only academic lessons, but also behavioural, social, and emotional lessons. But, on top of that, I have to, and the list is endless: I have to complete paper work, I have to keep track of data, I have to do "SMART" goals, I have to make personal goals and enter them onto the proper website. If I want a substitute teacher, I have to get a sub requested and make the lesson plans, and then I need to use another database to log my leave time. Nothing is streamlined and everything is redundant, and so there's so much paper work to prove that you're doing what you should be doing... which takes away from the time of actually doing it.

Each of the participants validated this opinion by mentioning the previous, as well as many other administrative tasks, such as taking and filling reports and making phone calls, as additional tasks which overload their job requirements. In addition to listing their requirements, the participants confessed that not only is it the amount of work which they are expected to complete, they disclosed that their main priority is adequately meeting the needs of their students, and with the varying demands, they feel that at times they are not "doing enough." The participants described that not completing all of their various responsibilities led them to feeling as if they were doing "a bad job" and this resulted in decrease of self efficacy. These challenges mirrored the data found in the literature, since Zhang and Yue (2007) described “role overload” as additional responsibilities that teachers are expected to complete that are not related to their primary responsibilities to students. The literature also claimed that teachers are expected to complete such tasks under restrictive and unreasonable timelines and thus, becomes a major
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factor in the development of chronic stress and withdrawal among teachers (Brunsting, 2014; Golembiewski et al., 1983; Harrell et al., 2004; Kyriacou, 2001; McCormick & Barnett, 2011).

4.1.2 Lack of practical experience in pre-service education and minimal access to adequate education resources increased teachers’ levels of stress.

As aforementioned, Carolynn reported that meeting the needs of all her students is her main priority. The participants described a lack of professional preparation and resources as factors that created challenges in meeting all student needs. They began by describing aspects of their pre-service education, where all participants agreed that their pre-service education did not adequately prepare them for entering the profession. Linda argued that there was not enough in-class time included in her pre-service education, while Carolynn expanded on this by emphasizing that pre-service education focused primarily on pedagogy and not enough on practical teaching experience. She argued that developing one's own teaching pedagogy is something that is developed through in-class experience, and did not require such an emphasis in pre-service training.

When you're a young teacher on your first day... you're not really thinking about what your pedagogy is... you're thinking about the practical day to day, taking care of discipline, getting all the assessments, that kind of stuff. Now with more experience, I can really delve into what my philosophy is.

Each of the participants agreed on this sentiment as they identified a lack of practical experience in their pre-service education as something that contributed to higher levels of stress when they entered the profession.
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In relation to teacher health, Carolynn and Linda claimed that there were minimal resources provided by their employer that support teachers with their mental and emotional health. In contrast, Anita noted that, in her region of Norway, there were many resources that were affiliated with her employment that promote positive health, and this acted as a major support for her during time of stress. Despite the disparity in experiences, all participants mentioned the value of resources that promote health and wellbeing.

Each participant valued the idea of adequately providing for their students, as a result, they felt that access to resources which support teaching strategies was essential. Carolynn and Linda both argued that a major challenge in their own practice, was having adequate access to teacher resources. They both mentioned having class sizes on average of about 25-33 students each and that often they did not have resources such as equipment, books, stationary, and technology to fully support all student learning. They emphasized that, in their regions, there was a lack of funding which is directly allocated to resources for education.

The experiences related to resources and teacher preparation that the participants shared, confirm the data that has been collected among the literature. The literature suggests that pre-service education programs have been outlined as both a predicting factor to teacher burnout, but also as a preventative strategy (Harrell et al., 2004). The research validates the opinions of the participants in this study, by emphasizing the value of in-class practical experience to support teacher success and positive health (Linston et al., 2006; Lloyd, 2012; Vibulphol et al., 2015). Hakanen (2006) adds to this through emphasizing that in order for teachers to effectively meet the needs of students, it is imperative that they have access to adequate teaching resources.
4.1.3 Negative relationships with administrators and colleagues impacted participants’ overall wellbeing.

The literature frequently highlights the value of relationships within an educational setting to be the most important aspect of teaching (Anderson & Graham, 2016; Ashley, 2006; Simmons, Graham & Thomas, 2015). The participants supported this claim when each of them authentically expressed how the relationships in their lives impacted their teaching practice and overall wellbeing. All participants spoke about the impact of their relationships with colleagues and administrators. The relationships that these teachers had with their administrator, or previous administrators, proved to be one of the most influential factors that impacted their wellbeing. Each participant offered anecdotes of positive and negative experiences with administrators that they have had and commented on the significance of these relationships to their wellbeing. As each participant self-reported to have experienced burnout at some point during their career, each participant outlined that during this time, they did not feel that they had working relationships with their administrator. They described these relationships as lacking support, recognition, and communication. Anita added to this by stating that, in her own teaching practice, administrators who limited her autonomy and consistently provided negative feedback negatively contributed to her wellbeing. Each participant admitted that at some point in their careers they have experienced situations and relationships in their work environments that could be classified as "hostile.” Anita stated that "we are teaching the students to be kind to each other and support each other, but we are not putting the same effort into building the same values into our work environment.” Correspondingly, the literature addressed the power of relationships within a school setting as an important aspect to remember, with a concentration on teacher-administrator relationships. The research adds that teachers who do not feel recognition or that they are able to
approach administrators, are more likely to leave the profession (Drewett, 2005; Harell et al., 2004; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015). Collectively, the aforementioned factors impacted each of the participants’ teaching practice as they disclosed that they experienced burnout. They described burnout to impact their engagement, practice, physical health and each participant reported contemplating leaving the profession during this time. Their experiences reflect the literature as Karsenti and Collin (2013) highlighted that teachers in Canada are now subject to high levels of stress and many contemplate leaving the profession, while 30% actually abandon the profession. Despite the literature which validates the impact of teacher relationships with administrators, there is little data that investigates the correlation between collegial relationships and wellbeing. This finding is significant as the participants described that all relationships within their work-place impacted their experience of burnout.

