Elementary Title I Teachers Perception of Stress, Burnout and the Impact on Retention

Kelly Thompson
Concordia University - Portland

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Kelly Michele Thompson

CANDIDATE FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Donna Graham, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee
John Mendes Ed.D., Content Specialist
Michael Hollis Ph.D., Content Specialist

ACCEPTED BY
Joe Mannion, Ed.D.
Provost, Concordia University, Portland

Sheryl Reinisch, Ed.D.
Dean, College of Education, Concordia University, Portland

Marty Bullis, Ph.D.
Director of Doctoral Studies, Concordia University, Portland
Elementary Teachers at Title I Schools Perceptions of Stress and the Impact on Retention

Kelly Thompson
Concordia University–Portland
College of Education

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Doctor of Education in
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Donna Graham, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee
John Mendes, Ed.D., Content Specialist
Michael Hollis, Ph.D., Content Reader

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teachers’ perceptions of stress due to their job, and if this had an influence on retention. The study concentrated on teacher’s perceptions of what caused them stress and if they would leave the profession due to work related stress. The conceptual framework for this study was the transactional model of stress theory by Lazarus and Folkman, which provided a better understanding of demands in education and the resources provided to teachers. Data collection consisted of interviews with eight teacher participants, as well as the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators. During the interviews, findings indicated all participants perceived themselves to be stressed. The frequency of this stress ranged from every day to often throughout the week. The results of the MBI-ES indicated six of the eight participants were emotionally exhausted, and at risk for burnout. The following are the common themes related to stress discovered in the study based on interviews with the participants: lack of resources, student behavior, low parent involvement, administration, and teacher accountability. The stress factors perceived by the participants indicate further research on teacher perceived stress, stress reduction, and stress coping and preventative strategies for teachers would be beneficial.

Keywords: teacher, stress, burnout, Title I, MBI-ES, retention,
Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation to my husband Matt and my daughter Kasey. Without their support and understanding, this would not be possible. Matt and Kasey are the reasons I was able to persist and continue when I was ready to give up through this process. It is because of them I was able to reach this goal. Thank you, both, for sacrificing and supporting me to make this goal a reality.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this study was to better understand how teachers perceive teacher stress and the influence this may have on teacher retention. Teachers face stress from different factors in education daily. This study took place in the Eastern United States and looked specifically at teachers who work at Title I schools. The specific state is unique regarding education; most of the money allocated to the state’s elementary and secondary schools is from state sources. Based on the 2012 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, schools in the state spent an average of $8,832 directly on teaching, more than in all but six other states. Students in the state where the study took place, despite the state being one of the two of top per-capita spenders, had below-average National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores (NCES, 2013). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2013, students who were eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch, an indicator of low family income, had an average score that was 21 points lower than students who were not eligible for free/reduced-price school lunch.

With high spending on instruction, and below-average scores nationally, the stress on teachers may be a reason for this outcome. Teacher stress in low socio-economic schools can be a significant reason that teachers leave the profession. The state’s Department of Education found that schools in the state serving higher percentages of low-income students saw higher percentages of teachers leaving the classroom after one year. This is a common problem for many states across the nation. Nationally the average length turnover rates among new teachers are rapidly increasing, particularly in low-income schools. Therefore, not only is there a need to recruit talented candidates to teaching, but also to support and retain them, once they have entered the classroom (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). Furthermore, the state’s Department of Education found that one-year teacher turnover rate among schools serving the most low-
income students is nearly 16%, and about half of these teachers do not return to the state’s classrooms.

One reason teachers may leave their profession can be due to long periods of work-related stress that turns into burnout. Teachers can become burned out when constant demands are present without having resources needed. In 1974, Freudenberger introduced the term burnout to describe the inability to function effectively in one’s job because of prolonged and extensive job-related stress. Additionally, burnout can cause a teacher to experience depersonalization. According to Byrne (1991):

Depersonalization is evidenced when teachers develop negative, cynical and sometimes callous attitudes towards students, parents, and colleagues. Teachers reflect feelings of reduced personal accomplishment when they perceive themselves as ineffective in helping students to learn, and in fulfilling other school responsibilities. (p. 28)

Teachers who are stressed to the point of burnout are likely to be less sympathetic toward students, have a lower tolerance for classroom disruption, be less apt to prepare adequately for class, and feel less committed and dedicated to their work (Farber & Miller, 1981).

Understanding burnout and occupations that are most at risk such as teaching can guide the education system to focus on this issue. To gain insight on the problem of teacher stress, the perception of elementary teachers who work in high poverty schools in the state was explored.

One benefit of retaining teachers is the experience they will gain along with having the correct qualifications. Having qualified teachers is beneficial to the students, the school, and society. In state, highly qualified teachers have obtained a bachelor’s degree from an accredited Four-Year College or University, Praxis Core Academic Skills test, and must also pass the Praxis test in the content area they will teach. Having qualified teachers gives students instruction from
teachers who are experienced. When qualified teachers become stressed or burned out they may leave the profession negatively impacting the students. Experienced teachers are essential in high poverty schools to help students make academic progress.

**Background**

This study explored how teachers in a Title 1 school perceive teacher stress, and the effect this has on retention. Teacher stress is an issue that has affected educators and schools for years, causing many teachers to leave the profession. Professions other than teaching have an average annual turnover rate of 11%, while the annual turnover rate for teachers is 15.7% (Mrozek, 2004). Not only will the problem of teacher stress affect teachers, but may also negatively affect students. The effect on students can especially be a concern for students in Title I schools. The stress teachers face over time can escalate to burnout that can impact teachers physically, mentally, and even their perception and attitude towards their career. This case study design with a qualitative research method explored what teachers perceive to cause them stress working at a Title I school.

Finding out what teachers perceive as causing them ongoing stress would be a valuable tool that can be used to support teachers in a better way. Many teachers who do enter the field of teaching, leave the profession before retirement age (Kelly, 2004). Teachers play a very influential, and crucial role in shaping an individual's character and outlook towards life and its various experiences, it is extremely important that teachers are engaged, and love their jobs (Iyer, 2016). Understanding the different factors that cause teachers stress may help teachers stay in the field of education. Finding what teachers perceive is causing them work-related stress may help with teacher retention. A focus on reasons for attrition may inform strategies to increase
teacher retention (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Retaining teachers will help teachers gain experience which in turn will benefit students.

Work-related stress can affect individuals in different ways. Prior research showed that teachers could experience stress that affected them negatively, physically or emotionally. Teaching can bring out emotions experienced at work for teachers, it is important that teachers employ effective strategies to regulate such emotions (Burić, Penezić, & Sorić, 2016). The relational nature of classrooms means that teachers are vulnerable to emotionally draining and discouraging experiences (Maslach & Leiter, 1999). Educators experiencing stress from emotional experiences may also experience physical stress at the same time. Understanding the factors that are causing stress to teachers is a good way to help figure out the appropriate strategies that will help teachers cope with stress in a healthy manner. Additionally, if teachers are able to handle stress in a healthy way, they will be more likely to continue their career instead of leaving the field of education.

Teacher stress is a problem in education that can affect the length of time teachers stay in the profession or may cause teachers to leave the profession. The average length of a teaching career in the United States is decreasing, and turnover rates among new teachers are rapidly increasing, particularly in low-income schools. Consequently, there is a need, not only to recruit talented candidates to teaching, but also to support and, thus, retain them once they have entered the classroom (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). While there is research on stress and burnout, an elementary teacher’s perception of stress and retention along with their perception of preventive stress strategies can be explored further. Understanding what is causing teacher stress is important to focus on preventative measures for stress. People who work in human services seem to be particularly at risk of burnout, (e.g., social workers, nurses, teachers, lawyers, medical
and police officers) (Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). To reduce the negative effect stress has on teachers, more attention needs to be placed on this growing epidemic (Bachkirova, 2015). Furthermore, placing attention on helping teachers cope with stress will help prevent teachers from experiencing work-related burnout.

Work-related burnout is an extreme reaction that individuals experience when they cannot successfully cope with work pressure (Wang, Zhai, Dai, & Yang, 2015). Burnout can have a negative impact on teacher retention. Teacher stress needs to be explored and understood in order to keep teachers in the profession. Educators may experience stress that can cause them to no longer like their profession. If an individual does not like his or her profession, he or she may not practice it successfully (Terzi, A.R. & Tezci, 2007). Analyzing the factors that cause teacher stress, and using preventative measures along with coping skills can help motivate teachers to continue to stay in their career. If teachers want to be successful in their profession, they should unconditionally accept the profession and engage the profession with love and passion (Cetin, 2006). While passion for their chosen profession is important for teachers to have, having appropriate resources and coping skills to deal with stress is equally important for teachers. Lastly, if there is a better understanding of teacher’s perception of stress, changes can be made in education to better support teachers.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem this study explored was how teachers in Title I schools perceive teacher stress, and the effect this has on teacher retention. Teachers in Title I schools encounter perceived stress that may not be encountered by teachers in a higher socio-economic school. Scholars have placed insufficient focus on the influence of community socioeconomic status on teacher’s perception of stress (Kenyeri, 2002). On average, teachers who do not quit within their
first year leave or experience burnout within five years (Haberman, 2006). Teachers perceive different factors as stressful, including students and administrators. The rate at which teachers leave the profession is significantly higher than the departure rate in other professions (Minarik, Thornton, & Perreault, 2003). Administration can be a main way to lessen stress in a school, (Black, 2004), by initiating preventative stress strategies and stress coping skills. Teachers can experience stress from a lack of administrative support (Blase, J., Blase, & Du, 2008). Student behavior can be another leading reason a teacher experience stress.

The experience level of a teacher can contribute to their work-related stress. Not only may experience play a role in teacher stress, the type of school a teacher works at can also contribute to teacher stress. Teachers at high-poverty, urban schools can encounter additional stressors that are not as prevalent at suburban schools. Some of these stressors include lack of resources, funding, and working with students who live in poverty.

Teacher stress is a problem in education that causes many qualified teachers to leave the profession. Approximately 50% of the new teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching (Blow, 2011; Lambert, 2006). Finding strategies and coping skills to deal with work-related stress can be beneficial to teachers experiencing stress. Teacher retention continues to be a difficult issue to resolve (Kaff, 2004). The research reviewed in this study discusses the need to focus on the issue of teacher stress and retention.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers in Title I schools perceive teacher stress and the impact stress has on retention. The stress experienced by teachers can affect job performance along with negatively affecting the teacher emotionally, physically, and mentally. Research has suggested that elementary school teachers reporting excessive stress levels also
report possessing fewer personal resources for stress prevention (McCarthy, Kissen, Yadley, Wood, & Lambert, 2006). This study explored the perception of stress and teacher retention in the Eastern United States. The participants in the study were elementary teachers in Title I schools. The purpose of using elementary teachers at high-poverty schools is to see if socio-economic factors play a part in teacher stress.

Research Question

This research study took place in an urban school located in the Eastern United States. The research question that was addressed in this study looked at stress factors elementary teachers face in Title I schools. The research question addressed teacher retention as well as what teacher’s perceive to cause them work related stress.

RQ1. How do teachers in Title I schools perceive job stress and teacher retention?

Research Methodology

A case study design was used to explore teacher’s perception of stress, and how this may have on retention among current elementary teachers in the Eastern United States. “The case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 1984, p. 23). One of the most important sources of case study information is the interview: "most commonly, case study interviews are of an open-ended nature, in which you can ask key respondents about the facts of a matter as well as their opinions about events" (Yin, 2003a, p. 90). Using the qualitative research method with the case study design enabled direct investigation of participant’s perceptions.
The sample consisted of eight participants who teach at elementary Title I schools in the Eastern United States. The eight participants were interviewed individually on different dates and at different times. The interview was structured with a predetermined set of questions. The questions asked if preventative measures or coping skills were used for reducing stress by the participants. Teachers were asked if they perceived preventative stress measures or stress coping skills as beneficial. The participants did not have prior knowledge of the questions before the interview. Notes were taken during the interview; transcripts were sent to the participants with an area to include participant’s comments.

The assessment tool was the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators (MBI-ES). All participants were given the MBI-ES to discover if each teacher is experiencing stress. The inventory results were viewed through a qualitative lens. When an inventory uses scales that are sorted by frequency scores or likert-type data, that can be viewed as qualitative data that is numerically coded. As such, ordinal data is, by its nature, categorical, with numbers applied to indicate the order or ranking. These categories, therefore, are not strictly numeric, which would lend themselves to descriptive or inferential statistics. (“The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach & Jackson, 1981, 1986) is the most widely used measure of occupational burnout, the inability to function effectively in one’s job as a consequence of prolonged and extensive job-related stress” (Byrne, 1991, p. 4). The MBI scale used accurately describes the degrees of burnout in each of the three major areas of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment.

