

Bethel University

Spark

All Electronic Theses and Dissertations

2018

The Link Between Professional Burnout and Personality Disposition in Special Education Teachers

Brittany Elaine Enslin
Bethel University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://spark.bethel.edu/etd>



Part of the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Enslin, B. E. (2018). *The Link Between Professional Burnout and Personality Disposition in Special Education Teachers* [Master's thesis, Bethel University]. Spark Repository. <https://spark.bethel.edu/etd/194>

This Master's thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Spark. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Spark.

THE LINK BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT AND PERSONALITY DISPOSITIONS IN SPECIAL
EDUCATION TEACHERS

A MASTER'S THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY

BRITTANY E. ENSLIN

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2018

BETHEL UNIVERSITY

THE LINK BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT AND PERSONALITY DISPOSITIONS IN SPECIAL
EDUCATION TEACHERS

Brittany E. Enslin

August 2018

Advisor's Name: Charles S. Strand, Ed.S.

Program Director's Name: Katie Bonawitz, Ed.D.

Abstract

Burnout is physical and emotional exhaustion caused by unmanaged and prolonged stress. The objective of this study was to determine how personality traits affect burnout likelihood among special education teachers. This involved investigating whether personality traits matched individuals' choice of profession and their probability of experiencing burnout. Burned-out individuals often experience physical fatigue, long-term exhaustion, feelings of hopelessness, negative attitude towards others, and depersonalization. Symptoms of burnout come from work overload, stress, lack of social support, and variations of individual personality traits. This research explored the concept of personality influencing the probability of burnout in the special education field. The writing also focused on burnout history, symptoms and effects of burnout, personality styles, burnout prevention, and burnout interventions.

Table of Contents

Signature Page	1
Abstract	3
Table of Contents	4
Chapter I: Introduction	6
Thesis Question.....	12
Chapter II: Literature Review	13
Overview of Literature Review	13
Burnout.....	13
History of Burnout.....	13
The Maslach Burnout Inventory.....	14
Personality Traits and Temperament.....	16
“The Big Five” Personality Traits.....	18
Special Education Teacher Burnout.....	21
Classroom-Level Variables.....	24
Health Effects of Burnout.....	26
Stress and Personality.....	27
The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping.....	28
Emotional Labor.....	29
Factors of Burnout.....	31
Occupational Factors.....	32
Perfectionism.....	32

Burnout and Student Learning Outcomes.....	34
Factors that Work Against Burnout.....	34
Coping Strategies and Interventions.....	35
Managing Emotions with Spirituality.....	35
Burnout Interventions.....	37
Transition to Chapter III.....	42
Chapter III: Discussion and Conclusion.....	43
Summary of Literature.....	43
Professional Application.....	47
Limitations of the Research.....	48
Implications for Future Research.....	49
Conclusion.....	49
References.....	50

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Burnout is a physical, emotional and mental state observed in people whose occupations require constant face-to-face interactions with other people. Burnout is not a symptom of stress, but rather the result of unmanaged stress. A burned-out individual typically experiences physical fatigue, long-term exhaustion, a sense of hopelessness, self-doubt, feelings of inefficiency, and negative attitude towards others (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Personality traits and the emotional lives of individuals in the caring profession are believed to be connected to a person's likelihood of experiencing burnout in their career. Teachers were the focus of this study due to their constant and intense face-to-face interactions.

Christina Maslach is a pioneer of conducting research that focuses on burnout. Her research focused specifically on job burnout in careers that require frequent social interactions. Maslach developed a way to measure burnout symptoms in workers. She called her questionnaire the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The Maslach Burnout Inventory is still the most widely used research measure to diagnose the three main components of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1996).

Nejat Basim, Memduh Begenirbas, and Rukiye Yalcin (2013) stated, "Emotional exhaustion is the feeling of being overloaded at work and is a key aspect of burnout" (p. 1489). It is characterized by excess work along with the loss of power and energy due to failure and attrition. Neuroticism and extroversion were found to significantly affect emotional exhaustion. Multiple studies have shown individuals who have neurotic personalities are typically moody

and experience feelings of anger, anxiety, fear, and have the tendency to interpret events negatively (Armon, Shirom, and Melamed, 2012).

The second main factor of burnout is depersonalization. This refers to an individual having a dehumanizing and impersonal view of others. This can come in the form of blaming students and their families for their behavioral or learning difficulties, giving up on maintaining their classroom, and having negative feelings toward students and colleagues. Teachers who experience depersonalization spend less time with students and coworkers and have a negative view of the school environment. However, some teachers notice they start to become emotionally exhausted. To alleviate this, they purposely distance themselves from their students in hopes to prevent burnout (Oakes, Lane, Jenkins, and Booker, 2013).

Reduced personal accomplishment is the third aspect of burnout. This is seen in individuals who have low self-perception of themselves and a loss of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the extent of one's belief in one's own ability to reach goals and complete tasks. Teacher efficacy is rooted from self-efficacy. It is a teacher's ability to create a positive learning environment and the belief he or she can successfully teach children who are at risk for failure, despite their backgrounds. Teachers who have low teacher efficacy believe external factors are to blame for the lack of student learning that is happening in their classroom. Related to teacher efficacy is locus of control. This is the extent a teacher believes they are in control of what happens in their classroom, especially learning or behavior (Pas, Bradshaw, and Hershfeldt, 2011).

Emotional labor is how professionals manage their emotions in the workplace. This is considered to be a main contributor to burnout. Purposefully trying to alter negative emotions

to only express socially acceptable emotions is an example of emotional labor (Teven, 2007). Teachers are viewed as professionals who should keep their emotions regulated at work. They are expected to display only socially acceptable emotions. Due to this expectation, some individuals engage in surface acting to manage their emotions in the workplace.

In order to manage emotions, individuals can adopt surface acting, deep acting, and naturally felt emotions. Surface acting refers to the process of an individual displaying certain expressions, such as smiling in the workplace despite how they really feel. Putting an effort into changing how one feels to match required emotions is referred to as deep acting. Some employees express naturally felt emotions because they genuinely feel them. Among the three main ways to manage emotions, studies show that those who adopt surface acting are most likely to experience burnout due to the emotion conflict of acting only how they should feel rather than how they really feel (Basim, et. al., 2013).

Nationally, teacher attrition rates average around 50%. Teachers who have worked three years or less in the field attribute to a large portion of the attrition rate. Many teachers leave the profession due to oversized class sizes, long work hours, and the overwhelming demands from administration and student families. However, burnout does not affect every teacher. Research has found student misbehaviors, level of professional satisfaction, and the way teachers view themselves and their students as sources of burnout. How an individual reacts to these factors can determine the likelihood of burnout developing.

“The Big Five” factor model of personality represents individual personality differences in temperament, which ultimately impacts the way people interact. Teacher temperament is thought to explain why some teachers respond differently to stress along with their likelihood

of burning out. "The Big Five" helps assess the relationships among teacher caring, teacher temperament, and burnout. These are key determinants of behavior. The five basic dimensions of personality are: openness to experience, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion (Teven, 2013).

Openness to experience is the first of the five factors of personality. Individuals who are open to experience tend to be flexible thinkers, imaginative, and have intellectual curiosity. They are willing to immerse themselves in new experiences. These individuals are less likely to burn out due to their flexible nature (Srivastava, Chandra, and Shirish, 2013).

Neuroticism is the tendency to experience negative emotional states. Neurotic individuals are typically anxious, hostile, depressed, and vulnerable. Teachers who have a neurotic personality are more likely to experience negative emotions and not cope well with stress. These individuals are more likely to burn out. Neurotic teachers are less equipped to care for others due to the higher levels of anxiety and moodiness they experience (Chang, 2009).

Researcher Jason Teven defines agreeableness as the tendency to be cooperative and compassionate. Those with agreeable personalities are often supportive of their peers, maintain positive relationships, and correlate very strongly with caring (2013).

Conscientiousness is defined as one's persistence, involvement, and intent to follow rules. These individuals are self-disciplined and organized. Teachers described as conscientious are good teaching candidates because they are reliable and have strong impulse control (Shirish, et al., 2013).