4.2 Teachers’ Stress Led to Depersonalization Within Their Relationships at School, Which Negatively Impacted their Practice

The second finding addresses the correlation between burnout, teacher practice and student experience. The participants validated the importance of teacher wellbeing and how teacher stress impacted their practice. Based on the qualitative data, the findings suggest that the participants identified specific changes in their behaviour and teacher practice which was caused by stress.

Palmer (1997) highlights that "teaching emerges from one's inwardness" (p.2) and that when teachers teach, it is a projection of their soul onto their students (Palmer, 1997, p. 2). This statement highlights the significance of teacher wellbeing and how their internal wellbeing can impact their teacher practice. Participants validated this idea through emphasizing that their
health and wellbeing impacted their teaching practice, and as a result, impacted student
experiences of school. The data collected suggested that teacher wellbeing affects many different
areas of teacher practice, which include engagement, preparation and professional development.

One theme which was common among all participants, was the idea that as high levels of
stress emerged, their levels of engagement decreased. Participant responses suggested that lack
of engagement impacted teacher practice, as they felt as though they were not providing students
with adequate instruction. Linda validated this through describing her experience of burnout as,

Weakening what I was doing, I wasn't bringing any excitement. I wasn't looking at all my
kids individually, we were kind of moving along, I wasn't extending what I was doing,
we were kind of just moving forward as a group together.

Each of the participants addressed this theme through describing some form in which their
teaching practice and pedagogy shifted whilst being under immense stress. The participants often
discussed a lack of motivation or excitement in relation to teaching and described their
experience as being stuck in a "rut." As a result of this lack of engagement, the participants
indicated that their preparation, in terms of lesson planning and drive for professional
development, also diminished. Some participants identified a lack of motivation and desire to
engage in professional development during this time. As a result of this, each participant
described their classroom environment as one that was stagnant and not exceeding the needs of
students. The emphasized that they negative emotions that they were experiencing impacted their
contribution to the profession, and as a result impacted the classroom environment.

In addition to discussing how the participants' teacher practice changed during times of
high stress, they also disclosed that the factors that impact teaching practice also impact student
engagement and their experience of school. Carolynn suggested that during times of stress, “you don't give your whole self to it, and maybe the kids suffered as a result.” These experiences validate Demerouti et al. (2009), as their research identified lack of engagement as a prominent indicator of teacher stress. Similarly, their research suggested that lack of engagement from the teacher can impact the levels of engagement displayed by students. The literature suggests that student experience of school is often directly related to the relationships that they develop (Anderson & Graham, 2016). The participants addressed this concept through describing their relationships with students and how they were affected by stress. Each teacher confirmed that there were areas of their mood that had changed as a result of stress or burnout. They also described feelings of sadness, depersonalization and confusion. It was noted that during their time of burnout, teachers felt that their quality of teaching was affected, and as a result this impacted their sense of self. Linda and Carolynn reported that their patience with students declined and this resulted in retroactive classroom management practices such as yelling. They speculated that these practices could have impacted student-teacher relationships by causing students to withdraw from them and, as a result, negatively impacted student experiences of school. They furthered this through emphasizing that their declining relationships with students could have had an effect on both their academic achievement and emotional competence at school. In relation to academics, the participants considered that students may have been hesitant to ask for clarification and approach the teacher for other academic needs and support. Similarly, they mention that during their time of burnout, they lacked motivation to develop a comprehensive understanding of student needs and this also could have impacted student achievement. Participants also addressed that their negative wellbeing during this time may have affected student experience of school. Similarly, they identified that their overall wellbeing
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imparted the quality of relationships developed with students. Anita connected to this idea, stating that "if you do not communicate well with students, you do not have the base to build a good education." Evers and Tomic (2003) vindicated these concepts through stating that negative attitudes and relationships within the school can be detrimental to the overall school community, as students are able to recognize burnout and in turn, adopt this negativity, which has the ability to diminish the class climate. However, despite the research which emphasizes the correlation between teacher health and student experience of school. The participants' experiences contrasted to the literature since they identified that their wellbeing could have impacted student experience, however, they did not specifically notice any of these signs and only speculate that it could have impacted them. Thus, more research would be beneficial in identifying student perceptions of teacher wellbeing.

Following the discussion about their relationships with students during the time of immense stress, each participant offered additional information about their current relationships with students and how they differ from relationships built while experiencing burnout. Linda indicated that within the previous five years, she was able to make meaningful working relationships with her students and was able to meet their needs and support them in achieving their individual goals. Anita's experience reflected this, as she explained that with the development of positive wellbeing, she has noticed that her relationships with students have developed. She described this as one of the most fulfilling aspects of being a teacher, "having students smile at you and tell you what they've been doing over the weekend.” She explained that these positive relationships have not only impacted her own experience of teaching, but it seemed to also impact student experience at school. Split, Koomen and Thigs (2011) complement this by highlighting the importance of teacher and student relationships to enhance
the wellbeing and self efficacy of teachers and students. They argue that teacher and student relationships are developed through fostering "relatedness" (p.357) and, as Anita suggested, this impacts the strength of teacher-student relationships.