The purpose of the interviews was to explore reasons for stress or job burnout experienced by the teachers. These interviews took place in a predetermined location with all the participants individually who were asked the same questions. The questions used helped
understand how the teachers perceive stress affecting their profession and their personal lives. The questions asked gave insight into how often the participants felt stress due to their profession.

**Research Rationale**

The design used for this study was a case study design with qualitative research. A qualitative approach is the best method to use for this study due to the focus on the participant’s perspective. Qualitative research provided an in-depth perspective of the participants in relation to understanding teacher stress, and the effect this may have on retention. The qualitative method was preferred because the phenomenon to be studied includes complex human and organizational interactions (Peterson & Spencer, 1993).

Qualitative research helps to provide useful data and perspectives during the investigational process. “It is common for people to suppose that qualitative research is marked by rich description of personal action and complex environment, and it is, but the qualitative approach is equally distinguished for the integrity of its thinking” (Stake, 2010, p. 31). Collecting data from the source and receiving the direct information from the participants made a qualitative method a better fit for this study than a quantitative method.

**Definition of Terms**

**Burnout.** Maslach’s (1982) definition of burnout encompasses “emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of others, and a feeling of reduced personal accomplishment” (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002, p. 28).

**Depersonalization.** Depersonalization is defined as a negative, cynical, or excessively detached response to other people at work, which represents the interpersonal component of burnout (Noushad, 2008).
**Emotional exhaustion.** Emotional exhaustion, which refers to feelings of being depleted of one's emotional resources, is regarded as the basic individual stress component of the syndrome (Noushad, 2008).

**Maslach Burnout Inventory.** Burnout is considered as a three-dimensional syndrome, i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, that is measured with the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (Noushad, 2008).  

**Stress.** Defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.

**Title I schools.** Part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, Title I provided supplementary resources to schools with a high number of low-income students (Sunderman & Mickelsen, 2000).

**Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

The following assumptions were present in this study:

1. It was assumed the participants answered questions honestly and to the best of their ability.

2. It was assumed participants were not deceptive in their answers and provided answers relevant to the study.

Limitations are design factors that the researcher cannot control in this study. The following were limitations present in this study.

1. Teacher experience was a limitation. The teachers who worked at both elementary schools had different levels of experience and education. The researcher did not have
control over which teachers volunteered to participate in this study and their teaching experience.

2. Limitations such as bias may exist in this study. In any study, there are biases. In this study, only teachers at two Title I elementary schools’ in one Eastern state participated in the study. Therefore, this study did not represent every teacher at every Title I elementary school in the Eastern United States. A small number of teachers at each school participated, not representing every teacher at the schools. Additionally, the researcher was familiar with both schools and all the teachers in the study.

Limitations may exist also pertaining to the time of year the study takes place. The study took place during the school year, which made time constraints for participants a limitation in this study. It was difficult finding participants that had additional time during the school year.

The following is a delimitation that existed in this study.

1. The sample size was a delimitation in this study. The sample was delimited to elementary teachers who worked in Title I schools located in one Eastern state who were willing to participate in the study.

Chapter 1 Summary

Teacher stress is a problem that needs to be researched and addressed. Teachers’ experience of the stress of testing, differentiating lessons, and managing behavior can lead to teacher burnout. This is the situation at many Title I schools in high-poverty areas. As the demands of educator’s increase, resources should be available to compensate for the increased demands. “We are setting impossible expectations for those who do not want to compromise their standards of quality teaching” (Lloyd, 2012, p. 24). For teachers to be given added responsibilities and feel that do not have the adequate resources to meet the responsibilities is a
stressful situation. Teachers are put in situations at times where they may neglect a responsibility to do what is best for a student at that moment. For example, if a teacher has a student who becomes upset, they may stop instruction for a moment to console the student. Teachers in high-poverty schools may have additional stress due to some students not having their basic needs met. Due to the breakdown of the American family, society expects teachers to act as social workers, health care providers, and parents, while continuing to educate the children about core content areas, technology, and the global community (Kozol, 2008).
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher’s perceptions of stress, burnout, and the relation to teacher retention. This study further explored factors that cause stress to elementary teachers who work in Title I schools in the Eastern United States. The average length of a teaching career in the United States is decreasing and turnover rates among new teachers are rapidly increasing, particularly in low-income schools. Approximately 50% of the new teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years of teaching (Blow, 2011; Lambert, 2006).

Teacher’s perception of stress can be caused by different variables and eventually lead to burnout. Iyer (2016) stated, “Burnout is characterized by exhaustion, cynicism and a lack of professional efficacy” (p.39). Teachers who experience burnout can develop symptoms of this stress. The stress experienced by teachers can affect job performance along with negatively affecting the teacher emotionally, physically, and mentally.

This chapter includes the background of the problem followed by the conceptual framework and the review of the literature. Perceptions teachers have of stress and work demands and resources available are reviewed to understand the conceptual framework. This stress is the result of the perception of an imbalance between demands placed upon our educators in the classroom and the resources and the amount of support they receive to cope with them (Wood & McCarthy, 2002). The transactional model of stress by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) was used in this study to have a better understanding of demands in education and the resources provided to teachers.

The chapter will conclude with a summary. The chapter includes literature from multiple databases accessed through the Concordia University Library database. The databases included
are EBSCOhost, ProQuest Dissertations, ERIC, Education Journals ProQuest, ASSIA, Academic One file, and GALE.

**Background**

The purpose of this study was to understand how teachers in Title I schools perceive job stress and teacher retention. Teachers play a very influential and crucial role in shaping an individual's character and outlook towards life and its various experiences; teacher engagement and love of their jobs is extremely important (Iyer, 2016). Stress can lead to burnout when teachers perceive they are stressed at work combined with feeling they do not make a difference to students. Understanding the factors that cause teachers stress may help teachers stay in the field of education.

Work-related burnout is an extreme reaction that individuals experience when they cannot successfully cope with work pressure (Wang, Zhai, Dai, & Yang, 2015). This condition refers to an exhausted state of emotion, attitudes, and behavior that arises from a prolonged experience of stress. In the United States, about 51% of educator’s report experiencing excessive stress several days per week (MetLife, 2013). Teacher stress needs to be explored and understood to keep teachers in the profession.

This case study explored what teachers perceive to cause them stress working at a Title I school. Finding out what teachers perceive as causing them ongoing stress is a valuable tool that can be used to support teachers in a better way. Understanding the factors that are causing teacher stress may lead to the development of appropriate strategies to help teachers emotionally. Teacher stress is a problem in education that causes many teachers to leave the profession. Understanding the causes of teacher stress and finding strategies and coping skills to deal with work-related stress is important. Teaching is an emotional process, involving more than just
knowing and providing instruction in the subject matter (Iyer, 2016). Teacher burnout consists of reactions to profession based stresses, including physical and emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of students and/or negative feelings towards them, and a low sense of personal accomplishment (Egyed & Short, 2006; Freidman, 2003; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). An emotionally and physically exhausted teacher may no longer feel effective.

**Conceptual Framework**

Having an understanding of teacher’s perception of stress in relation to the demand of work is essential to this study. The transactional model of stress theory by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) was used in this study to have a better understanding of demands in education and the resources provided to teachers. Stress results when individuals appraise situational demands as taxing or overwhelming the personal and social resources the individual has at his or her disposal to address demands effectively (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

According to Split, Koomen, and Thijs (2011), the transactional model of stress explains the potential effects of external stressors on wellbeing through the experiences of everyday discrete emotions and is, therefore, highly useful to understand the effects of interpersonal teacher-student stressors on teacher wellbeing. Teacher wellbeing in relations to the demands and resources in a school can shed light on teacher’s perceptions of stress. Understanding individual teacher perceptions of demands and resources in the school environment coincides with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress. Focusing on teacher’s ability to weigh their job demands, and coping skills can help teachers understand their perception of stress.

The application of the stress model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) enables a better understanding of the dynamic processes upon the assumption of a domestic care activity and the
resulting consequences for the caregiver. A transactional perspective of stress is a focus of this research study. A focus on teacher’s perceptions of the balance between classroom demands and resources as a stress factor drove this study. Lazarus and Folkman’s theory suggests that when educators see their professional responsibilities are demanding without proper resources stress is most likely the outcome. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) discussed individual perception determining if a life event or situation will be stressful.

In this study pertaining to teacher perceived stress the researcher used, questions understand how teachers perceive stress and burnout. The participants were asked interview questions to explore what exactly was causing work related stress for the participants. The study examined the scores teachers received from taking the MBI-ES. The study explored whether teachers perceive having a balance between resources and demands will provide teachers a better working environment and, potentially, improve teacher retention.

**Review of the Literature**

Teacher stress and burnout can eventually cause an educator to decide to leave the profession. According Montero-Marín, Zubiaga, Cereceda, Demarzo, Trenc, and García-Campayo (2016), burnout syndrome, associated with a gradual loss of energy and enthusiasm, is a profound consequence of chronic stress and has traditionally been defined by the dimensions of *exhaustion, cynicism,* and *inefficacy.* Teachers experiencing stress at work still have many job demands that are their responsibility. Many items teachers are responsible for and are evaluated on are often out of the teacher’s control. In recent decades, there has been a trend toward greater accountability in education (Shahjahan, 2011). This trend sparked much research and policy related to the identification and dissemination of evidence-based practices and has led to more
challenging standards for student performance and increased emphasis on teacher evaluation (Konstantopoulos, 2014; Spencer, Detrich, & Slocum, 2012).

A review of the literature showed different stress factors such as testing, evaluations, student needs, behavior, lack of resources, and accountability. These can be perceived by teachers as stressful. Teachers are responsible for delivering academic instruction, facilitating student learning and engagement, and managing classroom behavior. Stress may interfere with teacher performance in the classroom (Tsouloupas, Carson, Matthews, Grawitch, & Barber, 2010). If teachers feel stress and see a resulting decline in their performance, additional stress may result.

Variables that lead to teacher stress can cause teachers to become overwhelmed to the point they are burned out. Sass, Seal, and Martin (2010) stated, “Although the sources of these stressors are well documented, validated theoretical models that predict teacher burnout and retention are scarce” (p. 3). Determining prevention strategies for teacher burnout is difficult unless the factors that contribute to the stress are understood. Understanding teacher perception of stress and using theoretical stress models can help provide insight on teacher burnout and retention.

Teachers’ stress at work is the experience of unpleasant emotions as a result of teaching work (Kyriacou, 2001). The purpose of the study was to understand teacher’s perception of stress and burnout in Title I elementary schools in the Eastern United States. Understanding the causes of teacher stress and burnout can put a focus on preventative measures to reduce stress and help teachers cope with stress. Teachers face stress from different factors in education.

Understanding the factors that cause teacher stress can help motivate teachers to continue to enjoy their career. While it is important for teachers to be passionate about the profession, it is
equally important for teachers to have appropriate resources and coping skills to deal with stress. It is difficult to thrive in an occupation without proper support, leadership, and resources needed to do a job efficiently. Elementary teachers reporting an intention to leave their current job for professional reasons, as opposed to personal ones, e.g., pregnancy, family relocation, and retirement, have also reported higher classroom demands, fewer school-provided resources, and higher occupational stress (Jazaar, Lambert, & O'Donnell, 2007). These are some of the factors that lead to higher stress levels in elementary teachers.

**Historical Research**

Research on teacher stress and burnout has led to many studies throughout the years. Some authors researched this subject to better understand the variables that lead to teacher stress and burnout. Sass, Seal, and Martin (2010) focused on the interrelationships between variables that lead to teachers leaving the profession and job dissatisfaction. According to the authors, sources of these stressors are well documented, validated theoretical models that predict teacher burnout and retention are not as prevalent.

Sass et al. (2010) explored different variables that cause teacher stress. Student behavior stressors were the first variable discussed. “One justification is that behavioral exchanges with students are expected by teachers and can be considered a main part of their work effort, whereas Administrative stressors are considered as an additional, unneeded stressor” (Sass et al., 2010, p. 1). The authors describe the variables of social support in two different categories. The first categories look at social support by superiors. External relationships with school authorities and co-workers are perceived to have a more negative effect than negative interactions with students, student and teacher relationships can cause stress, but relationships with colleagues and superiors can cause a more damaging stress (Sass et al., 2010). New teachers can experience negative
interactions than can be perceived as stressful. Rieg, Paquette, and Chen (2007) noted that new teachers frequently mentioned relationships with students, other teachers, and supervisors as the cause of stress-related worries.