Extraversion is an individual's level of cooperativeness, sociability, and responsiveness in high-stress situations. This personality type relates to assertiveness, excitability, and positive affect. Teachers who are extraverted are typically happy and optimistic. They often positive and outgoing in how they relate with their students and colleagues. Extraversion is highly correlated with caring due to their strong, positive orientation towards others (Teven, 2013). Being assertive in high tense situations is essential to maintain an effective classroom.

As mentioned from "the Big Five" factor model of personality, a teacher's temperament can strongly influence their potential for burnout. Caring is a part of teaching that involves a personal relationship with one's students. Teacher caring is a major factor of burnout in the special education field. This was surprising information to learn because I consider myself to be a deeply caring teacher. However, it did make me realize how my emotions often effect the outcomes of crisis situations. The three factors that determines if a student perceives the teacher as caring are empathy, understanding, and responsiveness.

Empathy the ability to identify with how another person is thinking or feeling. Studies agree that empathy is related to positive moral development and promotes pro-social behaviors (Wagaman, Geiger, Shockely, and Segal, 2015). Empathy is important in the special education field. Teachers must try to understand how students are feeling when they lack age-appropriate communication skills.

Related to empathy is understanding. Understanding is "the ability to comprehend another person's feelings and needs (p. 203)". Many teachers have a sense of when a student is encountering a problem, whether it is school-related or issues outside of school. These teachers often have open communication with student families and are empathetic toward difficult

situations families may be encountering. Others have less of a sense of what's going on or are simply less sensitive to the matter (Wagaman, et al., 2015).

The third factor is responsiveness. Responsiveness is having sensitivity toward others. These individuals are thought to be compassionate, helpful, friendly, and sincere. Students perceived their teachers are caring when they showed responsiveness in the classroom. Responsive teachers respond to student needs for affirmation and respect. These teachers challenge their students to succeed and grow academically and socially (Teven, 2013).

Demanding jobs with emotionally charged relationships with clients is a recipe for burnout, but it doesn't have to be the end of a career. There are ways to prevent burnout from occurring. Self-efficacy is a person's confidence in the ability to change his or her own environment. Teachers who have developed self-efficacy set higher goals for themselves, persist through challenges, and provide more support for students who are having difficulties. Teachers with high self-efficacy give their students the feeling they can achieve despite their abilities or outside factors. Teachers who have low self-efficacy view themselves as less competent in classroom management and are more likely to burn out (Oakes, et al., 2013).

Teachers endure many stressors in their career that can ultimately end in burnout. However, there is hope to manage the complicated interactions between work and life. Resilience is the ability of individuals to "bounce back" or respond positively to challenging situations. It's closely related to a strong sense of self-efficacy and motivation to teach despite significant adversities. Being a resilient teacher enables oneself to thrive and sustain effectiveness. Qing Gu and Christopher Day (2007) stated, "Teaching in the 21st century is rated as one of the most stressful professions" (p. 1303). Teachers must adapt positively and thrive

despite significant adversity to avoid the effects of lingering stress. Resilience in negative circumstances can be enhanced or inhibited by work settings, coworkers, and strengths of our aspirations. “Resilience is not an innate quality, but a product of personal and professional dispositions and values” (p. 1305). For instance, a person may show resilience in a certain situation, profession, or life phase, but fails to show these abilities when the time or place changes. Those who prove to be resilient throughout their challenging careers typically continue to have the inner motivation to stay in the teaching field. In general, most teachers adapt and do not leave their job (Qing & Day, 2007).

Thesis Question

How does the disposition of teachers predict burnout? Other than personality types, what causes so many teachers to burn out early in their career? How do teachers avoid burnout or cope with existing burnout?

In Chapter II this writer will share research to provide some answers to the thesis questions.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Literature

The literature of this review was located using Education Journals, ERIC, EBSCO MegaFILE, and Academic Search Complete. The searches were narrowed by only reviewing published empirical studies articles from peer-reviewed journals that focused on burnout, teachers, personality, coping, students of burned-out teachers, and interventions relating to the guiding questions. The key words used in this were “burnout”, “teacher disposition”, “perfectionism”, “Maslach Burnout Inventory”, “the Big Five’ personality factors”, “coping”, “burnout and special education”, and “personality traits and temperament”. This chapter reviews the literature on teacher disposition and burnout and its impact on special education.

Burnout

History of Burnout

The term “burnout” was originally introduced by Herbert J. Freudenberger in 1974. He described a burned-out individual as a fatigued and frustrated employee whose symptoms were brought on by their devotion to a cause or job, way of life, or failed relationship. He found the more committed individuals were to their jobs, the more prone they were to burnout. Freudenberger believed the source of burnout existed mainly outside of the job. He thought family and romantic relationships could inversely interfere with a person’s stress level and work demeanor; however, burned-out individuals are unable to keep work and personal life problems separate and allow stress to affect them in all areas of life. Freudenberger felt burnout mostly affected American workers. There was, and continues to be, heavy pressure for

workers to not only provide for their families, but to have a comfortable marriage, respect from the community, and a secure status (Freudenberger, 1981).

The definition of burnout we use today was formulated by Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson in 1981. They described burnout as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people-work’ of some kind” (p. 1). Burnout involves physical fatigue, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. At the time of burnout’s initial recognition, teachers were not considered to be a part of the working professionals likely to suffer from burnout. Factory workers, clerks, and secretaries were the positions most likely to burn out (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Christina Maslach believed burnout correlated with physical exhaustion, insomnia, marital and family difficulties, and higher use of drugs and alcohol. She noticed burnout commonly existed in the care-giving and service field of work. These employees typically worked too much, too long, and too intensely (Taycan, Taycan, and Celik, 2014). Maslach and Jackson also noticed a significant relationship between individual ego level and personality characteristics. The authors developed the *Maslach Burnout Inventory*, a subscale still used today to measure burnout. Before this, burnout was never formally studied (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory

Christina Maslach and Susan Jackson were interested in creating an instrument to measure burnout among human service workers. In 1986, they developed the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (MBI). The items in the inventory were designed to measure the theorized

components of burnout. The instruments used were created to target professional experiences of individuals working within a specific population. The key aspects of burnout measured in the inventory were depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment, and emotional exhaustion (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Depersonalization is described by Maslach and Jackson as having a dehumanized and impersonal view of others. People experiencing depersonalization develop a negative attitude towards work and students, have dehumanizing views of others, and ultimately caring less about their work environment. Ironically, these individuals tend to be the teachers who care the most about their students. Depersonalization can be a coping mechanism for emotional exhaustion. Teachers may blame students and their families for the child's behavioral or learning difficulties and begin to no longer enjoy being around their students (1981).

Reduced personal accomplishment is the loss of feeling successful and adequately qualified for a job. In this stage, employees begin to doubt their professional choice. They start to feel unaccomplished at work and unhappy about themselves. When teachers begin to experience a reduced sense of accomplishment, they feel less useful at work, view work peers negatively, and feel less responsive to students' needs (Teven, 2007).

Emotional exhaustion is a prominent indicator of burnout. It is characterized by feeling stressed and overloaded at work. For teachers, having to solve student problems, deal with student parents, and act warm toward students and work peers, all while disregarding their own emotional states can quickly lead to physical and emotional exhaustion (Basim, et al., 2013). How a person reacts to stress along with his or her overall personality traits have significant effects on emotional exhaustion. Personality is thought to play an important role in

how a person displays their emotions both at work and at home. Once a person notices his or her own sense of emotional exhaustion, it must be monitored to identify and prevent burnout at its early stages (Basim, et. al., 2013).

The MBI is comprised of a series of interviews and questionnaires about the social work service employees' personal feelings and attitudes toward work. This 25-item form was originally distributed to nurses, teachers, social workers, and several other social service jobs that involve constant face-to-face interactions. The inventory tracked the intensity and frequency of personal feelings toward their jobs (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Results from the MBI confirmed the hypothesis that individuals with specific personality traits in the human service field are prone to burnout, while others are not. There was supporting evidence that the participants in this study experiencing burnout wanted to spend less time with people. This desire often came in the form of absenteeism and frequent breaks at work. Maslach and Jackson also theorized that burnout is related to the desire to leave one's job. This hypothesis was supported through high burnout scores on the MBI relating to the intention to quit. Another hypothesis from the researchers confirmed the belief that burnout can lead to impaired work and personal relationships. These burned-out individuals were more likely to report that they wanted to get away from people. The Maslach Burnout Inventory used in these studies has provided knowledge for theories of emotion and job stress, variables that promote or reduce the occurrence of burnout, and could help suggest modifications for future job recruitment and training (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Personality Traits and Temperament

Can personality be a predicting factor of burnout? Many researchers in the field of burnout believe it can. Personality traits are the qualities or characteristics that distinguish a person. When burnout was initially introduced, researchers wanted to know why some people burn out in the human service field, while some do not. Individuals with certain personality traits may unknowingly choose to be in highly stressful fields of occupation, and ultimately set themselves up for burnout (Armon et al., 2012).