Overall it is evident that based on the qualitative data, there are key themes which suggest that the experience of stress impacts teacher-student relationships and as result, as Linda suggests, some teachers "do not provide students with what they deserve" during this time.

4.3 National Context Impacted Participants’ Role as Teachers and Influenced Societal Views which Contributed to Their Stress

This theme highlights the significance of the national context and teacher practice. The findings suggest that national context and societal views impacted participants' roles as teachers and their self-efficacy within those roles. Participants described different aspects of the demographics that they live in, and further noted how these demographics influenced their specific responsibilities as teachers and, as a result, their wellbeing.

4.3.1 National demographics influenced expectations of participants’ teaching duties, which could negatively impact their overall wellbeing.

When analyzing the experiences of the teachers interviewed, it became clear that despite the differing geographic locations, each participant discussed aspects of their national demographics as a contributing factor to their health. Based on their specific demographics, it was clear that in addition to their primary teaching responsibilities, they also assumed other various tasks. Linda described the demographics of her geographic location and mentioned many factors that relate to her national context and how they impacted her practice. As a teacher
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in the United States of America, specifically in the state of Kansas, she described many American families as being under "severe financial crunches," and as a result she was feeding children breakfast, sending food home with them at the end of the day, providing students with clothes, helping them brush their teeth at school, etc., etc., We are a family for our students, providing them with basic needs that should be provided at home.

She describes these additional responsibilities as a priority for meeting the immediate needs of her students, but also acknowledged that engaging in these tasks, increased the varying factors that contribute to stress. Carolynn connected to this experience while describing the demographics of her teaching practice in Ontario, Canada. She emphasized that, as a teacher in this geographic location, she must be specifically conscious of diversity—diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, varying socio-economic status and an array of familial values and beliefs. She suggested that within Ontario, even in similar geographic areas, there is a wealth of diverse needs,

All of my students are completely different. Some come from affluent families, some come from immigrant families, and some families have lower incomes. It's a mixed bag of a bit of everything, and really these students don't live very far from each other, you have a very different community within the same area.

She emphasized that her teaching practice is heavily related to the societal demographics in which she teaches, and that as a result of these demographics, differentiated instruction is an integral part of her practice. Thus, in her specific context, it became evident that there are various duties in which she is expected to implement in order to adequately support all students, and this
may contribute to her overall health. Anita contrasted this experience when she described the demographics of her location in Western Norway. Dissimilar to the two other participants, she mentioned that her teaching responsibilities are impacted by the affluence and democracy of this region. She describes that most parents she deals with are well educated indifferent disciplines, and as a result, they have strong opinions about the role of education, teacher pedagogy and stated, “because of that, it's a very demanding area to work in.” She reported that parents are very involved in the educational system in her region and it is her responsibility to meet all of their individual needs, which can be challenging for her teaching practice while difficult to meet the different and varying demands of the parents. Coulter and Abney (2009) confirmed these experiences through emphasizing that demographics play an important role in developing teacher practice and responsibility in specific contexts. They furthered this notion through elaborating the idea that teachers must be able to effectively adapt to and support the specific demographics that are present in their classrooms.

4.3.2 Negative societal opinions perpetuated by the media influenced teachers’ sense of self and contributed to burnout.

Despite the differing national contexts, each participant identified the media and societal values to be a major factor in influencing their self-efficacy as a teacher. Each participant identified the media as an entity that impacts the view in which society holds of teacher. Each participant argued that much of the images created by the media about teachers in their national context, do not adequately reflect their true role. The role of the media appeared to be a strong factor in the professional life of Linda as she indicated that
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In the United States, I feel that we have a very negative connotation. Teachers have become the hot topic and are constantly in the national news, being highlighted and accused of such negative things, or for not being effective teachers, we rarely ever get recognition for everything that we do well.

Carolynn and Anita related to this experience through emphasizing that the media in both of their national contexts often focused on teacher strikes and labour disputes. Both participants mentioned a decline of respect for teachers from students, parents, and the community based on their perception portrayed in the media. Despite these negative attributes, they also mentioned that there are times when teachers can be positively reflected in the media. Drewett (2005) validated these claims by suggesting that the esteem which teachers have in different regions affects their practice, as well as interactions with society. Teachers who are portrayed positively in society often acquire higher levels of autonomy and respect from the community. Overall, each participant, as well as the literature, confirmed the role of media in influencing societal views about education and teaching.

4.3.3 Teachers were not included in the development of educational policies and were underserved by policies that did not appropriately reflect their classroom needs.

In all of the national contexts which were represented, each participant identified educational law and regulations as a factor that impacted their practice. They each identified a disconnect between policies and what actually happens in the classroom. As Linda shared, we have this national group of people who make decisions that impact lives, and they're not asking the people that are directly in the field, "Hey, what does this look like? Does this apply to you?" And that causes a huge amount of stress.
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Anita added to this by explaining that, in Norway, "it's a problem that politicians run the school, and they tend not to ask the teachers for their input very often.” This was a concern addressed by each participant as they suggested that alignment between teacher values and public policy would create an educational system that bests meets the needs of both students and teachers.