Sass et al. (2010) looked at other variables to support their claim. This included workload stress, role conflict, job dissatisfaction, and intent to quit. Throughout the school year, teachers’ workloads include a vast array of tasks that are not limited to instruction, such as learning new teaching approaches, keeping current of technological innovations, student behavior problems, faculty meetings, and parent and community commitments (Pillay, Goddard, & Wilss, 2005). Sass et al. used theoretical models to conduct their research and support their claims. According to Sass et al., most parsimonious models revealed that student stressors completely mediated the relationship between teacher efficacy related to student engagement and job dissatisfaction, with social support superiors and student stressors being best predictors of job dissatisfaction. The authors could support their claims with their findings. Classroom teaching is now a fraction of the many responsibilities of the teachers' jobs. The added responsibilities given to teachers can be perceived stress for many teachers. Understanding the factors that cause teachers to feel overwhelmed and stressed can help reduce elementary teachers leaving the field of education. Once factors that cause teachers stress are understood preventative strategies and coping skills can be provided to teachers.

Zysberg, Orenshtein, Gimmon, and Robinson (2016) looked at what each individual teacher views as stress factors. Zysberg et al. found the literature suggests that individuals perceive and interpret situations differently based on their personal predispositions, previous experiences, available resources, and assessment of their prospects, thus experiencing varying levels of stress within the very same circumstances” (p. 12). This research is important
regarding teacher stress prevention. The extrinsic factors are important to identify to aid in stress prevention and coping strategies for teachers. Burnout seems a natural consequence when individuals do not have sufficient coping resources to deal with life demands.

**Elementary teachers and stress.** The 2012 Gallup-Health Ways Well-Being Index found that teachers were second only to physicians in reporting having felt stress at work, and MetLife survey found that 51% of teachers felt under great stress at least several days per week. Elementary teachers (59%) were found to be more likely than middle school (44%) or high school (42%) teachers to report high stress (McCarthy et al., 2013). An educator who is experiencing burnout has low morale, low self-esteem, and is physically exhausted (Roloff & Brown, 2011). When teachers are stressed for a long period of time, it can lead to burnout.

The age group an educator works with can influence the work-related stress a teacher experiences. Elementary teachers may be experiencing more stress than teachers in middle school and high school. Elementary teachers spend a great deal of time with students, of course, but, in many cases, these interactions can add to their daily stress. Many times, student behavior is more challenging due to losing the experienced teachers. "In other words, teachers' experience of stress appeared to have little to do with differences between the various elementary school contexts" (McCarthy, Lambert, O’Donnell, & Melendres 2009, p. 3). Understanding the different factors that cause teachers stress may help teachers stay in the field of education.

Teachers play a very influential and crucial role in shaping an individual's character and outlook towards life and its various experiences, it is extremely important that teachers are engaged, and like their jobs (Iyer, 2016). Stress can lead to burnout when teachers perceive they are stressed at work combined with feeling they do not make a difference to students. Stress can incur from feeling that your work no longer makes a difference. A diminished feeling of
personal accomplishment can cause stress to educators. Furthermore, if the stress and diminished feel of accomplishment is experienced overtime the educator can experience burnout. Maslach’s (1982) definition of burnout encompasses emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of others, and a feeling of reduced personal accomplishment.

**Student behavior.** Negative student behavior can be a factor that causes stress for teachers. According to Ahart (2003), stress from pupil misbehavior and time pressures was significantly greater than stress from poor working conditions and poor staff relations for both rural and urban school teachers. Poor working conditions and time pressures predicted burnout for rural school teachers; pupil misbehavior and poor working conditions predicted burnout for urban school teachers (Abel & Sewell, 2010). Negative student behavior can cause disruption in the classroom. This disruption can cause other students to lose focus. The student behavior can also cause the teacher to stop teaching or become distracted causing the teacher to stop teaching.

Teaching can bring out emotions experienced at work for teachers and students; it is important that teachers employ effective strategies to regulate such emotions (Burić, Penezić, & Sorić, 2016). Teachers reported contributors to work-related stress is student misbehavior. Ingersoll and May (2012) noted that the higher levels of student discipline problems were associated with higher levels of teacher turnover. A great deal of scholarly research has been completed on the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and classroom management, content areas, teacher attrition or retention, and any combination (Anthony, Gimbert, Fultz, & Parker, 2011; Hong, 2012; Hughes, 2012; Menon & Sadler, 2016). The behavior of students and school climate can cause teachers stress. This type of stress can drive a teacher to find a school with a better climate. Alternatively, teachers who feel more distressed by student misbehavior may seek out schools with more fair and supportive climates. Aggression toward teachers is linked to
burnout and disengagement from teaching, but a positive school climate may reduce aggression and associated teacher distress (Berg & Cornell, 2016).

Behavior and lack of support are some of the factors that can cause teachers stress. This can cause the teacher to be unable to teach with constant negative behavior, making it difficult for teachers to do their job. Understanding how teachers perceive negative student behavior in relation to stress can help administration focus on teacher’s wellbeing. Administration can work towards a positive school environment to help address negative student behavior. Administration can also work on preventing negative student behavior from continuing in the classroom.

Behavior in the classroom can lead to stress for teachers trying to teach all the students and maintain classroom management. According to Yu et al. (2015), teachers feel greater anxiety and fear because of the poor discipline of their students, frequently exhibit an open dislike toward teaching, and disgust towards their students. These teachers begin to show symptoms of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The sense of teaching efficacy has a negative association with stress (Klassen & Chiu, 2011). If negative behavior is not addressed appropriately, and the teacher does not have support from administration, the teacher may feel unable to do their job effectively.

Maslach burnout, indicators and symptoms of stress, and burnout. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is an instrument, which has been used worldwide to assess occupational stress in human service professions. Burnout, first described by Maslach and Jackson (1981), is a "syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment" (Hancock & Scherff, 2010, p. 330). This measure can help identify teachers who are suffering from work-related stress and burnout. Additionally, this can help
identified teachers receive coping strategies for stress to prevent or cope with the following symptoms of burnout. Burnout is not just generated by a stressful environment, but also by other factors such as work and social environment a poor quality of life, and feelings that are associated with dissatisfaction at work (Elmossati, Ahami, Oudda, & Elkettani, 2016). Teachers may feel ineffective and have feelings of reduced personal accomplishment when they perceive themselves as ineffective in helping students to learn, and in fulfilling other school responsibilities.

Teachers can easily fall victim to burnout when constant demands are present without having resources needed. Understanding burnout and occupations that are most at risk such as teaching can guide the education system to focus on this issue. In 1974, Freudenberger introduced the term burnout to describe the inability to function effectively in one’s job because of prolonged and extensive job-related stress. People who work in human services seem to be particularly at risk of burnout, e.g., social workers, nurses, teachers, lawyers, medical, and police officers (Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Educators experiencing stress from emotional experiences may also experience physical stress at the same time.

Teachers who experience burnout can develop symptoms of this stress. Preventing stress, when possible, is one key to promoting teacher satisfaction (Lambert, McCarthy, Gilbert, Sebree, & Steinley-Bumgarner, 2006). Stress affects both teachers and students and may interfere with performance in the classroom; Tsouloupas, Carson, Matthews, Grawitch, and Barber (2010) stated that stress is quite common among educators. Addressing the issue of teacher stress may benefit teachers and students.

According to Dorman (2003), the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), an instrument that assesses three dimensions of stress, can help show what stress affects and educators and how it
affects them mentally and physically. This assessment can help determine if the teacher participants at the Title I elementary schools are stressed. Understanding if teachers are stressed can help inform administration the need to focus on preventative measures and coping skills, along with teacher retention. It is therefore paramount to understand the individual’s experienced level of stress in a given setting to be able to understand the risk of suffering burnout in the long run (Zysberg, Orenshtein, Gimmon, & Robinson, 2016). Along with personal coping resources, teachers' perceptions of the balance between classroom demands and resources play a pivotal role in whether stress is experienced by the teacher.

Maslach describes burnout as including “physical and mental exhaustion observed in all professionals, whose work requires continuous contact with others”. These symptoms were also prevalent in “professional people such as teachers, nurses, social workers, and police” (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002, p. 18). Maslach’s (1982) definition of burnout expanded on Freudenberger’ s (1975) earlier definition of the same term to include the specific symptoms of “emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of others, and a feeling of reduced personal accomplishment” (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002, p. 28). The reasons a teacher leaves the profession are often personal, however, multiple theories exist on teacher attrition.

The number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) elementary and secondary school teachers in 2011 numbered approximately 3.7 million (NCES, 2011a, p. 94). Additonally7.9 % left the teaching field, citing a variety of reasons; this meant a turnover of approximately 269,000 jobs each year (NCES, 2011b, p. 94). Teaching is a stressful career that can lead an educator to leave the profession early. Teachers in the United States are in the career for about 11 years (Luther & Richman, 2009).
Teachers leaving the field early has a negative impact on schools, school districts, and students. School districts will have to continue to seek and pay for new teachers if retaining teachers becomes difficult. The costs associated with teacher turnover nationally are substantial, estimated at $7.3 billion per year (Kain, 2011; NCTAF, 2011). Teacher turnover can also affect students negatively, especially if teachers leave before the end of the school year.

**Mindfulness and coping strategies.** Mindfulness is a strategy that can be implemented at a school to help teachers with stress. Mindfulness has been defined as a process of "paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). Costello and Lawler (2014) explained that mindfulness is a 2,500-year-old tradition which focuses on individual inner experiences. Mindfulness helps a person focusing on the present to better respond to what is happening. This is a technique that can help a teacher focus on what is presently happening in the classroom.

Mindfulness helps ground the teacher by being in the present instead of thinking about stressful events that happened earlier or stress that awaits them. Building teachers' social-emotional competence, including mindfulness training, can improve teachers' overall effectiveness and wellbeing. Mindfulness can help teachers with strategies the need to handle stress from work and potentially reduce burnout. Hafenbrack, Kinias, and Sigal (2013) found mindfulness improved decision making; Dane and Brummei (2013) said mindfulness increased the ability to work in high-pressure environments; Adams (2011) noted that mindfulness improved work-life balance.

Teacher stress and burnout not only has a negative impact on the teacher, but also the school and students. “Finding that the primary cause of teacher shortages is not a lack of
professionals entering the field but rather a "revolving door" created by teachers leaving the field for reasons other than retirement, it is important that researchers identify factors that lead to teacher burnout and presumably, in the long run, to the decision to leave the field” (Blazer, 2010, p. 2). Additionally, it is crucial to understand the effects teachers suffer from burnout. This, in turn, will help with prevention and strategies to cope with stress.

Mindfulness has been defined as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). Incorporating mindfulness may benefit teachers with stress and have a positive impact on students. Mindfulness reduces stress, worry, and emotional reactivity, while increasing working memory, cognitive flexibility, self-awareness, ethical behavior, relationship satisfaction and wellbeing (Davis & Hayes, 2011). Focusing on prevention of stress and ways to cope with stress may help keep teachers in the education field and improve staff morale and school climate.

Stress within the teaching profession has a negative impact on the health and well-being of individual teachers and on retention and recruitment for the profession as a whole (Gold, Smith, Hopper, Herne, Tansey, & Hulland, 2010). Coping strategies and mindfulness can help teachers understand how to cope or handle stress in a healthier way. Evidence from intervention studies suggests that mindfulness training is associated with improvements in teachers' classroom behavior (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013; Jennings, Frank, Snowberg, Coccia, & Greenberg, 2013). Lazurus (2000) states “Becoming more conscious of the conditions that induce stress, teachers can begin to notice the symptoms of distress sooner and take specific steps to vigorously counteract the effects of stress (p. 11). Stress coping strategies can aid teachers in dealing with stress, so the stress does not evolve into burnout and cause the educator to leave the profession.
**Impact of burnout on teachers.** If teachers experience stress over time and feel there will be no positive change, they are candidates for burnout. According to Iyer (2016), a disengaged or burned out teacher remains uninterested in his or her work, thereby causing students to lose interest in schooling and increasing the dropout rate. Maslach and Schaufeli (1993) described burnout as having three manifestations: (a) depersonalization, (b) reduced personal accomplishment, and (c) emotional exhaustion. Teachers who reach the point of being burned out may distance themselves from both students and teachers and start to feel emotionally depressed. They may lose their passion to teach and believe they no longer make a difference to their students.

Burnout can impact teachers in many aspects of their life. Teachers may suffer from one stress-related ailment or from a combination of stress-related health issues. Blazer (2010) stated, “Stress levels are directly linked to physical well-being, seventy-five percent of visits to doctor’s offices concern stress-related ailments” (p. 3). The first dimension of burnout is emotional exhaustion. Educators are faced with limited resources, more responsibilities, and less time it is easy to feel that there is nothing left to give. The next dimension discussed is depersonalization, which can cause staff to become overwhelmed and negative. The final dimension is that of low accomplishment. This dimension leads to loss of motivation and job irrelevance.