Teacher morale is dropping quickly due to school budget cuts, job security, and the stress of high stakes testing. The way people respond to stressful situations, along with their personalities, can determine the employees' level of emotional labor and emotional exhaustion. What needs to be kept in mind is the emotional state in teachers and how they handle challenging situations (Basim, et al., 2013).

Personality traits that predict burnout include workers who feel their efforts aren't being appreciated, type-A personality, low self-esteem, passive coping mechanisms such as ignoring problems, and those with high expectations of themselves. At some point in their career, almost all teachers have been frustrated with their job. However, some teachers experience these emotions more intensely and frequently than others (Brunsting et al., 2014).

Self-efficacy is the extent of one's belief that he or she can control the surrounding environment. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more organized, open to new ideas, and likely to persist in difficult situations. They are more committed to their job and have greater enthusiasm toward teaching. Teachers with high self-efficacy are typically patient with students and spend more time helping those who are struggling. These teachers deliver high rates of

reinforcement, spend more time on academic instruction rather than behavior management, and believe all students can be successful despite student abilities (Oakes et al., 2013).

Teachers who have a low sense of self-efficacy view themselves as less competent in classroom management. They are more affected by stress than teachers with confidence in their teaching and behavior management. Their lack of classroom control causes them to feel pessimistic, anxious and doubtful about their career choice. These teachers often revert to negative coping mechanisms, which can lead to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. These teachers have the highest risk for the exhaustion dimension of burnout, which usually ends with teachers leaving their field of work (Oakes et al., 2013).

Teacher stress is often a result of lack of social recognition, large class size, fear of violence from students, lack of classroom control, isolation, and limited professional opportunities. When teachers are faced with these stressors, their reaction depends on their personality characteristics. Teachers with stable personalities are predisposed to view events in a positive manner, which produces psychologically and physically healthy outcomes. When their personalities are less stable, they tend to view events in a negative, stressed manner. They see potential stressors as a threat, rather than a challenge (Kokkinos, 2007).

The “Big Five” Personality Traits

“The Big Five” personality dimensions was a tool created to predict the likelihood of burnout. Ernest Tupes and Raymond Christal found five recurrent factors in analyses of personality ratings. These factors are fundamental dimensions of personality and are most commonly known today as the Five-Factor Model (McCrae & John, 1992). The Five-Factor Model has been heavily researched by personality theorists in efforts to narrow down the basic

dimensions of personality. In the early years of this study, only extraversion and neuroticism were identified as major components of psychological tests. Openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were added several years later. Gordon Allport and Henry Odbert retrieved the terms used in this model from a dictionary, Raymond Cattell created the rating scales contrasting groups of adjectives, Tupes and Christal obtained observer ratings and factored them, and W.T. Norman narrowed it down to the final 20 rating scales. This group effort created the most widely-used personality instrument still utilized today, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (McCrae & John, 1992).

The first of the five factors (also known as the “Big Five”) examined in the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* is extraversion. Extraversion is also known as “surgency.” This refers to the quantity and intensity of interpersonal reaction (p. 301). Attributes of this trait include friendliness, assertiveness, cheerfulness, and excitement seeking. Agreeableness, the second factor in the Big Five, is related to the tendency to be compassionate and cooperative. This measures an individual’s level of trusting and helpful nature. Those who score very high on agreeableness are typically naïve or submissive. On the other end of the spectrum, those who score low on agreeableness are viewed as competitive, detached, and untrustworthy (Teven, 2007).

Openness to experience, the third factor, reflects the degree of intellectual curiosity a person has. Openness also involves active imagination, attentiveness to inner feelings, embracing variety, and a constant pursuit of self-actualization. This trait is unrelated to symptoms of burnout. Those who are less open to experience are often viewed as practical, routine-bound, and data-driven (Hurt, Grist, Maysky, and McCord, 2013).

A significant part of the “Big Five” is the fourth factor: neuroticism. Neuroticism is the tendency to experience negative and emotional states. Individuals who have this personality type have the tendency to experience negative emotions such as fear, depression, and anxiety. This causes a negative emotional balance, which is believed to be the result of unintended emotional expression. Neurotic people view the world pessimistically and often interpret many stimuli as threatening. Neuroticism and extraversion significantly affect emotional exhaustion, one of the main causes of burnout. Individuals who are viewed as neurotic do not handle stress well and are less likely to be good teaching candidates due to their high possibility of burning out (Teven, 2007).

The last trait included in the “Big Five” is conscientiousness, also referred to as “dependability.” Conscientiousness is linked to positive health outcomes. It is believed that conscientiousness predisposes people to handle stress more effectively. These individuals are viewed as self-disciplined and competent. The more conscientious the teacher, the more likely the teacher will be reliable, orderly, and caring. Alongside neuroticism, conscientiousness has been found to predict work-related outcomes such as level of success in the career, deviance, and coping styles. These personality styles influence utilization of available coping resources required to alleviate burnout (Teven, 2007).

In a study of the personality characteristics mentioned in the “Big Five” and environmental variables, researchers found that the personality traits of special educators in Greece were the most significant predictors of the burnout dimensions (Kokkinos, 2007). The five basic dimensions of personality that were studied for this literature review have proven

certain personality traits can predispose employees to experience stressors more negatively and intensely, and ultimately cause burnout (Armon et al., 2012).

Special Education Teacher Burnout

Teachers have one of the highest levels of burnout in the human service field. Approximately one-third of teachers consider their career as highly stressful, and nearly 40% of teachers leave the field by their fifth year of teaching. More teachers leave their profession due to job dissatisfaction rather than them nearing the age of retirement (Høigaard, Giske, and Sundsli, 2012).

Teaching is an occupation that requires constant regulation of emotions. Individuals in the teaching profession are expected to listen to students' problems, give them advice, and stay calm in high tense student situations, all while disregarding their own emotional state (Basim et al., 2013). Teachers make a conscious effort to not reflect their personal problems in the work place. They do not want to project their feelings on students or coworkers, because they are looked upon as professionals and role models. Being a teacher can feel isolating, leading to feelings of frustration, isolation, and boredom, all while dealing with their anxieties alone (Chang, 2009). Teachers are required to collaborate with school administration, colleagues, and parents to ensure effective teaching and learning. Regulating and managing these emotions while maintaining their professionalism at work has a negative impact on teachers in terms of their psychology (Yilmaz, Altinkurt, Yahya, and Mustafa, 2015). The difference between expectations and reality brings out frustration amongst teachers and increases their emotional exhaustion.

Twenty-five percent of new teachers in the United States leave the profession within their third year of work, and nearly 40% of teachers quit their jobs within the first five years. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, job satisfaction and the desire to stay in the teaching field dropped dramatically. However, it was not always due to burnout. Some teachers took interest in different jobs with higher pay and mobility, which may have decreased their commitment to their original position. Currently, most new teachers who quit discover they are not adequately prepared for the overwhelming responsibilities involved with their position (Høigaard et al., 2012).

Teacher attrition and teacher shortage have an alarming effect on burnout. The shortage causes staffing problems in schools and degrades the quality of classroom instruction. New teachers, especially new special education teachers, are the most prone to feeling the intense emotions that come with teaching (Chang, 2009). Høigaard et al. (2012) stated, "Studies indicate that the period when teachers are newly qualified is a peak time for leaving the profession" (p. 347). A common fear of new teachers is not being respected or liked by their colleagues. They feel anxious about being inexperienced in the subject content and feel forced to make quick and uncertain decisions. Without correctly adapting their teaching methods, students of inexperienced teachers are less likely to reach their educational goals (Chang, 2009). The unrealistic expectations placed upon new teachers increase professional dissatisfaction and emotional fatigue.