Teacher involvement in developing policy has been identified in the literature as an aspect which improves teacher empowerment and fosters cohesion between policy and in class practices (Bogler & Somech, 2004). Muijs and Harris (2003) adds to this by emphasizing that teacher leadership directly within school communities has increased, however, they suggested that teachers should begin having more involvement in policy regarding education. Despite the contrast in national contexts, it is evident that each of the participants expressed similar experiences based on how their national context impacts teacher practice.

4.4 Self Care Techniques and Building Positive Relationships with Colleagues Supported Teachers in Overcoming Burnout

In response to the aforementioned findings which contributed to these teachers' overall stress, during the interview the participants also described specific strategies and resources that supported them in overcoming burnout. This theme outlines specific strategies, including self-care techniques and positive relationship building, as a significant factor in assisting these teachers in overcoming burnout.

4.4.1 Self-care techniques, including physical activity and change of work environment, led to *Participants' positive well-being*

Each participant had indicated that they categorized themselves as someone who had overcome burnout and as a result, they shared the strategies which assisted them in this
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experience. Each participant reported that in order to overcome burnout, they needed to make appropriate changes to their life. They suggested that in order to do this they began with practicing self-reflection. Carolynn, Anita and Linda all claimed that they began with self-reflection as it assisted them in developing a firm understanding about what exactly was challenging for them, and assisted them in developing a plan for making appropriate changes to mitigate these challenges. Each participant also identified physical activity as one pursuit which seemed to improve their overall health and wellbeing, which lead to the participants overcoming the experience of burnout.

Linda and Carolynn also identified making a change to their environment as the most effective factor in overcoming burnout. Carolynn explained that when she experienced burnout twice, each time she made a change of school and grade and this assisted her in improving her overall wellbeing. Similarly, Linda changed schools and grade when she experienced burnout. Anita adopted a different approach to changing her environment. She disclosed that what was most effective for her was when she attended a month long therapeutic recovery camp, subsidized for residents of Norway, which worked intensively to restore overall health and wellbeing. She explained that during her time at the recovery camp, she learned to practice effective stress management techniques and was able to utilize peer support. Anita identified this as one of the most effective ways which supported her in developing positive wellbeing.

Demerouti et al. (2009) state that receiving professional assistance to support teachers in developing skills to manage stress is highly beneficial. This was evident in Anita's case, however, Carolynn and Linda did not have access to comprehensive recovery camps. Linda indicated that "we don't have the best insurance, so even preventative things like going to the chiropractor or getting regular medical checks... we don't really get support for that.” Carolyn
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and Linda's experiences reflect those of many teachers on a global scale, as many communities do not have access to comprehensive resources (Beecham, 2005). Similarly, in their research, Zhang and Yu (2007) argued that self-care techniques, such as physical activity, are one of the most effective techniques to addressing stress in teachers. However, it is important to note that despite the participants mentioning physical activity as a supportive factor, they also disclosed that they do not continue physical activity on a regular basis. As a result of this finding, more research should be implemented in understanding the patterns of self-care techniques among teachers, and how they are implementing them over a longer period of time.

4.4.2 Building positive relationships with administrators and colleagues promoted increased self-efficacy in teachers

In response to relationships being highlighted as a key factor that contributed to teacher burnout, it was also identified as a protective factor. All of the participants discussed how both collegial, as well as personal, relationships supported them in developing positive wellbeing. The teachers all emphasized the importance of developing a positive relationship with their administrator. They described that a positive relationship with an administrator would allow teachers to be transparent, able to effectively communicate, and ask for assistance when needed. They also acknowledged experiencing recognition, autonomy and feeling as though they are supported by their administrator as essential factor to building a positive relationship. These attributes assisted each of these teachers in overcoming burnout. Similar to this, they spoke about positive relationships between teacher colleagues. They suggested that developing trusting, communicative relationships assisted them in developing a positive outlook on their school community. The teachers also mentioned team-teaching as an integral part of their practice, which assisted them in developing teacher practice in a collaborative way. Anita added to this by
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emphasizing that at her school, all of the teachers formally meet once a week to develop plans collaboratively. She noted that these regular meetings assisted her in improving her practice and alleviating stress by managing tasks among the group. Anita emphasized that “we have to take care of each other as teachers so that we can effectively take care of our students.” After discussing her relationship with her colleagues, Anita also mentioned the value of developing positive relationships with students. She mentioned that in her region, she teaches her students for four consecutive years. She mentioned that having this time together helps foster a safe environment for the students as well as herself, and this really assisted her in developing meaningful working relationships. Knobloch and Whittington (2002) confirm this notion when they explained that positive working environments increase teacher self-efficacy.

Despite the teachers’ emphasizing important strategies that they adopted during their experience of burnout, they indicated that much of these strategies were implemented as a reactive intervention, and although they still continue to enact positive relationship building, they have neglected to continue practicing purposeful self-care techniques. Similarly, each participant discussed or hinted towards the idea that there is a possibility in which they would experience burnout again at some point in their careers. The literature identifies self-care as being a preventative factor to teacher burnout (Brunsting, 2014; Golembiewski et al., 1983; Harrell et al., 2004; Kyriacou, 2001; McCormick & Barnett, 2011). However, there is a lack of literature which outlines the duration of teachers implementing self-care techniques, and research that investigates the re-occurrence of burnout. Thus, it would be beneficial to gather more data about the longevity of self-care techniques among teachers.
4.5 Recommendations for Adjusting Teacher Practice Which Can Support Teachers in Mitigating High Levels of Stress

The final theme highlights specific recommendations made by the participants that might support novice teachers in developing positive wellbeing. The participants outlined the importance of work-life balance and time management as work skills which support teachers in their practice and as a result promotes positive wellbeing.

