STRESS EFFECTS AND MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTIONS AMONG

EDUCATORS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

by

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ABSTRACT

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University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2023

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In the United States, work-related stress costs companies over $200 billion each year (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2015). Classroom teachers face a variety of challenges in their scope of work. Due to such challenges, teacher turnover and self-reported job dissatisfaction are at an all-time high, according to new research. Studies from the American Federation of Teachers (2017) show that the majority of American teachers feel over-stressed at work, and the number citing poor mental health has jumped alarmingly in recent years. Absenteeism, low job satisfaction and effectiveness, high attrition, and high burnout are all consequences of high teacher job stress (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). In fact, research by Pennsylvania State University (2016) suggests resultant costs in human resources and health care spending for teachers could amount to billions of dollars each year.

In a recent study by the American Federation of Teachers 52% of teachers agreed that they do not feel the same enthusiasm as when they started teaching (AFT, 2017), and 46% report high daily stress during the school year (Gallup, 2014). This percentage is tied with nurses for the highest rate among all other occupational groups. Teachers also

report instances of experiencing poor physical health aside from their mental health status. In addition, reports of bullying by superiors, colleagues, parents, and even students are evident at rates far higher than any other profession. To add to these health concerns, the vast majority of teachers indicate that they are sleep-deprived (Gallup, 2014).

Policy-based interventions have been implemented in many schools as an attempt to address job-related stress, however, these interventions have been minimally evaluated by research (McIntyre et al., 2017). Additional information is needed regarding occupational stress among teachers. The purpose of this   mixed-methods study is to explore existing research regarding the consequential effects of teacher stress in the workplace, identify teacher perceptions of occupational stress, and address the effectiveness of strategies and policy-based interventions, which may contribute to decreased resultant costs of work-related stress, such as turnover rates, negative social conditions, and culture/climate of school campuses. This study is premised on the assumption that enhancing the positive attributes and strengths of educators can have a positive impact not only on their performance and commitment but also on the performance of their students.

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

The current status of the American educational system is among the most controversial topics in the nation. One developing aspect of concern includes the topic of teachers' well-being, influenced by a variety of negative and positive aspects (Zewude & Hercz, 2021). Though occupational demands may heighten stress levels that contribute to mental health of many professionals, the teaching profession has the highest rates of stress and burnout when compared to other occupations (Gray et al., 2017). Recent studies from the American Federation of Teachers (2017) show that the majority of American teachers feel over-stressed at work, and the number citing poor mental health has jumped alarmingly over the past few years. In fact, 46% of teachers report high daily work-related stress, while a vast majority of teachers report instances of sleep deprivation and poor mental health (Gallup, 2014). The teacher turnover rate presents cause for concern with new teachers leaving the profession at a rate between 19 percent and 30 percent within the initial five years of their careers. These statistics may have a detrimental impact on campuses nationwide, significantly impacting learner outcomes (Guin, 2004; Kraft & Papay, 2014). About 50% of the teachers polled in a recent survey indicated they had contemplated quitting the profession in the previous year with the most frequently cited reason being unsatisfactory salaries and excessive stress (Phi Delta Kappa International, 2019).

Although teachers have commonly been identified among the highest occupational groups to suffer from symptoms of emotional exhaustion, such as stress and burnout, prior research has aimed primarily on indicators of teachers' professional knowledge or motivational characteristics (Klusmann et al., 2016). Though the concepts of stress, burnout, conflict, attitudes, counter-productive actions and other negative

constructs have continued to be of vital concern among human resources management scholars and practitioners, prior studies have not necessarily provided comprehensible insight with regard to the characteristics of exceptional workers or complex processes that promote success in the workplace, nor have these studies introduced strategies which intend to build on the psychological capital of workers (Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2015).

According to The World Health Organization (2001), mental health can be defined as a "state of well-being in which individuals successfully cope with the normal stresses of life, enabling them work productively and contribute to their community" (p. 1). Past studies have indicated that 75 to 90 percent of all visits to primary care physicians are due to stress-related medical conditions, as physiological changes typically accompany a stress response (Elkin, 1999).

Schonfeld (2001) suggests that low salaries as well as work overload are factors that may increase the levels of stress in which teachers must face. According to the Economic Policy Institute, their pay disparity has expanded from 4.3% in 1996 to 17% in 2015, making teachers the lowest-paid employees in the country when compared to other workers with similar experience and education (Allegretto & Mishel, 2016). Another study suggests that school climate plays a significant role in regard to teacher stress as well, and often leads to increased absenteeism, as well as high turnover rates (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008).   Teacher turnover accounts for almost 90% of the demand for recruitment and hiring of new teachers (Learning Policy Institute, 2017). Furthermore, attrition rates have historically affected student achievement, according to previous studies (Boyd et al., 2008). Overall, the exploration and understanding of performance related consequences among teachers is lacking in educational research and depth.

The Research Problem

Various occupational demands placed upon today's educators are contributing to teacher turnover at alarming rates. The problem lies within the effects of work-related stress for many teachers and the negative impact on student success factors. Teaching is commonly known as a demanding profession, marked by a variety of unique challenges: administrative responsibilities, long hours, classroom management issues, and a lack of autonomy, to mention a few (McCarthy, 2019). Studies indicate that increased rates of teacher attrition adversely affect student achievement (Boyd et al., 2008). Not only does work-related stress along with additional health concerns among teachers seem to have a strong correlation to student performance, but these issues extend well past academic outcomes, jeopardizing public finance as well (Phillips, 2015). For instance, a major deficit impacting the composition of teaching staff in various systems worldwide is a scarcity of qualified teachers. According to the European Commission, there is or will be a shortage of trained teachers in thirteen European nations in the near future (Carlo et al., 2013). McCallum et al. (2017) also emphasize parallel concerns regarding teacher shortages in England (United Kingdom) and the United States, particularly in content areas like mathematics, science, and secondary English. As the student population is increasing faster than the number of teachers, the matter of teacher shortages will become even more problematic in developing countries by 2030. As much as 60 percent of the 69 million new teachers required in developing nations by 2030 would be needed to replace instructors who will be departing the profession by 2030. The remaining teachers are required to enhance school access and lower secondary class sizes to 25 (UIS, 2016). Overall, research suggests that many costs related to teacher stress are expensive for school districts and have become a considerable debt for the nation as a whole (Phillips, 2015).

One of the related financial burdens is absenteeism and payment of substitutes; a second burden is the elevated health care costs that accompany the stress and mental health disparities among teachers. Policy-based interventions have been implemented in many schools as an attempt to address job-related stress, however, these interventions have been minimally evaluated by r. esearch (McIntyre et al., 2017). Consequently, additional information is needed in regard to the effects of occupational stress among teachers. This study will aim to elucidate the gaps of knowledge specifically regarding proposed interventions that intend to address teacher burnout.

The inevitable flux of departing teachers, whose replacements must be recruited and trained at great expense, carries the highest price of all. It has been estimated that teacher turnover is costing states a total of about $2.2 billion each year (Phillips, 2015). Due to the growing concerns from teachers, parents, students and any organization who has a potential investment in the U.S. educational system, the issue of teacher work-related stress and health disparities of education professionals is of global concern.

Significance of the Study

Several reviews of evidence supporting the negative effects of work-related stress have been conducted (Maslach & Leiter, 1999; see also Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). However, significant gaps are evident in prior research, particularly pertaining to the impact which teacher stress may or may not have on student achievement and academic performance (Klusmann et al., 2016). Still, research indicates that teacher self-efficacy, which accounts for effective classroom management and adequate use of quality instructional practice, is negatively associated with teacher stress and burnout (Brouwers & Tomic, 1999; Reinke et al., 2013). Nevertheless, existing relationships between teacher efficacy, burnout as a result of constant stress, and student academic achievement is one that requires further investigation.

When teachers are exposed to stressful environments, their physical and emotional resources are dramatically decreased, which consequently prevents them from coping with stress (Cokluk, 2014).   Furthermore, an individual lacking the skills to effectually cope with stress constantly experiences feelings of disappointment, tension, and anxiety, and burnout may often ensue as a result of the constant stress (Kyriacou, 2000). This study seeks to discover effective mechanisms for coping with the stress that tends to accompany daily tasks and common challenges in the everyday lives of teachers. The findings of this research are intended to address the criticality of necessary interventions which could potentially lead to the reduction of teacher stress and burnout.

Additionally, the existence of significant limitations among current burnout reduction programs must be addressed. In recent years, the topic of school staff well-being has received increasing attention in mental health literature (Lever et al., 2017). An increase in the number of studies on teacher well-being implies that this is a relatively new area of study. Published research has focused on a variety of topics, including the relationship between teacher wellness and student achievement, the role of teacher wellness in fostering child-school connectedness, teacher burnout, teacher efficacy, and the measurement of wellness (Lever et al., 2017). Thus, emphasis must be placed on the exploration and discovery of strategies that may help alleviate the present teacher shortage, particularly on an organizational level.

This study is intended to add to the body of extant literature and research regarding new strategies to minimize teacher stress and promote teacher health and wellbeing in order to prevent the negative ramifications that impacts teachers, children, parents, communities, and educational systems. Swider and Zimmerman (2010) contend that these programs must be restructured to include solutions for unique burnout antecedents within individuals and organizations rather than focus on universal solutions.

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Because prior research has sought to identify individuals who are more likely to experience burnout, it is suggested that organizations utilize human resource functions in order to customize burnout interventions which more specifically target common traits of their employees (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010).

The effectiveness of interventions designed for teachers who may be silently suffering from the effects of work-related stress is a relevant topic for school districts, campus leaders, and state representatives alike. Campus leaders may be able to utilize the information from this study to implement interventions which combat teacher stress and cultivate a culture of mental and emotional wellness in their schools. Likewise, district leaders may choose to address student outcomes and teacher efficacy by implementing similar interventions across educational institutions. The findings of this study may impact principles of teacher efficacy, program efficiency, and the cost-effectiveness of retaining quality teachers due to lower stress levels, hence decreasing instances of teacher burn-out.

Research Purpose and Questions

This study aims to analyze the current perspectives of elementary school teachers in regard to potential work-related stress factors. This study also serves to indicate to what degree, if any, mindfulness-based interventions can impact teacher perspectives and self-efficacy for the reduction of stress. The research will closely examine the effects of work-related stress in the workplace, as well as assess the effectiveness of interventions focused on the reduction of teacher stress factors in elementary classrooms. The basis of this study is comprised of prior research suggesting several major indicators frequently considered in public education sectors as common stress factors in the workplace, such as an increased focus on standardized testing and accountability, unstable leadership at the

campus level, and inadequate resources for dealing with behavioral problems in the classroom.

The critical issue of work-related stress and health disparities of education professionals will be addressed first by examining potential causal factors for teacher stress and burnout, then discovering possible effective methods for stress management. Sorenson (2007) suggests, "while no single concept or technique can magically relieve all stress, educators need to utilize the previously noted and proven methods which can be integrated into various aspects of career and life" (p. 13). An additional intention of this research is to contribute to the compilation of integral evidence in regard to teacher work-related stress.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between teacher stress outcomes and practices that intend to assist in stress reduction such as mindfulness and self-awareness through journaling activities. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the relationship between self-efficacy and burnout among elementary classroom teachers?

2. Is there a difference in TSES by Race/Ethnicity?

3. Is there a difference in MBI by Race/Ethnicity?

4. What effect, if any, does journaling have on teacher self-efficacy and burnout?

5. What perceptions are evident among classroom teachers regarding the effects of mindfulness-based exercises, such as journaling, as a strategy for stress reduction?

Definition of Key Terms

Burnout: a term used to describe a state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion that results from chronic organizational stressors which manifest in the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Chronic teacher stress: the cognitive process whereby a teacher is unable to cope with work demands for a prolonged period, compounded with frequent feelings of failure and disappointment, creating emotional exhaustion and apathy (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978).

Coping: Coping has been defined as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141).

Emotional Exhaustion: feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work. This involves feelings of fatigue, being used up, irritability, frustration, and wearing out (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Depersonalization/Cynicism: an unfeeling and impersonal response toward recipients of one's instruction. Usually entails having negative or inappropriate attitudes toward clients (Maslach, 2018).

Personal Accomplishment: feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work (Rumschlag, 2017).

Psychological well-being: Positive evaluation of oneself and one's past life, a sense of continued growth and development as a person, the belief that one's life is purposeful and meaningful, the possession of quality relations with others, the capacity to manage effectively one's life and the surrounding world, and a sense of self-determination (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Psychological Capital: an individual's positive psychological state of development, characterized by self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (Luthans et al., 2006).

Self-efficacy: an individual's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute a course of action needed to meet the demands of a situation (Bandura, 1977).

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the need for this study, significance of the problem, research purpose and questions, and defined key definitions pertaining to this study. This study not only serves to contribute to the existing research in regard to the consequential effects of teacher stress in the workplace, but also seeks to explore teacher perceptions of occupational stress and address the effectiveness of strategies and policy-based interventions, which may contribute to decreased resultant costs of work-related stress for classroom teachers. The following chapter will serve as a review of the literature of topics that will encapsulate this study.

CHAPTER II:

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review will provide an in-depth assessment of relationships between the effects of work-related stress and teacher mental health concerns to student academic success. The primary focus of this review will identify recurring themes and trends that have been made evident by existing research studying the topic of teacher stress and methods of stress reduction. To address these topics, this literature review focuses on: (a) causal factors for teacher stress, (b) student outcomes, (c) psychological capital, and (d) stress reducing interventions.

Causal Factors

Because employment plays a crucial role in adult life and is a predictor of adult acclimatization, positive well-being includes the lives of individuals in the workplace. Employee satisfaction, as well as subjective well-being, are critical to preventing burnout or resignation in the face of workplace stress (Park et al., 2004). Positive emotions and a sense of well-being among workers were found to be predictive of more outstanding commitment and devotion to their employment, as well as reduced rates of burnout and resignation. Employees who work in the educational sector are particularly susceptible to burnout, which is generated by excessive workload and stress caused by role conflict and ambiguity in the workplace (Dillon & Tanner, 1995). Educating children, especially those included in special populations, can present additional challenges due to the high anxiety and stress levels present in these environments. In fact, Smylie (1999) contends that teachers encounter significant obstacles at the organizational level due to working with diverse student populations. This can further lead to teacher exhaustion and burnout (Smylie, 1999).

Teachers' perceived stress, psychological weariness, burnout, and health impairments, as well as the environments in which they occur, have been studied by scientists since the 1970s (Ben-Shahar, 2007). Maslach and Leiter (1997) define burnout as the loss of interest in one's work or an erosion of engagement. According to Jennett et al. (2003), it is characterized by persistent occupational stress and is typically viewed as a condition that is comprised of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal achievement (Maslach & Jackson 1981; Maslach et al. 1996). Furthermore, the consequences of burnout can negatively impact employees and larger institutions, specifically those who work in human services professions. Freudenberger (1974) identified the overwhelming sense of tiredness that many human services employees face daily as burnout, which was then characterized in these contexts as a condition of physical, mental, and emotional depletion caused by prolonged work stress, attrition, and frustration (Maslach, 1993, 2003; Maslach et al., 2001).

Educator stress, according to Kyriacou (2001), is more accurately explained as a consequence of an imbalance between the expectations placed on educators and their capacity to meet those demands. Some teachers find themselves under a significant amount of pressure due to the circumstances in the workplace, however, working conditions are only a portion of causal factors which impact teacher stress and burnout levels. McCarthy (2019) contends that the teachers' internal evaluations of the challenges they encounter considering the resources they have at their disposal to address those challenges are of the utmost importance. In which case, it should be feasible to identify and deal with instructors who are particularly prone to stress in addition to measures to enhance the overall working environment. Thus, it is imperative that conversations regarding chronic stress and burnout include not only the potential causes for such

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symptoms but also strategies for reducing burnout levels of human services workers, specifically educators.

Research suggests that stressful working environments are the root cause of most burnout symptoms for classroom teachers, but working conditions are not the only causal factor, by far (McCarthy, 2019). Teacher burnout may be caused by a variety of factors, including poor classroom management, administrative insensitivity, bureaucratic ineptitude, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate salaries for teachers (Farber, 1991). Some studies link burnout to teaching multiple courses with a variety of student needs (Shirom et al., 2009) in addition to issues with student behavior and classroom management (González-Morales et al., 2010; Llorens-Gumbau & Salanova-Soria, 2014). Time pressure is an additional most significant predictors of stress and burnout among the other stressors discussed in Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017). Emotional exhaustion has also been linked to teacher work overload (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009, 2017) and lack of student motivation (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011) in multiple studies.

Traditionally, psychological research has focused on the emotional impact, and this tendency is predicted to continue in the future. To lessen pathological responses and increase human coping, scientists have been studying fear, stress, anxiety, and trauma for several decades (Fredrickson, 2009). Maslach et al. (2001) suggests teacher burnout is exacerbated not just by institutional conditions, but also by individual characteristics, particular personality factors. This emphasis on good feelings corresponds with the normal human desire to conduct more useful and successful lives and uncover and cultivate abilities (Joseph & Linley, 2006). When an individual's focus is diverted away from their negative emotions, they are less likely to succumb to depression and other mental health issues like stress and anxiety. In Keyes's view, research on positive mental well-being should include three components: positive sentiments such as happiness and

life satisfaction; cognitive well-being, such as self-acceptance and mastery; and social well-being, such as interpersonal skills. (Keyes, 2006).

The teaching profession is a difficult one that has an impact on the behaviors, decision-making, and overall job satisfaction of individuals who work in it. According to McGrath et al. (1989), past research shows that among primary instructors who cope successfully with stress, those who employ active methods rather than passive approaches are more efficacious. Examples of this perspective are teachers who seek therapeutic solutions, like meditation or journaling, to help mitigate the negative effects of stress. Contrastingly, teachers who burn out due to stress may no longer be able to participate in enjoyable activities, and their own indignation at the circumstance may exacerbate this anguish. Furthermore, teachers who work in low-stress conditions are capable of participating in more positive activities than those who work in stressful environments. In order to reduce the adverse effects of stress, McGrath et al. (1989) also advise teachers to place an emphasis on their intrinsic motivators.

Teachers' stress may be more effectively managed through school regulations and staffing solutions, as well as an ardent team attitude by staff members towards the development of well-rounded students. Previous research indicates that teachers' collective effectiveness may have a significant, positive influence on job satisfaction; however, there have been few studies evaluating teachers' collective efficacy and workplace stress (Klassen, 2010). Several burdens to the teaching profession, as reported by teachers, are challenging behavior of students, meeting the needs of students in inclusive settings, increased workload, and lack of teacher training (Gray et al., 2017), while research from the Pennsylvania State University (2016) suggests four main sources of teacher stress to include school organizations, job demands, work resources, and teacher social and emotional competence.