Within the teaching profession, special education teachers are the most prone to experience symptoms of burnout. Teachers working with students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are linked to high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

However, special education teachers who have specialized training are significantly less likely to burn out compared to inexperienced teachers. In France, special education teachers are not required to have specialized training prior to employment, frequently leaving teachers feeling unprepared for facing challenges in the classroom. Teachers who choose not to pursue the specialized training are less likely to have positive relationships with their students, and student-teacher conflict is more common. (Boujut, Dean, Grouselle, and Cappe, 2016).

Unfortunately, even the teachers who decide to receive specialized training are still at risk of burning out. Lack of support from the principal and members of administration can leave teachers feeling like they do not have the resources necessary to manage their overload of responsibilities. In addition to a lack of resources, special education teachers often sacrifice their time for daily paperwork and IEP meetings, leaving less time for classroom instruction. The authors found that special education teachers working with students with emotional disturbance (ED) experience burnout at an alarming rate compared to those working with other student disabilities. The challenging behaviors, along with managing the classroom, can lead to burnout at a higher rate (Brunsting et al., 2014).

Regular education teachers who have one or more special education student in their classroom are at high risk for exhaustion and burnout. This is due to their lack of training in student disabilities and how to modify instruction and assignments for them. In these situations, it is often difficult for the teacher to lead the class as a whole, while also teaching at a reasonable pace for the one or more students with special needs. Fortunately, most students with special needs are provided with a paraprofessional in the general education setting to provide extra support (Boujut et al., 2016).

Classroom-Level Variables

There are factors of burnout that are associated with classroom composition. These factors consist of student population, classroom setting, and the work environment. Research suggests student age is associated with burnout. Teacher age was also studied but yielded inconsistent results. Studies consistently show teachers of students within the age range of 13-19 are at higher risk for burning out than teachers of other age groups. Teachers of older students experience lower levels of personal accomplishment and higher levels of depersonalization (Brunsting et al., 2014).

Teachers who work with students with challenging behaviors, such as emotional disturbance, have the highest burnout rate compared to teachers who work with students with other disabilities (Brunsting et al., 2014). Teachers who work with students with significant behavior problems, such as ED and EBD (emotional behavioral disorder), experience additional challenges. These teachers are expected to teach the required material and adapt to student learning needs, while creating and implementing effective behavior interventions. Students with EBD have poor academic skills and disruptive behaviors. To become engaged in academics, teachers must provide academic instruction along with behavior management interventions. The complexity of these demands may be overwhelming for some teachers. In an investigation of teacher time use, it was estimated teachers of students with ED and EBD in self-contained classrooms spent on average only 32.3% of the school day on academic instruction. The insufficient time leaves little room to meet individual student needs. This is alarming information because most of these students spend their school day in one classroom with one teacher (Bettini, Kimerling, Park, and Murphy, 2015).

Staffing in classrooms has a surprising correlation with burnout. Special education classrooms typically have more staff than regular education teachers due to their need of extra support. However, Brunsting, Sreckovic, and Lane's research found the more adults present in an ASD (autism spectrum disorder) classroom, the higher the rate of burnout is for the lead teacher (2014).

On top of managing extra adults in the classroom, special education teachers are under the constant burden of spending much of their workday doing "busy work." This includes due process work, preparing for parent conferences, staff meetings, daily notes to families, and figuring out what additional classroom materials need to be purchased that week, usually with their own money. The lack of time given to plan for instruction and manage the classroom can give teachers the sense they are not giving their students the best education possible. The need to create a comfortable learning environment by supplying plentiful resources and class materials out of their own pocket is a constant reality for most teachers. The complexity of these demands can be overwhelming for teachers, leading them to feel stressed and frustrated (Brunsting et al., 2014).

Working with members of school administration can be a challenge for special education teachers. Administration often has control over what teachers are responsible for and how much time they are given to complete tasks. A study consisting of special education teachers' time use in resource settings showed that administrators had impractical expectations for how much time special educators spend working. Administrators believed teachers worked about 11.9 hours per day. Overall, they overestimated how much time teachers spend actively teaching and underestimated the amount of time spent on

administrative tasks. The lack of understanding of how special educators use their time causes administration to be unable to support them in using their time productively. However, school administration is not fully to blame. Many members of administration do not have the training or experience required to understand special educators' work. Support from administration is essential for special educators' success and retention, however there are limited studies focused on how administrators can better support special education teachers (Bettini et al., 2015).

Support from the people teachers frequently interact with is important to combat the stressors of the profession. Principals who interact casually with staff predict lower burnout scores for teachers. In addition, support from the families of students inversely correlates with burnout. When teachers do not get any feedback from parents, they do not know how parents view their teaching. The more openly teachers and parents communicate, the less likely it is for teacher burnout to occur (Brunsting et al., 2014).

Health Effects of Burnout

Burnout is typically associated with negative emotional effects, however studies have shown work stress and exhaustion can also lead to health impairments. Common physical symptoms of burnout can consist of a lowered immune system causing chronic fatigue, headaches, colds, and influenza. Musculoskeletal pain has also been reported. Depression is a symptom that is also commonly reported with burned-out individuals. Teachers with burnout typically experience eight out of nine symptoms of depression (Brunsting et al., 2014). In addition to depression, burned-out employees are at higher risk for chemical dependency and suicidal tendencies (Lheureux, Truchot, and Borteyrou, 2016).

Severe burnout can lead to the manifestation of disease. Bellingrath, Weigl, and Kudielka stated, “frequent and intense work stress is associated with increased risk for cardiovascular disease, coronary artery disease type 2 diabetes, depression, alcohol dependence, and sleep problems” (p. 38). Heightened cortisol levels, along with disturbance of the metabolic processes, have a direct association with burnout. Furthermore, research has found individuals who score high on burnout spend nearly double on medical insurance compared to an employee group who scored low on burnout. Workers who scored high on the burnout scale typically had more doctor visits per year. However, health issues are not an immediate effect of burnout, as these symptoms can slowly manifest themselves over time (Bellingrath et al., 2009).

There are several studies that have linked suicide and addictive behaviors as extreme consequences of burnout. However, the results are varied. The authors of one study believe chronic exposure to the threat of valued resources, such as personal objects, characteristics, conditions, and energies produce burnout. This can ultimately cause the individual to use all available resources for too long of a period without successfully protecting the threatened resources. Losing one resource increases the chance of the loss of other resources if work demands continue to be too high. According to Lheureux et al. (2016), “Suffering from continuous losses increases feelings of hopelessness, as well with depressive symptoms, making suicidal ideation more prevalent and suicidal plan and attempt more likely” (p. 175). The emotional exhaustion suffered by the burned-out individual is moderately linked to the consumption of alcohol and psychotropic medication as coping behaviors.

Stress and Personality

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

In the 1980s, a transactional model of stress and coping was developed by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman to examine job stress. Their aim was to study why stress is such a prevalent issue in many workers' lives. The authors believed that depending on how many demands a person is confronted with and the amount of resources they have, stress may either be in abundance or avoided completely. There is an imbalance between demand and resources. There are three stages included in the transactional model of stress and coping: measures of daily stress, appraisal, and coping (Chang, 2009).

Daily stress accounts for the elementary hassles people encounter in everyday life. The hassles the authors focused on were from the Daily Hassles Scale, which is comprised of household responsibilities, finances, work, the environment and social issues, home maintenance, health, family and friends, and personal life. Studies using this scale have found that an increase in daily hassles links to a rise in same-day illness symptoms and distressed mood. Hassles were also foretelling of next day mood and health. However, these encounters are not all the same in their effects on health and mood, even if the emotional intensity is similar (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987).

There are two kinds of appraisal: primary and secondary. Primary appraisal is also called "perceived stress." In this stage, a person evaluates the potential threat to determine the significance of the event. The individual determines whether he or she has anything at stake in the encounter. If it's decided there is, the reaction depends on what is at stake. If there is nothing at stake, no emotional reaction will occur. The secondary appraisal stage is what a person thinks he or she can do about the situation. When faced with a situation, an individual

decides if any actions can improve the outcome of the situation, and then evaluates which social and personal coping options might work (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987).