In addition to sharing their personal experiences related to stress, as well as factors which assisted these teachers in overcoming burnout, the participants offered additional recommendations to mitigate high levels of stress in future teachers. The participants described the teaching profession as a learning process that develops with experience. They advised novice teachers to connect with a mentor to assist them in managing tasks in their early years of teaching. Similarly, the participants recommended that pre-service education programs provide more practical experience that support teachers in developing effective teaching behaviour management strategies. Carolynn added to this when she mentioned that she had access to professional development throughout her career. However, she suggested that these professional development classes would be more beneficial if they included direct instruction and follow-ups from those implementing these workshops.

The participants also stressed that it is imperative for novice teachers to adopt a positive attitude towards teaching challenges, while prioritizing important teaching tasks and not overloading oneself. Linda indicated that she provided advice to mentee teachers through encouraging them to evaluate "what's going to get you the biggest bang for your buck, pick what's most important and focus on that for now, make sure you find the balance.” Carolynn
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added to this by emphasizing that novice teachers should not take on too much, and progressively add tasks. Collin et al. (2013) validated this claim through arguing that an effective practice for novice teachers is to engage in self-reflective practice and recognize the amount of tasks they are realistically able to manage in order to best support students and their own wellbeing.

Finally, the participants added to this recommendation through stressing the importance of a positive work environment. They argued that it is imperative for teachers to receive recognition from colleagues, administrators and the community. Anita emphasized that "when you recognize people and the work that they are doing, they blossom.” This statement supported Drewett's (2005) research, as he explained that teaching is a humanistic profession and in order to promote positive wellbeing for all teachers, it is essential that they receive recognition and positive feedback. The participants added to the literature by describing the importance of relationships between colleagues as being an important aspect to the profession. They suggested that positive attitudes, cohesion and the desire to work collaboratively, were protective factors of burnout.

4.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, based on three semi-structured interviews with teachers from Canada, The United States of America and Norway, this study found several different factors which contribute to teacher stress, as well as factors which supported these teachers in overcoming burnout. First, this study identified several factors which contributed to these teachers’ overall experience of stress, which lead to burnout. These factors included additional responsibilities, such as paperwork and administrative tasks, lack of practical experience in pre-service education, and
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negative relationships with colleagues and administrator. Next, this study found that teachers’ stress led to depersonalization within their relationships at school, which negatively impacted their practice. This study also identified that the national context of each participant impacted their role as teachers and influenced societal views which contributed to their levels of stress. Conversely, this study identified specific strategies that supported these teachers in overcoming burnout which include, self-care techniques and building positive relationships. These findings make a significant contribution to the existing literature by validating factors that contribute to teacher stress which have already been discovered, such as excessive responsibility and negative relationships, while also highlighting that more research is needed in order to identify self-care techniques in teachers and how they manage stress of longer-periods of time. In the next chapter, I will discuss implications of my research study while making recommendations for various stakeholders.
5.0 Introduction to the Chapter

In this chapter I discuss the implications of my research study. I begin by outlining the key findings of my research and their significance. I discuss the implications for the broader community and for myself as a teacher-researcher. Based on the implications outlined, I make recommendations that are directed to various stakeholders who impact the educational community. Further, I identify specific challenges that require further research and conclude by summarizing my findings.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and their Significance

Based on my research, my findings have been organized into five main themes that relate to teacher wellbeing. The first theme dealt exclusively with the discussion of specific factors which contributed to these teachers' high levels of stress. In this theme teachers identified various responsibilities and a lack of professional support as a key contributing factor to the experience of burnout. Each participant outlined various responsibilities, such as excessive paperwork and administrative tasks, as a factor that contributed to frequent stress. The teachers asserted that these additional tasks used time that should have been dedicated to primary teacher responsibilities. Further, the teachers identified a lack of practical hands-on preparation in pre-service education as a major contributor to stress. The teachers interviewed reported that teacher education predominantly focused on pedagogical theory rather than practice, and as a result, did not prepare them for practical classroom management strategies. The findings with this theme suggested that these teachers experienced high levels of stress in their early stages of teaching. Collectively, these findings suggest that additional responsibilities, such as excessive
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administrative tasks and lack of preparation, leads to low-self efficacy and contributes to teachers’ experience of burnout. These findings are significant to the educational community as they demonstrate areas that need improvement to better support teacher needs.

The second theme was that teacher burnout affected both teacher practice and student experience. The participants validated the importance of teacher wellbeing and how teacher stress impacts their practice. Based on the qualitative data, the findings suggest that the participants identified specific alterations in their behaviour as a result of stress. The participants highlighted a correlation between burnout and feelings of depersonalization. They described this as a state of feeling disengaged in their work. As a result of depersonalization, the participants indicated that their experience of burnout negatively impacted their students' experience of school and the inhibited their relationships with students. These findings are significant to the educational community, as they demonstrate that teacher wellbeing is directly correlated to student experience. In order to effectively support student learning, teachers must display positive overall wellbeing.