McCallum and Price (2016) found that negative influences related to teachers' work, burnout and stress, relationships with students, parents, colleagues, and leadership, workload, and having to adapt to continual change were shown to have a significant effect on teacher well-being. Subsequently, the development of programs to support teachers' personal and professional well-being, which were more likely to have a long-term impact on one's well-being when implemented by teachers themselves, is necessary. For the greatest benefit to teachers' health and well-being, a combination of school-wide and organizational efforts should be used in addition to those taken on an individual basis. These combined efforts will have a positive impact on teachers both as individuals and collectively. Both teachers and students benefit from increased health and well-being because of investments in teacher well-being initiatives.

The strain of working in a unique educational setting may have a negative or beneficial impact on teachers' subjective well-being, as well as on their level of life satisfaction and self-control as coping mechanisms. Multiple studies indicate that teachers' feelings of well-being and contentment increase due to a range of factors including increased self-control, support networks in general, and peer support (Lever et al., 2017). In this review of the literature, it is suggested that employee wellness programs are beneficial for employee wellness and morale and reduce health costs for employers.

An International Education Research Council Project Study (AIS-NSW) found several potential factors in a meta-analysis study on well-being, including stress, self-efficacy, motivation, emotional competence, resilience, interpersonal relationships, organizational support, burnout, fatigue, exhaustion, positive school ecology, and leadership (McCallum et al., 2017). When considering these factors, one significant finding in particular indicates that "despite the high levels of attrition and burnout among teachers, it is one of the few professions in which beginning practitioners face the same

level of skill and workload expectations as more experienced professionals" (Gray et al., 2017, p. 205). Thus, creating the need to extend upon the research for the protective factor of resiliency among teachers (Gray et al., 2017).

Within the compendium of research, characteristics of resilience among teachers appear to be associated with a variety of constructs such as confidence, motivation, and self-efficacy (Klassen, 2010). According to Betoret (2006), mastering higher levels of self-efficacy allows teachers to experience fewer difficulties within their profession and ultimately leads to lower levels of work-related stress. Furthermore, many researchers have suggested that the focus of teacher stress is redirected beyond indicators and key contributors of stress. Characteristics of teacher resilience, or the adeptness of teachers to maintain successful professional outcomes as well as overcome environmental stressors and personal difficulties, is a more in-depth component requiring further exploration (Kitching et al., 2009).

In addition, the expectations of classroom teachers to provide adequate student support to all children including those with behavior problems, as well as mental health difficulties continue to be a source of workplace stress and distress for many teachers (Kidger et al., 2016). Regarding professional development for teachers, Davis (2006) agrees that educational policy and teacher preparation programs have focused more heavily on enhancing teachers' understanding of subject matter and strategies for delivering content knowledge with less attention on other topics that may also enhance teacher sustainability and performance. Despite the inadequacies in support and training provided to teachers, the most commonly reported causes for teachers' elevated risk of mental health disparities include "excessive workload, lack of autonomy, poor salary, perceived lack of status and pressure to 'perform' in a context in which schools are increasingly regulated and judged against an array of externally determined targets"

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(Kidger et al., 2016, p. 2). Additionally, teachers are also often subject to considerable amounts of social and political criticism about how best to do their jobs (Goldstein, 2014). Although the lack of support which seems to exist in many schools may worsen the effect of such stressors in the workplace, various qualitative studies have emphasized the unfortunate existence of an underlying culture of teachers being forced to cope with challenging situations alone and feeling unable to confide in colleagues when feeling stressed or depressed (Kidger et al., 2016). In fact, collaboration among teachers and their peers is also often restricted, with teachers spending less than 5% of their workday isolated from their colleagues (Scholastic & the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012).

According to additional research, the most prevalent negative feelings that teachers face while dealing with classroom disciplinary concerns in their classrooms are anger and frustration (Carson, 2007; Sutton, 2007). In this study, Carson (2007) analyzed the emotional experiences of teachers, concluding that teacher burnout is caused by frequent unpleasant emotions such as unhappiness, anger, and frustration. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy is one factor that may have a direct impact on the activities and environments that people choose to engage in, but it can also influence their coping attempts once they have begun. Expectations about one's own abilities impact how much effort one puts forth and how long one perseveres when faced with adversity (Bandura, 1977). In essence, the more self-efficacy one has, the more active one's efforts will be. Those who continue to engage in subjectively threatening but relatively safe activities will obtain corrective experiences that support their feeling of effectiveness, ultimately reducing their protective behavior over time (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) goes on to imply that self-debilitating expectations and concerns may be held onto for extended periods of time by those who discontinue coping attempts too soon.

Evidence stemming from previous studies suggests, "While there is a growing trend focusing on school climate, the limited research is interesting given the applicability of school climate factors to education" (Gray et al., 2017, p. 207). Ultimately, when teacher wellness and a positive school climate are fostered within a campus, social and emotional support complement effective teaching, and a comprehensive environment for student learning is developed. Gray (2017) suggests that when teachers feel empowered and a positive school climate is reinforced, students become more equipped with the tools that they need to become successful in the classroom. Conversely, individuals who self-report lower levels of happiness subsequently indicate lower levels of occupational productivity. For example, Killingsworth and Gilbert (2010) suggest the possibility that increased levels of unhappiness may also lead to a lack of mental concentration, therefore affecting productivity.

According to McCallum and Price (2010), new teachers also benefit greatly from the promotion of self-awareness and well-being. In this study, researchers determined that promoting self-awareness of wellbeing in new teachers contributes to their longevity and productivity. When teachers are not adept at maintaining a sense of well-being, many will choose to retire, causing shortages; many leave the profession prematurely; fewer applicants attend teacher training, and others believe that the current teacher workforce is finding it difficult to connect to students' lives. These facts highlight concerns of wellness, transition, and coping for new teachers, as well as difficulties and possibilities for school reform, leadership, and curriculum renewal. Teachers must also be able to connect with students in order to impact their learning, health, and well-being. Therefore, the idea that retaining quality teachers necessitates a wellness plan that clearly defines restricting and enabling factors emerges from the evidence (McCallum & Price,

2010). Overall, the causal factors which contribute to ongoing teacher stress, as indicated in the literature, consist of key indicators negatively affecting teachers. These indicators include an increased focus on standardized testing and accountability, unstable leadership at the campus level, inadequate resources for managing behavioral problems in the classroom, lack of support, and lack of effective professional development.

Student Outcomes and Teacher Stress

Teachers' daily efforts, passion, and dedication are all based on the success of their students and the education of the next generation. Students' success, contentment, and accomplishment are all linked to the quality of their teachers (McCallum et al., 2017). Multiple studies have supported the idea that many teachers suffer from severe emotional problems as a result of the high-stress nature of their work (Eaton et al., 1990; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). An abundance of foundational research regarding human behavioral science indicates that well-being and performance might be negatively affected by stress (Folkman et al., 1986). Students' academic and behavioral results are more likely to be negatively affected when teachers are under stress and lacking the capacity to manage their stress appropriately (Wentzel, 2010).

Maslach and Jackson (1981) defined burnout as a symptom of emotional weariness, depersonalization, and decreased personal accomplishment. Similarly, emotional exhaustion occurs when teachers are unable to teach students efficiently attributable to excessive feelings of fatigue and stress (Maslach, 1996). Professional burnout may be the outcome of long-term exposure to high levels of stress. Exhaustion from prolonged work-related stress is known as burnout, and its symptoms include feelings of emotional exhaustion, cynicism (or "depersonalization"), and poor self-efficacy (Maslach et al., 2001). A person's emotional weariness is a reaction to their job's exorbitant demands (Maslach et al., 2001). From overwhelming expectations and

insufficient resources, inefficacy is described as a self-perceived inability to perform (Maslach et al., 2001). According to the transactional model of stress, stress and burnout develop when a person has a negative assessment of their ability to adequately manage the expectations imposed on them (Sapolsky, 1998). Consequently, teachers' stress, coping, and self-efficacy are likely to be interconnected and multidirectional in nature.

Belcastro and Gold (1983) contend that when teachers experience burnout, turnover intentions and absenteeism increase. Teachers are also more likely to be irritable and less effective in the workplace leading to diminished performance (Huberman et al., 1993). According to McCarthy et al. (2015), teacher stress is more likely to cause an overreaction to classroom problems, which has the potential to undermine the teacher-student relationship in the future. Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment are all components of burnout that are often associated with the implementation of classroom practices (Maslach et al., 1996).

Maslach et al. (1996) considered emotional exhaustion as the core dimension of burnout and defined emotional exhaustion as the tired and fatigued feelings that develop as emotional energies are drained. These feelings are highly likely to impede a teacher's efforts to employ efficient instructional strategies and may contribute to the formation of negative attitudes and relationships with students (Lamude et al., 1992). Teachers with low self-efficacy in classroom management often feel as if their efforts have little influence, thus they capitulate to students' disruptive conduct (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000), cyclically resulting in increased disciplinary difficulties and exacerbating the teachers' stress and feelings of ineffectiveness (Sutton et al., 2009).

Stress and burnout among classroom teachers have been linked to poor outcomes for both students and teachers (Beer & Beer, 1992; Geving, 2007). In fact, Wong et al. (2017) investigated the effect of teacher stress and burnout on both the quality of teaching

and the engagement of students. This study concluded that teacher stress was linked to a higher risk of teachers leaving the profession. They also discovered that teachers were less likely to suffer from work-related stress when they received adequate instructional support to promote effective instructional quality and student engagement, as well as emotional support to assess students' long-term growth. (Wong et al., 2017). Furthermore, Kokkinos' (2007) study revealed that negative student behaviors such as destroying school property, criticizing other students, and talking back to the instructor were shown to be evoked by teacher conduct. This study also revealed a correlation between teacher burnout and antisocial and oppositional/defiant behaviors such as bullying, rudeness and misrepresenting or deception among students. Further studies indicate that students' academic performance can also be predicted by teacher burnout, which is linked to decreased levels of effective learning and motivation among students (Zhang & Sapp, 2008). In addition, the stress levels of students may also be affected by teacher burnout; recent research indicated that teacher burnout levels explained more than half of student cortisol variability (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). According to Carroll et al. (2021) stress impairs cognitive control and flexibility, and teachers must possess strong abilities in these domains. It is possible that students are influenced by teacher stress at least in part because there is a change in the teacher's cognitive performance, which influences the learning environment in the classroom (Carroll et al., 2021). It is plausible that higher cognitive performance in teachers, which relates to greater well-being, is a method through which long-term changes in student well-being and the classroom environment might be achieved (Carroll et al., 2021).

In the context of classroom interactions, the qualities and behaviors of students are important for instructors to consider, particularly when such behaviors jeopardize interpersonal connections in the classroom. Teachers' ability to cope is often overlooked,

presumably because it is one aspect of functioning that is often perceived as synonymous with stress. Two distinct concepts which contribute to well-being are stress and coping. Understanding both is critical for personal growth and individual adaptation. When there is an imbalance between the amount of work required and the quality of available resources, stress levels are impacted. Cognitive and behavioral efforts have been used to manage (reduce, minimize, master, or tolerate) the demands of this person–environment interaction (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This implies that people might be suffering from a substantial amount of stress and yet claim to have adequate mechanisms to cope (Brenner & Bartell, 1984). As a result, this difference may be particularly pertinent in today's high-stress educational situations, where teachers may encounter stressful conditions yet may have a broad range of individual coping responses.

         The ideas based on the aforementioned studies suggest the possibility that teachers who suffer from health concerns of any magnitude cannot fully utilize their talents, such as their ability to teach effectively, resulting in a significant cost burden for the school system. Therefore, the improvement of educators' well-being must continue to be a focus in educational research. Teachers who experience significant levels of burnout or emotional exhaustion display decreased levels of teaching quality, as well as compromised interpersonal interactions (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Additionally, teachers who have low sense of self-efficacy, or who exhibit negative attitudes about their capacity to educate students and regulate their behavior, demonstrate less effective teaching methods, which results in lower levels of student performance (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

Stress-related symptoms in teachers are classified by Kyriacou (2011) as mental, bodily, and behavioral (e.g. depression, loss of self-confidence). Consequently, teacher burnout and stress have detrimental effects on the physical and mental health of teachers,

as well as on student performance, behavior, and future prospects in education. According to Naghieh et al. (2015), a high rate of absenteeism and teacher turnover may have a negative impact on school atmosphere and organizational goals and objectives, as well as on the public budget. Individuals with various health concerns are unable to fully utilize their talents, such as their ability to teach effectively, resulting in a significant cost burden for the school system. This burden is exacerbated by the persistent problem of teacher turnover, which affects campuses and districts in a variety of ways. Therefore, the improvement of educators' well-being must continue to be a focus of research and education reform (Calhoun & Teseschi, 2006).

The term burnout has been described by Maslach and Jackson (1981) as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Likewise, emotional exhaustion is evident when teachers lack the ability to effectively service students, due to overwhelming feelings of fatigue and stress (Maslach et al., 1996). Furthermore, teachers who experience burnout may exhibit reduced tolerance for classroom behavior problems. For example, Kokkinos et al. (2005) assessed the correlation to teacher burnout and the perceived severity of 24 undesirable student behaviors among teachers. The results indicated a significant relationship between burnout and the ratings of antisocial and oppositional student behaviors. It further suggests that teachers who experience elevated levels of stress are less tolerant of challenging students. Accordingly, classroom teachers who experience higher levels of stress are more likely to magnify problematic behaviors of impertinent students (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008).

A considerable amount of prior research demonstrates a relationship between students' achievement attributes this achievement or lack thereof, to teachers' characteristics (Heyder, 2019; Jepsen, 2005; Lever et al., 2017). Some of the most noted

teacher characteristics are experience, qualification, or knowledge (Baumert & Kunter, 2013) and motivational characteristics such as enthusiasm or self-efficacy (Klassen & Tze, 2014). Though teachers have been often described as being at risk of experiencing emotional exhaustion by way of chronic stress and burnout, less is known about the role of negative affective experiences of teachers. In addition, knowledge gaps are evident when focusing on performance related consequences from teacher to student. Pioneer researchers on burnout have already provided conclusive evidence of a positive relationship between emotional exhaustion of teachers and poor work performance in terms of instructional behavior (Maslach et al., 2001).

Furthermore, when studying the concept of burnout beyond the teaching profession, research indicates that elevated rates of absenteeism and lower work performance are related to symptoms of emotional exhaustion across other occupations (Rumschlag, 2017). This evidence implies that burnout, where it relates to employee performance, may be transferable to the teaching profession as well. Consequently, the implication of this evidence suggests that when teachers experience burnout, the entire school community is negatively affected.

Psychological Capital

Positive and negative effects of human functioning have been investigated in the case of psychological capital and other relevant implications. (Genoud & Waroux, 2021). Individuals with positive attitudes and outlooks tend to be happier and more successful in every vocational sector than negative employees (Burke & Richardsen, 2019). According to Burke and Richardsen (2019), the capacity to adapt to stressful events is strongly dependent on the exit duct. By focusing on holistic well-being, self-improvement, and fulfilling one's full potential, positive psychology provides a unique perspective on health and wellbeing. In a study by Brown et al. (2019), researchers found

that stress impacts subjective well-being. The result of this study also indicated that both positive emotions and a feeling of purpose in life are related to emotional well-being. Furthermore, this study also revealed that teachers who often work in stressful environments suffer from lower levels of happiness and contentment.

Positive psychological capital, or PsyCap, is a concept that has gained traction recently in several fields of psychology. Researchers and experts are increasingly recognizing PsyCap's purpose and function, believing in its capacity to accomplish maximum productivity in the workplace (Luthans et al., 2006). Positive Psychological Capital is a concept developed from the positive psychology paradigm that shows a positive link between hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism and well-being, both overall as well as vocational. According to Luthans et al. (2007), PsyCap can be defined as:

> "an individual's positive psychological state of development that is characterized by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resiliency) to attain success" (p. 3).

At its core, PsyCap refers to a variety of human characteristics that are thought to influence productivity, and many aspects of an individual's psychological capital are mirrored in his/her self-perception or feelings of self-esteem (Goldsmith et al., 1998). Extant literature has indicated that psychological capital yields major benefits in attitude and behavior at the workplace. Additionally, psychological capital has been linked to

improved happiness, involvement, and efficiency. Further evidence shows that psychological capital contributes greatly to improving the psychological well-being of workers and is associated with decrease in various pathologies, to include burnout (Avey, Luthans, et al., 2010; Avey, Luthans, & Yousse, 2010).

As indicated in many prior investigations, accompanying data revealed strong positive connections between the PsyCap and well-being dimensions (Luthans et al., 2010; Selvaraj, 2015; Zhao & You, 2019). These studies also discovered that PsyCap resources lead to improved emotions, which are the most critical components of well-being (Rabenu et al., 2016). Not only does PsyCap improve positive affect, emotional labor, and vocational well-being (Zhao & You, 2019), but it has also been impactful in encouraging a positive outlook and attitude for individuals both in and out of the workplace (Avey et al., 2011).

Stress has a positive effect on burnout, while burnout has a negative effect on job satisfaction (Demir, 2016). In addition, stress and burnout partially mediate the favorable benefits of PsyCap on job satisfaction (Demir, 2016). Overall, PsyCap is an evidence-based construct, proven to have a positive relationship with job satisfaction, job engagement, well-being, mental health, and employee performance. Research has also indicated a negative relationship between PsyCap and stress, turnover intentions, substance abuse and counterproductive workplace behaviors (Avey et al., 2011; Aybas & Acar, 2017; Krasikova et al., 2015; Rabenu et al., 2016).

Duckworth et al., (2009) suggests that the entire nation must have an understanding of well-being among teachers, due to the vital importance of the effects of teacher well-being in classrooms, and positive psychology is a necessary component for employees to develop positive well-being and create healthy working environments. In fact, despite the difficulty of unraveling complex challenges in occupational spaces,

many workplace managers have continued to subscribe to a mechanistic view of organizations as formularized entities. According to this perspective, employees can be managed similarly, and the programming of the organization's human capital is predictable and a task that is easily executed.

Recognizing the complexity of today's world, academics and a growing number of practitioners increasingly adhere to the truth that work, and how it is carried out in various organizations, is essentially about relationships—especially regarding the connections between the organization itself and those who work there. Many preconceptions are altered by this relational viewpoint, such as the perception of most organizations touting the capacity for its employees to be flexible and adaptable, even though these standards of practice have proven to result in capriciousness and instability for those who work within the organization (Larson & Luthans, 2006).

Görgens-Ekermans and Herbert (2013) argue that the model's practical utility in the workplace is growing. Youssef-Morgan and Luthans (2015) propose the existence of four mechanisms for linking PsyCap to well-being. The first, supported by several studies, indicates that an individual's cognitive and affective appraisals of life in general, as well as specific life domains, events, and circumstances, shape wellbeing (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2012; Diener et al., 2009).