Burnout causes physical, emotional, and relationship stress, which is detrimental to job performance and to the teacher’s personal and family life. According to Yu, Wang, Zhai, Dai, and Yang (2015), the psychological pressure of high stress, often causes teachers professional dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and employee turnover. “It is critical to predict job dissatisfaction in order to reduce the likelihood of teachers transferring to other schools or leaving the profession altogether” (Sass et al., 2010, p.1).
The impact burnout has on teachers can negatively effect the teacher physically, or emotionally. Finding out what teachers perceive to cause them stress may help prevent teachers from experiencing burnout. Most researchers believe burnout is the result of an interaction between school conditions and teachers' personality characteristics, but studies have produced contradictory findings regarding which variables play the most important role in the development of burnout (Blazer, 2010). Finding out from teachers what they perceive to cause them stress can gain insight on what variables play a role in causing teachers stress.

**Title I schools and teacher stress.** The focus of this study involved elementary teachers that work in Title I schools. Teachers in urban schools have a high turnover rate in addition to increased work demands and fewer resources (Shernoff, Mehta, Atkins, Torf, & Spencer, 2011). Chronic turnover among new teachers is most concerning, up to 23% of public school teachers leaving within their first five years of teaching, another 14% migrating to other schools and 9% of teachers leaving the profession altogether (Keigher, 2010). Teachers are already facing significant difficulties and challenges to successfully teach in inner-city schools. Stressors related to teaching in urban schools are well documented, including overcrowding, large class sizes, and large numbers of students with unmet learning difficulties and mental health needs (Boyd & Shouse, 1997; Shernoff, Mehta, Atkins, Torf, & Spencer, 2011).

Retaining high-quality teachers in urban schools becomes difficult with the stresses the teachers encounter. More experienced teachers are able to find employment in safer schools, schools with a higher teacher experience also had higher teacher and student reported safety (Berg & Cornell, 2016). Losing qualified experienced teachers makes it difficult for the students and many times student behavior is more challenging due to losing the experienced teachers. Chronic turnover can negatively impact students, the students need high-quality educators yet
commonly taught by inexperienced teachers overwhelmed by the stressors of urban schools and likely to leave the profession in a few years (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Teacher stress in high poverty elementary schools is an issue that needs to be addressed by using strategies and additional resources to prevent teachers from burnout. Burnout may also result in teachers leaving the profession. Ingersoll (2001) reviewed data suggesting that teacher shortages are not caused primarily by a lack of individuals entering the profession but instead are the result of a “revolving door” in which large numbers of teachers leave for reasons other than retirement. Additionally, numerous studies spanning a period of over two decades, demonstrate that a significant number of teachers entering public-school, leave the teaching profession within their first three years (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007; Boyd et al., 2011; Flynt & Morton, 2009; Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Keigher & Cross, 2010).

Socioeconomic status plays a big part on teacher stress. Even though there have been multiple studies on teacher stress which examined factors associated with school environmental conditions minimal focus has been placed on the influence of community SES on teacher’s perception of stress (Kenyeri, 2002). Additional resources are needed at high poverty schools, but many times are not provided teachers become overwhelmed and overworked. A lack of resources can cause a teacher to feel they cannot meet the needs of their students adequately.

Teacher programs often do not prepare teachers for situations they may encounter at high-poverty schools. “We are setting impossible expectations for those who do not want to compromise their standards of quality teaching” (Lloyd, 2012, p. 24). Helping students beyond just providing an education can cause stress for teachers. If a teacher faces the continued stress that can lead to a bigger concern for the teacher who may become burned out. The effect of teacher burnout on education is critical - teacher burnout contributes to other issues such as
leaving the teaching profession, teacher absenteeism, and lower achievement for students (Hastings & Bham, 2003). Burnout is “a type of psychological distress—a chronic negative psychological condition that results as day-to-day work stressors take their toll” on educators (Roloff & Brown, 2011, p. 453). Teachers who experience burnout begin to feel negative about their job and may decide to leave the education field.

Teacher burnout has a very negative effect on the teacher’s emotional state and physical state whether you are a newer teacher or not. Lloyd focused on newer teachers and the preparation they receive. To have quality teachers in the profession, the issue of stress and burnout needs to be understood. Understanding the causes of teacher stress and burnout can put a focus on preventative measures to reduce the number of teachers working in high-poverty schools from leaving the profession.

Cultural differences can lead to boundaries in the classroom causing increased stress. For instance, without proper English Language Learner training, it is difficult to overcome the language barrier and provide quality instruction. The self-reported teacher-efficacy and cultural receptivity levels of preservice teachers were higher than those teachers who had only completed one year in urban schools. Teachers in low socio-economic schools have additional challenges.

Teachers in schools with more minority students and more low-income students experienced more victimization, perhaps as a result of fewer resources in the school, increased exposure to violence in the community, and more stressful life events (Berg & Cornell, 2016). Students who live in poverty do not have access to the same resources as suburban students due to family financial status. For instance, parent involvement, school supplies, and school resources are not as prevalent in low socio-economic schools. With lower involvement, lack of
resources, and students living in poverty, in addition to teacher work demands, teachers may become stressed with all the demands in a Title I school.

**Compassion fatigue.** Teachers are responsible for students learning, but all also responsible for students socially and emotionally wellbeing. Teachers in high-poverty school may begin to suffer from compassion fatigue. Working with students who need resources, that may have been abused, neglected, or witnessed traumatic events can cause the educator to experience compassion fatigue. Not many studies consider the impact of compassion fatigue on educators, even though there is a profusion of literature in the fields of social work (Bride, Radey, & Figley, 2007). People who experience compassion fatigue feel a sense of isolation, helplessness, and confusion (Figley, 2002). Compassion fatigue may result in secondary symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (Craig & Sprang, 2010).

Compasson fatigue can cause a teacher to become less empathic. Neff and McGehee (2010) stated, “self-compassion as the ability to hold one’s feelings of suffering with a sense of warmth, connection, and concern” and argues that this attitude of acceptance when facing pain or failure represents an important pathway to mental health, (p. 226). Teachers that do not feel empathy for students may not able to provide the support a student may need. Students in Title I schools need resources and support. Compassion fatigue limits one's ability or desire to be empathic and fully understand others' suffering (Figley, 2002). Furthermore, if teachers understood compassion fatigue, they would be more effective in identifying the symptoms, this could cause them to administrative supervision to mediate the effects (Simpson & Starkey, 2006). Additionally, understanding the symptoms of compassion fatigue may help gain insight on how administration can help teachers who suffer from compassion fatigue.
**Teacher accountability.** Teachers have responsibilities that go beyond teaching. The stress elementary teacher’s encounter may be caused by having responsibilities that are not balanced with appropriate resources. Hughes (2015) stated, “in an age of testing and accountability, dehumanization becomes a social norm of the educational system we reduce youth to numbers and teachers to assessors and evaluators, assessment and evaluation have never been the sum of teaching” (p 30). The level of responsibility with the limited time in the workday can attribute to teacher stress. To address the growing demands for accountability, Howard (2003) estimated that more than 200,000 new teachers would be needed annually for the next 10 years. This is concerning, especially if this stress leads to teachers leaving the profession. With the increased stress and accountability figuring out how to help teachers balance or cope with stress would be beneficial.

Teachers have experienced increased accountability related to their job evaluations (Papay, 2012). Schools focus on testing accountability for funding, causing stress for teachers. A teacher needs to be sensitive to understand, analyze and handle every student who has his own unique limitations and strengths meet the need of their students (Iyer, 2016). The teacher needs to prepare daily for the day, consider the students’ learning needs, and prepare the classroom environment for the students. Darling-Hammond (2013) warned that when evaluations are poorly perceived, we risk losing effective teachers to frustration.

Teachers are expected to differentiate lessons and teaching styles for students individually, but also prepare students for standardized tests. Challenges of accountability, lack of administrative or parental support, and lack of time to feel prepared, schools and teachers now are also dealing with severe cutbacks in resources, overloaded classrooms, and pay cuts or
furloughs (Richards, 2012). The student performance expectations have increased, but the support and resources to support that goal have been reduced (Richards, 2012). The accountability place on teachers who are lacking resources needed to fulfill their jobs may be a factor that contributes to teacher stress. Teachers are evaluated on student test scores and student growth. The accountability placed on teachers to help students academically can be difficult when students need help emotionally, socially and need resources such as food and clothing. The additional work demands can cause stress that may lead to burnout.

**Importance of leadership.** Understanding the causes of teacher stress and burnout can put a focus on preventative measures to reduce stress and help teachers cope with stress. Teachers face stress from different factors encountered in education. Sass, Seal, and Martin (2010) stated, “One justification is that behavioral exchanges with students are expected by teachers and can be considered a main part of their work effort, whereas administrative stressors are considered as an additional, unneeded stressor” (p. 1). The additional unneeded stressor can cause teachers to feel even more stressed since it is perceived as unneeded or unnecessary.

Throughout this study, the stress factors teachers encountered interacting with school leadership was examined. External relationship with administration can cause obstacles with staff this external relationship with school authorities and co-workers are perceived to have a more negative effect than interactions with students (Sass et al., 2010). This interaction between administration and teachers can interfere with student learning. The factors that cause teacher stress can be prevented or can provide teachers with coping skills by using different strategies. One way to prevent stress is by having leaders who will implement needed strategies and who understand the importance of being proactive regarding teacher stress. Praise and recognition should be a focus for the school leader to improve school climate. A positive climate is one
strategy that can help educators deal with stress. Leaders who make a positive climate a focus will help the overall school. Student and teacher relationships can cause stress, but relationships with colleagues and superiors can cause a more damaging stress.

Principals should have an active role in the collaboration process to ensure the school success. Although the concept of leadership continues to change today, administration roles are and still difficult to perform. Leaders will gain more respect from staff by leading by example. Understanding the importance of preventing teacher stress is important for school leaders. “Recognition of achievement leads a person to shine the culmination of the Cycle of Excellence” (Hallowell, 2011, p. 174). Understanding the importance of motivating teachers and helping them remember what drives them to be a teacher will help educators feel connected to their workplace. “The modern workplace tends to leave people disconnected-emotionally alone, isolated, exhausted, anxious, and afraid-with no idea how they got that way or what to do about it” (Hallowell, 2011, p. 35). Workplace stress can victimize teachers and leave them with negative feelings.

Leaders can use multiple strategies such as transformational leadership to help reduce stress for educators. Leaders should put a focus on teacher satisfaction. Dinham and Scott (1998, 2000) and Sergiovanni (1967) suggested a connection between teacher satisfaction and factors associated with intrinsic rewards, e.g., student-teacher relationship and teacher and student achievements, and a link between teacher dissatisfaction and extrinsic factors, e.g., school leadership and climate, teacher workload, and school communication. The stress factors that teachers face can affect their performance. What is most important at work is to understand and distinguish between when people are completely engrossed in their job and fully exhibit their physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities at work and when they remain completely withdrawn
and disassociated from their tasks (Iyer, 2016). Motivating, giving positive feedback, and supporting teachers will help boost their self-esteem and avoid being an unneeded stress for teachers.

Leadership style along with using preventative and coping strategies to help teachers with stress would be beneficial for teachers, students, and the school. According to Lazarus (2000) “Research clearly indicates that teachers who have such supportive resources are more resistant to the harmful effects of stress as well as cope better when they do experience stress (pg.37). Administration can focus on a positive praise towards teachers, instead of focusing on a criticism approach. The leadership style of administrators is one of the main ways to help promote a positive climate and encourage employees. A united school with all participants feeling a sense of community and support will enhance the school environment, help teachers cope with stress, and enhance student experience.

**Chapter 2 Summary**

This chapter included the focus of this study and factors that contributed to teacher stress. Understanding how teachers perceive stress may help with teacher retention and provide teachers with resources and coping skills to help manage the stress. “59% of teachers and 63% of administrators say their district is not doing enough to identify, compensate, promote, and retain the most effective teachers” (Brandt, 2011, p. 30), elementary school is the first school experience takes place for many; teachers’ efforts can mold and channel young, vulnerable, and receptive minds of students in the right direction (Iyer, 2016). The literature review focused on teacher’s perception of stress and teacher retention.

The theory used in this study was Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) Transactional Model of Stress. This theory was used to see teacher’s perceptions of balance between classroom demands
The chapter goes on to analyze Maslach Burnout, Indicators and Symptoms of Stress, teacher burnout, coping strategies, and Title I schools. Each section discussed the importance of understanding teacher stress and burnout. What appears to be missing in the literature is a better understanding of the factors that lead to teacher stress (Lambert & McCarthy, 2006). Even though teacher stress has been studied the knowledge gained regarding this phenomenon, its antecedents and consequences, many questions and aspects are left underexplored (Zysberg, Orenshtein, Gimmon, & Robinson, 2016). Focusing on if teachers perceive they are stressed and finding out what is causing their stress was the focus of this study.
Chapter 3: Methodology and Design

Introduction

This study focused on teachers’ perception of stress, burnout, and teacher retention. The methodology that was used in this research is a qualitative case study design targeting elementary school teachers at Title I schools in one Eastern state. Teacher stress can lead to burnout, which may cause teachers to leave the field of education. What appears missing in the teacher stress literature is the application of empirically supported models of stress and coping that will facilitate a better understanding of the factors that lead to teacher stress (Lambert & McCarthy, 2006). The goal of this study was to identify teacher’s perception of stress.