The third theme was that national context had a great impact on the wellbeing of each teacher. This theme aimed to develop and understand the role of national context on teacher wellbeing. The findings suggest that national context and societal views impacted participants' roles as teachers and their self-efficacy within those roles. Participants described different aspects of the demographics that they live in, and further noted how these demographics influenced their specific responsibilities as teachers. The participants described specific responsibilities, including providing students with basic needs and accommodating actively involved parent needs. As a result, these additional responsibilities contributed to role-overload. Moreover, participants’ described negative societal opinions perpetuated by the media as a factor
which contributed to their self-efficacy as teachers. Similarly, teachers were not included in the development of educational policies and were underserved by policies that did not appropriately reflect their classroom needs. Collectively, the factors discussed above—student demographics, policy, and media representation—are all influenced by national context. Often the national context positions these factors, so that they negatively impacted teacher wellbeing. These findings are significant as it demonstrates that teacher wellbeing can be attributed to factors beyond the classroom environment and supporting teacher wellbeing should become a priority on a national level.

The fourth and fifth theme explored self-care techniques and a discussion of how teachers supported each other. In response to discussing factors that contributed to the participants' levels of stress, they identified self-care techniques, as well as way they build positive relationships with their colleagues. Many interview participants understood these strategies as key factors which supported them in overcoming burnout. The participants identified an increase in physical activity as the most beneficial self-care technique. Similarly, they highlighted the importance of relationships with colleagues and administrators as integral to promoting positive wellbeing. Based on their experiences, the findings suggest that self-care and relationships are imperative in maintaining teacher health. However, although all of the teachers identified self-care as important, all disclosed they struggle to maintain habits of self-care. Additionally, there is little data to demonstrate long term strategies for implementing self-care and its long term benefits. These findings are significant as they outline specific tactics teachers may implement to promote wellbeing. However, the finding also demonstrate a need for more research to understand teachers’ commitment to self-care.
5.2 Implications

In this section, I outline the implications of my research findings. I begin by discussing the broad implications of my research findings for the educational community, policy makers and pre-service educators. I then discuss the implications of my findings for myself, both as a teacher and as a researcher.

5.2.1 Implications for the greater educational community

This research has identified several implications for the greater educational community. The participants interviewed have highlighted that teachers are experiencing unmanageable levels of stress which can be attributed to various job related demands. Teachers are feeling overwhelmed with the volume of additional administrative tasks they are expected to complete while still effectively implementing their primary teacher responsibilities. These primary responsibilities include, but are not limited to, lesson planning and assessment. In addition to high job demands, the participants highlighted a need for more adequate teaching resources to support student learning. Particularly, the teachers in North America did not feel they had adequate access to resources necessary to teach, including technology and equipment. The findings of this study suggest that the greater educational community must evaluate the job demands of teachers, and develop a plan which promotes teacher wellbeing.

In response to these factors that contributed to stress and their impact on teacher practice, the research also highlights significant methods for mitigating and overcoming high levels of stress. The data suggested that self-care techniques, such as physical activity and positive relationships (specifically with colleagues and administrators), acted as a protective factor for
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teachers from burnout. Despite these findings, it is important to note that the teachers highlighted an inability to commit to self-care techniques over long periods of time. These implications are significant as it supports the educational community in understanding specific factors for fostering a healthy working environmental within the educational field.

5.2.2 Implications for pre-service education programs

In addition to excessive job demands each participant outlined that they felt a lack of preparation when entering the profession from their pre-service programs. The teachers argued that pre-service education did not prepare them for practical teaching strategies, but rather primarily focused on pedagogy. The participants identified a lack of practical knowledge to be a source of stress in their beginning years of teaching. This research demonstrates a need for providing pre-service teachers with practical knowledge that they can easily adopt in their early years of teaching. This research highlights the importance of pre-service education and its impact on teacher wellbeing.

5.2.3 Implications for the national context

During this study the participants commonly addressed feelings of low-self efficacy during times that they were experiencing high levels of stress. In addition to job demands, they reported that their national context contributed to their role as a teacher, and as a result their sense of self. They outlined that demographics (socio-economics, race, gender and class size) in the area which they are teaching contributed to their role as teachers. As a result, they were expected to take on additional responsibilities. Similarly, images perpetrated by the media within the national context each teacher lived in influenced societal beliefs about the profession, and as a result influenced each teacher’s self-efficacy. Further, each of the participants described that, in
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their national context, they were not included in the development of educational policies and were underserved by policies that did not appropriately reflect their classroom needs. Based on the high levels of stress experienced by these teachers, caused by several factors, the teachers developed low self-efficacy. This was in part because they felt they were not able to adequately meet all student needs. The literature outlines that burnout rates have been rising in North America (Collin, Karsenti & Komis, 2013). The participants added to this by emphasizing that teacher turnover has not only negatively impacted teachers and students, but also, the cohesion of educational teams. These implications are significant to national context as it identifies areas in which it contributes to negative teacher wellbeing.

In response to these factors that contributed to stress and their impact on teacher practice, the research also highlights significant methods for mitigating and overcoming high levels of stress. The data suggested that self-care techniques, such as physical activity and positive relationships (specifically with colleagues and administrators), acted as a protective factor for teachers from burnout. Despite these findings, it is important to note that the teachers highlighted an inability to commit to self-care techniques over long periods of time. These implications are significant as it supports the educational community in understanding specific factors for fostering a healthy working environmental within the educational field.