Strategies for Reduction of Stress

Prominent levels of stress have been consistently identified to have detrimental effects on employees of various industries. Work stress is described by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (Jenkins, 1996) as " harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the workers." According to McCarthy et al. (2015), although advancements are gradually being made in understanding teacher stress, it

appears evident that more improvements must be made in order to establish effective solutions for teachers who feel stress due to classroom management issues.

Work-related stress is widely recognized as one of the most critical occupational health risks, often resulting in employee dissatisfaction, decreased productivity, absenteeism, and turnover (Cummins, 1990; Spielberger & Rehieser, 1995). Preceding data derived from national surveys regarding stress perceptions indicated that 11 million employees experience health-threatening levels of job stress (Sauter et al., 1990, p. 1148). Subsequently, many reported that they suffer from numerous stress-related ailments. In 25 percent of cases, 69 percent indicated decreased productivity, and 53 percent identified work as their greatest source of stress, according to Spielberger and Rehieser (1995). In an earlier study of teacher stress, Pelsma and Richard (1987) discovered a high correlation between work satisfaction and teacher stress. It was also discovered that the quantity of stress and level of job satisfaction experienced by teachers had a direct impact on the overall quality of their work lives.

Coping methods are the fundamental behaviors that are used to categorize how individuals really respond to stress. According to the most widely used taxonomy (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), there are two basic process-oriented functions of coping strategies, which are problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping, respectively. According to this categorization, individuals who experience challenges in their interaction with their environment seek knowledge about what they can do and take measures to improve the reality of their situation in the former. The latter function is concerned with managing the emotions that are associated with a stressful environment. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the manner in which individuals cope is highly influenced by the resources that are accessible to them. The pooling of resources

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makes it possible to cope with the situation (Westman, 2004). In this study, the presence of positive psychological capital is conceptualized as a valuable resource.

Interventions aimed at helping teachers deal with stress are beneficial for all employees. However, support for teachers who perceive themselves to be chronically overworked and under-resourced is most urgently necessary (McCarthy, 2019). Austin et al. (2005) contend that educators may benefit from problem-solving strategies and the increased opportunities to seek social and emotional support from outside sources as well as their inner networks. Pillen et al. (2013) added that emotion-focused coping is affected by the teacher's personality and occurs when teachers believe environmental conditions are absent of the possibility of improvement.

According to Achor (2013), teachers who possess a positive mindset may also have lower levels of stress because it allows them to see positive realities, particularly positive perceptions of self. Likewise, Lambert et al. (2006) suggest that teachers with more classroom demands also report higher burnout levels, more students with discipline issues, and an intention to resign from their positions (McCarthy et al., 2010). The criticality of considering the teachers' perspectives is evident due to the impeding nature of teachers' reactions to student misbehavior, as well as stress levels.

One of the most significant goal-directed behaviors includes one's ability to observe, evaluate, and reinforce oneself. Humans have the ability to act according to their goals, overcome challenges related to ideas, emotions, and actions, delay gratification and cope with distress by increasing their self-control, according to researchers. Thus, self-control is triggered when a person encounters a challenge in achieving a goal and wishes to adopt new, rather than more familiar, habits. Stress is not adequately managed by those who lack these capabilities (Park et al., 2004).

Emotional well-being encompasses happiness, satisfaction, and morale, as well as a crucial aspect of human functioning. Many positive effects can be attributed to positive thinking (Keyes, 2006). People who have a positive outlook on life tend to lead a physically and mentally healthy lifestyle. They are more open and active thinkers, who have a better grasp on their own lives, are better able to deal with difficult situations and are more likely to create personal objectives for themselves (Pascual et al., 2003). Having a positive mood increases the chances of pursuing a broader range of ideas and behaviors in the short term—for example, a person's ability to recognize new possibilities increases if they are experiencing happy feelings (Ribeiro, 2018). Experiencing negative emotions has the opposite impact of extending one's perspective. While enjoyment is an element in the happiness equation, job satisfaction may be influenced by enjoyment of work and the use of fun to develop collegiality and alleviate stressful conditions (Karl et al., 2007).

One study that focused on the influence of self-control on the enjoyment of pleasant experiences hypothesized that self-control positively affects mood and life satisfaction (Ebersold et al., 2019). In the aforementioned study, self-control, a personal coping resource, was found to contribute to a more significant beneficial impact but not to higher life satisfaction and lower negative affect according to the study results. Furthermore, teachers who were more in control of their emotions scored higher on the scale of pleasant emotions (Ebersold et al., 2019). Both positive and negative emotions help manage stress; yet they could impact behavior in many ways (Keyes, 2006). As a result, teachers' negative emotions were associated with work-related stress but not with self-control. In contrast, teachers' positive feelings and life satisfaction were linked to self-control but not negative emotions. Maintaining self-control was not directly associated with stress reduction but instead with an increase in relative feelings.

According to Keyes (2006), happy and negative emotions are based on different mechanisms, just as self-control alone should not be perceived as a stress-relieving technique, but as a vehicle to support individuals in the reduction of stress. According to the findings, people must be provided with time to become familiar with and proficient in the utilization of stress-relieving strategies for them to prove beneficial. In the aforementioned study, some mentioned possibilities attempted to provide reasoning for the results. These include the premise that the stress levels of these participants were not high enough for self-control to be necessary, or their positive emotion was sufficient to enable them to retain well-being despite the stress they encountered (Keyes, 2006).

Yoga, mindfulness, and meditation have been linked to reducing teacher stress (Divoll & Ribeiro, 2021, 2022). Additionally, Divoll and Ribeiro (2021, 2022) suggest several approaches for new teachers specifically. These suggestions include: (a) improving knowledge of student development, the brain, and stress, (b) focusing on what is in the teachers' control, (c) breaking down the tasks into small chunks, and (d) creating a positive mindset. Ribeiro and Divoll (2020) further suggests that teachers should strive to improve well-being by making time for social connections, meditating, practicing gratitude, and focusing on increasing happiness. These suggestions include the development of necessary habits such as reflecting on the brain and triggers to stress, creating combative and problem-focused coping resources to manage stressors, minimizing, or avoiding potential stressors, and actively creating positive emotions by increasing positive perceptions of oneself (Divoll & Ribeiro, 2021, 2022).

According to Taylor et al. (2015), mindfulness-based interventions which promote self-awareness in the workplace have been deemed beneficial when addressing stress reduction. More specifically, research pertaining to the concept of happiness has determined that measurements of happiness are significantly related to levels of

productivity in the workplace (Oswald et al., 2015). Oswald et al. (2015) also state that lower levels of happiness are systematically associated with lower productivity, while Killingsworth and Gilbert (2010) suggest the possibility that unhappiness may lead to a lack of mental concentration, thus creating issues pertaining to productivity with occupational tasks.

While several studies support the need for organizational interventions to relieve stress, Naghieh et al. (2015) discovered only low-quality evidence that these interventions actually led to improvements in teacher well-being and retention rates. This compilation of evidence also recognizes the limitations of similar research and explains that though interventions have been evaluated for effectiveness, most relevant studies regarding the wellbeing of teachers have been directed at the individual level, and therefore do not address causal factors of stress in the workplace as a whole (Naghieh et al., 2015).

 More recently, emphasis has been directed toward the importance of providing teachers with professional development activities that help them develop critical life skills necessary to meet the demands of their trade. This emphasis includes critical skills such as focused and broad attention, mental flexibility, emotion regulation and resilience, and empathy, forgiveness, and compassion (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jennings et al., 2012; Mind and Life Education Research Network, 2012). Thus, mindfulness-based interventions have been proposed as an integral professional development option that may help build these types of abilities (Roeser et al., 2013). By altering one's emotional state during a stressful circumstance, or by removing or minimizing the cause of stress, coping techniques may mitigate the impacts of stress (Lazarus, 1993).

Interventions that intend to minimize the effects of stress among classroom teachers may be an important and necessary first step toward reducing negative

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outcomes. According to experts at Pennsylvania State University (2016), these interventions can be categorized into three main categories: (a) Organizational interventions which focus on changing the culture of the organization, (b) Organizational-individual interface interventions which work to build workplace relationships and support, and (c) individual interventions which teach individual employees of the organization to manage stress. One of the most important aspects of regulating one's emotions and dealing with the social pressures of classroom life is one's conviction in one's capacity to do so. Emotion regulation efficacy beliefs relate to a conviction that one has the resources and skills necessary to cope effectively with stressful events in one's life. This view is linked to how much effort and tenacity a person puts forth when dealing with stress (Bandura et al., 2003).

Because emotions govern teachers' thoughts and behaviors (Cross & Hong, 2012), and thus influence both teachers and students, it is critical that teachers become aware of occurrences in the classroom that may jeopardize their emotional wellness. Because teaching is typically characterized by intense attention to daily occurrences happening in the classroom, there is typically very little time for reflection (Fullan as cited in Chang & Davis, 2009). Furthermore, studies have shown that teachers often struggle with critical emotional reflection and evaluation (Cross & Hong, 2012; Zembylas et al., 2011) and may not possess the capacity necessary for independent introspection.

Gratitude journaling is the practice of writing about the things that one is grateful for on a daily basis. Multiple studies have shown a favorable correlation between journaling and happiness, positive affect, as well as both global and domain-specific life satisfaction, over time (Froh et al., 2008; Froh et al., 2009). Individuals who use this kind of positive journaling report higher levels of happiness overall, as well as more satisfying interpersonal interactions (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Watkins et al., 2003).

Happiness Journaling

The Happiness Habit Journal (Ribeiro, 2018a, 2018b) is a tool that is intended to guide participants through the process of living a happy life by assisting writers in identifying principles and priorities in their daily lives to promote happiness and joy. This particular journal, which was created based on the works of experts and authors on happiness, is comprised of thirteen components, which include (1) happiness-source goals, (2) gratitude, (3) circle of life goals, (4) happy moments, 5) conscious struggles, (6) commandments, (7) resolutions, (8) tiny habits, (9) accomplishments, (10) acts of kindness, (11) spiritual master, (12) overall day rating, and (13) Happiness Trophy. According to Ribeiro (2018a), the purpose of the journal is to help participants to become creators of their own happiness by developing and maintaining positive habits which facilitate good feelings. Overall, the journal is intended to help journal writers to make meaningful decisions about behavior thoughts, words, and attitudes in order to increase happiness in one's daily life (Ribeiro, 2018a).

Ties to this particular journal and the concept of PsyCap as a resource can be deduced from connecting each of the four dimensions of PsyCap: hope, optimism, resiliency, and self-efficacy to several components of the Happiness Habit Journal, such as happiness source goals, gratitude, accomplishments, and tiny habits. Participants of the journaling activities, using The Happiness Habit Journal (Ribeiro, 2018a) are encouraged to prioritize journal components that they perceive as most helpful for their own personal life goals. However, not all goals are created equal; although the most ideal goals share a similar structure, such as being reachable, specific, quantifiable with an alignment of values (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007).

Helping employees concentrate on existential problems like mastery, connection, and self-acceptance may also be a vital and successful path to happiness (Biswas-Diener

& Dean, 2007). In reality, research on happiness offers numerous appropriate definitions based on an assessment of religious, philosophical, and psychological material, which helps us better understand this highly cherished emotion (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007). Subjective well-being may be achieved and maintained by focusing on the essential elements of goals and social relationships, according to studies on happiness (Argyle, 2001). The foundation of action-oriented education has traditionally been goal setting. Employees are more likely to experience happiness when they have a feeling of purpose and meaning in their lives, and personal objectives help them achieve these goals by providing a useful target for measuring growth and progress (Emmons, 1999).

Happiness research also indicates that there is much more to happiness than simply enjoying material pleasures, good fortune, or a job well done. Emotional rewards for effort and success are what we mean by "happiness" in this context. Happiness, according to Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007), is useful in and of itself, acting as a crucial psychological capital that may be spent while working toward other objectives. Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007) go on to indicate that people who are happier are often more helpful, creative, prosocial, benevolent, altruistic, and healthier. Happier individuals live longer lives, are more likely to marry, remain married longer, have more close and casual friends, and make more money. Additionally, Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) agree that employees that are happy perform better in terms of organizational citizenship, performance ratings, and productivity. As a result, happiness might be seen as a means to an end rather than a goal in and of itself. Educational leaders may create a new set of emotional resources for teachers through fostering optimum levels of happiness in the workplace (Biswas-Deiner & Dean, 2007). In fact, those in positions of authority who hope to affect positive change in the lives of their educators and who want to contribute to helping employees live more productive, more fulfilling lives would do well to gain an

appreciation for the factors of happiness that are within their own spheres of influence (Biswas-Deiner & Dean, 2007). In essence, much of what we understand about happiness is centered around goal attainment and vice versa.

Theoretical Framework

In order to address the aim of this study, we utilized a culmination of several theoretical approaches and models, all of which focus on human behavior. First, the Psychological Capital (PsyCap) model is a higher order core construct that integrates criteria of positive organizational behavior, or "the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today's workplace" (Luthans, 2002, p. 59). This model utilizes four main criteria, self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resiliency, for the purpose of developing and managing optimal performance in everyday life.

In theory, prior research indicates that PsyCap is a major contributing element to happiness, not just in the context of an organizational transformation, but also in general. Employees who are optimistic, for example, have favorable expectations for goal achievement and are more capable of positive growth and change. Similarly, pleasant emotions are likely to inspire discovery of new ideas and boost innovative thinking while pursuing goals (Fredrickson, 2001). The notion that positive PsyCap benefits individuals' well-being originated from the positive psychology framework. According to Luthans et al. (2006), a positive association between PsyCap (hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism), well-being (Selvaraj, 2015) and occupational well-being (Zhao & You, 2019) is evident. Research also indicates that PsyCap resources contribute to positive emotions and are the most important component of well-being (Rabenu et al., 2016; Rabenu & Yaniv, 2017). Furthermore, PsyCap improves positive affect, emotional exhaustion, and

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vocational well-being (Zhao & You, 2019) and fosters a positive attitude (Avey et al., 2011).

The model referenced below provides a description of the hypothesized method and empirical link between positive employees and positive organizational change. In the model, positive psychological capital (PsyCap) of employees, expressed via positive emotions, is linked to their relevant attitudes and actions, which may either assist or prevent beneficial organizational development (Avey et al., 2008). Avey et al. (2008) also suggest that cynical attitudes and deviant actions may hinder good organizational change, while attitudes of engagement and organizational citizenship behaviors on the part of cynics and deviants may promote positive organizational change. In the figure below, Avey et al. (2008) propose the impact of PsyCap, mindfulness, and positive emotions on attitudes and behaviors relevant to positive organizational change.

Figure 1

Model for Impact of Psychological Capital (PsyCap), Mindfulness, and Positive Emotions on Attitudes and Behaviors Relevant to Positive Organizational Change (Avey et al., 2008)
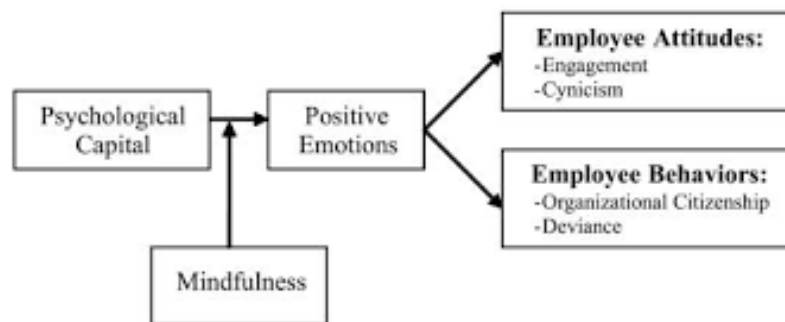
According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the manner in which individuals cope is highly influenced by the resources that are accessible to them. The pooling of resources

makes it possible to cope with the situation (Westman, 2004). Thus, employing this model, PsyCap symbolizes positive agentic resources that enable individuals to grow, optimize, and increase their daily activities (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017) to better manage stress. In this theoretical framework, focus is on emotional, cognitive, and social characteristics including self-efficacy, goals, accomplishment, and social resources to promote teacher well-being (Luthans et al., 2006).

Figure 2

Model of Continuum for Psychological Capital Analysis (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017)
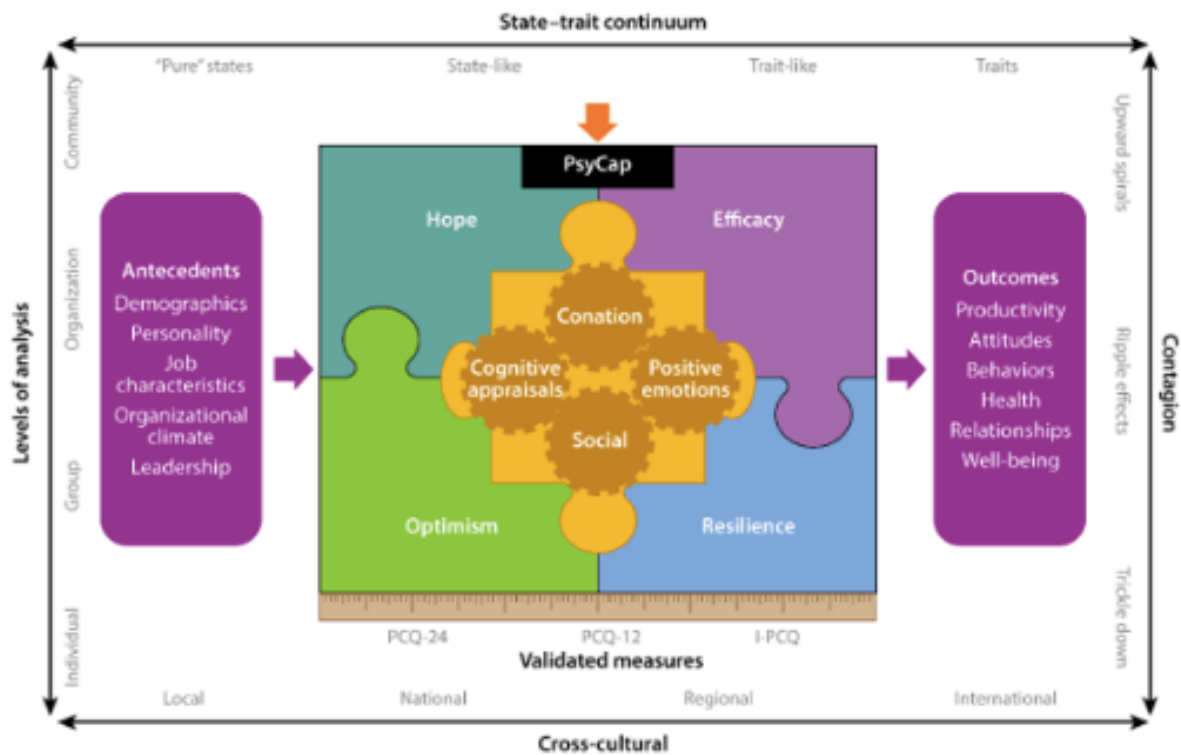
Luthans F, Youssef-Morgan CM. 2017.
Annu. Rev. Organ. Psychol. Organ. Behav. 4:339–66

A combination of the conservation of resources theory (COR) and the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (BBPE) were deemed adequate and alternate explanations for PsyCap's functions and effects in this particular study. These foundational theories were referred to and acted as a point of reference throughout this study due to their ability to connect personal resources to well-being and positive outcomes.   The BBPE theory emphasizes personal and social capital as key resources that create well-being and positive outcomes (Fredrickson, 2004). A thriving existence, better functioning, and more teaching pleasure are all possible with the BBPE method (Fredrickson, 2004).