Focusing on teacher’s ability to weigh their job demands and coping skills can help teachers understand their perception of stress. Lazarus and Folkman hypothesized that encountering life demands may result in a subjective transaction in which the person weighs perceived demands of the event against perceived capabilities for coping (McCarthy, Lambert, & Ullrich, 2010, p. 2). Perceptions that life demands outweigh available resources can lead to the stress response, which includes negative emotions and, in the long term, burnout symptoms and health problems (Sapolsky, 1998).

This research study took place in two urban schools located in one Eastern state. The research question in this study addressed perceptions of stress factors elementary teachers face in low socioeconomic schools. The question addressed teacher retention, while the interview questions looked at teachers’ views stress in the workplace. The following question was used to guide the study: How do teachers in Title I schools perceive job stress and teacher retention?

The inventory used to collect this data is the Maslach Burnout Inventory Educator Survey. The MBI-ES is a burnout inventory which has been used in many research studies to
assess occupational stress. This data was looked at in a qualitative manner. The inventory was utilized to find out if the participants being interview were stressed. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach & Jackson, 1981, 1986) is the most widely used measure of occupational burnout, the inability to function effectively in one's job because of prolonged and extensive job-related stress (Byrne, 1991, p. 4). This was given to all teachers who participated in this study. The Maslach Burnout Inventory Educator Survey was purchased at Mind Garden. The inventory was distributed by email and the questions were scored by Mind Garden. Individual interviews were conducted with each participant. The interviews consisted of predetermined questions. The questions addressed how the participants feel about stress and burnout. The interview consisted of 8 teachers who worked at low socioeconomic elementary schools located in one Eastern state.

**Research Methodology**

The case study design was utilized to gain an understanding of the research problem by collecting data in the form of interviews, MBI-ES, and field notes. Including multiple sources of data ensured that the study reflected an accurate account of the perceptions in question (Creswell, 2013). Further analysis of the data resulted in an understanding of teacher perceptions of stress and teacher retention. The methodology of the research was qualitative. The case study exposed the realities of differences in opinions that translated into identifying effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the study (Yin, 2014). Qualitative research helps to provide useful data and perspectives during the investigational process. “Qualitative research relies heavily on interpretive perceptions throughout the planning, data gathering, analysis, and write-up of the study” (Stake, 2010, p. 55).
Population and Sampling Method

For this study, data was gathered from Title I elementary schools located in one Eastern state. The basis for participant selection for this study was their employment at the school location where the study took place, including being a full-time teacher for at least one year at the selected schools. Purposeful, non-probability sampling for this study provided information that allowed exploration of teacher perceptions of stress and teacher retention.

The goal of this research was to identify elementary teacher’s perceived stress at Title I elementary schools that are located in one Eastern state. The two schools used in this study have similar demographics and a comparable number of students. Both schools are Title I schools with approximately 600 students. Approximately 70% of the students are low income. Around 50% of students are Hispanic, 25% African American and 20% are Caucasian students. Each school has at least 20 teaching staff members. The two-elementary school that were selected due to their location and similarities. The selected schools had similar demographics and staff, but were located in different areas of the Eastern state. The Maslach Burnout Inventory Educator survey was sent to all participants. Individual interviews were conducted for all participants.

Sources of Data

The sources of data used for this study consists of interviews, field notes, and the MBI-ES. Maslach is at the forefront of research involving burnout research. Maslach described burnout as “physical and mental exhaustion observed in all professionals, whose work requires continuous contact with others” (Beckstead, 2002, p. 785). The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-ES) is an instrument, which has been used worldwide to assess occupational stress in human service professions (Byrne, 1991). This measure can help identify teachers who are suffering from work-related stress and burnout. The interview questions focused on participants’
perceptions of job-related stress. The first set of interview questions consisted of 8 questions that reflect their current perspectives on teacher stress and retention in Title I schools. Additionally, the interview helped identify teachers coping strategies for stress.

To address burnout for teachers, it is important to assess teachers to see if they are stressed. The Maslach Burnout Inventory Educator Survey (MBI-ES), an instrument that assesses three dimensions, can show how stress effects individuals mentally and physically (Dorman, 2003). This instrument can indicate what variables causes stress. Ingersoll (2001) reviewed data suggesting that teacher shortages are not caused primarily by a lack of individuals entering the profession but instead are the result of a “revolving door” in which large numbers of teachers leave for reasons other than retirement. Although aspects of teaching in any school can cause teachers stress, (i.e., large class sizes, high levels of instructional and non-instructional duties, lower salaries, etc.), it is important to understand that teachers' perceptions of their own demands and resources can be an important determinant of whether or not they experience stress (McCarthy, Lambert, & McCarthy, 2010).

When using the interview as one of the approaches for data collection, it is important to include questions that are open-ended (Creswell, 2013). The purpose of the interview was to allow the researcher to understand teacher perceptions on a qualitative level. Reviewing the interview responses allowed the researcher to analyze qualitative data on teacher perceptions generated from the responses. The interviews acted as verbal reports of data, the field notes and MBI-ES corroborated the data. Field notes were taken during, and right after the interview process. The researcher to field notes during the interviews to include verbal and non-verbal responses and cues.
Data Collection

The researcher contacted the district where the study would be conducted once approval was granted from Concordia University’s Institutional Review board. A required district form was filled out and provided to the district to explain the study and the protocol the study would follow. Superintendent and principal approval was granted to conduct the study at the two sites. Once the approvals were granted the researcher prepared an email to send to the principal of both schools. The email that was prepared contained a consent form, information on the study, and the researcher’s contact information. This email was sent to each principal to forward to their staff. The email to staff generated sufficient responses for the target sample size. The researcher followed up with an email to the participants. The researcher participant role was explained via email to establish a researcher participant working relationship. The follow up email to participants contained an additional consent form, overview of the study and a request for dates and times that would work for the participants. The study was conducted outside the instructional day for the participants.

The data collection processes incorporated in this study were interviews with teachers, the MBI-ES, and field notes. The initial face-to-face interviews were conducted with eight teachers on different days at a predetermined location and time. The goals of the interviews were to understand how teachers perceived workplace stress burnout, and teacher retention. The average interview took approximately 45 minutes. Each interview was audio recorded to ensure all data received and notes were accurate.

After the researcher conducted the interviews, the researcher listened to the recording of the interviews. The researcher took field notes of observations of the participant’s demeanor and additional comments after and during the interviews. The data from the field notes consisted of
participant comments made regarding the study, participant demeanor, and any information or comments participants provided after the interview questions. The participants’ answers were recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed. The interview responses and field notes were downloaded to Nvivo software program. In the next phase, the participants completed the Maslach Burnout Inventory Education Survey (MBI-ES) to examine if the participants actually perceived the experience of stress due to their job. The MBI-ES is a survey that has a focus on the three dimensions of work burnout for teachers: emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization. The MBI-ES consisted of 22 questions with a seven-point, Likert-type scale with a 0-6 rating, the following are the three areas of measure that are in the survey:

The MBI-ES was purchased through Mind Garden. The participant’s emails were entered in the Mind Garden website. The participants were emailed the MBI-ES from the Mind Garden website. Once the MBI-ES completed, the report was sent to the researcher. Data collected during this study was stored on the researcher’s computer that was password protected with only the researcher having access. The transcribed interviews, field notes and MBI-ES was stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home office. The data collected from this study will be stored for three years, then all data will be destroyed by the researcher.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

The goal of qualitative data analysis was to uncover emerging themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understandings (Patton, 2002). The analysis consisted of different phases preparing and analyzing the data. The researcher gather data, analyzed the data, and used open and axial coding. “Qualitative research relies heavily on interpretive perceptions throughout the planning, data gathering, analysis, and write-up of the study (Stake, 2010, p. 55). The first phase of data
analysis consisted of secretarial and organization tasks. Immediately upon completion of the interview, the researcher dedicated time to transcribe audio recordings from the interview and read through all field notes and typed them in entirety.

The field notes provide the researcher with data from the probe questions, observations during the interview, and any comments made before or after the interview. For instance, the researcher was able to observe the participants’ demeanor and additional comments, or comments related to the questions asked. Rubin and Rubin (2005) explained that this improves the researcher’s subsequent questioning (p. 111). Some participants commented how this study would be useful for the District to see to better understand teacher stress. A couple of participants also commented on providing this information to the teacher union to help address teacher stress and lack of resources in Title I schools.

Next the researcher began preparing the transcripts to code the data. Pre-coding, open coding and axial coding was used to code the data. The researcher analyzed each interview and looked for similarities and wrote down any similarity that was found. Next the researcher listened to the audio recordings. The researcher transcribed the recording and underlined the first response to each interview question. The researcher typed both the field notes and the transcribed interview into a word document. The researcher pre-coded the data by analyzing the field notes and writing down any words that were repeated. Never overlook the opportunity to “pre-code” by circling, highlighting, bolding, underlining, or coloring rich or significant participant quotes (Layder, 1998). The researcher went through the field notes and interview transcripts and highlighted any common words or repeated words. The data that was analyzed and coded showed patterns and repeated words regarding the teachers’ perceptions of stress.
Analysis begins with identification of the themes emerging from the raw data, a process sometimes referred to as "open coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher read through the all data multiple times. Open coding consists of close examination of data and breaking that down into parts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). After analyzing all of the data the researcher categorized the data creating labels. The data coded found themes and patterns causing the participants stress. The goal of qualitative data analysis is to uncover emerging themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understandings (Patton, 2002).

Next, both documents were uploaded using Nvivo software to determine any additional themes or patterns. The data was collected and organized into categories using NVivo software. The researcher then sorted through the information that was related to teacher’s perception of stress and the impact on retention. When the interview data and field note data agreed, the study findings were deemed more dependable (Ary et al., 2010). The researcher analyzed the categories found in Nvivo and circled any common pattern found in the interview transcripts or field notes. The researcher then used axial coding to condense the patterns and categories found to fit into themes. During this cycle, "the code is sharpened to achieve its best fit" (Glaser, 1978, p. 62).

The MBI-ES was sent to each participant via email, through Mind Garden. The MBI-ES was taken by each participant online. The results of the MBI-ES were sent to the researcher. The researcher analyzed each result to see what the participant scored in each of the three areas. The main area the researcher focused on was emotional exhaustion. The researcher analyzed the data to see if the participant scored in the percentile that is at risk for emotional exhaustion.

To ensure credibility there are several methods were used in the qualitative research in this study. One made used by the researcher was triangulation. Qualitative researchers
triangulate their evidence (Stake, 2010, p. 123). This study used multiple data sources such as interviews, field notes, and the MBI-ES. The researcher compared the interview transcript responses to the field notes. Using axial coding, triangulation, and the use of thick descriptions confirmed credibility of the data. The researcher also used member checking for transcript verification. Member checking ensure the researcher had all the correct information from the participants.

**Ethical Issues**

To ensure ethical guidelines are met the researcher provided participants with an in-depth description and procedure of the study. Adams and Lawrence (2015) stated, “According to ethical guidelines, all studies should be designed to increase our knowledge about behaviors, situations, or theories. The researcher has a responsibility to use only those measures or procedures that will produce meaningful results” (p. 95). Using the data collection instruments provided a stronger, more valid and reliable results for this study. This ensured minimal risk to participants in this study. Qualitative research poses ethical issues and challenges unique to the study of human beings (Eide & Kahn, 2008).

Participants reviewed an in-depth description of the study. Confidentiality was reviewed with participants. The participant’s identity was not available during or after the study. The researcher had connections to both schools, having worked at both schools within the previous five years, but no longer working at either school. The teacher participants should not have felt pressure to participate in the study. The school administration did not receive the names of the participating teachers or their answers. All answers were coded and the identity of the participants was withheld during the study. Participant privacy was explained and all participants were coded to ensure confidentiality throughout the study.
Chapter 3 Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of elementary teachers working in one Eastern state in relation to stress. The research design chosen for this study is qualitative with a case study design combined with the MBI-ES with selected personal interviews. This study gathered data through personal interviews with the teachers and the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

The interview method can be a very useful technique for collecting data which would likely not be accessible using techniques such as observations or a questionnaire (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2010, p. 193). The measurement tool used in this study was The Maslach Burnout Inventory Educator Survey. Using the MBI-ES results determined whether the teachers working at the Title I focus school were experiencing stress. Including personal interviews in this study identified teachers’ perceptions of stress factors. A qualitative examination of the MBI-ES provided evidence of participants’ stress to answer the research problem from the perspectives of the participants, including the participants’ feelings and opinions regarding stress and burnout.