Lastly, there is a relationship between appraisal and coping. Coping efforts are actual strategies used to mediate primary and secondary appraisals. In the transactional model of stress and coping, when stakes are high, an individual should be actively seeking coping mechanisms and increased attention to its consequences. Coping is split between problem-based coping and emotion-based coping. Problem-based coping is used when a person feels like he or she has control of a situation and is able to manage the source of the problem. Emotion-based coping is used when a person feels like he or she has no control over the situation. The individual may start to use healthy or unhealthy strategies to manage emotional distress (Chang, 2009).

Emotional Labor

Employees regulating and managing their emotions in the workplace while displaying professional behaviors defines the basics of emotional labor. Emotional labor is focused on observable behaviors rather than internalized emotional management. Emotional labor is like an inner battle between acting out how one feels while maintaining appropriate behavior in certain situations. Take for example an employee upset with a client; instead of having the natural reaction to yell at that person, that employee must control his or her emotions according to what that person thinks is professionally appropriate. Controlling such intense emotions can cause employees to become emotionally drained, especially outside of work. Many workers become mentally and physically exhausted after maintaining the required level of genuineness throughout the work day. This exhaustion can cause workers to lose patience

more easily with others at home after using up all their “niceness” at work (Bondarenko, du Preez, and Shepard, 2017).

Personality is not a fixed variable; the ability to predict burnout is questionable. People respond differently to stressors in various situations through specific types of acting (Chang, Mei-Lin, 2009). Emotional labor research describes emotional labor behavior under three dimensions: surface acting, deep acting, and naturally-felt emotions (Yilmaz et al., 2015).

Surface acting refers to employees pretending to feel certain emotions, words, and body language while internally hiding their real feelings. With surface acting, an individual will pretend to feel the emotion or behavior they believe is socially acceptable, even though they do not actually feel that way. This often includes workers who are angry or afraid of certain clients but feel the perceived need to hide those feelings from that client and other employees. Some people show facial expressions and body language to project feelings they do not necessary feel. Many employees in the social work field will display surface acting for clients’ sake. They will surface act only when their true feelings would not benefit the client (Bondarenko et al., 2017). Studies have shown that surface acting is more common in male teachers, married teachers, and people working in administration. Neurotic and extroverted people commonly adopt surface acting as well (Basim et al., 2013).

Deep acting is an individual’s effort to feel a certain behavior, even though they do not feel that way. People do this to follow the rules of behavior and to fit in with social norms. The difference between surface acting and deep acting is with deep acting, emotions are encouraged to be felt, while those exhibiting surface acting simply pretend to feel emotions without putting effort into experiencing them (Yilmaz et al., 2015). Deep acting is often

performed through self-talk to regulate negative emotions. This is commonly seen when special education teachers try to see things from their students' point of view to enhance positive emotions. Extroverted people were found to adapt to surface acting and deep acting easily (Bondarenko et al., 2017).

Some employees display the required emotions because they reflect how they really feel. This act of emotional regulation is an expression of naturally-felt emotions. With this trait, individuals act exactly how they feel. This is more commonly seen in teachers compared to school administrators (Basim et al., 2013). Yilmaz et al. (2015) stated, "the main difference among these three dimensions is the level of internalization of behaviors" (p. 77). The research concluded that teachers should go about their work professionally through deep acting and naturally-felt emotions instead of revealing their private problems through surface acting (Yilmaz et al., 2015). The exhaustion from maintaining the emotional stability required to work in the teaching field is likely why teachers retire earlier than other professions (Boujut et al., 2016).

Factors of Burnout

Antecedents of burnout involve two factors: situational and individual. Situational antecedents refer to a person's overall job characteristics. This includes work overload, time pressure, and lack of social support from work peers. Occupational characteristics also play a part in situational antecedents. Characteristics involve the obligation to display or hide emotions in the workplace. Organizational characteristics, which is the conflict of values between employers and employees, is also considered a situational antecedent (Mojsa-Kaja et al., 2015).

Individual antecedents is the other factor of burnout, which includes demographic variables, work-related attitudes such as unrealistic expectations, and personality traits. People with personality traits such as neuroticism, external locus of control, poor self-esteem, type-A behavior, avoidant coping style, and low sensation-seeking tendencies make up the profile of a burnout-prone employee (Mojsa-Kaja et al., 2015).

Occupational Factors

Social work, counseling, and teaching are the most common occupations that require intense social interactions. Teachers have the highest stress and burnout levels compared to other occupations in the human service field. Teachers often experience high levels of exhaustion and cynicism, which are critical dimensions of burnout (Mojsa-Kaja et al., 2015). According to Brunsting, Sreckovik, and Lane, the age and gender of teachers may also impact burnout rates. Teachers' age negatively correlated with burnout. In other words, the older the teacher, the less likely he or she will experience emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Older teachers typically have a greater sense of personal accomplishment. However, this hypothesis has varied results in other studies. Along with age, the amount of experience in both the special and regular education fields negatively correlates with burnout. In terms of gender, males experience higher rates of depersonalization. Research reviewed by the authors suggest men are more susceptible to burnout than women. However, these findings are inconsistent across studies (2014).

Perfectionism

Perfectionism is a personality trait that plays an important role in teacher stress and burnout. Perfectionism is a personality style described as an obsession with flawlessness, being

overly critical of oneself, and setting unrealistic standards for performance. Teachers who are perfectionists view not only themselves critically, but those around them. Perfectionists want to live up to their high standards, often leaving them feeling stressed and burned-out (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008).

Perfectionism is a multidimensional characteristic that is comprised of two dimensions: perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns. Striving for perfection is considered healthy and normal. Setting high standards and having high expectations of oneself within reason is associated with positive characteristics and outcomes. Perfectionistic concerns are comprised of the neurotic, unhealthy, and maladaptive facets of perfectionism. These people are more critical of themselves about mistakes, doubtful of their actions, have perceived pressure to be perfect, and have negative reactions to imperfections. Perfectionistic concerns are associated with negative characteristics and burnout. The distinction between perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns is crucial in how perfectionism is related to stress, burnout, and coping (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008).

Perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns have their own coping styles. People with perfectionistic strivings typically use an active coping style, while those with perfectionistic concerns have more of an avoidant coping style. An active coping style consists of planning and suppressing completing activities. It means to actively try and change the stressful situation, which is related to greater coping efficacy. Avoidant coping styles are linked with denial and behavior and mental disengagement. Teachers with an avoidant coping style avoid stressful situations rather than directly address them. This coping style does not allow for effective stress management. It can lead to drug and alcohol use, poor eating habits,

procrastination, and other maladaptive coping mechanisms (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008).

Burnout and Student Learning Outcomes

The exhaustion felt by teachers who are experiencing burnout symptoms can directly affect the students they teach. Burned-out teachers put less effort into creating and implementing reasonable IEP goals and focus less on taking care of their emotional well-being. In turn, students of a teacher experiencing burnout are more likely to be disruptive, have social and emotional struggles, have lower quality IEPs, and reach their IEP goals less often. Most teachers are unaware their emotional exhaustion affects their students. Teachers who experience emotional exhaustion believe they exhaust themselves for the benefit of the students and do not plan on changing (Radford, 2017).

Burnout is the main contributor for teacher attrition rates. The yearly attrition rate of special educators is nearly twice that of general educators. Approximately 20% of special education teachers switch to general education or to another position in the education field. Attrition rates and frequent absences are correlated with student discipline issues, poor teacher-student relationships, and lack of student progress. Burning out early in the teaching field can lead to teacher shortage, leaving schools with fewer trained teachers and ultimately degrading the quality instruction in the classroom (Wong, Ruble, Yu, and Mcgrew, 2017).

Factors that Work Against Burnout

There are some personality styles and mindsets that individuals have that have a negative correlation with burnout. An individual's self-perception and traits are factors of either increased or decreased burnout, which consists of three variables: experiential avoidance, mindful awareness, and valued living.