Likewise, Hobfoll (1989) indicates that the COR theory emphasizes the significance of incentives to preserve, protect, and increase resources when threatened with loss. Within this theory, it is predicted that positive individual outcomes (Hobfoll, 1989), including dedication and the preservation of well-being and usable, balanced resources (Zhao & You, 2019) are highly likely. Moreover, the COR theory has often been connected to stress management and PsyCap. Hobfoll (1989) contends that burnout is a result of sustained periods of deficiencies of resources, according to the conservation of resources (COR) theory. Within the theory, the lack of resources available to the individual causes other resources to be compromised as well.

As a result, the culmination of these foundational principles offers a realistic paradigm for evaluating hypotheses regarding stress coping methods and the presumed association with psychological well-being (Folkman, 2013) and PsyCap (Rabenu et al., 2016). The COR theory may be considered as an important personal resource that aids in goal attainment since individuals with numerous potential resources, such as PsyCap, are able to better manage daily occupational challenges and strive toward nurturing and optimizing these resources. According to Hobfoll (2011), the COR theory operates under

the assumption that people are confronted with limited resources of time and energy and that in reaction to protracted periods of high demands and low resources, they demonstrate lower energy and fail to perform efficiently.

Summary

In this chapter, a review of relevant literature relating to the purpose of the present study, one main commonality is evident. Though occupational demands may heighten stress levels that contribute to the mental health of many professionals, the teaching profession has the highest rates of stress and burnout when compared to other occupations (Gray et al., 2017). One widely supported and significant understanding of this topic is the idea that the academic and behavioral performance of students is severely impacted by elevated levels of teacher stress.

Overall, the research reinforces the idea that emotional well-being encompasses happiness, satisfaction, and morale, as well as a crucial aspect of human functioning. Many positive effects can be attributed to positive thinking (Keyes, 2006). Since employment has a crucial role in adult life and is a predictor of adult adjustment, positive well-being includes the lives of individuals in the workplace. Employee satisfaction, as well as subjective well-being, are critical to preventing burnout or resignation in the face of workplace stress (Park et al., 2004). Positive emotions and a sense of well-being among workers were found to be predictive of more outstanding commitment and devotion to their employment, as well as reduced rates of burnout and resignation. Teachers are often faced with elevated levels of stress due to occupational-related stress factors such as excessive workload and high anxiety environments. This can lead to elevated levels of teacher exhaustion and burnout (Tay, 2014). Furthermore, in the absence of adequate coping mechanisms, teachers are more inclined to suffer a decline in

motivation and passion, as well as a loss of interest in their profession (Matheny et al., 2000).

In addition, individuals who have a positive outlook on life often possess the ability to recognize new opportunities when experiencing feelings of happiness. Experiencing negative emotions has the opposite impact of extending one's perspective. Perspectives are narrowed when destructive emotions plague them; sorrow, anxiety, worry, rage, disgust, or hate are a few of the adverse effects believed to result from such negative feelings, and mental toolkits are severely constrained when suffering from such emotions (Catalino et al., 2014).

The subsequent chapter will explain methodological aspects of this study. Details regarding the operationalization of theoretical constructs, research purpose and questions, research design, population and sampling selection, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, privacy and ethical considerations, and the research design limitations for this study are expounded upon in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III:

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions of elementary school classroom teachers for the attainment of self-awareness and ultimately the reduction of stress. The study included a compilation of information from one academic year acquired from self-reported data of 31 classroom teachers employed by a large urban school district in Southeastern Texas throughout the 2020-2021 school year. The quantitative data was compared and analyzed using statistical correlations, and interview transcripts underwent an inductive coding process to obtain insights based on the qualitative data. This chapter provides an overview of the study by detailing the specifics of the research design to explain operationalization of theoretical constructs, research purpose, questions, hypothesis, research design, population and sampling selection, data collection procedures, data analysis, privacy and ethical considerations, and limitations of the research design.

Overview of the Research Problem

Work-related stress along with additional health concerns among teachers seem to have a strong correlation to student performance, but these issues extend well past academic outcomes. Collectively, research suggests that many costs related to teacher stress are expensive for school districts and have become a considerable debt for the nation (Phillips, 2015). One significant burden includes the high price of health care costs that accompanies the stress and mental health disparities among teachers. Educators, parents, students, and relevant stakeholders who have potential investments in the US educational system could benefit from determining effective strategies for addressing the issue of teacher work-related stress and the long existing n health disparities of education professionals.

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Policy-based interventions have been implemented in many schools as an attempt to address job-related stress, however these interventions have been minimally evaluated by research (McIntyre et al., 2017). Additional information is needed in regard to occupational stress among teachers. This study aims to elucidate the gaps of knowledge specifically regarding the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions that intend to reduce teacher stress for the purpose of increasing student academic achievement.

Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs

This study consisted of the following constructs: (a) teacher stress (b) teacher self-efficacy, and (c) strategies for stress reduction. Teacher stress was measured by self-reported values as indicated on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which is comprised of four subscales. These subscales include the self-reported levels of burnout, depersonalization, personal achievement, and sense of self-efficacy. The MBI employs a Likert scale that was administered pre-intervention and post-intervention by two sub-sample groups - one group participating in the mindfulness intervention and the other without intervention. Teacher stress was measured by totaling scaled items on the MBI, and subscales were also independently analyzed.

Teacher self-efficacy was further measured by the widely used Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). This tool measures the elements of teachers' self-efficacy towards instructional techniques, classroom management, and student involvement. Self-efficacy may also be conceptualized as a construct with a more general and less task-specific emphasis, referring to the belief in one's ability to deal with a wide variety of stressful or challenging demands (Luszczynska et al., 2005), however, to fulfil the purpose of this study, it was necessary to look at the construct of self-efficacy in terms of its specific elements.

Stress reduction strategies in this study referred to common research-based practices that intend to produce a reduction in occupational stress among teachers, specifically designed to solve a problem- in this case, elevated levels of teacher stress. The culmination of various intervention activities is commonly utilized to improve the functioning of school campuses and districts. For the purposes of the current study, the stress reduction strategy selected for teachers to engage in was a daily mindfulness-based journaling activity using the My Happiness Habit Journal (Ribeiro, 2018a).

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of mindfulness-based interventions for the reduction of teacher stress. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the relationship between self-efficacy and burnout among elementary classroom teachers?

2. Is there a difference in TSES by Race/Ethnicity?

3. Is there a difference in MBI by Race/Ethnicity?

4. What effect, if any, does journaling have on teacher self-efficacy and burnout?

5. What perceptions are evident among classroom teachers regarding the effects of mindfulness-based exercises, such as journaling, as a strategy for stress reduction?

Research Design

In order to address the goals of this study, a sequential mixed-methods, quasi-experimental design was utilized. The researcher's intention was to evaluate the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions as it relates to the reduction in teacher stress. This design was carried out in both quantitative and qualitative phases. One significant advantage of the chosen design was to provide a multi-faceted perspective and in-depth exploration of quantitative results extricated and measured from the qualitative phase.

The participants were divided into two sub-groups; one group received mindfulness-based training and took part in the journaling intervention, while the second group served as the control group and received no intervention. Both groups completed the prerequisite survey, as well as the post intervention survey, and the data was compared across the two sample groups to determine if trends were evident.

Following their involvement in the journaling intervention, participants were interviewed about their stress experiences throughout the intervention period. During these interviews, inquiries concerning their perspectives on the journaling assignments were also addressed to gain more insight of how the exercises were received by participants. The qualitative data was then utilized to identify common themes within the participants perceptions of the intervention.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of elementary school teachers, teaching all content areas from grades 1-5 in from one large school district in Southeast Texas. This district services over 77,000 students and employs over 5,000 teachers, respectively. Participants were recruited from four campuses of similar areas within this district in Southeast Texas and volunteered for the study by responding to recruitment materials disseminated via email correspondence. The select population was identified from four similarly performing schools, with similar demography within the same district as a means to control for district demands and curriculum requirements. Screening for previous exposure to similar research was completed on all respondents, and all teachers with prior exposure were excluded from the study as a means of controlling intrinsic motivational aspects of engaging with the interventions, due to having prior experiences with similar practices.

Participant Demographics

Participants of the study included 31 (n=31) elementary school teachers. Of these participants 94% (n=29) were women and 6% (n=2) were men. Demographic data was collected which determined that participants ranged from ages 23-57, with a median age of 35 years. The sample participants self-identified as 61% African American, 4% Hispanic, 15% Caucasian, and 12% Asian. A collective 8% of participants did not wish to respond or identified as other races/ethnicities. Participants also self-reported educational data ranging from bachelor's degrees to beyond master's degrees; the highest level of education received was reported as: 19% having bachelor's degrees, 61% reported having master's degrees, and 3% with education beyond master's degrees. 17% of participants did not respond to this item. Finally, years of teaching experience ranged from 2 to 26 years, with a mean of 18 years. When reporting years of experience, 39% of respondents were between 0-10 years, 36% were 10-20 years, and 10% of the respondents reported experience between 20-30 years. 15% of participants did not respond to this item.

Respondents reported a distribution of participant years of experience in the classroom. This data reveals that 12 (38.7%) of the respondents have between 0 to 10 years of classroom experience, 11 (35.5%) of the respondents said they have experience of between 10 to 20 years teaching in the classroom, and three (9.7%) of the respondents said they have experience of between 20 to 30 years of classroom teaching experience.

The distribution of participant race and/or ethnicity reveals that three (9.7%) of the participants who responded to this item identify as Asian, 16 (51.6%) identify as Black, one (3.2%) participant responded to this item identifies as Hispanic/other, 4 (12.9%) of the participants who responded to this item indicate that they identify as

white. Finally, one (3.2%) participant responded to this item reported that he/she is from an ethnic group not specifically mentioned but identified as other.

The distribution of participant's highest level of education reveals that six (19.4%) of respondents reported bachelor's degree, one (3.2%) participant reported having a doctoral or professional degree, and 19 (61.3%) of the participants who responded to this item reported having a master's degree. In all demographic results, five surveys were omitted due to incomplete responses.

Participants' also reported the predominant content area that they currently teach. This data reveals that 12 (38.7%) of the participants who responded to this item said the content area they predominately teach is English Language Arts, four (12.9%) of the participants who responded to this said the content area they predominately teach is Mathematics, eight (25.8%) of the participants who responded to this item indicated that the content area they predominately teach is other, and two (6.5%) of the participants who responded to this item indicated that the content area they predominately teach is Special Education. The survey data also indicated that 11 (35.5%) of the respondents are between the ages of 20 to 35 years, 13 (41.9%) of the respondents are between the ages of 36 to 50 years, and 2 (6.5%) of the respondents are between the ages of 51 to 65 years.

Participant Selection

The intended purpose of the current study was to assess the effects of mindfulness-based interventions on stress levels among classroom teachers. Therefore, an advertisement for recruiting teachers to participate in the study was disseminated via district email. An invitation for teacher participation was also announced during campus staff meetings. Teachers volunteered to participate by meeting with the researcher at their current campuses and were informed about the intent, objectives, and procedures for the study. Half (n=15) of the teachers were included in the treatment group, while the

other half (n=16) were included in the control group based on their personal preferences. Participants who agreed to complete the daily journaling tasks were automatically assigned to the treatment group. To reduce the prevalence of participant dropout, each of the treatment group participants were offered an incentive in exchange for full participation throughout the duration of the study.

All study participants completed two psychological questionnaires prior to and following the intervention. Prior to the initiation of the intervention period, all participants of the intervention group were contacted by telephone and informed about the qualitative component of the research. Nine of the participants from this group agreed to participate in the baseline interviews, leading to the researcher's decision to conduct an interpretive phenomenological analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2003). According to Baker and Edwards (2014), a sample size between 6 and 10 is sufficient to arrive at conclusions using the interpretive phenomenological analysis for qualitative data. This approach offers a flexible and versatile understanding of the interviewees' experiences by giving voice to their perspectives and experiences, then providing a subjective interpretation of the narratives being expressed (Tuffour, 2017).

Data Collection

Prior to data collection, the researcher gained approval from the University of Houston-Clear Lake's Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS). Respondents of recruitment materials were asked to consent to have their information considered. Once consent was given, the participants were screened to determine if they had previously taken part in similar practices as the chosen intervention. Additionally, respondents who indicated that they were not elementary school classroom teachers were omitted from possible participation in the study. Administrators, counselors, interventionists, and teachers of students above grade level five were declared ineligible

and excluded from further involvement with the research in order to limit the population sample to elementary school teachers. The demographic data enabled the researcher to ascertain whether respondents were eligible to participate in the study and to establish correlations between descriptive statistics, predictor variables, and scaled scores.

The intervention consisted of two components. The first required participants to engage in a daily journaling activity throughout the duration of the six-week period. The treatment group was also asked to participate in one mindfulness-based journaling training session where they were asked to engage in a variety of activities which focused on common principles of mindfulness strategies prior to participating in the journaling experience. During this session, participants were guided by experts to personalize their journaling experience and were offered additional information about the process to clarify roles and tasks throughout the journaling experience.

 Throughout the six-week period, participants were sent text messages biweekly to further indicate their level of use for the strategies. Additional messages disseminated each week asked participants to describe their current stress levels at any given moment in time using a Likert-type scale measurement from 1 (lowest level of stress) to 10 (highest level of stress). The intent of these messages was to serve as reminders for participants to remain intentionally aware of their own stress levels and mindfulness habits, as well as to remind participants to utilize the Happiness Habit Journals regularly.

Quantitative

Both sample groups were selected based on this screening information and given pre-intervention Likert surveys, MBI and TSES, to determine baseline data. Any incomplete surveys that were submitted were omitted from further review. All eligible respondents were then contacted via phone or email and asked for their voluntary participation in the study. Respondents who indicated that they would like to participate

in the journaling activity were assigned to the treatment group, while participants who indicated that they would not like to participate in the journaling activity were assigned to the control group. At the conclusion of intervention, the treatment group and the control group were both required to complete the MBI and TSES once more to determine if trends or patterns in the data were evident.

The collection of quantitative data took place over a six-week time period. Both intervention and control groups completed a questionnaire containing forty-one items collectively. This questionnaire was inclusive of three main components of measurement: (a) demographic data (4 items), (b) Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Survey (22 items), and (c) Teacher Sense of Self-Efficacy Tool (12 items). The demographic information provided the researcher with the opportunity to determine which respondents were eligible to participate in the study, as well as an opportunity to determine relationships between the descriptive statistics, predictor variables, and scaled scores. Administrators, counselors, interventionists, and teachers of students above grade level six were deemed ineligible and excluded from further exchange with the study to circumscribe the population sample to include only elementary school teachers.

Once respondents were assessed for eligibility, those who agreed to the terms of the study were consented and assigned to one of two groups- (a) the intervention group received the intervention, and (b) the control group received no intervention. Half of the respondents were assigned to the intervention group, while the other half were assigned to the control group; however, because the sample group had an odd number of total participants, the control group had one more participant than the intervention group. The pre-test comprising demographic data, MBI, and TSES was then administered to both groups in order to obtain baseline data. At the end of the six-week period, participants of both intervention and control groups were asked to complete the MBI and TSES surveys

once more in order to collect follow-up data for a comparative analysis alongside the initial baseline data.

Qualitative

Teachers who indicated on the screener that they would like to participate in the second phase of the study agreed to be interviewed for the collection of the qualitative data. These selected individuals were asked to consent to the interview prior to data collection. The consent form detailing the purpose and processes of the study informed them that their participation was completely voluntary, and it provided participants with the opportunity to opt out of the study at their free will. This consent form also ensured confidentiality of the identities of participants. The Happiness Habit Journal (Ribeiro, 2018a) was utilized as an intervention tool for the study participants, but the journals were not collected nor considered viable sources of data for the intended purposes of this particular study.

At the conclusion of the six-week intervention period, interviews were conducted via web-based meeting options. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face interviews were not considered a meeting option to conduct these interviews. During these interviews, participants of the intervention group were asked five questions to determine if any changes in their original perceptions existed following the intervention. Participants of the control group were not invited to participate in the interviews because they did not take part in the journaling intervention, and thus would not have relevant information to offer regarding the final inquiries.

All interview sessions were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Interviews ranged in length from 21 to 36 minutes per participant and were conducted using a web-based conferencing application. Prior to the initiation of the intervention, participants were asked a series of questions regarding the participants' perceptions of

work-related stress and potential contributing factors to stress. These questions include: (1) What is meant by the term "well-being" and what do you think can be done to improve well-being among staff?, (2) Considering your own personality, what are three words would you use to describe yourself?, (3)What does the term, "stress" mean to you?, (4) Describe a time that you felt stressed. What did you do to address or overcome those feelings?, (5) What provides you with the greatest amount of satisfaction/dissatisfaction at your workplace?

During each post-interview session, participants were asked the following: (1) Which component of the Mindfulness-based practices was the most helpful? In what way did you find it helpful?, (2) Has your use of the Happiness Habit Journal altered your behaviors or responses to stress? How?, (3) Did you notice a time throughout your journaling journey when you felt elevated levels of stress? If so, how did you manage these feelings?, (4) Do you feel less stressed now that you have learned these strategies?, (5) Do you intend to continue to incorporate these strategies into your daily life in the future? Why or why not?

Instrumentation

All study participants completed a survey which included two psychological questionnaires prior to and following the intervention. This survey was comprised of four demographic items, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), and the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES). Following the intervention period, several participants volunteered to be interviewed for the collection of additional qualitative data regarding their individual experiences with the journaling intervention.

MBI

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is the first scientifically constructed assessment of burnout and is frequently used in research studies worldwide. Since its first

publication in 1981, the MBI has been used for a variety of reasons, including individual diagnosis and organizational measurements. According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), the scoring of all MBI items is based on a frequency rating system consisting of seven levels, ranging from "never" to "daily." The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) comprises three distinct scales, namely emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement. Each scale assesses a distinct dimension of burnout. It is not recommended to amalgamate scales for the purpose of creating a unified burnout scale (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). An analysis of the three facets of burnout distinctly indicates that, in application, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) functions as an assessment of three distinct constructs. The scoring system ranging from 0 to 7 is utilized to establish low, moderate, and high levels of each scale, as per defined score ranges. Though there are multiple versions of the MBI based on specific audiences of whom to be assessed, only items from the general survey (MBI-GS) were utilized in the current study.