The research method and design that guided this study on teacher stress used interviews, field notes, and the MBI-ES. The case study approach gathered in-depth answers from participants. “Qualitative research relies heavily on interpretive perceptions throughout the planning, data gathering, analysis, and write-up of the study (Stake, 2010, p. 55).” The researcher recorded all details of the data with the understanding that the information found may be important to the investigation.

Chapter three focused on how the data was collected and on the research questions used to drive the study. The chapter included an explanation of the research methodology and the
instruments used to collect the data. Once the data was collected, the researcher reviewed and coded the data. The researcher thoroughly explained the study to the participants and maintained participant confidentiality. Finally, the chapter explained the data analysis and the ethical implications of the study.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the perceptions of work-related stress from elementary teachers who teach in Title I schools. The setting for this study took place in one Eastern state. Participants included eight elementary school teachers. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the data collected and an analysis and results of the research.

Data collection consisted of interviews, MBI-ES, and field notes. Audio recordings, field notes and transcripts from the interviews provided opportunities for multiple reviews of the data. During a 4-week period, June and July 2017, data was collected. This data was collected following the completion of eight interviews, in June 2017, The Maslach Burnout Indicator-Educator’s Survey (MBI-ES) was emailed to the eight participants. The data from the MBI-ES was emailed to the researcher from Mind Garden.

The data collected from the interviews and MBI-ES provided the researcher with answers to how teachers perceive stress and if this also impacts teacher retention. The interview questions showed some participants would like to leave the profession or transfer to another school. The interview questions also provided data supporting the teachers perceived themselves as being stressed. Furthermore, the interviews provided what the participants felt caused them to experience stress at work. The MBI-ES provided data to show the majority of teachers in this study scored in the percentile of experiencing emotional exhaustion.
Descriptive Data

Data was gathered from Title I elementary schools located in one Eastern state. The basis for participant selection for this study was their employment at the school location where the study took place. Additionally, the participants had to be a full-time teacher for at least one year at the selected schools. The two schools used in this study have similar demographics and a comparable number of students. Both schools are Title I schools with approximately 600 students. Approximately 70% of the students are low income. Around 50% of students are Hispanic, 25% African American and 20% are Caucasian students. Each school has at least 20 teaching staff members.

The sample used for this qualitative case study was eight elementary school teachers, four from School A and four from School B. Three females and one male participated from school A and three females and one male from school B. The participants, each Caucasian, included elementary teachers and special education teachers and each consented to participate in the study. The participants all met the study criteria of the amount of time they have worked as a teacher. The participants teaching experience ranged from six years to 20 years.

Data Analysis

The researcher first collected, then analyzed the data. The first method of collecting data in this study was an individual interview with each participant. The interview provided information pertaining to the eight participants’ perceptions regarding job-related stress and the factors that may cause this. After analyzing the data collected from the interviews and field notes several primary themes emerged from the data that relate to the participants’ experience with stress at school. These themes included lack of resources, low economic status, low parental involvement, state testing, student behavior, and administration leadership style for
causes of their stress. Most participants enjoy teaching at a Title I school. Participants all stated they felt stressed working at a Title I school.

The research methodology used was qualitative. This approach was used to gain an in-depth perception from each participant. “A key characteristic of qualitative research that is based on participant perspectives is the belief that participants actively construct their own reality” (McMillan, 2012, p. 227). The qualitative approach facilitated the data analysis used for this study. This qualitative case study did use a Likert scale survey, the MBI-ES in this study. “A social research survey is a set of questions or statements or scales—from paper, on the telephone, or on the screen—usually asked the same way of all respondents. The data are turned into totals, medians, percent’s, comparisons, and correlations, all fitting nicely into a quantitative approach, but qualitative researchers often save a part of their inquiry (Stake, 2010, p. 99). The main source of the participant’s input was taken from the interviews, but the MBI-ES was used to see if the participants were suffering from emotional exhaustion. In many qualitative studies, the survey items are interpretive items (Stake, 2010, p.99).

The interview process (see Appendix E), developed included probing questions to expand on participants’ answers. Interviews with participants were scheduled on days and times that were convenient for them. Each interview lasted approximately 40-60 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed later, field notes were taken at the time of the interview. Participants were emailed the transcripts of the interview to their personal email address that was provided by them at the time of the interview for member checking. Electronic data was stored on a flash drive and on the desktop of a password-protected computer. Field notes from the interviews were important to the process of triangulation in this qualitative case study. Field
notes were taken during the individual interview, and the interviews were transcribed by the researcher from the audio recordings.

Analysis began with the examination of the field notes, recordings of the individual interviews, and results of the MBI-ES. The researcher was also able to develop themes and concepts that were communicated from the participants. This allowed the researcher to determine how to organize and code the data. The first step was to listen to the audio recording of the interview to transcribe each interview conducted. This allowed the researcher to read through the data and develop an overall understanding of each individual participant. The researcher compared this to the field notes that were taken during the interview to make sure all data received during the interview was compared to the recording.

To analyze the data from the interviews, the researcher used open coding. Using open coding helped the researcher to define concepts and develop categories. The researcher typed up the field notes and reviewed the notes to ensure inclusion of all data. The researcher also reviewed the interview transcripts to ensure inclusion in the transcript of all information from the interviews. By organizing the codes into categories, themes emerged from the data.

Commonalities identified from the individual interviews and field notes were the factors that participants felt caused them stress. The factors consisted of lack of resources, state testing, low parental involvement, behavior, and leadership style. A group norm on the MBI-ES was established for the participants on the inventory by finding the average combined score of all the participants. The group research norm was a score of 4 for emotional exhaustion (see Table 1). Any score above 4 indicated the participant was at risk for burnout; according to the MBI-ES, the score of 4 or above is in the 90% which indicates emotional exhaustion. This data helped organize stress levels of participants in comparison to their group.
Field notes and transcripts were uploaded to NVivo software. NVivo software was used to open code the transcripts from the interview and the field notes (see Table 1) to distinguish commonalities and key words. Software coding allowed verification of the common themes emerging from the interviews and field notes. The researcher utilized open coding, to analyze the data. By using open coding, the researcher was able to identify patterns and group the patterns into categories to further analyze. The categories were compared to the results from the Nvivo software. The results showed what words were most prevalent based on the interviews and notes. This confirmed what themes were present based on the teachers’ perceptions.

Table 1

**NVivo Codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Weighted Percentage</th>
<th>Similar Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>participant</td>
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<td>149</td>
<td>8.80</td>
<td>participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>school, schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>year, years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>needs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>need, needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>lack, lacking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grade</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>grade, grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parents</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>parent, parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stress</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>stress, stressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behavior</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>behavior, behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>help, helping, helps</td>
</tr>
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<td>work</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>work, working</td>
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<td>kids</td>
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<td>Title I</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>testing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher completed the coding process by establishing common themes and keywords and drawing conclusions from coding. The researcher reviewed the coding from NVivo software to the themes discovered by the researcher to ensure patterns or themes were
valid. The commonalities of the answers from the interviews emerged by analyzing the word patterns found in the transcripts and field notes using NVivo.

Results

Then research question informed the purpose of the study and guided the data collection process.

R1. How do teachers in Title I schools perceive job stress and teacher retention?

The results from the interviews conducted with the participants showed other commonalities from participant responses. A commonality among the participants was that all participants felt there was a lack of resources needed for their students. Of the eight participants, three participants would leave their current Title I school and go to either another school or a non-Title I school, one participant was unsure, and four participants would not leave their current school. When asked if the participants thought about leaving the profession, five participants contemplated leaving the education field. Five of the eight participants felt coping strategies and/or stress preventative strategies would be beneficial. Three of the eight participants were unsure if coping strategies and/or stress preventative strategies would be beneficial.

The next method of collecting data involved each participant taking the MBI-ES. The MBI-ES contained 22 questions that will give each participant an individual score for Depersonalization, Personal Achievement, and Emotional Exhaustion. Scoring a 90% or above for Emotional Exhaustion is an indicator of burnout. The results of the MBI-ES for the participants showed that five out of the eight participants were at 90% or more and at risk for burnout. One participant was at 87% for emotional exhaustion and two participants both scored 38% for emotional exhaustion.
Data collection was by individual and focus group interviews, preparation of field notes, and the MBI-ES. First, the results from the interviews will be presented followed by results from the MBI-ES. The purpose of the first interview was to document each participant’s teaching experience and their personal feelings toward work-related stress at Title I schools. The researcher went over the consent form with each participant before the interview questions were asked. The researcher then reviewed what the study entailed along with participant confidentiality, (see appendix F). The researcher next explained the interview will be tape recorded with participant permission. The participants were made aware that at any time during the interview if they wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, to let the researcher know. Next the participants were asked eight questions. Probing questions prompted the participants to expand on their answers. All participants met a predetermined location. As a thank you, each participant was given a snack and a beverage before the interview questions were asked. The participants provided the following responses to the interview question:

**Question 1. “How long have you been teaching at this school? This District? What Grades?”** Participant A: “I have been teaching in this School and district for 6 years; I teach third grade and always have.”

Participant B: “This will be my thirteenth year of teaching, 10 years in this district. I teach fifth grade.”

Participant C: “Six years total teaching all in this district. I have taught second, fifth grade and Special Education third- fifth grade this year I am teaching second grade again.

Participant D: “Teaching for 6 years, 5 years in this district. I teach first grade currently, but did teach Kindergarten for 4 years.”
Participant E: “I fourth grade, and I have taught every grade kindergarten-fifth grade, and was a Reading Specialist.”

Participant F: “I have taught for 9 years all at this school in this district, all grades kindergarten-fifth grade”

Participant G: “Total, 19 years. I taught kindergarten-fifth grade special education all in this district”

Participant H: “17 years’ total, 9 at my present school and 16 years in the district. I have taught second, fourth, and fifth grade.”

**Question 2. Describe your experience teaching at a Title I School?**

Participant A: “Students and teachers are stressed. The school has students with high-level needs and low parent involvement. Struggles with poverty, behavior concerns, high ELL and Special Education population in the school. I love working with the students, but it is very difficult to meet all the student’s needs, consistently taking work home.”

Participant B: “Constant disruptive behaviors that interrupt instruction, parents do not always work with the school and sometimes ignore communication from the schools.”

Participant C: “It is rewarding, but takes a toll on you due to all the stress, the needs cannot be possibly met with continuous budget cuts. The parents are not very involved or are not supportive of the teacher.”

Participant D: “Lack of funding, lack of staffing, and lack of parent involvement makes it difficult to see progress, but when kids improve the payoff is huge.”

Participant E: “Rewarding, you can see the difference you make for the students. The kids know that they matter to you and that school is a safe place for them. A bond forms between you and the students, this improves their self-esteem and they know they have an adult
that cares about them. The first few years can be a struggle and you have to have a passion for helping kids with so many needs.”

Participant F: “Challenging, all of our students come from low-income families, and some have suffered childhood trauma. Research shows the effect trauma has on a child’s brain and resources needed to help children who suffer from trauma. Students have a difficult time socializing in a positive manner, all of the needs make it difficult to meet student standards and teaching requirements.”

Participant G: “Title I schools have a higher rate of behaviors then non-Title I schools; Parents aren’t well informed. They are, however, very appreciative of anything you do for their students. Parent have little idea how to get help for their children. Many times, the parents are lacking education or skills needed to help their child succeed in school.”

Participant H: “The kids in Title I schools bring a set of challenges unlike any other type of school. The children rarely have the structure, support or stability at home to participate in the general curricula. They need constant modifications and accommodations to be successful.”

Question 3. Do you feel you have adequate resources to meet the student’s needs?

Participant A: “No, lack of staff to work with student behaviors, emotional health of students, or give students counseling. Lacking curricular materials, resources, and resources for the classroom. Not enough resources for students who are ELL, Special Education, or have behavior concerns. There is also a lack of substitutes to cover classes.”

Participant B: “No, especially for students who need resources for emotional issues”

Participant C: “No, we need more resources for our students”

Participant D: “No, it seems like more and more is expected but we are giving less and less”
Participant E: “There is not enough resources, not enough money to pay for items or materials, most materials for students you pay for out of pocket. Not much room, the school is overcrowded, you have to make the best of with what you have”

Participant F: “No, not at all. There is only one Guidance Counselor who is constantly needed. It is not possible for her to meet with all the students who need her, also need additional materials and resources for students, there was extra support staff but that was cut when there was a budget freeze.”