5.2.4 Implications for personal professional practice

Given my role as a child and youth practitioner, I have always been an advocate for the positive wellbeing of students, as well as professionals. Based on the data collected from this research, my pedagogy as a teacher will be one that consistently supports positive wellbeing in not only students but the educational community at large. This research has supported me in
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gaining knowledge about specific practices that can support my practice and wellbeing within
school communities. Prior to this study, I viewed wellbeing as an individual endeavour,
however, this study has allowed me to understand the multiple factors which contribute to
overall wellbeing of teachers. In addition to learning about specific strategies I can use to foster
wellbeing within myself, I have learned that it is important to promote positivity in both the
micro school environment, as well as the national context. This study has allowed me to
understand that the wellbeing of educational professionals is something that should be prioritized
not only by individual teachers, but by larger communities. This study has motivated me to
continue promoting wellbeing and positivity in both schools as well as in communities, in order
to support the wellbeing of teachers, and as a result the wellbeing of students. Similarly, this
research has equipped me with the data to become a firm advocate for the positive wellbeing of
teachers on a global scale. As a direct result of this research, I intend to support teachers in
adopting positive practices that support their wellbeing. Additionally, I will also explore how the
wellbeing of both teachers and students is supported in different national contexts. As an
educator going to teach abroad, I intend to continue learning about best-practices and share these
on a global scale.

5.3 Recommendations

In order to appropriately support teachers, and the educational community, from being
impacted by teacher burnout it is imperative to implement changes which support the wellbeing
of both teachers and students. Based on the data collected, I support the following
recommendations for various stakeholders, as they relate to the support of teacher wellbeing.
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5.3.1 Recommendations for pre-service education programs

- In order to effectively support teachers in their early years of teaching, rather than promoting a strong focus on teaching pedagogies, a more practical, hands-on experience should be implemented in pre-service education. Through providing novice teachers with practical experience, this will support teachers in developing skills necessary to create a cohesive classroom environment.

- Providing novice teachers with frequent and accessible mentor support in their early years of teaching will improve self agency to manage both teaching and administrative tasks.

5.3.2 Recommendations for media/ greater community/ policy makers

- Communities should provide families with greater access to programs to assist families in providing children with basic needs. By ensuring children’s basic needs are met, they will be fully prepared to learn when they arrive at school. As a result, this will alleviate the number of additional responsibilities many teachers assume.

- Based on the contrast between the amount of community supports Anita (study participant from Norway) had in comparison to Linda (study participant from United States of America); communities should subsidize comprehensive programs for professionals to learn how to develop positive self-care techniques and stress management strategies.

- The media should demonstrate positive ways in which teachers contribute to their communities, perpetrating images of teachers in a humanistic way. This media portrayal
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will support teacher self-efficacy and strengthen relationships between professionals in education and the public.

- Practicing teachers should be directly involved in the development of educational policies. Their involvement will ensure their needs and responsibilities are adequately reflected within educational policy.

5.3.3 Recommendations for school boards and administrators

- School boards should provide teachers with access to resources that support self-care and stress management. For example, wellbeing support groups, or professional development that focuses on various job related areas that contribute to stress, can help in this work.

- Teachers should have adequate access to resources that are imperative for supporting student learning. For example, equipment and materials that support student learning should be readily available in all classes.

- Administrators should develop a positive working community for teachers. This can happen through initiating genuine and honest communication with staff while also encouraging positive interactions and support among colleagues. This can be done through implementing team-building activities.

- Administrators should be active in the teaching community of their schools and frequently provide positive reinforcement, recognition and constructive feedback directly to teachers. This will support teachers in developing positive self-efficacy.
5.3.4 Recommendations for Teachers

- Teachers should develop and promote positive collaborative learning communities.
  Teachers should act as supports for colleagues and promote healthy relationship building among teachers.
- Teachers should prioritize self-care techniques in order to support positive wellbeing throughout the course of their careers.
- Novice teachers should adopt a positive attitude towards teaching challenges, while prioritizing important teaching tasks to ensure that role-overload is avoided.
- Teachers should engage in frequent self reflection and seek support from colleagues and administrators during times of challenge within their career.
- Teachers should recognize the significance of positive wellbeing and advocate for the wellbeing and self-care of both teachers and students. This advocacy can be both local as well as on a national level.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

Given the scope of this study, it would be beneficial for further research to continue exploring different aspects related to the topic of teacher wellbeing and national context. Further research should be done exploring specific strategies that teachers use to avoid burnout and promote self-care. Ideally, the research would focus specifically on the longevity of these positive self-care practices. This study found that self-care is an imperative factor in developing positive wellbeing for teachers, however, it was noted that the participants interviewed do not continue engaging in self-care tactics long term. It would be beneficial for further study to learn how self-care practices can be used in supporting the wellbeing of teachers. Further, research on
how teachers can implement self-care for long periods of time would also be useful. The educational community will also benefit from further research which uses a larger scale, and represents several countries and continents, to develop a comprehensive understanding about wellbeing practices among teachers globally. These avenues will provide deeper insight into the range of techniques that can be adopted individually, as well as how they can support the greater educational community.