TSES

The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) is a self-report survey designed by Alfred Bandura (1977) as a tool to measure one's individual belief regarding his ability to positively impact student learning outcomes, including the capacity to effectively engage with challenging or disengaged students (Tschannen-Moran, 1998). The instrument was specifically designed for the purpose of assessing teacher self-efficacy. Its application involves gauging the level of self-efficacy exhibited by teachers at a particular point in time, as well as prior to and after their involvement in professional development initiatives (Tschannen-Moran, 1998). Two versions of the scale are available for use. The short form, which includes 12 items, was employed for this particular study to measure the self-efficacy of the participants before and after taking part in the journaling intervention.

Data Analysis

Research question one, *What is the relationship between self-efficacy subscales and burnout subscales among elementary classroom teachers?,* was addressed by completing a correlation scale for both the TSES to measure self-efficacy subscales and MBI to measure burnout subscales. The sample was summarized using simple frequencies and descriptive statistics. The data set was derived from demographic and survey data from the original measurement tool that was disseminated to all thirty-one participants. Only data derived from twenty-six surveys were considered within this analysis due to the omission of five incomplete surveys submitted. Categorical data was represented using proportions while continuous data was represented by mean ± standard deviation. Relationships between predictor variables and scale scores were assessed using non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis tests and Spearman's Rho correlations. Nonparametric tests were used partly due to the relatively small sample size and partly due to the fact that the data were not normally distributed. To address the first research question, the data derived from the pre- and post-surveys were examined using four subscales. These subscales included burnout, depersonalization, personal achievement, and sense of self-efficacy levels of each participant.

Research question two, *Is there a difference in TSES by Race/Ethnicity?,* and Research question three, *Is there a difference in MBI by Race/Ethnicity?,* were analyzed using a multiple comparison test and utilized the Bonferroni correction method. This test is typically utilized when engaging in repeated comparisons due to the tests' ability to correct for the increased error rates in hypothesis testing with multiple comparisons. In this case, the Bonferroni test seeks to avoid data from being incorrectly interpreted as statistically significant in this manner by making an adjustment during the comparison testing phase of the study. This method was chosen to reduce the probability of producing

type I errors during the analysis process. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant for all tests, and analysis was completed using SPSS Statistics Version 27.

Research question four, *What effect, if any, does journaling have on teacher stress and burnout?,* was addressed by conducting a paired samples t-test. Descriptive statistics were measured for participants of the journaling exercise as well as the control group whose participants did not take part in the journaling exercise. Subscales for each measurement were also deduced using the factor analysis for each of the measurement tools.

Research Question five, *What perceptions are evident among classroom teachers regarding the effects of mindfulness-based exercises, such as journaling, as a strategy for stress reduction?*, was addressed by utilizing an inductive qualitative analysis process referred to as Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The initial interview results were analyzed in accordance with the guidelines provided by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). The guidelines broadly include six steps for the analysis, which were applied to the current data. The steps include the following (1) reading and rereading of data, (2) initial noting, (3) development of emergent themes, (4) grouping of the initial codes or emergent themes, (5) linking the codes across cases, and (6) reflection on the grouped codes and main themes (Smith et al., 2009).

The IPA method of inductive qualitative analysis was used to obtain a thorough and in-depth investigation of the experiences of individuals being observed. This process is commonly utilized to aid researchers in developing the participants' in-depth reflection on their emotions and subjective experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Smith and Osborn (2003) also indicate that the intent of this method is to identify and characterize the participants' experiences with life events, as well as how they view those experiences.

Researchers often consider their own perceptions of the social environments in which the research participants live (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The IPA technique assists individuals with reflecting on their thoughts regarding phenomena they encounter and how they are influenced by the social world (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

In this study, the analysis of qualitative data was conducted using qualitative research software called Atlas.ti. Within this process, the software was used to sequence the data by inputting the interview transcript information, initial coding, linking codes to the relevant text, developing networks of similar codes, and finally naming the codes. Reading and rereading of the transcripts yielded more than 36 codes in the transcripts which were repeated in multiple cases. Several of the codes, however, were unique.

The technique for coding began with the identification of in-vivo codes. Following the determination of the appropriate codes, the focus was on the search for themes and patterns in the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). This enabled the development of categories into which the codes might be arranged. Following the creation of the categories, the codes were rearranged into subcategories, and the results were recorded. The findings formed the basis for the conclusions. The initial codes were linked to the relevant text in transcripts and grouped to form main themes. Initial codes were then named as subordinate themes and groups within these themes were also named to form superordinate themes. Seven superordinate themes were constructed and supported with the quotations from transcripts. Lastly, textual and visual outputs were then processed further to write on the final themes.

Qualitative Validity

The qualitative data acquired from the interviews were analyzed using the inductive coding process in order to build an empirical understanding of teacher perspectives in regard to stress factors and the journaling experience in which they

participated throughout the intervention period. Each interview was audio-recorded and then fully transcribed into a Microsoft Word file to be coded. After all interviews were transcribed, transcripts were sent via email to each interviewee to make specific changes and corrections to responses, if necessary. This respondent validation process, also referred to as member checking, provided the opportunity for the researcher to verify if the description was complete and realistic, if the presented themes were accurate, and if the interpretations of the data provided were fair and representative of the reported account in each interview (Creswell, 2005). The intent of this procedure was to provide participants with the opportunity to confirm the accuracy of recorded data. According to Birt et al. (2016), this technique has been used by researchers to determine if interview results are credible. All transcripts were confirmed as accurate before the submission deadline, most with minor or no corrections and permitted by participants for use by the researcher.

Privacy and Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, the researcher gained approval from the University of Houston-Clear Lake's Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) for this study and adhered to all ethical guidelines designated by the University of Houston-Clear Lake, as well as to the standards of the American Psychological Association (APA) in the data collection process. The researcher also followed the agency and State of Texas data privacy guidelines when conducting this study. The agency prohibited the researcher from using any personal identification data in the dissemination of the research outcomes. The State of Texas specified personal identification information as an individual's first name or first initial and last name in combination with social security number (SSN) or date of birth therefore, no personal identifiable information was collected. Utilization of pseudonyms allowed the researcher to maintain anonymity of the schools, school district,

and individual participants throughout the study. Each participant was assigned a number in order to match data from the beginning to the end of the study. Other references to schools, nearby regional areas, and/or distinguishable identifiers were replaced by pseudonyms as well.

The identities of the participants remained anonymous throughout the study, and no obvious undue risks were endured by any of the participants. Throughout the interview process, every effort was taken by the researcher to remain as impartial and objective as possible in order to avoid imposing personal beliefs upon any of the participants. All information acquired from audiotaped transcriptions was transcribed with the highest accuracy and precision. No obvious undue risks were endured by any of the participants. Throughout the interview process, every effort was made to remain objective and neutral in order to avoid imposition of personal beliefs on any of the participants. Throughout the coding phase, every attempt was made to maintain objectivity as themes and supporting data were selected to justify and support the findings. All obtained data was stored in two places throughout the study: the researcher's computer hard drive and an online data storage cloud belonging to the researcher. This data will be maintained confidentially for five years after the study is completed, then it will be destroyed.

Summary

The goal of this study was to determine if the incorporation of mindfulness-based interventions, such as journaling, would impact the perceived stress levels of classroom teachers. This chapter included an overview of the research problem, operationalization of theoretical constructs, a description of the research population and sample, as well as the defined procedures for data collection and analysis. This chapter also addressed privacy and ethical considerations, and research design limitations. Chapter IV contains

a detailed description of this mixed-method study, including participant demographics, an analysis of relevant quantitative data, and an analysis of qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews of elementary classroom teachers. The upcoming chapter will also discuss the results of the study and include a detailed description of the findings from the data collected throughout this study.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

This study not only analyzed the current perspectives of elementary school teachers regarding potential work-related stress factors but also served to indicate to what degree, if any, mindfulness-based interventions, such as journaling in this case, can impact teacher perspectives and self-efficacy for the reduction of stress. According to Maslach et al. (1996), the primary symptom of burnout is emotional exhaustion, which manifests as emotional and mental fatigue. The second sign is depersonalization, which manifests itself in the form of a cynical and pessimistic attitude toward students. Finally, the third symptom is referred to as low personal accomplishment, which is defined as a sense of inefficiency and incompetence at work. Maslach and Jackson (1981) developed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to quantify these three variables. This tool was utilized and referenced heavily throughout this study and in the analysis of the upcoming data.

The research examined the effects of work-related stress in the workplace, as well as assessed the effectiveness of interventions focused on the reduction of teacher stress factors in elementary classrooms. Potential causal factors for teacher stress and burnout were identified by deducing common themes from interviews and surveys, then one research-based method for stress management, mindfulness-based journaling, was selected for the intervention. Participants were divided into two groups. The control group participated in a pre- and post- survey to measure burnout and efficacy levels with no intervention. The treatment group engaged in the journaling intervention throughout a six-week period, then reported their individual experiences by way of a post-intervention survey and post-intervention interview. This chapter provides a detailed description of the findings from the data collected throughout the study.

Research Question One

Research question one (*What is the relationship between self-efficacy subscales and burnout subscales among elementary classroom teachers?*) was addressed by conducting a Pearson's r correlation coefficient. Each of the subscales which comprise the MBI and the TSES were analyzed in the table below. Subscales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) which measure depersonalization, personal achievement, and burnout levels were compared to subscales of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) which measures classroom management, instructional strategies, and self-efficacy. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between the subscales of personal achievement and self-efficacy among the participants. The data also shows that there is a significant relationship between depersonalization and burnout. In addition, a statistically significant relationship is evident between the subscales of classroom management and instructional practices. The table below illustrates the aforementioned relationships between each subscale and includes data analyzed from both measurement tools.

Table 1

Participant Results from MBI and TSES Subscales

		2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Depersonalization	Pearson Correlation	-.338	.700**	.015	-.515	-.421
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.091	<.001	.966	.105	.173
	N	26	26	10	11	12
2. Personal Achievement	Pearson Correlation	--	-.114	.439	.388	.638*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.581	.205	.239	.025
	N		26	10	11	12
3. Burnout	Pearson Correlation		--	-.210	-.481	-.241
	P value			.560	.134	.451
	N			10	11	12
4. Classroom Management	Pearson Correlation			--	.910*	.489
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.012	.266
	N				6	7
5. Instructional Strategies	Pearson Correlation				--	.651
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.113
	N					7

Research Question Two

Research Question two (*Is there a difference in TSES by race/ethnicity?*) was addressed by completing a one-way ANOVA. This test was used to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed between the means of racial/ethnic categorical groups. The results indicate that there were no statistically significant differences among the ethnic categories on the TSES score, $F_{(2, 23)} = .73$, $p = .49$; however, teachers who identified as Black or African American had the highest self-efficacy when compared to the other groups. The table below indicates the differences that existed between racial/ethnic categorical groups.

Table 2

TSES Results by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	N	Mean	SD
White	4	2.46	.93
Black or African American	16	3.18	1.02
Other	6	3.00	1.28
Total	26	3.03	1.06

Research Question Three

Research question three (*Is there a difference in MBI by race/ethnicity?*) was addressed by analyzing multiple comparisons through a one-way ANOVA. The results of this analysis indicate that there were statistically significant differences in MBI total by race, $F(2, 23) = 4.2$, $p = .03$, eta squared = .27. A statistically significant difference between those who identified as Black or African American and the group who identified as other was evident in this analysis. Participants who identified as other race/ethnicity opted not to identify with the other groups listed.

Table 3

MBI Results by Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	N	Mean	SD
White	4	3.20	.84
Black or African American	16	3.44	.61
Other	6	2.53	.66
Total	26	3.19	.74

Research Question Four

Research question four, *What effect, if any, does journaling have on teacher self-efficacy and burnout?,* was addressed by conducting a paired samples t-test. Descriptive statistics were identified for participants of the journaling exercise as well as the control group whose participants did not take part in the journaling exercise. These descriptive

statistics included the results from the subscale measurements for both groups. Included within the burnout measurement were the subscales of burnout, depersonalization, and personal achievement. Likewise, the self-efficacy scale included three moderately correlated factors that underwent a factor analysis process. Included within the self-efficacy measurement were the subscales of classroom management, instructional strategies, student engagement.

Table 4

Pre-post survey results

Category	Pretest (Participants)		Posttest (Participant)		Non-participant Posttest	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Classroom Management	7.83	0.84	7.72	0.55	6.85	1.39
Instructional Strategies	7.61	0.69	7.42	0.66	7.15	0.95
Student Engagement	7.42	0.73	7.36	0.66	6.95	1.24
Self-Efficacy	7.36	0.66	7.36	0.59	6.98	1.09
Burnout	4.81	1.38	3.84	1.06	3.89	1.86
Depersonalization	2.57	0.71	2.30	0.67	2.37	1.78
Personal Achievement	5.78	0.34	5.76	0.78	5.98	0.92

Paired samples *t* tests were used to compare the pre and post scores. For the classroom management subscale there was no significant difference $t(8) = .48$, $p = .66$. A p-value of .05 was utilized to determine significance. There was only a marginally significant difference in burnout when using a one tailed test $t(8) = 1.93$, $p = .045$. All other comparisons were not significant.

Table 5

Paired Samples Test Results Mean Differences

	Mean Differences		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	M	SD	Lower	Upper
Classroom Management	0.11	0.73	-0.45	0.67
Instructional Strategies	0.19	0.97	-0.55	0.94
Student Engagement	0.06	0.62	-0.42	0.53
Self-Efficacy	0.12	0.70	-0.42	0.66
Burnout	0.97*	1.50	-0.19	2.12
Depersonalization	0.27	0.69	-0.26	0.80
Personal Achievement	0.01	0.80	-0.60	0.63

Note. * significant at the $p < .05$ level (one-sided test).

Research Question Five

Research question five (What perceptions are evident among classroom teachers regarding the effects of mindfulness-based exercises such as journaling as a strategy for stress reduction?) was addressed by using the interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) method of inductive qualitative analysis. Reading and rereading of the transcripts yielded more than 36 codes in the transcripts which were repeated in multiple cases.

A summary of findings based on the qualitative data revealed that the practice of journaling has proved immensely helpful for the individuals involved as reflected in the experiences they shared. Development of tiny habits in everyday lives of the participants is one of the most helpful components. Likewise, the practice of writing daily as a routine has increased understanding of the self, hence journaling became a valuable tool for self-reflection and evaluation for many participants. Setting up daily goals and following them throughout the day is another helpful factor which has opened opportunities for accomplishments and self-auditing.

While reflecting on the daily routine, participants were able to know and understand more about themselves and the differences between daily targets and accomplishments. According to several participants, they felt happier and satisfied due to reduced levels of stress from participating in the journaling activities throughout the intervention period. Overall, each of the participants reported that they were motivated and committed to continue the routine of journaling in the future after the intervention period had ended.

Two differing strategies were considered to further delineate the experiences of the participants after coding and formation of superordinate themes. The chosen strategy for analyzing this data was to present these experiences by theme. Because the theme-wise presentation provides an overview of each theme covering all cases in one, as opposed to explaining each theme in seven various places throughout the document with several repetitions, the results in his section are presented by theme with supporting quotes provided by interviewees for each theme. In the next section, each superordinate theme is described by detailing its comprised subordinate themes and supporting quotes from the participants of the study. The following information will identify each major theme that was presented and will also provide participant data to support each theme.

Most Helpful Components

The participants were asked to share the most helpful components of the journaling and reflect on their practices. Several of the responses that were provided centered around the journaling not only keeping them on track, but also that the process brought positive changes in their routines. The figure below provides a visual representation of the relationship between helpful components and sustainability as indicated by participants.

Figure 3

Relationship on Helpful Components and Sustainability
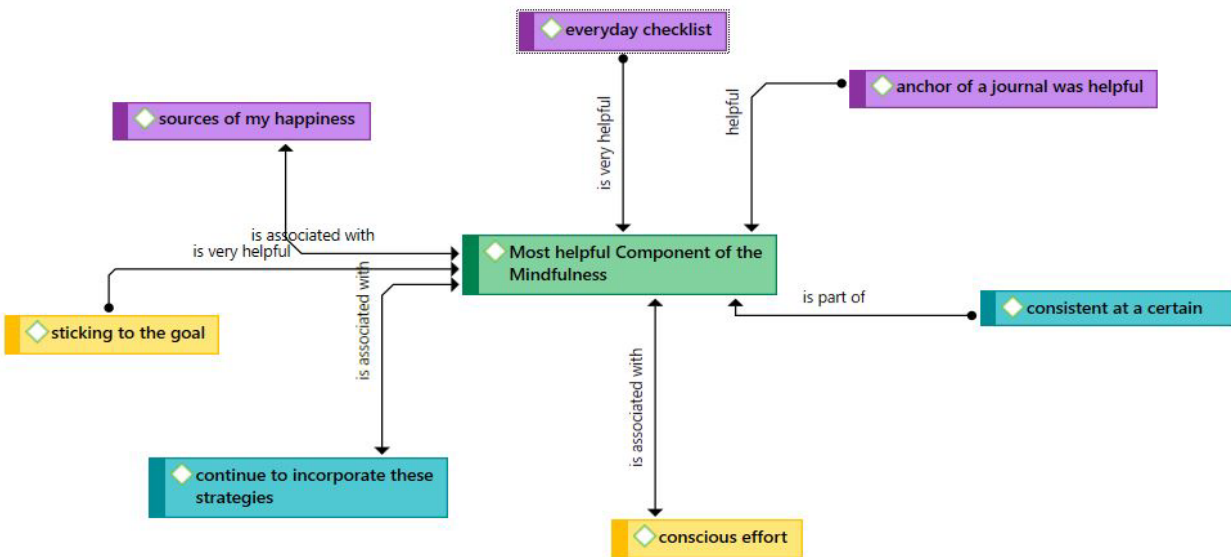
Most participants (n=9) were able to describe factors which proved to be very helpful during the process of journaling, such as journaling provided a consistent anchor for the day, provided an everyday checklist, and it helped them to stick to a goal. Three participants mentioned that the activities associated with the journaling exercise became sources of their happiness, and they would continue to incorporate the strategies that were adopted throughout the experience due to the positive aspect of mindfulness brought about by journaling each day. The process involved the development of tiny habits, for example waking up at a fixed time in the morning, writing down the experience and looking at the progress, or writing down any missed tasks. One participant noted, "I think the most helpful part was creating tiny habits because the tiny habits assisted with how I did things during the day." These habits apparently are perceived as small, but they seemingly brought greater change and impact to the lives of the participants. Managing

time allowed for reflections of personal routines and daily experiences, as well as assisted participants with the organization of their daily routines as indicated by one participant:

> I think the part that was helpful was when you had to write it down to kind of organize what is it, you're going to do first and then go to the missed aspect of it, because that's the part that I really use the most out of it, like specially in the morning, it kind of had my day organized.