Experiential avoidance is the desire an individual has to avoid disagreeable situations, thoughts, or feelings. It is the natural tendency to want to stay away from uncomfortable experiences. However, avoiding instead of confronting problems can have a negative effect if done in every situation (Brunsting et al., 2014). Mindful awareness is the act of making a conscious effort to be aware of one's surroundings and is negatively associated with burnout. It's the ability to pay attention to thoughts and feelings without judgement. Being mindful can be a means of reducing stress, improve attention, reduce emotional reactivity, and boost the immune system (Brunsting et al., 2014). Mindfulness can improve an educator's ability to notice tensions and emotions arising in the classroom. This allows the educator to respond effectively to conflicts that may arise (Goh, 2012). Another variable negatively related to burnout is valued living, which is the perception of living in harmony with one's surroundings. It is the understanding of what a person wants out of life and to actively work to achieve it (Brunsting et al., 2014). Having a healthy mindset and coping strategies available are highly advised when entering a career in education.

Coping Strategies and Interventions

Managing Emotions with Spirituality

Managing emotions in the teaching environment is difficult for every educator at some point in their career. When teachers feel fed up, tired, angry, sad, or any other negative emotion, society expects them to hide their feelings and put on a happy face. Teachers are encouraged to keep work and home life issues separate. They are not supposed to bring problems from home to the workplace. Unfortunately, many allow home and work stress to

build up inside without any healthy outlet. The need to cope with stress in a proactive manner is vital to managing feelings of exhaustion and burnout (Hartwick & Kang, 2013).

One of the most popular and useful tools for managing emotions during stressful times is spirituality. Roughly 66%-75% of recent studies discovered people who have religious involvement have better mental health and capacity to handle stress. Meditation and repetitive or thoughtful prayer is said to bring about a physiological relaxation response, which could change the perception of a stressful event (Hartwick & Kang, 2013)

Many teachers are inspired to go into the teaching field due to their spiritual beliefs. A recent study of college students and religiosity found that highly religious people commonly enter education careers, maintain them, and ultimately become more religious while doing so. In a Wisconsin study on educators, over half of the teachers believed they were called to teach by a higher power. The study showed teachers with devout spiritual beliefs drew upon those aspects of their spiritual identity and utilized them in their professional careers. Although limited, there is evidence that relieving professional stress can be accomplished by spiritual practices such as prayer and meditation. Teachers who work with students with EBD were interviewed about how they deal with work stress. In a study of Catholic School teachers' stress levels, three out of the 20 teachers reported using prayer as a method of dealing with work stress. Based on several other interviews with EBD teachers, prayer, humor, and keeping emotional distance with students and families were their main strategies used to reduce stress (Hartwick & Kang, 2013).

Shin Ji Kang was the principal investigator for his study on prayer as means of coping with stress. Three out of the four teacher participants in a Wisconsin public school indicated

they considered themselves “highly religious” and attended weekly half-hour long prayer meetings at work. Participants stated they often prayed to become a better teacher, to problem-solve, and for emotional healing of troubled students. Of the teachers who reported to be active prayers; 93% believed prayer has provided comfort during challenging times or crisis; 84% of participants indicated prayer has helped them cope with work-related stress; and 70% stated prayer helped them maintain their passion for teaching and reduce burnout. Overall, roughly 62% of the general teacher population currently engages in spiritual practices to manage professional (Hartwick & Kang, 2013).

When prayer is used as a stress coping mechanism by teachers to manage stress and remain resilient during challenging circumstances, they often see potential stressors as an opportunity to learn rather than a threat. Teachers who believe deeply in their religion find themselves praying more for their students than themselves. In some sense, they give up control and hand the issue over to God (“let go, let God”) by praying and taking things day by day until the issue is resolved. Although the article does not suggest all teachers should start praying, teachers who are spiritually inclined will likely benefit from spiritual practices while managing professional stress. The authors recommend schools create “sacred spaces” throughout the buildings, such as a quiet room for teachers to pray, meditate, reflect, or decompress. These can come in the forms of meditation gardens or just quiet spaces within the building (Hartwick & Kang, 2013).

Burnout Interventions

The psychological property of burnout has been found to be a temporary state on a continuum rather than an end-point. A study conducted by Fessler and Christensen interviewed

160 teachers and found that career frustration and burnout are most common in teachers in the middle of their career, however, the sample size was small, possibly skewing the results. Frustrated teachers who participate in stimulating professional development opportunities can often regain their enthusiasm for teaching. Therefore, it is possible that burnout can be a temporary state if someone overcomes it during their career (Chang, 2009).

In 1996, Elizabeth Cooley and Paul Yovanoff designed an intervention focused on alleviating burnout caused by teacher stress and lack of collegial support. The intervention lasted a total of ten weeks consisting of weekly two-hour meetings. The first five weeks were dedicated to ways to cope with stress using three main skills: identify problems and develop solutions, physiological coping (relaxing muscles), and cognitive coping (recognizing and redirecting self-negativity). The last five weeks were comprised of pairing up teachers to practice solving typical school-related problems through a four-step process: clarifying the problem, summarizing the problem, creating an intervention, and evaluating the outcome of the intervention. The group who participated in the intervention experienced significant positive differences in emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, organization, and overall job satisfaction. Participants in the control group reported experiencing no noticeable differences. A separate study conducted by Jennett, Harris, and Mesibov in 2003 stated, "Teachers' commitment to an intervention philosophy was inversely correlated with both emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. Commitment also explained 17.8% of the variance in personal accomplishment, which suggests teachers who commit to an intervention may have greater success alleviating their burnout." (p. 698). When a person uses effective

coping strategies, that individual is more likely to have lower stress levels. When there is poor effort to alleviate or cope with stress, burnout can occur (Brunstring et al., 2014).

Burnout interventions exist so that individuals can manage their stress and achieve an overall sense of wellness. Wellness is a mental and physical state of health that increases the likelihood of an individual meeting his or her full potential. Without a sense of wellness, workers in the human service field are typically less responsive to the needs of their clients. If an individual does not strive for personal wellness, it does not make sense to promote and teach it to others (Lindo et al., 2015).

Balance is the key to wellness; however, individuals have different perceptions of how balance is defined. A group-supervision wellness study was conducted by one of the authors of this article, Jonathan Ohrt. His goal was to examine students' perception of the program. The purpose of the intervention was to increase awareness of burnout risk factors, warning signs, and strategies aimed to prevent burnout. The intervention was also aimed to teach individuals about the wellness models and dimensions of wellness, to identify the physical and emotional symptoms of stress, prepare for potential obstacles to wellness, and choose specific wellness strategies to implement during the semester. Ten female students from a Southern United States university were chosen to take part in the study through a voluntary 15-week counseling practicum. Each week consisted of a 1.5-hour practicum group supervised session. During the weekly sessions, participants learned about the various components of burnout. The practicum supervisor taught the students definitions of burnout, its risk factors, consequences of burnout, and prevention strategies. The participants were provided information about the components of wellness, which consists of intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, physical, and

occupational wellness. During these discussions, participants talked about physical and emotional signs of stress they experienced along with the challenges they expected to come across during the semester. Lastly, participants shared their specific wellness goals they aim to achieve by the end of the semester. Supervisors checked in with the participants weekly to see how they were progressing with their goals. Ten students from this program were interviewed about their perceptions of the wellness study and the kind of impact it had made. The students were asked how the intervention affected them physically, emotionally, and spiritually, and how it has impacted their interactions with clients. Students were also asked how they felt about the program's overall format, what they would change about it, and if they plan to continue to use the wellness practices they learned. The results of Ohrt's intervention program exposed several major themes: accountability, self-care, healthy coping strategies, and increased awareness of burnout symptoms (Lindo et al., 2015).

Accountability was described as the sense of responsibility felt by the students to share their thoughts with their classmates during the weekly sessions. It also referred to the support received by students for participating in the check-in meetings. The students discussed in post-interviews how they liked the amount of support and encouragement that was shared during the meetings, and the accountability they provided for each other (Lindo et al., 2015).

Another theme that came about from Ohrt's intervention was the concept of self-care. In this program, self-care was how the students evaluated themselves regarding their holistic wellness, and commitment to establishing goals along with realistic strategies to achieve them. Many of the students throughout this program realized the importance of finding time and staying committed to self-care through setting and achieving reasonable goals.

Healthy coping strategies are methods or activities that are aimed to manage stress and reduce burnout. Several students reported physical, relaxing, and meditative activities were the most useful during the onset of feeling burnout symptoms. Extra sleep was also reported as a good source of relaxation (Lindo et al., 2015).