5.5 Concluding Comments

Based on the data collected from this study, it is evident that teacher stress impacts the practice of teachers on a global scale. This study identified five major themes related to teacher wellbeing. The major themes identified specific factors that contribute to teacher stress, while also highlighting factors which support positive wellbeing of teachers. The findings of this study suggest that school boards, educational professionals and communities must prioritize teacher wellbeing to support both professionals and student learning. Further research lends itself to a larger sample and examining self-care over a longer period of time. This research illustrates that teacher wellbeing is both connected to the wellbeing of students as well as the national context.
Referências

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Appendix A: Consent Letter

Date:

Dear _______________________________,

My Name is Kelly Borges and I am a student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on learning about factors that contribute to teacher stress as well as examining what resources and factors assist teachers in overcoming teacher burnout. Additionally, I am interested in learning about the relationship between teacher education, national context, and teacher health. I am interested in interviewing teachers who have experienced symptoms of burnout, but who have overcome this experience and remained in the profession. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates. I may also present my research findings via conference presentations and/or through publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. Any information that identifies your school or students will also be excluded. The interview data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only person who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor Dr. Angela Macdonald-Vemic. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question during the interview. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks to
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participation, and I will share a copy of the transcript with you shortly after the interview to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,

Kelly Borges

Course Instructor’s Name: Angela Macdonald

Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Kelly Borges and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ______________________________________

Name: (printed) __________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________

Appendix B: Interview Protocol
Introductory Script: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study, and for making time to be interviewed today. This research study aims to learn how a small sample of elementary educators, from different national contexts, experience symptoms of burnout and how they overcome this experience. This interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, and I will ask you a series of questions focused on teacher stress. I want to remind you that you may refrain from answering any question, and you have the right to withdraw your participation from the study at any time. As I explained in the consent letter, this interview will be audio-recorded. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I. Background Information

1. To start, can you tell me a bit about what led you to the teaching profession? Why did you become a teacher?

2. When and where did you complete your teacher certification?

3. How would you describe your experience of teacher education? (listen, then probe as necessary re: preparation for the realities of profession)

   - Can you provide a bit more information about your pre-service teacher education program? Specifically, which areas of curriculum have been most useful to you, as well as highlighting areas that you believe could use improvement?

4. Do you believe that that the national context within which you attended teachers college-informed your preparation for the profession? If yes, in what ways?
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4. Can you give me an overview of where and what you have taught since you completed your teacher education program (places, schools, grades)?

3. How many years have you been working as a teacher in your current location?

5. Can you describe the overall community in which you teach? (e.g. Geography, demographics, socioeconomic status of residents)

5. What grades and subjects do you currently teach?

6. In addition to your role as a teacher, do you fulfill any other roles in the school or in the educational community? (eg. mentoring, leadership, coaching, etc.)

7. Can you describe a typical day of teaching in your current school (e.g. routines, role expectations, schedule). How would you describe your primary responsibilities?

II. Teacher Perspectives on National Context

8. In your view, how is the teaching profession perceived in the national context within which you teach and why?

6. Can you describe some common beliefs about teachers and the teaching profession?

7. Did these perceptions and beliefs regarding the teaching profession inform your decision to become a teacher? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?

8. Do these perceptions and beliefs impact your experience of the profession? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?

9. Do you feel there is adequate institutional support for teachers where you teach? Which institutional bodies offer the supports you have access to?
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10. Do you believe that the national context within which you teach plays a role in your mental health as a teacher? If so, can you elaborate on this?

11. Based on your experiences, do you believe positive teacher health is a valued where you teach (school board, province)? Why/why not?

III. Teacher Perspectives, Experiences & Beliefs about Teacher Stress and Burnout

13. What does the phrase "teacher stress" mean to you?

14. What are some "signs" or indicators (internal and/or external) that suggest you may be experiencing stress?

15. In your experience, what are some of the common sources of stress in your professional life and experience?

16. How might these sources of stress be or have been mitigated?

17. You have identified yourself as someone who has overcome "burnout".
   - Can you tell me what this term means to you, and how you knew that you were experiencing it?
   - How, if at all, would you differentiate between "teacher stress" and "teacher burnout"?

18. Based on your own experience, what factors do you believe contributed to your experience of burnout?
   - In what ways, if at all, do you believe you were adequately prepared and/or supported to deal with the factors you have mentioned?
   - How did your experience of burnout impact your teaching practice?
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- How if at all did it impact your personal well-being?

**Overcoming Burnout**

19. What does "overcoming burnout" mean to you?

20. Can you please tell me more about how you overcame burnout?

- What, if any, stress management techniques were you using before your experience of burnout? Which techniques were most beneficial to you and why?
- Can you describe any stress management techniques that you used when you began to experience symptoms of burnout? Which techniques were most beneficial to you and why?

21. What specific support systems, factors, and resources supported you in overcoming burnout?

- In your professional career, did you have access to professional development or in-service programs related to teacher health? If so, did you find these beneficial?
- What do you think about the institutional resources that were available to you?
- How did you learn about the coping mechanisms that supported you through the experience of burnout?
- What coping mechanisms and strategies do you continue to enact after having overcome burnout?

22. Do you believe that the national context within which you teach, and the regard for education and supporting teachers, played a role in either your experience of teacher burnout or your experience of overcoming teaching burnout? If yes, in what ways?

**Supports, Challenges & Next Steps**
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23. How do you think teachers can be further supported in mitigating their experience of stress and burnout?

24. What advice can you offer for novice teachers in relation to teacher health and burnout?

Thank you for your participation in this research study.