Likewise, four participants indicated that one of the most helpful components was that the journaling process acted as an anchor for the structure and organization of daily habits. One participant reported that the visual aspect of journaling assisted with understanding their goals for the day and a plan for how to reach these goals. One participant shared:

> I guess I liked the whole setup of how it was planned out. And for me, it was very visual, which just helps me, I guess, being a visual learner. And I liked that with it being planned out that way, it made it more intentional.

> The newly developed routine was visible through different habits and activities which were even more motivational, provided a visual record of accomplishments, and provided a sense of achievement for participants. These factors jointly contributed to positive change in behavior and acted as stress relievers as indicated in another participant's response: "I will say that the biggest thing, just knowing boundaries that I needed to set and implement the things that relieve stress, was most helpful, being able to identify those and continue with those." Overall, each participant of the treatment group mentioned some aspects of goal setting and tracking their accomplishments via the journaling process. In total, nine participants reported at some point during the interview process that the journal in this aspect was "helpful."

Goal Setting and Tracking

Although goal setting was discussed as part of the helpful components, it was much emphasized and mentioned by several participants (n=8) at different points during the interviews therefore it emerged as another superordinate theme. Participants' comments support the idea that the journaling experience assisted them in setting attainable goals and provided a tracking system for self-accountability for the goals being set. One participant recalled, "It helped me start my day with a goal in mind and know the steps that I needed to take to ensure that I follow through with those." Another participant recalled the practice of identifying a recipient of the Happiness Trophy as a personal goal as indicated in the quote:

> The Happiness Trophy, I don't know if I would call it that, but yes, I'm good for trying to make sure to add some type of positivity or compliment into other people's day. That was one part that was a lot easier for me because it was something that I do anyway.

Four participants described the journaling experience as a beneficial method of organizing routines and managing personal and professional activities systematically with better time management. According to five participants, it also helped them to understand some components of themselves better in order to have honest reflections on their own thoughts, emotions, and actions throughout the day. One participant remembered, "The journaling really forced me to be honest about what I was feeling and how my day went. It wasn't always good, but it was always helpful to understand my own thoughts like that." This experience gradually increased their knowledge of self and helped to resolve specific issues that participants may not have acknowledged or been made aware of. Overall, the journal allowed participants the opportunity to set their own personal and

professional targets and track their progress toward these targets each day. This sense of awareness served as a catalyst for daily goal setting and tracking for these participants.

Most Challenging Components

There were components that were initially mentioned as challenges to completions of the daily journaling routine; however, in the same response, participants often contradicted their perspectives by also offering explanations of how these components were also helpful. One probable reason for this was their satisfaction and happiness because of the entire journaling experience, though several participants felt as if some parts of the process were tedious and time-consuming. This was evident in several participant comments. One participant explained, "Having to come back, well, remembering to come back at the end of the day, just kind of summing up how things went." Another participant shared similar sentiments regarding the time that each of the journaling sessions took and included reasoning for additional daily tasks that took away from the experience as stated in the quote below:

> The circle of life was kind of more difficult to do. I wouldn't say it was the least helpful because it has so many different components. When I think of the circle of life, like my life, all of the different components that were included in that everyday checklist is something I wasn't thinking about every day. I wasn't doing every single day, especially with the workload that I had, my kids and meetings activities, extracurricular activities. So, some of those things were kind of like hidden jewels.

In three cases, the participants considered the least helpful variables to be trying to recall moments they may have forgotten or remembering something irrelevant or insignificant. For instance, one participant reported:

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Sometimes at the end of the day, as I'm trying to figure out what I accomplished, I couldn't remember, but I know that I did something good today. I did a lot. But it had a way of getting to me if I couldn't think of anything to write down for certain parts of the journal even if I knew that I did them.

For two of the participants, it was somewhat of a challenge to complete the circle of life every day due to the involvement of multiple components involved in the journaling process. Four other participants shared similar sentiments about the combination of journaling tasks; as one teacher explained, "It was hard trying to set those daily goals every morning, and then trying to come back at night and think about them. That was really hard to fit into my day." Another participant recalled:

Most parts of the journaling were not really hard to do, but just tedious and took more time than I felt I had to give on days when I was exhausted from the day...and those are usually the days when I needed it the most.

Overall, most (n=6) of the participants in the journaling intervention found some component of the journal to be helpful for the reduction of stress. However, three participants were able to identify specific components of the journal itself that they felt added to their daily stress because of the tasks associated with the completion of the daily journaling activity, therefore considering the process of journaling challenging. When asked about the least helpful component, most participants merely mentioned the time and effort that each journal entry required for completion as the only negative part of the journaling process.

Elevated Levels of Stress

There are contrasting views on stress elevation as reflected in the shared experience by participants. They include the stress caused by a hectic work routine at home or office, stress before and after the start of the journal, and reduction in the stress

due to the adoption of journal practices. The overall management of stress seemed to become one of the overarching goals of the journaling process, although participants expressed their understanding of the journal being a reasonable strategy to reduce stress.

In one case, a participant discussed busier workdays as the culprit of elevated stress levels. She recalled:

Sometimes work is a lot, and home is a lot. When I think of all the things I have to do in a day, I feel even more stressed out. And humans shouldn't have to function like that every day or even most days.

Five of the participants revealed that at the start of the journaling they struggled to fit into the routine while defining small goals, working every day on the goals, writing them down, and looking back and forth to analyze whether they are progressing or not. With time, they got into the routine, developed tiny habits, and set themselves on track. One teacher explained how the journal was helpful during moments of heightened stress:

We were journaling throughout the course of the school year, and being a teacher, there are some very stressful moments throughout the school year. And so, kind of having that anchor of a journal was helpful for me. Because I could kind of just separate it for a second... because whenever I get really stressed, I get really overwhelmed, get really in the thick of it, kind of, and I forget to slow down and separate myself from it. And so, I felt like the journal helped me with that.

One participant remembered feelings of stress when trying to think of concepts related to negative emotions such as unpleasurable experiences throughout the day or conscious struggles, specifically when journaling during happier periods of time:

In the beginning it was hard for me to kind of figure out goals, like I don't know, like something unpleasurable or a conscious struggle. Those were becoming a

little bit more difficult when I was kind of thinking more about my happier self throughout the time and what I completed and what I accomplished.

In three cases, subordinate themes emerged regarding the added stress of noncompliance with the journaling. One participant stated, "I knew it was something that I needed to do and that kind of added more stress to the equation." and another recalled, "I just wanted to complete the journaling tasks correctly so I could see if it would really help me. I think I worried myself about it on days when I didn't quite feel up to doing it." On the other hand, another participant stated, "I would say that I didn't see a pattern of elevated stress" when asked if the journaling process contributed to moments of heightened stress. Another stated, "Not really. I think putting it on me to do was okay. Just like if I'm not doing this added stress for me, but not the journal itself. Just the fact that I felt like I wasn't keeping up the way I needed to keep up."

Although many of the participants were quite satisfied with the process and developed an appreciation for the experience, there were mentions of feeling increased stress or inability to fulfill each of the associated tasks. One participant responded, "It was hard trying to set those daily goals every morning, and then trying to come back at night and think about them. That was really hard to fit into my day." Likewise, another participant also revealed that committing to the set routine of every component may have caused stress as indicated in the following response:

A lot of times, I honestly found the journal to be stressful, trying to remember to get it done and finding time to get it done, just trying to make sure I was keeping up with it. So no, it didn't make me less stressed. It actually caused stress for me.

In addition, the recollection of six experiences indicated that the stress level of participants adjusted from initial higher levels and then lowered after settling in the routine, then again later increased due to the increased daily tasks, especially in instances

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when differences existed between the targets and the achievements. One participant reported, "At first, I was a little stressed about completing everything, but once I got into it, it wasn't such a difficult task like I thought it would be." Similarly, another participant added, "I went from stressing about the journal to getting it done, then back again to worrying that I wasn't doing it right and that was difficult for me." The sense of incomplete daily targets seemingly increased the stress levels of these participants, even though the intent was to decrease stress levels by allowing participants time to focus and reflect on daily goals and habits. One potential cause could be that participants were able to locate sources of happiness in the form of small habits which reduced stress, but these participants were still unable to find adequate methods of managing the time and effort required to complete the journal entries daily.

The data indicates that the experiences of the participants did not reveal a fixed level of stress for any of the participants. The levels of stress for participants continued to fluctuate depending on the component of the journaling activity that they were currently completing. Participants reported varying degrees of stress due to a variety of factors, the most prevalent of which was the increased pressure to manage their time and effort in completing all daily journaling tasks. Three participants described feelings of frustration at the beginning of the intervention period that leveled out once they adjusted to the routine of journaling daily. In two other cases, participants expressed elevated levels of stress when beginning the new journaling habits. However, twelve of the fifteen participants maintained a positive outlook about the journaling process and insisted that it was helpful in learning new strategies to manage time, despite the challenges with maintaining the journaling routine. These participants found it difficult to describe a time when they felt their stress levels may have been elevated.

Motivation

The stress factors and challenges brought about by the journaling routine may have widened the gap between targets and accomplishments. As such, five of the participants in the journaling intervention reported that they developed various strategies that helped to keep them motivated to maintain the routine and persist in a positive way. Although they were not sure of completing all daily targets, these participants managed to achieve the majority of the daily journaling components with a higher level of satisfaction. According to these participants, the act of journaling each day helped them to examine their routines and identify the areas where they were strengthened and the weaker areas as well. One participant noted, "Knowing that I wanted to help teachers find better ways to manage our lives and be our healthiest selves kept me consistent with the daily targets," while another participant recalled, "I just knew that I needed something, and it was worth a try if I wanted to find a stress reliever after going through everything I go through in a day."

The overall understanding by participants resulted in feelings of positivity due to the addition of small activities like sources of happiness and utilizing the journal as a tool of self-reflection. Despite some level of stress, participants were able to convince themselves to maintain the routine for the expectation of positive outcomes as shared by a participant:

> I really wanted to toss the journal. But then I say, you know what, I said I would do this, it's going to help me, so I'm going to get it done. So, I kind of looked at it like, hey, because I know what it's for, I'm going to go ahead and get this done.

The attitude, as demonstrated in the interview, is one outcome of the journal because three participants found the practices more helpful than attending mindfulness practices without journaling or not participating in any stress-reducing strategy at all. One

participant recalls another positive outlook toward the experience, "I think this strategy is really penciled in on just real self-care. Like, how and what am I doing for my happiness." Another participant reports the benefits of identifying patterns of behavior and the new habit of utilizing a daily checklist to stay on top of goals:

> Just putting in those simple checks or accountability checks into my life I was able to make a really big impact and help me manage my stress and kind of help me identify patterns and just be more cause conscious rather than focus on the effect of the stress.

Another participant recalled the reality of her own stress response when asked about strategies that helped her to persevere through the journaling process despite a stressful time in her life. She responded,

> Coping mechanisms, right? Like, we tend to get ourselves, myself, I'll speak for myself, like a flurry of emotions as a woman and to regulate that and understand what's real, what's factual, and then what's emotion? Emotions aren't facts. So, when I write and I see it, I know that this is a feeling, and it too shall pass.

In sum, several of the participants devised a variety of techniques that assisted them in remaining motivated to continue the habit and persevere in a positive manner throughout the process. Despite the fact that they were not confident in their ability to complete all daily objectives, the majority of participants were able to complete the majority of the daily journaling components with a significant degree of satisfaction by focusing on various motivating factors. Journaling assisted them in examining their existing routines and identifying the areas in which they display strengths, as well as weaknesses. These reflections allowed for a greater understanding of self as reported by a total of nine of the participants, and motivated them to maintain the journaling practice, even when they were met with challenges in completing the activities.

Behavioral Change

The participants shared examples of changes in their behavior due to journaling practices It is evident from the shared experiences that many participants observed changes in their behaviors and were able to learn more about themselves through self-reflection brought about by the journaling activities. The behavior change appeared to result from the participants' engagement in journaling practices. According to twelve of the participants, the journaling activity helped them to note daily practices and auditing of the habits they are trying to evolve or have developed. These participants developed an appreciation of awareness of daily stressors and their own personal stress responses as reflected in one participant's response below:

It made me more aware of things that I know bother me. So, it made me evaluate things that eliminated stress and things that brought on stress to kind of adjust how I should handle work, what things should I take on, or what things should I not take on.

It was also mentioned that maintaining the routine of writing subjective experiences and reflection on habits resulted in an increasing trend of self-reflection among participants. In two cases, participants report becoming more aware of daily activities because they acknowledged that they would be reflecting on their reactions, responses, and behaviors while journaling later. This sense of awareness was likely a catalyst for the commitment that these participants developed to the journaling activities. One participant shared,

Once I completed something, I thought about the journal, and what I was going to be writing in it, when I got to it. So, the more I did it, the more it allowed me to think about... like okay, I did do this goal. Okay, so how can I make sure that I do it the next day and the next day after?

Another participant recalls acknowledging changes in behaviors based on the routine of self-reflection incorporating mindfulness into the new daily routine.

> I'd say it altered my behavior in the morning, like I said, I got up and I was able to get that routine down. And with one of the things or two of them, like prayer and meditation; it was something I was doing anyway.

One participant recalled creating a goal within the journaling experience that contributed to positive changes among interpersonal skills, "And things that stick out in my mind, like one of mine was being an active listener. So, when my roommate tells me about her day, not being on my phone, and actually listening. I remember thinking about that." The participants were able to grasp an understanding of the intended purpose of the journaling intervention and mentioned that they intend to complete the exercises for their happiness and relief from stress. Six participants mentioned that the journal served as a helpful tool that provided opportunities for self-evaluation which is not normally practiced in their usual daily routines as evidenced by the following participant response:

> I believe it was a really good self-evaluation tool, and it opened my eyes to the things I need to work on. I was able to think about me for a change, so it was definitely an eye-opener; something that I never thought about before. And so, it allowed me to see clearly these little things that I can do to accomplish or get further along with myself, because at the end of the day, if I'm not good, I can't make sure everyone else is good. So, I want to make sure that I am completing it and being happy at the end of the day.

Three others attribute a more profound sense of clarity and mindfulness throughout the day when practicing journaling. Two participants found themselves recognizing the connection to the experience when completing the journaling in the morning, then again in the evening. Hence, creating new opportunities to set goals and

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gain clarity before starting the day, then returning to a mindset of self-reflection deemed itself a beneficial process as indicated by one participant:

> I think in the morning, it gave me clarity and like peace of God at the beginning of my day to start my day off and some sort of meditation mode before my day gets going. And then in the evening to reflect on something that I could have changed, behavior and attitude, where I lost it, or where it was a good day. I feel like the beginning was more meditational and then at the end of the day it was more of a reflection.

Benefits of Journaling

Though behavioral changes emerged as an ordinate theme, additional benefits to the journaling process were also reported by participants. These positive experiences are reflected in the figure below:

Figure 4

Purpose, Results, and Benefits of Journaling
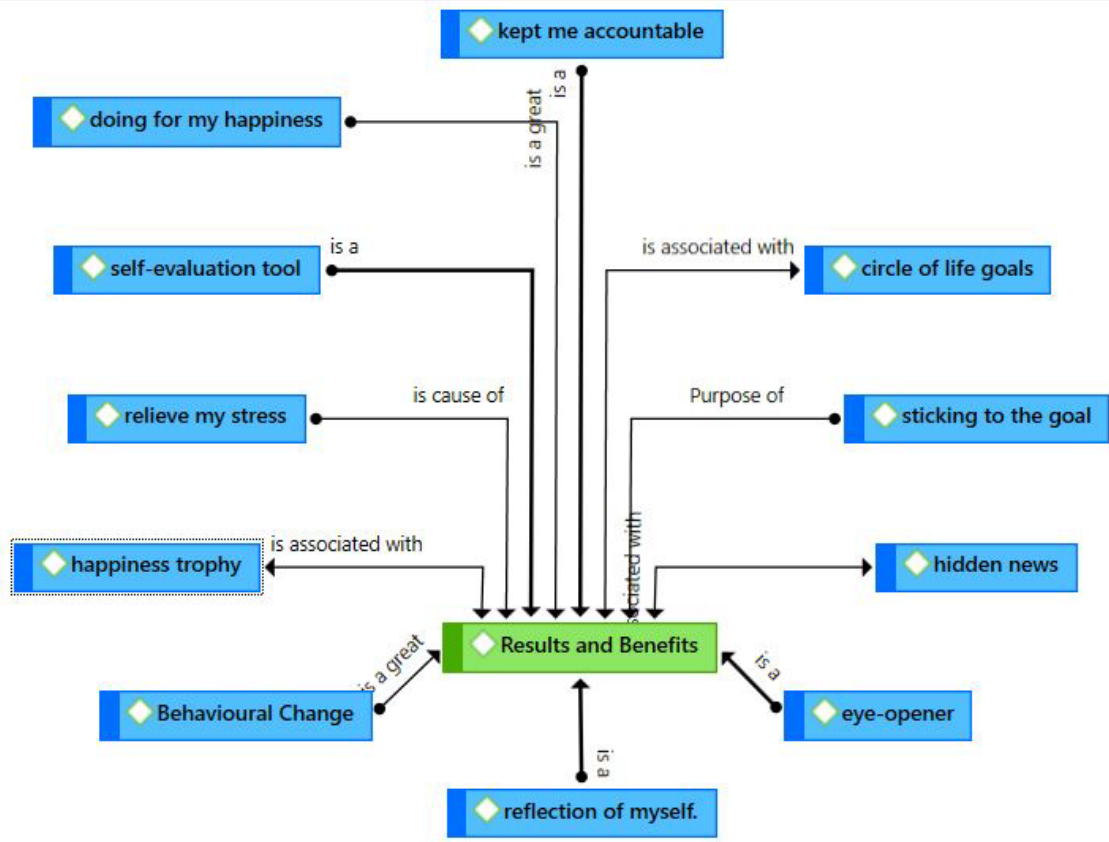
Four participants mentioned some aspects of the journal serving as a tool for accountability that allowed them to track emotions, self-reflect, and a focus on goal setting and overall self-care. Once participants identified strategies and motivating factors that helped them to overcome the challenges they faced with their new routines, the journaling experience kept them on track with their daily goals, held them accountable for targets they set, allowed moments for self-reflection, provided a purpose for self-awareness, and made participants aware of their accomplishments. Three participants

were also made aware of the ability to create systems for self-accountability in place in order to manage emotions as one participant expressed, "Just putting in those simple checks or accountability checks into my life made a really big impact and helped me to manage my stress and identify patterns and just focus more on the cause rather than the effect of the stress".