Participant G: “No. I feel that every time we get close to having what we need, budgetary measures impact our resources, we do not have enough materials for academic success and the mental health is desperately needed in this school”

Participant H: “Absolutely not. The challenges that we face are not understood at the State, District, or Federal level. Teachers and the union voice help is needed, but the higher levels in the State and the Federal level seem to not hear our needs at our high poverty schools. We need supports not just for the children but for the parents”

**Question 4. How often if ever, do you feel stressed from your job?** The following are the responses given by the participants:

Participant A: “A lot, pretty much every day.”

Participant B: “Often.”

Participant C: “Very Often” Pretty much a few times a week at the very least.

Participant D: “Daily.” Every single day I encounter stress due to my job. I am feeling very overwhelmed, especially at this point in the year.

Participant E: “Daily, but not always throughout the entire day.”

Participant F: “All the time.” Frequently through the day.
Participant G: “Everyday”
Participant H: “Constantly”

**Question 5. Do you think about leaving the profession?**

Participant A: “No” Even though it is extremely stressful, my heart is teaching students.
Participant B: “Yes, I did leave briefly and then returned” I do still consider leaving or seeking a different position in the education field.
Participant C: “Yes” I do think about leaving the profession a lot.
Participant D: “Yes” I think about leaving or finding a position at a different school.
Participant E: “No” I would not want any other career.
Participant F: “Yes, especially this year” This year has been extremely challenging, I feel unsupported throughout all the challenges.
Participant G: “No, I love working with my students”
Participant H: “More and more often, If I was not so invested into my retirement and do not want to start somewhere at entry level, I would more seriously consider it.”

**Question 6. If you could transfer to a non-Title I school, would you?**

Participant A: “considering and will change schools, not specifically looking for a non-Title I school”.
Participant B: “No” I would look at different positions I could work in at the school, but would not specifically look for a non-Title I school.
Participant C: “No, not necessarily”
Participant D: “Yes” I would transfer to another school if a position became available at a non-title I school.
Participant E: “Never” Working in a Title I school has challenges, but I enjoy working with the students.

Participant F: “Yes” I would like to work in a school that is not Title I

Participant G: “No” I enjoy working with students I have, I prefer working at a Title I school.

Participant H: “Not sure, I love these kids”

**Question 7. What do you feel causes you stress at work?**

Participant A: “Not feeling valued and respected by leadership, leadership not communicating effectively with staff, parents, and students. Student behavior adds additional stress to this”.

Participant B: “Testing, paperwork, teacher accountability, and student behavior”

Participant C: “Amount of student needs and lack of resources to meet the needs”

Participant D: “Workload, student behavior, politics”

Participant E: “Lack of consistency of procedures in the building and the constant change of policy, procedures, and rules for students by leadership, safety concerns, parents not following school rules”

Participant F: “Not feeling supported by the administration, teacher-driven rules instead of Leadership enforcing rules, kids see the inconsistency and lack of follow through. Low morale and lack of support.”

Participant G: “Accountability with the lack of resources to meet student needs”

Participant H: “Not enough resources or staff to help students”
Question 8. Do you think stress preventative strategies and coping skills such as mindfulness will help reduce stress?

Participant A: “I think it depends on the teacher, I personally feel making time for myself, and breathing exercises help with stress”.

Participant B: “Yes!” I feel yoga helps me when I am stressed, and keeps me grounded.

Participant C: “Yes, especially mindfulness” I feel it is important for us but also for the students as well.

Participant D: “Yes” Exercise works well; I do not know much about mindfulness but have heard positive comments about mindfulness.

Participant E: “Yes, we used to have a Yoga class at the school after dismissal. It was a great stress reliever, but unfortunately is not offered anymore”. The administration at that time thought this was important and many staff participated in this program.

Participant F: “Probably” I really do not have an opinion either way, but it could not hurt.

Participant G: “Maybe” I believe it may help, I am unsure if it will solve the problem of stress with the added responsibilities of the job that seems to be growing each year.

Participant H: “Yes, exercises and physical work helps me” I think wellness if really important to decrease stress, or at least handle stress better.

The interview concluded with the researcher thanking each participant. The researcher then explained the next steps to the participant. First the researcher asked each participant for an email address. The researcher explained to the participants they would receive an email from Mind Garden with a link to take the MBI-ES survey. After the survey was taken each participant would receive the results of their MBI-ES by email, along with receiving an email from the
researchers with the transcribed interview. The researcher asked each participant if they had any questions regarding the next step, or any other questions regarding the study.

**Answering the research questions.** To answer the research question, open coding was used to analyze the data from the interviews. The researcher used open coding to compare and organize data into categories. NVivo software was used to find common themes and categories from the research data. Codes that were not related to the research question were removed from the list to categorize. Categories were developed by comparing the codes found by NVivo to the themes and patterns the researcher found on the field notes and interview transcripts.

The researcher analyzed the MBI-ES to determine if the participants who perceived they were stressed are suffering from stress. Tables 2, 3, and 4 below show each participant’s score for emotional exhaustion according to the MBI-ES. Each participant answered the 22 questions on the MBI-ES to determine their score. The frequency score for each question was 0 (Never), 1 (a few times a year or less), 2 (once a month or less), 3 (few times a month), 4 (once a week), 5 (a few times a week), 6 (every day).

Table 2

**MBI-ES Emotional Exhaustion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Participant Score (Emotional Exhaustion)</th>
<th>Group Norm Score (Emotional Exhaustion)</th>
<th>90th Percentile at risk for burnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The three areas scored were emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Each area had questions for the participants. Emotional exhaustion consisted of nine questions that focused on the emotional and physical energy of the participant. Depersonalization had five questions that related to the interaction with students. Personal accomplishment consisted of eight questions that related to the participant’s feelings towards their job accomplishments.

The questions asked related to the interview questions given to participants regarding work-related stress and the impact they feel this has on retention. The interview questions gained insight on the participant’s perception, while the results from the MBI-ES were able to

Table 3

**MBI-ES Depersonalization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Participant Score (depersonalization)</th>
<th>Group Norm Score (depersonalization)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

**MBI-ES Personal Accomplishment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Participant Score (personal accomplishment)</th>
<th>Group Norm Score (personal accomplishment)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
examine the effect of stress on the participants in each of the three areas. The MBI-ES does not provide a single, composite burnout score by (Kokkinos, 2006, p. 26). The scores did show if a participant was experiencing emotional exhaustion. A score above the group norm of 4 put participants in the range for emotional exhaustion. According to the MBI-ES, a score for Emotional Exhaustion of 90% or higher should act to reduce burnout. All participants during the interview perceived themselves to be stressed often due to their job, the scores on the MBI-ES reflected that many participants score high on emotional exhaustion.

According to the MBI-ES, higher emotional exhaustion and depersonalization contribute to higher burnout, higher personal accomplishment reduces burnout. The majority of the participants did score high on personal accomplishment. The two participants in this study who were not suffering from emotional had the lowest depersonalization, the lowest emotional exhaustion score, and the highest personal accomplishment score.

**Chapter 4 Summary**

This study examined the views of eight teachers and included data collected from eight participants. The data sources included interviews, MBI-ES, a review and analysis of documents. This chapter explored themes and various subthemes to gain an in-depth view of the participants’ experiences of stress, and teachers’ perceptions of stress and retention in Title I elementary schools. During this study, participants were interviewed individually and took the MBI-ES. The transcribed interview was shared with the participant as well as their MBI-ES score.

The findings showed all participants felt they were consistently stressed from their job ranging from every day to often throughout the week. The MBI-ES showed five of the eight participants had a score that indicated they were suffering from emotional exhaustion. The
findings also showed all participants felt there were not enough resources to meet their student’s needs. Other commonalities found in this research showed participants felt Title I schools were challenging, had low parent involvement, and presented stressors that a non-Title I school teacher may not encounter. The data from this study suggest that lack of resources at Title I schools is a need that should be addressed, not only for the students’ best interests, but also to lessen stress for teachers. Furthermore, the data analyzed showed a relevance to the research question. The data collected, and analyzed provided information on how the participants perceive stress and included the teachers perception on retention. Using a qualitative case study approach for this study enabled the researcher to get in-depth answers from the participants.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This qualitative case study examined teachers’ perceptions of stress and retention in Title I elementary schools in one Eastern state. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore perceptions of elementary teacher’s perception of stress at Title I schools. The study intended to answer the research question: How do teachers in Title I schools perceive job stress and teacher retention? The study included data collected from elementary school teachers who are currently teaching at Title I schools.

The data collected included participant interviews, field notes, and the MBI-ES, the participants consisted of eight elementary teachers who participated in interviews regarding their perceptions on work-related stress, along with taking the MBI-ES. The interviews conducted showed all participants perceived they were stressed from their job. The MBI-ES supported that the majority of participants were stressed from the job. This study is important to the field of education due to showing that stress is affecting teachers at Title I schools, and what the teachers perceive is causing their work-related stress. Understanding what factors are causing teachers stress can help the field of education prevent teacher stress which may, in turn, have a positive impact on teacher retention.

In this chapter, the summary of results will first be discussed. The chapter will continue with the discussion of the study’s results and how that relates to the literature. Limitations, implications of the results for practice will be discussed in this chapter. The chapter will end with recommendations for further research, and conclude with a summary. This chapter fits into the overall dissertation by discussing the results of the research and relating the findings to current literature on this subject. The results will show that the participants are perceiving they
are stressed, and due to the stress, some participants contemplate leaving the profession, or their current Title I school.

As teachers continue to feel stressed there will be a need to provide strategies and, or continue to research how to prevent teachers at Title I schools to become so stressed and burned out. Losing good, qualified teachers at Title I schools due to stress will hurt the field of education and most importantly have a negative impact on the students. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge necessary to address this problem by showing the perceptions of elementary teachers at Title I schools regarding work-related stress, the impact on retention, and if the teachers perceive stress coping skills or preventative strategies as beneficial.

**Summary of the Results**

This study was a qualitative case study that involved eight volunteer participants. The research took place in two urban schools located in one Eastern state. The research question that was used to guide this study is the following: How do teachers in Title I schools perceive job stress and teacher retention? Findings in this study were derived from the data collected. According to the data collected from the individual interviews, similar participant perceptions towards stress became apparent. All participants perceived they were stressed from their job and felt stressed from work either often or daily. All participants felt they did not have enough or adequate resources to do their job or support their students.

The participants mentioned, administration, testing, workload and low parent involvement as variables causing them work-related stress. The majority of participants felt stress did impact retention of teachers and contemplated leaving the profession or their current school. The MBI-ES showed that five out of the participants scored in the 90th percentile for emotional exhaustion. When asked if the participants thought about leaving the profession, five
participants’ thought about leaving the education field. Five of the eight participants felt coping strategies and/or stress preventative strategies would be beneficial. Three of the eight participants were unsure if coping strategies and/or stress preventative strategies would be beneficial.

Avci, Bozgeyikli, and Kesici (2017) stated, “teachers who have to work with people face-to-face and find solutions to the problems of the students or the parents as part of their job, have also many social duties such as treating everyone equally and serving as a model for their environment. School administrators, students, other teachers, and parents have an important place in the working lives of teachers as part of their job. Negative situations that teachers encounter during their interaction with these people cause them to experience situations such as stress, feeling of inefficacy, anxiety, and burnout by decreasing their job satisfaction (Avci, Bozgeyikli, & Kesici 2017). This research has similarities with the research conducted in this study. Participants in this study stated they felt stress from student behavior, leadership, parents, lack of resources, and work demands. The participants in this study felt they had negative experiences with parents, students, testing, student behavior and administrators. Having to deal with negative interactions along with work demands without needed resources would cause an extremely stressful situation.

**Discussion of the Results**

In this qualitative case study, the researcher discovered data about teachers’ perceptions of stress from teaching in a Title I school. The results revealed that participants all felt stress from their job. The teachers interviewed also discussed how teaching at a Title I school caused stressful situations that may not be prevalent at non-Title I schools. Low parental involvement
was a theme that was discussed by participants at each individual interview. The participants felt the lack of parent involvement made their job stressful.

During the interviews, the participants shared their experiences with stress. Another teacher perception that was stated by all participants was not enough resources are available for them to do their job and to meet the needs of the students. Participants also discussed the role poverty plays and the lack of mental health resources available at their Title I schools. “Teachers today are taking on roles in the classroom that are beyond teaching academics. Children in the social welfare system, who come from families at greater risk of poverty, have an increased prevalence of stress and mental health problems compared with those in the general population (Dore, 2005, p. 1).