Increased awareness is the understanding of oneself and the therapeutic process. According to the student post-interviews, most of the students reported an increase in awareness of the impact their stress levels had on their clients. Some students reported noticing they were worried about the time missed with their clients when they were sick due to an overload of stress. The students came to understand that once they took the time to take care of themselves, they were better well equipped to care for their clients. The participants of this study said the training helped them increase their self-awareness, become more attentive to their clients' needs, and have a better understanding of the impact that their well-being has on the therapeutic process (Lindo et al., 2015).

Burnout is an epidemic that has recently begun attracting more attention to health and psychology experts. Pre and post-work teacher wellness sessions are being offered at schools for teachers and staff, focusing on stress management and meditation techniques. Teachers are being encouraged to speak up more when stress becomes overwhelming, and to "tap out" when necessary to avoid prolonged feelings of stress and anger.

Maslach and Jackson (1981) stated, "The burnout victim is usually silent to the problem, which only complicates matters. Open communication about the subject is excellent therapy." (p. 5). This statement is to remind workers the importance of speaking out when they are noticing signs of burning out. The burned-out person must be assured that freely expressing

feelings will not jeopardize professional respect from administration or employers.

Transition to Chapter III

The final chapter of this thesis will provide a discussion and conclusion regarding teacher disposition and burnout and how they impact special education.

CHAPTER III

Summary

Teacher burnout has recently been getting more attention from mental health experts. As a special education teacher, I noticed I was experiencing a lot of symptoms of burnout during my first year of teaching. I developed a twitch in my left eye during the first week of school which stayed with me for two months. I had trouble with sleeping, relaxing, and maintaining a social life. I was mentally and physically exhausted. I wasn't excited to go to work, knowing my eyes would be glued to the clock while I frantically put together lesson plans, even after arriving 30 minutes early. My classroom had little direction, and my paraprofessionals could only help guide me so much. Eventually, I became more confident and led a successful classroom. I chose to be more active, took mental health breaks, and spoke up when I was struggling. Unfortunately, not everyone gets so lucky following a stressful work phase.

During my research, I found myself thinking back to my first paraprofessional job in Oakdale, Minnesota. During my time there I wondered if the second-grade teacher at the elementary school I worked at still enjoyed her job. I never saw her smile or speak warmly to students. She was closed off from other staff members and spoke negatively of her class when she did speak. Her classroom lacked control and her students did not respect her. Back then I thought she was simply rude and not cut for the job. Now when I think of her, I believe she was experiencing burnout.

This teacher displayed several signs of depersonalization through her lack of creating and maintaining relationships with students or colleagues. "Mrs. Johnson" clearly did not enjoy teaching her second-grade class. She appeared to experience reduced personal

accomplishment by seemingly doubting her career choice. She was visibly unhappy during the work day, and the lack of effort to control her classroom was noticeable. Mrs. Johnson looked physically and emotionally exhausted. However, I couldn't blame her. She was overloaded with a tough group of students and her cold demeanor didn't make her look open to accept advice. After gaining a better understanding of burnout and realizing some of my own symptoms, I have great empathy towards her and truly hope she has been resilient and found successful coping strategies.

Was the reason I avoided burnout early in my teaching career while Mrs. Johnson experienced harsh symptoms due to our personality differences? I believe it was. My personality has shaped me into finding humor in times of stress. Although I still struggle with anxiety and depression, I have discovered that finding the lighter side of situations is helpful. Laughing at simple mistakes is useful in creating a comfortable classroom environment. Besides humor, I encourage my staff to take time to unwind daily, and to "tap out" when they are starting to feel their emotions are getting in the way of a situation.

Through my research I was able to answer one of my questions I had about burnout. I have found that a teacher's personality can often predict the frequency and severity of burnout symptoms throughout his or her career. Temperament significantly influences how well teachers will do in their profession. Teachers who handle emotional labor in a healthy manner are less likely to burnout. Basim et al. (2013) describes emotional labor as "the act of expressing anticipated emotions during service interactions" (p. 1489). Effective teachers are verbally and nonverbally responsive towards their students, which facilitates student learning. These teachers care for their students, ultimately increasing student satisfaction. Teachers who are

open to new ideas and experiences are considerably less likely to burn out within the field. Educators who are conscientious are self-disciplined, organized, and achievement-oriented tend to care about putting in effort and caring about their jobs. This gives them a better likelihood of longer, healthier careers (Teven, 2007).

Within the teaching field, special educators are the most prone to burnout due to the extremely high demands put on the teacher. Teachers whose personalities involve distrust in others along with a negative and detached attitude are likely experiencing depersonalization, one of the main factors of burnout. Feelings of constant exhaustion and a sense of indifference toward helping students and families make it difficult to gain a sense of personal accomplishment, which is another main burnout factor. Teachers who lack a sense of self-efficacy have less confidence in their teaching capabilities, which ultimately degrades the classroom quality (Chang, 2009).

Other predicting personality traits of burnout include being unopen to the idea of change, type-A personality (characterized by perfectionism, impatience, and hostility), low self-esteem, and having unrealistic expectations of oneself and others. Neuroticism is a vulnerable personality factor for some teachers. Neurotic personality traits are often associated with burnout due to their inability to cope with stress. People with this personality experience feelings of anxiety, hostility, depression, self-consciousness and vulnerability. Teachers exhibiting these personality traits along with poor coping mechanisms are the most likely to burn out in their teaching career (Chang, 2009).

There are other causes of burnout other than a teacher's disposition, such as individual and organizational factors. Burnout frequency and intensity can be determined by classroom

composition, level of administration support, years of experience, work demands, salary, and other demographic variables. These factors are more concerned with “what” causes burnout rather than “who” experiences burnout. Although personality traits yield more consistent findings than demographic variables, burnout is believed to be made of multi-faceted factors (Chang, 2009).

When I initially heard the term “teacher burnout” as a first-year teacher, I was convinced it was happening to me. Two years later I found out that although I was displaying signs of intense stress and emotional exhaustion, I was not burning out. I did not show signs of depersonalization or lack of personal accomplishment. I found a few ways to cope with my stress in my first year through exercise, socializing with coworkers, and contacting administration when I needed support. I managed to evade burning out in my career early, but still wondered how other teachers can prevent or cope with burnout.

Through my research I found how helpful it is for teachers to be equipped with coping strategies. Strategies to cope with stress can come in the form of simple daily activities, such as taking a few minutes to mediate alone in a quiet space, engage in muscle relaxing techniques, eat balanced meals, and maintain an active lifestyle. Having support from colleagues is another important part of preventing burnout. Special educators often feel isolated from regular education staff due to their limited daily interactions. Most special education teachers spend their day in one classroom while mainstream teachers have more freedom to collaborate with other classrooms. This author believed being assigned a mentor from another part of the school, such as administration, could help special educators connect with other parts of the school (Radford, 2017).

Some people require more than small life changes to cope with stress. Multiple studies reviewed involved weekly social group meetings where participants were taught cognitive coping skills such as replacing negative self-talk with constructive, realistic, and empowering beliefs (Radford, 2017). Participants of these studies also learned about the importance of resilience, which is the ability to “bounce back” or respond positively to challenging situations. Gu and Day (2007) suggest positive emotions can enhance attention and cognition and enable people to augment their coping abilities. By implementing these practices and making special educators feel supported, they will be able to avoid burnout and become better role models for their students.

Professional Application

Burnout is a possibility for teachers of any grade or ability level. To avoid burnout from happening, prevention steps must be taken. Burnout is becoming more prevalent in the United States, which is why this issue was so intriguing to me. This will be my third year of teaching at a K-6 special needs charter school, meaning every student at this school has an IEP. I work in a small first-grade self-contained Personalized Learning Support classroom, and I am aware of the physical and emotional stressors that occur daily. I have been asked to be part of a teacher mental health committee this year to share with staff what I have learned about special education teacher burnout and what we can do to avoid it.