One component, the circle of life, was specifically mentioned by two participants as a direct benefit. One participant shared, "I like the organization of the circle of life. It forces you to think about things that I wouldn't otherwise take time out to even notice about my day. I just became more aware." Another stated, "The circle of life was tedious, but I think my favorite part because it allowed me to create goals about basically every part of my life. That became really important to me." To these participants, this component is perceived to be a systematically organized component of the process that proved helpful in the journaling process.

One participant detailed the benefits of journaling with a statement regarding the newfound ability to slow down and reflect on life itself in the following statement:

I've learned to just breathe. Like this time has been rapid even though I can't say we've done like a ton. It just felt like it went really fast. But it just reminded me to slow down and breathe. We only get one life here. And so, as a go, go, go type A person, I've just gotten time in this journal to take it easy and understand that this same day is going to be here tomorrow. It's been a really good reflection of myself.

Three participants developed a better understanding of everyday pressures and their own stress responses as they progressed through the intervention. While five participants reported experiencing increased clarity and awareness throughout the day, four others remembered an improved ability to recognize new opportunities for creating

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goals and obtain an understanding of self before beginning the day, then later return to a mindset of self-reflection.

Overall, the commonalities reflected by the individual journaling experiences indicate that most of the participants recognized adjustments in their habits and were able to learn more about themselves as a result of the journaling activities. The individuals' participation in journaling practices seemed to have resulted in this shift in their daily routines and awareness of their emotions. In summation, journaling served as a tool to assist participants with tracking performance toward daily goals and focusing on the habits they were seeking to establish or improve. Of all the changes in behavior mentioned, no negative changes were evident by participation in the journaling intervention.

Commitment to the Practices

Respondents expressed commitment and passion towards the continuity of journal practices. The apparent positive outcomes and improvement in the form of developing tiny habits seems to emerge as one reason to continue these practices. Participants reported the expectation of continuing with the journaling process due to its positive impact on their daily lives. One participant stated, "I am definitely going to keep doing this because I found that being able to recognize things that I was feeling and thinking without even being aware impacted my day in a positive way." Another had this to say when asked if she intends to continue with the journaling practices:

> I definitely do. Like I said, I believe it was a really good self-evaluation tool for myself. And it opened my eyes to the things I need to work on. And just thinking about me, so it was definitely an eye-opener, something that I never thought about before.

The repeated theme of continuation of the commitment to the journaling process was evident with another participant's response stating the desire to not only continue journaling, but to also improve within the methods of journaling.

I'll definitely continue and like, try to get more into it. Because like I said, I like the fact that I can kind of get up and do my day, and then reflect on, okay, what caused this, and then I can know in the future how to manage it better.

In sum, the expectation to continue the journaling practices was repeated by fourteen of the fifteen participants. The benefits of journaling as reported by the participants far outweighed the challenges that journaling presented. As participants began to recognize positive changes in how they began to shift their thoughts about stress and manage their emotions regarding daily tasks, they also began to recognize that their responses and reflections were helpful in many ways.

Challenges to the Continuation of Practices

Though many participants (*n=14*) of the journaling intervention expressed commitment and appreciation towards the continuity of journaling as a new daily habit, many (*n=9*) also expressed obstacles to continuing the practice in the future. Subordinate themes emerged from several responses regarding reasons for apprehension. The positive outcome and improvement in the form of developing tiny habits seem to emerge as the primary reason participants anticipate the continuation of journaling practices. In addition, the practices adopted by the participants impacted their everyday lives, which is also a strong motivational factor to continue journaling. They emphasized that practices would continue with an effort to adhere to the developed routine and maximum accomplishment of the daily targets. Four participants also mentioned the need for consistent habit building and other factors necessary to sustain everyday practices they learned throughout the journaling intervention. One reoccurring understanding is that

maintaining the routine is not simple and requires consistent effort for long-term benefits. As described in the figure below, several factors contribute to the sustainability of journal practices at the individual level, while other factors are attributed to the challenges of maintaining these behaviors.

Figure 5

Challenges and Necessary Actions to Sustain Everyday Routine
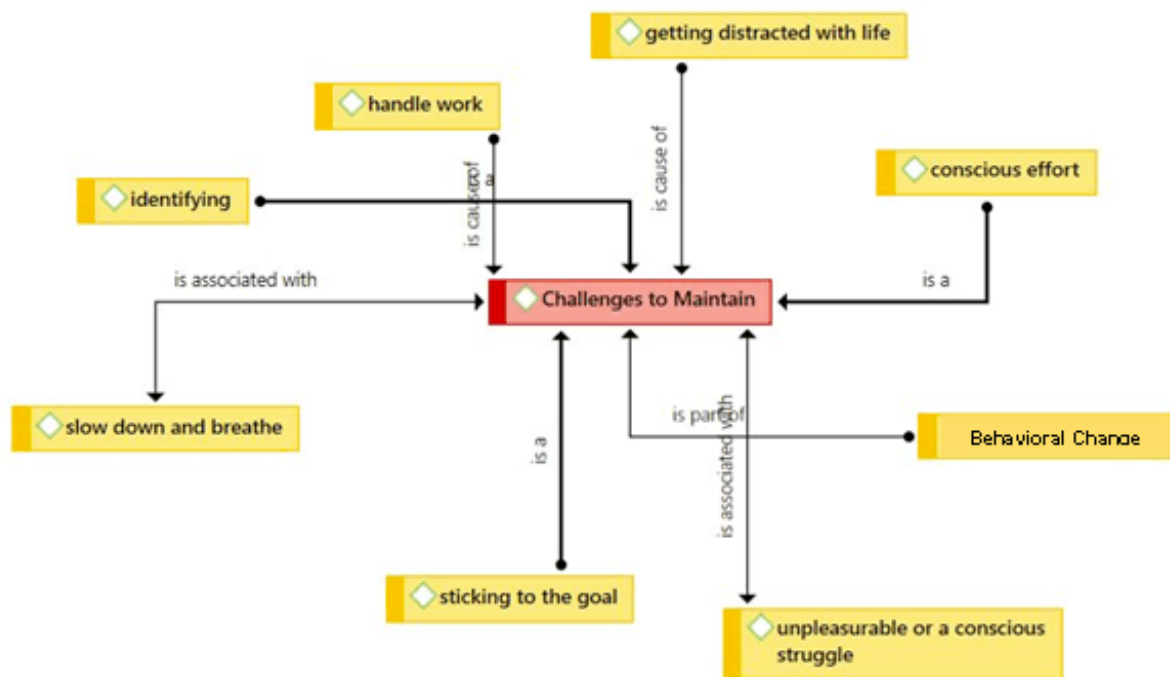
When considering the challenges associated with the continuation of daily journaling after the intervention period, many themes related to putting forth adequate conscious effort and sticking to the goal emerged. One factor that was mentioned repeatedly (*n=5*) is the challenge of time management when it comes to journaling. One participant summarized an understanding of these challenges by stating, "It's difficult to try to manage all the things that we do, not only being a teacher, but also being a mother and having so many other hats that we wear every day." Another mentioned, "It was

hard trying to set the daily goals every morning, and then trying to come back at night and think about them. That was really hard to fit into my day." Though participants found the journal to be useful, the necessary components of consistency and making the conscious effort to complete each target every day were indicated as one of the most prevalent challenges when it comes to maintaining the journaling practices.

Summary of Findings

The results of the qualitative data revealed that participants found the journaling intervention helpful for increasing mindfulness, organizing daily considerations, and provoking deep thoughts of challenges, goals, and pleasurable moments throughout the journaling experience. Though the journaling experience was a challenge in some ways, due to the nature and specificity of the various components involved in the daily journaling practices, the participants found the journal to have a positive impact overall. Furthermore, most respondents showed a strong commitment and enthusiasm for the continuation of journaling activities. As a result of the apparent altruistic motivations and progress in the form of building tiny habits, it appears one of the main reasons for continuing these behaviors is to realize the benefits of journaling practices. Of all the participants who took part in the journaling experience, the majority of participants ($n=14$) expressed an intention of continuing with some aspects of the journaling process as a result of the positive impact it has had on their daily lives.

The goal of this study was to determine if the incorporation of mindfulness-based interventions would impact the perceived stress levels of classroom teachers. This chapter included an overview of the research problem, operationalization of theoretical constructs, a description of the research population and sample, as well as the defined procedures for data collection and analysis. This chapter also addressed privacy and

ethical considerations, and research design limitations. Chapter V contains an analysis and discussion of the results presented in the previous chapter.

CHAPTER V:

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Classroom teachers have gradually become one of the human service employees of interest when considering the pervasive topic of stress and stress management. Due to the resultant implications of chronic stress among teachers, much research has been dedicated to the exploration of stress and burnout of today's educators. Though many teachers find themselves overwhelmed with tasks of daily functioning on the job, most teachers are able to cope with such pressures. However, burnout may accompany these feelings of chronic stress from teachers who have not successfully identified ways to cope (Jennett et al., 2003). This chapter provides a thorough examination of the findings of the current study, as well as its implications and future study recommendations.

Summary

The findings of this investigation revealed that teachers found certain aspects of the journaling intervention helpful in various ways. For instance, teachers found that by allowing themselves the opportunity to reflect on certain aspects of their lives in small habitual moments, they were able to become more mindful, better organize daily considerations, and think more deeply about challenges, goals, and pleasurable moments throughout the journaling experience. The following section highlights each of the findings from the study and expounds upon relevant existing research.

Research Question 1

While exploring the possibility of a relationship between self-efficacy and burnout among classroom teachers, several alternative findings came to light. First, the results indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship between the subscales of personal achievement and self-efficacy among the participants. The data also shows that there is a significant relationship between depersonalization and burnout. In addition,

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a statistically significant relationship is evident between the subscales of classroom management and instructional practices.

According to the hypothesis proposed by Bandura (1994), individuals who have a low sense of self-efficacy are more likely to engage in negative thinking and perceive the requirements of a task as a threat rather than a challenge to overcome. Consequently, these individuals develop low expectations for themselves (Bandura, 1994). Similarly, Yusef (2011) showed in one investigation that self-efficacy had a direct impact on the achievements of the participants, whereas achievement motivation and self-learning strategies had an indirect but equivalent impact on those individuals' accomplishments. In addition, the findings of Yusef's (2011) study demonstrated that a person's perception of their own level of self-efficacy served as a moderating factor in the connection between achievement motivation and learning strategies.

Burnout is a condition that manifests itself in three dimensions to include extreme emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a weakened sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 1996). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the result of the analysis indicated a significant relationship between the burnout total and the depersonalization subscale among participants. Teachers who scored higher on the depersonalization subscale had higher levels of burnout.

In terms of teacher self-efficacy, three subscale dimensions were measured in this investigation. Of the three subscales, classroom management and instructional practices were significantly related among the teachers surveyed. Foundational research on self-efficacy supports the idea that teachers who have stronger belief in their ability to take on new challenges are more inclined to try new instructional strategies to improve the quality of learning for their students (Berman, et.al., 1977; Guskey, 1984; Stein & Wang, 1988). According to Girardet & Berger (2017), a correlation between teachers' overall

pedagogical beliefs and their instructional practices is evident in many studies. Teachers' self-beliefs in this regard are often referred to as self-efficacy. Understanding how self-efficacy impacts teacher performance may help researchers determine if opportunities for change among educators are considered challenges or threats (Gregoire, 2003; Lu & Ishak, 2022). Self-efficacy, specifically among teachers, is defined as the "teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998, p. 233). Self-efficacy must be examined more closely because it is critical to teachers' perceptions of change (Gregoire, 2003).

Furthermore, positive student and teacher behaviors, as well as an improved educational system, have all been linked to teachers' perceptions of their own abilities in the classroom (Caprara, et al., 2006; McLean et al., 2019; Soodak & Podell, 1993). According to McLean et al. (2019), teachers' beliefs in their own abilities to manage the classroom and implement effective teaching methods may be linked to their level of satisfaction with their own student-teaching efforts. In addition, teachers who feel more confident in their own abilities are more inclined to believe that their future efforts will be successful (McLean et al., 2019). These teachers subsequently establish higher expectations for themselves, which increases the possibility that they will use the knowledge and skills they have acquired by means of training and professional development (McLean et al., 2019).

The crucial role of teacher self-efficacy has been consistently supported by research, demonstrating the variable's correlation with a number of outcomes for both teachers and students. For instance, research reveals that instructors who have higher levels of self-efficacy use better educational and classroom management strategies (Gregoire, 2003; Lu & Ishak, 2022). Furthermore, it is likely that when students are

actively engaged in the learning, teachers report fewer instances of disruptive conduct and are more adept to focus on instructional practices and the quality of their own teaching.

Research Question 2

The results of the current investigation indicated that there were no statistically significant differences among the ethnic categories on the TSES score; however, teachers who identified as Black or African American had the highest self-efficacy when compared to the other groups. It is imperative to consider the demographic composition of the campuses that were included in this study. Study participants were derived from four campuses in the same school district, and each of the campuses had similar demographics. In each of the campuses included in the study, over 75% of the student body were students of color.

It is possible that African American teachers are more equipped to manage the behaviors and educational experiences of minority students. In a study by Kunemond et al. (2020), teachers who had a greater racial disparity between their students and themselves reported lower levels of classroom management self-efficacy. These teachers typically operated with a lack of self-efficacy in their capacity to manage behavior, regulate students following classroom expectations, or handle disruptions in their classrooms. Likewise, Geerlings et al. (2018) investigated teachers' perceptions of their own effectiveness with students from both majority and minority groups. Conclusions revealed that teachers' perceptions of their own effectiveness were lower when working with students from ethnic minorities compared to white students, and that this difference was magnified in classrooms with smaller numbers of students from ethnic minority groups (Geerlings et al., 2018).

Additionally, conflicting cultural norms is a proposed explanation for the miscommunication, misunderstanding, and divergent expectations among students and teachers in racially mismatched classrooms (Kesner, 2000; Thijs, 2017). White teachers, in particular, tend to display a distinct propensity to expect children to conform to Eurocentric, middle-class behavioral norms and may also perceive some communication from minority students as inappropriate (Gay, 2002; Kunemond et al., 2020). These miscommunications can exacerbate stress and mistrust, furthering the negative aspects of the teacher-student relationship.

To further hypothesize the occurrence of higher levels of self-efficacy among African American teachers, researchers must take a closer look at inequity in educational environments for both students and teachers of all ethnic categories. Research on achievement gaps among U.S. students indicates that the level of needs is different for African American students due to societal expectations, bias, and inequities in funding and instruction (Smedley, 2001; Weathers & Sosina, 2022; Weir, 2022). Studies also show that African American teachers may be able to empathize with African American students and appear more equipped to address the needs of students of color (McKinney et al. 2020; Warren, 2015).

An inequitable disparity in funding exists between schools with large populations of minority students when compared to those with a majority of white students (Smedley, 2001; Weathers & Sosina, 2022). Studies have shown that schools with a disproportionate number of low-income and minority children also receive less financing per student than similar schools in the same district, even when overall funding levels are lower for disadvantaged urban districts compared to their suburban counterparts (Smedley, 2001; Weathers & Sosina, 2022). It is possible that minority teachers are more often predisposed to the inequities of resources that they must face in many of the

campuses that serve minority students, thus are able to manage this scarcity more efficiently. Culturally responsive instruction ignites another element of social emotional learning that African American teachers may be more comfortable with than their white counterparts (Warren, 2015). Still, the existence of high-stress environments creates a need for teachers to cope, regardless of ethnic categories.

Research Question 3

The results of the MBI analysis indicate that there were statistically significant differences in the burnout total by race. A statistically significant difference in burnout levels between those who identified as Black or African American and the group who identified as other was evident. Participants who identified as other race/ethnicity opted not to identify with the other groups listed. Participants who identified as other race/ethnicity reported lower levels of burnout symptoms than those who identified as Black or African American.

To further explain the implications of these results, researchers have relied on empirical evidence from previous literature. In a study by Gewertz (2019), a major theme that emerged echoes what African American teachers referred to as an "invisible tax" on educators of color. One example, Gewertz (2019) explains, is when a Black teacher goes above and beyond for a student because she understands a specific challenge that a Black student is facing. To this point, African American teachers reported that they should be compensated for the time, effort, and expertise that is utilized in such cases (Gewertz, 2019). The results of this investigation also indicated that teachers reported employment conditions where their hairstyles or clothing were frowned upon, or where they were not allowed to be culturally appropriate for their students. African American teachers described happenstances where their ideas were rejected, yet similar ideas were appreciated when presented by a White colleague (Gewertz, 2019). It is possible that

these experiences in the workplace negatively influence the stress levels of African American teachers, thus impacting levels of burnout for this particular group of educators.

According to 2015 American Community Survey data, nearly half of the students in U.S. schools are persons of color, yet fewer than a quarter of teachers are non-White educators (Gershenson, et al., 2021). Researchers discovered evidence that this demographic mismatch can contribute to academic inequity (Grissom, et al., 2015). According to one study, when allocated to a teacher of their race, both Black and White students performed substantially better. However, because white students are significantly more likely to have same-race teachers, they benefit from this phenomenon disproportionately (Dee, 2004; Redding, 2019). Many studies have demonstrated that teachers of color provide better academic outcomes for children of color in terms of standardized test scores, attendance, contemporaneous course performance, and suspensions (Gershenson, et al., 2021).

Despite the fact that all teachers feel stress, teachers of color from minoritized groups frequently face specific stresses. Common instances include being requested to translate for non-English-speaking parents and serving as the disciplinarian for students with behavioral issues (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Dixon et al., 2019). Also, problematic students may be brought in frequently from different classes, thus minority teachers' time is divided between working with their own students, students from other teachers' classrooms, and attending to their other duties despite disruptions. Thus, it is possible that African American teachers are conditioned to high levels of stress in general, therefore creating normalcy in navigating the symptoms of burnout by simply accepting it as commonplace in their daily lives. The aforementioned hypotheses could be critical contributing factors to explain why African American teachers scored higher burnout

levels than their White counterparts yet had higher self-efficacy than participants in other ethnic categories.

Research Question 4

Journaling is a powerful tool for creating rehabilitative and transformative qualities that we all share with the world (Myers, 2010). According to a summary of findings derived from the qualitative data of this investigation, journaling has proven to be extraordinarily beneficial for the participating teachers, as evidenced by their shared experiences. The formation of small habits in the participants' daily lives is one of the most beneficial components to journaling, according to Ribeiro (2018b). Similarly, the regular practice of writing raised the participants' self-awareness, so the journaling practices became a great tool for self-reflection and evaluation for many participants. Setting daily objectives and adhering to them throughout the day was an additional component that facilitated accomplishments and self-evaluation. Several participants reported feeling happier and more fulfilled as a result of their reduced stress levels after participating in journaling activities throughout the intervention period. After the intervention period concluded, each participant reported feeling motivated and committed to continue the journaling routine in the future.

A compilation of research reveals that positive thought patterns can be developed by practicing gratitude, recognizing, and appreciating happy moments, and engaging in random acts of kindness in an individual's daily life (Divoll & Ribeiro, 2021, 2022; Ribeiro & Divoll, 2020). Therefore, the use of journals was motivated by the search for an approach that would be more in tune with mindfulness as a way of being and knowing and that would provide more insight into the kinds of learning that may occur in the context of a mindfulness intervention (Crawford et al., 2021). This method appears

especially appropriate given that mindfulness is mostly acquired through engaging in its practice (Feldman & Kuyken, 2019).

Existing evidence suggests a direct relationship exists between stress and teacher performance and attitudes. The operationalization of mindfulness and its accompanying practices have been utilized effectively with diverse adult clinical populations to treat a variety of disorders including depression, anxiety, stress, and pain-related health problems (Feldman & Kuyken, 2019). The participants of this study reported many similar benefits to completing the daily journaling activity, in addition to improved organization, increased awareness, and self-reflection of daily achievements.

Achor (2013) suggests that teachers with a more optimistic outlook may experience less stress because they are better able to focus on the positives in their lives, including their own. In addition, Lambert et al. (2006) hypothesize that teachers who face more demands in the classroom are more likely to experience burnout, have more children with behavioral problems, and are contemplating resignation (McCarthy et al., 2010, McCarthy et al., 2015). The impeding nature of teachers' responses to student misbehavior and stress levels makes the need to understand the teachers' perspectives even more apparent. The findings of this study suggest that the journaling intervention provided the participants with the opportunity to organize their thoughts, analyze their emotions with an authentic voice, and self-reflect on their days.

Research Question 5

Descriptive statistics were obtained for journaling exercise participants as well as the control group, whose individuals did not participate in the journaling exercise. In order to address inquiries regarding the effects of journaling on teacher self-efficacy and burnout, the descriptive statistics for each subscale were measured and compared. The findings of the subscale measurements for both groups were incorporated in these

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descriptive statistics. The burnout subscales of burnout, depersonalization, and personal achievement were all included in the burnout measurement. Similarly, the self-efficacy measure was comprised of three moderately associated variables that were subjected to factor analysis. The subscales of classroom management, instructional tactics, and student involvement were all included in the self-efficacy measurement.

Upon analyzing this data, a few conjectures were considered to explain these results. First, the timing of the intervention is a critical factor when considering the implications of the study results. The COVID-19 pandemic was just beginning and was not nearly at its worst when the intervention began. When the initial survey responses were submitted, teachers were in the midst of a "regular" academic year. However, schools had transitioned from fully functioning brick and mortar institutions, to completely shut down, to virtual learning platforms in just a matter of weeks once the pandemic began to proliferate throughout the nation. The epidemic unexpectedly exacerbated the uncertainty, stress, confusion, and workload, even though the typical school year is already demanding for teachers. In essence, teachers were likely endeavoring to adjust to the new circumstances at the onset of the journaling intervention and throughout the remaining 6-week journaling period. This could have impacted the levels of stress that teachers were facing as well as their perceptions of self-efficacy.

In addition, the journaling intervention lasted a period of six weeks. This shortened time frame was likely not substantial enough amount of time to render many changes in stress levels nor self-efficacy among participants. Despite the limitations in the study design, timing, or pacing of the intervention, the results of the investigation illustrated that journaling proved helpful to classroom teachers in a variety of ways.

Research Design Limitations

According to Creswell (2002), "Limitations are potential weaknesses or problems within the study that are identified by the researcher" (p. 253). This study presents some limitations. First, the data collection and analysis process, though meticulous, could be considered subjective. Furthermore, if the study is repeated the results cannot be stabilized due to the subjective scoring processes of the written data from constructive response interview questions. This could cause inconsistency in the outcomes of the study.

One of the main challenges of the study was the ability to regulate the collection and analysis of the data. Because the intervention was scheduled to begin during the initial stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, time and resources were also a challenge to this process and several aspects of the original methodology of the study had to be adjusted, such as the requirement for participants to meet for training sessions to check in periodically with the researcher regarding intervention practices. A third challenge was that the participants did not always have a clear understanding of the data necessary to complete the study, nor their individual roles in the process. This led to several misconceptions about the requirements. For example, a total of 15 participants assigned to the treatment group responded to the post-survey, however only seven of the original 16 participants from the control group responded to the post-survey.

One additional limitation of the study is the lack of multiple and/or in-depth data resources. Most of the collected data was derived from the self-reported opinions and personal accounts of teachers. The comparative aspect of the study also led to a lack of diversity in the population of the study participants and a smaller sample size than desired for a study of its kind. Also, the fact that the study was limited in the number of pilot sites for the intervention program may have impacted its results. Finally, the study exhibits certain inherent limitations due to it being one of the first of its kind. Despite its

limitations, the results of this study provide a means to guide future stress coping and stress management practices in public education.

Implications

As a result of educational reform, financial implications for school districts, as well as potential impacts on the quality of educational services as a result of stress and turnover, have raised the question of whether elements of positive organizational psychology may be predictive of teachers' satisfaction, commitment, and intention to leave. If more teacher affect may be predicted by greater positivity, there are likely to be additional advantages that go beyond the focus of this research. Qualitative data determined several commonalities in teacher perceptions in regard to stress factors, staff well-being, and self-care. Multiple resiliency factors were also evident, based upon participant responses. All of the interviewees expressed some component related to the growth and achievement of their students as the most valuable part of their duties that offers the most job satisfaction, and respondents expressed that acknowledgement by their administrators would benefit them more than any other incentives that intend to promote increased job performance.

One significant understanding that is evident in this study is the perception of teachers indicates that both academic and behavioral performance of students is severely impacted by high levels of teacher stress. Additionally, conclusive evidence suggests a need for educational researchers to shift focus to certain identifiable factors for measuring resiliency in educators (Gray et al., 2017). Overall, emotional exhaustion was the most highly discussed dimension of burnout, and reduced personal accomplishment was mentioned in most interviews. Themes associated with depersonalization were the only constructs not mentioned by any of the participants, which may have significant implications for possible future areas of research.

The data from the correlation indicates that there were statistically significant differences among ethnic groups and when comparing the subscale variables from the survey. In comparison, the qualitative data suggested that most of the participants regarded the journaling intervention as beneficial for improving mindfulness, structuring daily concerns, and eliciting deep reflections on obstacles, objectives, and joyful moments throughout the journaling experience. Empirical evidence also supports the use of journaling with older adults as a preparatory method, purposeful activity, or occupation-based intervention to improve health outcomes (Brady & Sky, 2003; de Moor et al., 2002; Morgan et al., 2008)

When stress is persistent and left unresolved, it may cause individuals, teams, or entire organizations to focus on negative aspects of education. Prior research has also indicated a need to concentrate on positive components of education that can help to mitigate the effects of teacher stress, particularly the links between personal accomplishments and emotional exhaustion (Corbin, et al., 2019).

Participants of this investigation were able to verbalize the benefits and challenges of the journaling process though self-reported indicators which intended to measure burnout and self-efficacy among teachers utilizing a subset of characteristics within each construct. The results appeared inconsistent among the participants, which is congruent to other studies that focus on the use of interventions to reduce stress. However, a considerable number of previous studies lend themselves to the domain of positive psychology and have indicated that positive psychology improves personal health, social connections, work, income, lifespan, and societal happiness (Donaldson et al., 2011).

According to Parnell (2005), the ultimate purpose of journaling is to locate the center of one's emotional equilibrium and to discover methods for regaining balance

when an individual is presented with emotional challenges. By dedicating oneself to this "growth process," individuals may start building the self-awareness necessary to establish and sustain healthy emotional and spiritual stability (Crawford et al., 2021). While journaling may help some people become more in tune with their feelings and thoughts, allowing them to better identify and address periods of emotional and spiritual discord, the process also provides a beneficial opportunity to amplify the voices of the more introspective aspects of oneself (Hubbs & Brand, 2005).

When considering the implications of the results, it is important to emphasize the focus of this study which was to examine the effects of the mindfulness-based journaling intervention and its perceived impact on the reduction of stress. This focal point of the study is important because no prior evidence exists that this type of intervention has been used to reduce stress, but has proven to successfully increase mindfulness, decrease anxiety, and treat depressive symptoms (Krpan et al., 2013). This study is one of the first of its kind, in that the intention was to bridge the gap of knowledge between the effects of several constructs, such as happiness, mindfulness, self-awareness, and personal achievement, and its connection to burnout, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion among teachers. All of these components, when coupled with the idea of building psychological capital, were then considered to explore what relationship, if any, these collective constructs would have on the perceived stress levels of classroom teachers. These benefits have specifically been connected to the reduction of stress.

Mitigating the effects of stress of the classroom requires several approaches according to Divoll and Ribeiro (2021, 2022). Among these suggested strategies, teachers should increase their understanding of student development, the brain, and stress, focus on what is within their control, break down daily tasks into manageable chunks, practice gratitude, set time aside for social interactions, and cultivate a positive mindset (Divoll &

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Ribeiro, 2021, 2022; Ribeiro & Divoll, 2020). Likewise, Kokkinos (2007) suggests that to reduce teachers' use of maladaptive or dysfunctional coping mechanisms, it may be beneficial to raise teachers' knowledge of the process of burnout, provide time for reflection on personal characteristics such as coping resources, and explore alternative coping strategies. In fact, empirical studies have shown a negative relationship between psychological capital and stress as well as burnout (Cheung, 2011; Pu et al., 2017).

According to the findings of this systematic review and meta-analysis, the implementation of such interventions may be a feasible technique for inducing significant improvements in various burnout symptoms. These findings may be significant for classroom teachers, more specifically given the exponential increase in reported stress levels which have been amplified among educators since the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, implementing these kinds of interventions across campuses is likely to reduce burnout, increase psychological capital, and improve overall well-being, compassion for oneself, colleagues, and students.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Indeed, past research has indicated that under similar environments, individuals are more likely to "flourish" by experiencing increased positive emotions and life satisfaction (Basson & Rothmann, 2018; Froh et al., 2008; Froh et al., 2009). Longer-term interventions should be investigated in the future to see whether these changes lead to decreased levels of burnout. When developing and implementing teacher and school staff wellness programs, it is critical to collect data on employee wellbeing before, during, and after program implementation (Lever et al., 2017). It is also plausible that teachers who participated in the journaling activity experienced such a difficult period in their personal development, transitioning in teaching modes, and increased workload due to the intervention occurring at the brink of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Survey information was also collected during a racially sensitive era in the U.S. due to national coverage of several reported racial discriminatory incidents occurring in close sequence. Thus, the timing of the evaluations in this study may have had a significant impact on the results. Due to the existence of a racially charged environment during this time, the stress levels of Black teachers who participated in the study may have increased. This may have influenced the survey data regarding ethnicity and the relationship between race/ethnicity, self-efficacy, and burnout. Future studies should examine teacher stress and burnout at different times during the school year to identify if any trends or patterns are evident based on additional timing factors.

Another consideration revealed throughout this research was because actual usage rates of the journaling activities were elusive and difficult to track, it was improbable to define how much or how little time and effort was put forth by each of the participants. This leads to several implications to add to the findings. Although not addressed in this research, it is possible that individuals started the journaling process with excitement but lost interest or were fatigued over time. It is also possible that participants began slowly, completing the exercises less frequently, then more increasingly after adjusting to the new habit of daily journaling. Given the positive results of this study, future research should focus on characteristics that influence adherence to journaling interventions and ways to enhance the experiences of the participants as to encourage perseverance throughout the intervention period.

The role of the classroom teacher is one that typically requires collaboration with others working within a team. Consequently, future studies might benefit from examining the influence of team building, management structures, and performance of the individual, team, and organization in regard to the reduction of stress. Individual variables, such as personality traits or resiliency, might potentially have an

interconnecting influence on how classroom teachers manage stress, react to burnout, process feelings of depersonalization, and build a positive sense of self-efficacy. This begs the issue of whether other actions, emotions, or effects of teachers may also be contributing to teacher burnout, and the implications of methods to prevent such outcomes.

Further research may also involve exploring the relationships of teacher stress when paired with physical fitness levels, diet, and mental health. Researchers should examine the connection or influence on other desirable outcomes within education that were beyond the scope of this study. Furthermore, collaboration among teachers and their peers is also often limited, leaving teachers isolated from their coworkers for less than 5% of their workday (Scholastic & the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012). Thus, researchers might also aim to investigate team cohesiveness and collaboration, leader-member exchanges, and culture/climate as predictors or outcomes of burnout, taking into account the structure and organization of specific districts or campuses.

Conclusion

The findings of this research emphasize the complexities related to occupational stress among classroom teachers. Evidence suggests that identifying emotions reduces their intensity; thus, a sense of relief is evident when positive emotions become tangible and visible (Balderas et al., 2023; Lepore & Smith 2002). According to Smyth et al., (2018), when emotions leave one's mind and enter the world in a contained, self-regulated approach, those who journal may be able to better identify and manage these emotions. According to this understanding, the act of journaling may have practical value as a means of addressing mental distress, specifically heightened anxiety symptoms, and other facets of overall well-being in the context of general medical patients (Smyth, et al., 2018). This aligns with and expands upon previous studies regarding positive writing

interventions as a means of enhancing various facets of health and overall wellness. In essence, when an individual's inner expressions are given the opportunity to become perceptible to others, they are no longer confined to one's thoughts but rather manifested in the external world, providing a method for coping.

Studies on journaling interventions have suggested that journaling can impact levels of mindfulness, thus leading to a reduction of stress, increase happiness levels, improve measures of burnout, and treat depression (McGinness et al., 2022; Smyth et al., 2018). Regardless of the journaling technique employed in the mindfulness intervention, a significant body of research indicates that individuals who practice mindfulness report higher levels of positive well-being and lower levels of depressive symptoms than a control group (Bartlett et al., 2019; McGinness et al., 2022). Prior research also suggests that gratitude journaling, specifically, was employed in many mindfulness therapies (Fredrickson, 2010). Much of this may be related to the fact that writing is a highly concentrated activity that requires concentration at a slower pace than simply thinking.

When analyzing the significance of the findings of the current study, it is imperative to note that the purpose of this research was to investigate the effects of the mindfulness-based journaling intervention and its perceived influence on stress reduction. This area of focus is significant since there is little prior evidence that this type of intervention has been used to reduce stress in classroom teachers, though it has been shown to effectively promote mindfulness, decrease anxiety, and treat depressive symptoms. This was one of the first studies of its type, with the goal of bridging the knowledge gap between the impacts of numerous dimensions, such as happiness, mindfulness, self-awareness, and personal achievement, and their relationship to burnout, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion. These components, when combined with

the concept of psychological capital, were then analyzed to see what effect, if any, these collective constructs would have on classroom teachers' reported stress levels.

The advantages to adequate levels of psychological capital have been directly linked to stress reduction (Avey et al., 2011; Aybas & Acar, 2017; Krasikova et al., 2015; Rabenu et al., 2016). In fact, prior research has shown a negative relationship between psychological capital and stress, as well as burnout, as referenced throughout this study. Research also indicates that when teachers suffer from high stress levels, burnout, or lower levels of psychological capital, it either directly or indirectly impacts student achievement (Beer & Beer, 1992; Geving, 2007; McCarthy, 2019; Zhang & Sapp, 2008). A summation of prior research also suggests that teacher stress may also lead to burnout due to stressful work environment, which can subsequently result in physical absence from the classroom (Belcastro & Gold, 1983; Embse et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007), affecting student performance. Burnout due to stress impacts teachers' psychological capacity to focus, remain on task, and respond to classroom occurrences even while they are present in the classroom (Belcastro & Gold, 1983; Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Huberman et al., 1993; Lamude et al., 1992; McCarthy et al., 2015). This may decrease teachers' levels of efficacy leading to a progressive decrease in the use of quality instructional practices, thus, negatively affecting student performance (Sutton et al., 2009; Travers & Cooper, 1993). Furthermore, teacher commitment is lowered as a result of stress connected to time demands resulting from increased responsibilities and decreasing autonomy (Kidger et al., 2016).

One major detriment of teachers suffering from high stress levels is the effect that it has on teacher interactions, specifically with their students. Teacher-student interactions are critical for teachers, particularly when these behaviors jeopardize interpersonal connections in the classroom (de Ruiter et al., 2019). This interpersonal

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element requires increased attention in educational policy and teacher programs, which have hitherto concentrated on strengthening content knowledge and instructional methodologies (Davis, 2006).

Emotions govern the thoughts and actions of teachers; thus, teachers must be mindful of classroom events that might affect their emotional well-being (Cross & Hong, 2012). Teachers who work on their own may not be able to have a thorough grasp of reflective strategies, due to the fact that their days are often filled with continuous activity and little opportunity for reflection (Fullan as quoted in Chang & Davis, 2009). One of the most prevalent challenges that school and district leaders must address regarding the emotional health of teachers is to offer direction on how to conduct critical emotional reflection (Cross & Hong, 2012; Zembylas et al., 2011).

Many schools and school systems have limited programs to address employee wellbeing, and school personnel may only have access to professional development and basic resources. Therefore, it has been made apparent that teachers are directly influenced by work-related stress, but they frequently lack the programs, resources, and skills required to assist their management of stress and to promote overall wellbeing.

Overall, teaching is an emotional experience that demands an abundance of multifarious skills. Daily classroom activities with students may generate feelings of pleasure, self-confidence, and connection for teachers (de Ruiter et al., 2019). However, when faced with the overt challenges of today's classroom, teachers must be provided with the necessary tools and strategies to aid them in appropriately managing stress to avoid burnout. Educational leaders and policymakers are compelled throughout this research to provide teachers with appropriate and effective methods of managing the stressors that accompany the career; otherwise, the constant flux of departing teachers will continue to negatively impact our schools, districts, and nation as a whole. Utilizing

validated measures of wellbeing to evaluate staff requirements, define the target demographics for programs, and track changes in wellness after participation in the programs may assist with organizational program implementation.

Results from this meta-analysis suggest that implementing such strategies among classroom teachers is a potentially viable strategy for bringing about substantial improvements in a range of burnout symptoms. Given the exponential rise in reported stress levels among educators since the COVID-19 pandemic, these findings might have important implications for the classroom. Therefore, implementing such interventions in schools across the nation is likely to result in a decrease in teacher burnout, increase psychological capital, and enhance well-being and compassion for students and colleagues. The information presented in this study could provide educational leaders and policymakers with relevant insight that would aid them in implementing stress reduction programs to improve teachers' occupational health and emotional wellbeing in the workplace, thus increasing student achievement across the nation.

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