Although I won't be attempting spirituality meditation techniques with my co-workers anytime soon, I will be sharing the things I do to remain calm and confident throughout the day. Throughout each week I make sure to go outside daily for a break, no matter what the weather is like. Getting a breath of fresh air can help ease the mind and body. When it's nice outside, I

go for a short bike ride on my break. I take my class on walks around the building to give students and staff a chance to move around the building. Keeping my laptop in my office when the day is over is very important to me. I only take work home if it's a necessity because I like my work and home life to be separate. I draw and travel during my time off. Having things I enjoy doing outside of work helps me unwind and remind myself I have a life outside of work. Lastly, I keep all positive messages. Whether they come in the form of e-mails or post-it notes, being surrounded by positive words from others is a perfect reminder as to why I became teacher in the first place.

The mental health of teachers is important to protect schools from rising attrition rates and burned-out educators. Every school needs to be aware of the signs of burnout, and I want to see every staff member receive specialized training on managing stress.

Limitations of the Research

Burnout is a much broader topic than I had predicted. I had to narrow down my research to teacher burnout and personality characteristics. I decided to exclude other professions due to the high number of results to sort through. Numerous articles were focused on medical students, surgeons, and other medical professions. I wanted to focus exclusively on teaching, so I could actively apply what I learned.

I expected to find more articles on active coping strategies. It was a little worrying that there was significantly more information on causes of burnout than strategies to avoid or cope with it. I also thought there would be more information relating gender and burnout. There are more females than males in the teaching profession, but most studies that focused on gender

relations yielded inconsistent results.

Implications for Future Research

More research needs to be done to maintain effective teachers in our schools. There are still many areas that are missing in the research of burnout. I would like to see more information on administration and therapist burnout rates. I found very few articles other school staff members' attrition rates or stressors. It is unlikely that teachers are the only ones who experience burnout in the education field.

Conclusion

Based on what I've learned, personalities can determine the likelihood of burning out. It is crucial to have inner peace and social support to maintain a healthy career. If more teachers are exposed to early signs of burnout, fewer educators will experience its depleting effects.

References

- Armon, G., Shirom, A., & Melamed, S. (2012). The big five personality factors as predictors of changes across time in burnout and its facets. *Journal of Personality, 80*(2), 403-427.
doi:10.1111/j.1467-6494.2011.00731.x
- Basim, H. N., Begenirbas, M., & Can Yalcin, R. (2013). Effects of teacher personalities on emotional exhaustion: Mediating role of emotional labor. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice, 13*(3), 1488-1496.
- Bellingrath, S., Weigl, T., & Kudielkac, B. M. (2009). Chronic work stress and exhaustion is associated with higher allostatic load in female school teachers. *Stress: The International Journal on the Biology of Stress, 12*(1), 37-48. doi:10.1080/10253890802042041
- Bettini, E., Kimerling, J., Park, Y., & Murphy, K. M. (2015). Responsibilities and instructional time: Relationships identified by teachers in self-contained classes for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. *Preventing School Failure, 59*(3), 121-128.
doi:10.1080/1045988X.2013.859561
- Bondarenko, Y., du Preez, E., & Shepherd, D. (2017). Emotional labour in mental health field workers. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 46*(1), 4-13.
- Boujut, E., Dean, A., Grouselle, A., & Cappe, E. (2016). Comparative study of teachers in regular schools and teachers in specialized schools in france, working with students with an autism spectrum disorder: Stress, social support, coping strategies and burnout. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 46*(9), 2874-2889.

- Brunsting, N. C., Sreckovic, M. A., & Lane, K. L. (2014). Special education teacher burnout: A synthesis of research from 1979 to 2013. *Education & Treatment of Children, 37*(4), 681-711.
- Chang, M. (2009). An appraisal perspective of teacher burnout: Examining the emotional work of teachers. *Educational Psychology Review, 21*(3), 193-218.
- Folkman, S. (2008). The case for positive emotions in the stress process. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping, 21*(1), 3-14. doi:10.1080/10615800701740457
- Freudenberger, J. H. (1981). Burn-out: Beyond executive stress. *Management Review, 70*(2), 4.
- Gu, Q., & Day, C. (2007). Teachers resilience: A necessary condition for effectiveness. *Teaching & Teacher Education, 23*(8), 1302-1316. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2006.06.006
- Hartwick, J. M. M., & Kang, S. J. (2013). Spiritual practices as a means of coping with and ameliorating stress to reduce teacher attrition. *Journal of Research on Christian Education, 22*(2), 165-188. doi:10.1080/10656219.2013.808979
- Høigaard, R., Giske, R., & Sundsli, K. (2012). Newly qualified teachers' work engagement and teacher efficacy influences on job satisfaction, burnout, and the intention to quit. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 35*(3), 347-357. doi:10.1080/02619768.2011.633993
- Hurt, A. A., Grist, C. L., Malesky, L. A., Jr., & McCord, D. M. (2013). Personality traits associated with occupational "burnout" in ABA therapists. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities, 26*(4), 299-308.

- Jennett, H. K., Harris, S. L., & Mesibov, G. B. (2003). Commitment to philosophy, teacher efficacy, and burnout among teachers of children with autism. *Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders, 33*(6), 583-593.
- Kokkinos, C. M. (2007). Job stressors, personality and burnout in primary school teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 77*(1), 229-243.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1987). Transactional theory and research on emotions and coping. *European Journal of Personality, 1*(3), 141-169.
- Lheureux, F., Truchot, D., & Borteyrou, X. (2016). Suicidal tendency, physical health problems and addictive behaviours among general practitioners: Their relationship with burnout. *Work & Stress, 30*(2), 173-192. doi:10.1080/02678373.2016.1171806
- Lindo, N. A., Meany Walen, K. K., Ceballos, P., Ohrt, J. H., Prosek, E., Yousef, D., . . . Blalock, S. (2015). Wellness and burnout prevention: Perceptions of a group supervision intervention. *Journal of Professional Counseling: Practice, Theory & Research, 42*(2), 28-42.
- Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 2*(2), 99.
- McCrae, R. R., & John, O. P. (1992). An introduction to the five-factor model and its applications. *Journal of Personality, 60*(2), 175-215.
- Mojsa-Kajam, J., Golongka, K., & Marek, T. (2015). Job burnout and engagement among teachers - worklife areas and personality traits as predictors of relationships with work.

International Journal of Occupational Medicine & Environmental Health, 28(1), 102-119.

doi:10.13075/ijomeh.1896.00238

Oakes, W. P., Lane, K. L., Jenkins, A., & Booker, B. B. (2013). Three-tiered models of prevention: Teacher efficacy and burnout. *Education & Treatment of Children*, 36(4), 95-126.

Pas, E. T., Bradshaw, C. P., & Hershfeldt, P. A. (2012). Teacher- and school-level predictors of teacher efficacy and burnout: Identifying potential areas for support. *Journal of School Psychology*, 50(1), 129-145.

Radford, J. (2017). Burning out: The effect of burnout on special education. *Brigham Young University Education & Law Journal*, (1), 99-123.

Srivastava, S. C., Chandra, S., & Shirish, A. (2015). Technostress creators and job outcomes: Theorising the moderating influence of personality traits. *Information Systems Journal*, 25(4), 355-401. doi:10.1111/isj.12067

Stoeber, J., & Rennert, D. (2008). Perfectionism in school teachers: Relations with stress appraisals, coping styles, and burnout. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping*, 21(1), 37-53.

doi:10.1080/10615800701742461

Taycan, O., Taycan, S. E., & Çelik, C. (2014). Relationship of burnout with personality, alexithymia, and coping behaviors among physicians in a semiurban and rural area in turkey. *Archives of Environmental & Occupational Health*, 69(3), 159-166.

doi:10.1080/19338244.2013.763758

Teven, J. J. (2007). Teacher temperament: Correlates with teacher caring, burnout, and organizational outcomes. *Communication Education, 56*(3), 382-400.

Wagaman, M. A., Geiger, J. M., Shockley, C., & Segal, E. A. (2015). The role of empathy in burnout, compassion satisfaction, and secondary traumatic stress among social workers. *Social Work, 60*(3), 201-209. doi:10.1093/sw/swv014

Wong, V. W., Ruble, L. A., Yu, Y., & McGrew, J. H. (2017). Too stressed to teach? teaching quality, student engagement, and IEP outcomes. *Exceptional Children, 83*(4), 412-427. doi:10.1177/0014402917690729

Yilmaz, K., Altinkurt, Y., Guner, M., & Sen, B. (2015). The relationship between teachers' emotional labor and burnout level. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, (59)*, 75-90.