Most participants also mentioned administration as being a major variable causing their stress. Kyriacou (2001) found that “being exposed to a large amount of change and having difficult or challenging relationships with colleagues and administration can increase the amount of stress for teachers” (p. 31). This study shows how teachers in Title I schools perceive stress. The study gives insight on what teachers feel is causing them to have work-related stress. The data showed that stress was prevalent for the participants and that the participants felt Title I schools have challenges and stresses that non-Title I schools do not have. The answers the participants gave during the interview helped the researcher to discover commonalities. Stress from testing, lack of resources, low parental involvement, student behavior, and administration style were commonalities the participants discussed as factors they perceived as causing them stress. The commonalities were found by the researcher from the data collected and the use of coding. In the analysis of data, the researcher utilized an open coding process. The open coding process was transcribed using NVivo qualitative software. Open coding is a procedure where the
researcher reviewed the transcripts and coded the interview responses (Kolb, 2012). The open codes are codes that reflect the perceptions of the participants and are organized using labels. The data analysis aided the researcher in emerging commonalties and themes corresponding with the research question (see Table 1).

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

This qualitative case study related to perceptions of educators in previous studies. One common theme in this research study was the participant’s perceptions of the following causing them to feel stressed at work; work demands, testing, leadership, low parental involvement, student behavior, and lack of resources. Each common factor that is causing the participants stress is explained in relation to the literature.

Testing/Accountability. Effects of accountability on teaching were discussed by participants in relation to being a job stressor for them. Teachers may be susceptible to increased stress due to the high stakes, e.g., teacher evaluation and merit pay, associated with student test performance (Von der Embse, Schoemann, Kilgus, Wicoff, & Bowler, 2016). This increased stress may lead to burnout or a reason that may lead an educator to leave the field of education. The following research focused on the relation between teacher morale and teacher stress. “Teacher morale is on a steady decline due to poor status in the community, poor salaries (relative to other professions), excessive workloads, poor working conditions, and increasing government accountability measures” (Mackenzie, 2007, p. 90).

Lack of resources. All the interviewed participants agreed that a lack of resources regarding instruction and materials to meet the student’s needs was a job stressor for them. Elementary teachers reporting an intention to leave their current job for professional reasons, as opposed to personal ones, (e.g., pregnancy, family relocation, retirement, have also reported
higher classroom demands, fewer school-provided resources, and higher occupational stress) (Jazaar, Lambert, & O'Donnell, 2007). Another contributing factor may be the increased responsibility that schools have for student’s well-being, including not just academics but also personal, social, physical, and emotional health (Lambert, McCarthy, O’Donnell, & Wang, 2009, p. 3). As the expectations of educator’s increase, along with variables out of the school’s control, such as family life and poverty, teachers can experience stress to fulfill academic expectations. All participants in this study felt resources, particularly mental health was not available for the students that needed it the most.

**Parental involvement.** Teachers who participated in this study felt there was a lack of parent involvement at their Title I school. If parents do not show any interest in how their children are doing, if they ignore messages that teachers send home, or if they fail to come to conferences, teachers are likely to feel helpless (Feldman, 2003). Yet, even with the value of parent and teacher relationships being apparent, the lack of parental involvement and support is still cited as a strong determining factor for a teacher to who is considering leaving the classroom (Elfers, Plecki, & Knapp, 2006). The participants felt the lack of parent involvement was a job stressor for them. Parent involvement related positively to student academic performance; increasing this involvement may reduce the achievement gap between high- and low-performing students (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

**Administration/Leadership.** Most of participant’s felt administration did not address the behaviors appropriately. A common perception from the participants revolved around leadership and lack of support and guidance they felt from their administration. Howard and Johnson (2004) found that teachers feel unwanted stress when the administrative structure is very hierarchal and concentrated in the hands of few (p. 408).
Student behavior. The participants in this study all mentioned that negative student behavior caused them stress at work. Feng (2010) found that teacher turnover was positively correlated with levels of disciplinary incidents. The participants felt overwhelmed by the student behavior. Rieg et al. (2007) noted that new teachers frequently mentioned relationships with students, other teachers, and supervisors as the cause of stress-related worries.

In this study, participants expressed that teachers are required to meet the needs of their students with little resources, not enough support or leadership, and have a large workload and testing accountability. To address a gap in the literature, this research was conducted to develop insight related to the perception of stress experienced by elementary teachers working at a Title I school. This qualitative case study was designed to examine how the teacher’s perceptions on work-related stress, its effect on retention and if they found stress coping strategies beneficial.

Limitations

The qualitative case study design used for this study provided detailed information and insight about the participants. “It is common for people to suppose that qualitative research is marked by rich description of personal action and complex environment, and it is, but the qualitative approach is equally distinguished for the integrity of its thinking” (Stake, 2010, p. 31). Although the qualitative case study design was a strength for this study, limitations did occur. One limitation of this study had to do with the demographics of the participants involved. In this study, 6 of the 8 participants were female. The demographics indicated that the majority of participants are Caucasian females. The demographics in this study may not have represented the average perceptions, or feelings of all Title I teachers regarding work-related stress.

A second limitation of this study was the timing in which the focus group interviews were held as well as when the survey was administered. The interviews were held at the end of
the 2016-2017 school year. The end of the school year is a stressful time for teachers, as they are required to have all academic grades in, all meetings done before the school year ends, student files in order, and classrooms organized before the end of the year. Conducting the study during this time of year could have formed a bias since the time constraints for teachers to have all their work done was present at this time. An additional limitation of the study is that it may not represent all elementary teachers at Title I schools. While limitations exist, the study was able to achieve the research purpose and gain participant perceptions to answer the research questions of the study.

Implication of the Results for Practice

This study contributes to the body of knowledge needed to address teachers’ perception, in a Title I elementary school, on job-related stress. Data was gathered by interviewing participants and giving the participants the MBI-ES. The answers from participants correlated with the main theory used in this study. Lazarus and Folkman stress theory was the main theory utilized. Understanding individual teacher perceptions of demands and resources in the school environment dovetails perfectly with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress, which is the most well-accepted and commonly cited theory in the stress literature (Hobfoll, Schwarzer, & Chon, 1998). Lazarus and Folkman hypothesized that when life demands are encountered, a subjective transaction occurs in which the person weighs perceived demands of the event against perceived capabilities for coping. Perceptions that life demands outweigh available resources for coping lead to the stress response, which includes negative emotions and, in the long term, burnout symptoms and health problems.

In the context of teaching, Lazarus and Folkman's theory would suggest that when an educator perceives their classroom demands as outweighing the available resources for coping
with them, stress is the likely outcome. Among the most important advocates of this model, it is insufficient to define stress as a stimulus or reaction because stress is the interaction process between the individual and the environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The participants all consistently attribute stress to the lack of resources to meet needs. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) showed that stress does not result from the demands expected from the person, but it is related to the fact that the person evaluates whether he/she has the resources to meet those demands. This study contributes to the field of education by providing specific details on teachers’ perceptions of the variables that cause stress and impact retention.

This qualitative case study can serve as a foundation to bring awareness to educational leaders of the importance of understanding teacher stress to keep highly qualified teachers at low-income schools. One of the more significant implications derived from the findings was participants felt strongly about helping their students. Many of teachers interviewed would not want to ever leave a Title I school. Teacher Participants tended to agree it was the lack of resources, low parent involvement, and leadership that caused them stress which would impact their want to stay in a Title I school or the field of education altogether.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

This study has implications for additional research in the area of teacher’s stress in Title I schools. The results of this study provide the education field with perceptions of participants who currently teach in Title I schools. The teachers’ perceptions of stress can help guide school systems to put a preventative approach on teacher stress. This information can also guide the education field in understanding the importance of helping educators deal with stress in a healthy manner, so burnout does not occur. This study focused on teachers’ perceptions of stress, the
impact this has on retention and if teachers felt stress coping skills or preventative strategies would be beneficial.

This study could be strengthened by using a larger sample of teacher participants from a Title I school. Future research could be done with sample group from various schools and districts. This study had a small number of volunteer participants making it difficult to determine if their perceptions were the majority. The research could be further expanded by conducting this research at different times during the school year. One limitation of this study was the time of year the study was conducted. Researching this topic throughout different times of the year would give a more accurate teacher perception. The factors that cause teacher stress and how they can be prevented could be researched further to help figure out how to support teacher when they encounter stress.

**Conclusion**

This case study gained perceptions from participants who are experienced teachers working in a Title I elementary school. This study showed the perspectives of experienced educators who feel passionate about helping their students, but have common stressors they feel are not at non-Title I schools. Participants shared their views on why they feel stress due to work. The information shared by each participant was similar to the other participants in this study.

The teachers interviewed felt strongly about having help and resources for their students. Not having needed resources or support can greatly affect the morale of a teacher. Teacher morale can be affected negatively when having the additional stressors of working in a Title I school. Further research on teacher’s perception of stress in a Title I school can gain a greater understanding of the importance of making a teacher’s mental health and well-being a priority.
Focusing on understanding that stressors can affect a teacher’s perception, and most importantly job performance should be a priority for leaders. “The modern workplace tends to leave people disconnected—emotionally alone, isolated, exhausted, anxious, and afraid—with no idea how they got that way or what to do about it” (Hallowell, 2011, p. 35). One way to prevent stress is by having leaders implement needed strategies and understand the importance of being proactive regarding teacher stress.

Praise and recognition should be a focus for the school leader for improving climate. A positive climate, mindfulness, coping skills, and preventive strategies can help educators deal with stress. It is difficult for anyone to be the best when feeling emotionally distraught. When leaders of education recognize the importance of teacher’s emotional health they can focus on building a positive connection, this, in turn, will provide the best learning environment for students.
References


Appendix A: Request to conduct study

[Addressee redacted]

I am currently an employee of the [site redacted] and concurrently working towards my Ed.D. at Concordia University under the supervision of Dr. Donna Graham. I am writing to request your permission to conduct research in the elementary school on teachers’ perceptions of Stress and Burnout and its relation to teacher retention at Title I elementary schools in [site redacted]. I think this study is of great importance and I hope that you will consider partnering with me and allowing me to conduct my study in the [site redacted].

A proposal of the doctoral research study is attached for your review. The data collection instruments that I will use are interviews that will take place on two separate days, The Maslach Burnout Inventory Educator Survey, and an interview. I have also attached a sample cover letter that will go to all potential participants.

Data collection will consist of interviewing 8 teachers total, 4 teachers from [site redacted] and 4 teachers [site redacted] during non-teaching time. I will use the data gathered to make a recommendation on what the teachers’ perceptions of stress factors are and what stress strategies and prevention the teachers feel would be beneficial to them.

Before the study begins, an application will be submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that the research complies with Concordia University ethical standards as well as U.S. federal regulations. A copy of the approval will be provided to the district, if permission to conduct the study in the [site redacted] is granted.

The confidentiality of all participants will be respected fully and information will be kept under secure conditions. The school district and the participants’ identities will not be revealed in any way.
Thank you for your consideration. I would be pleased to share the results of this study with you if you are interested.

Respectfully yours,

Kelly Thompson

Ed.D. Student
Appendix B: IRB Approval

DATE: November 30, 2016
TO: Kelly Thompson, EDD
FROM: Concordia University - Portland IRB (CU IRB)
PROJECT TITLE: [973139-1] Teacher Stress and Burnout in Title I Elementary Schools in [site redacted]
REFERENCE #: EDD-20161011-Graham-Thompson
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: November 30, 2016 EXPIRATION DATE: November 15, 2017
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Concordia University - Portland IRB (CU IRB) has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Your project includes research that will be conducted within an institution that is not Concordia University. As such, you need to have that institution’s approval to conduct research. You are responsible for contacting and following the procedures and policies of Concordia University and any other institution where you conduct research. You cannot begin recruitment or collection of data within that institution until you receive approval from that institution.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulations.
Attached is a stamped copy of the approved consent form. You must use this stamped consent form.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. The form needed to request a revision is called a Modification Request Form, which is available at www.cu-portland.edu/IRB/Forms.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UIPRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please email the CU IRB Director directly, at obranch@cu-portland.edu, if you have an unanticipated problem or other such urgent question or report.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of November 15, 2017.

You must submit a close-out report at the expiration of your project or upon completion of your project. The Close-out Report Form is available at www.cu-portland.edu/IRB/Forms.
Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. OraLee Branch at [telephone number redacted] or irb@cuportland.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Concordia University - Portland IRB (CU IRB)'s records.

November 30, 2016
Appendix C: Teacher Participant letter

I am a doctoral student at Concordia University, working on a doctorate degree in Education that specializes in transformational leadership. I also work in the [site redacted]. I am conducting a research study on the perceptions that teachers have of Stress and Burnout and its relation to teacher retention at Title I elementary schools in [site redacted]. The purpose of the research is to explore the perceptions that ten different elementary teachers have of stress and burnout. You were chosen as a potential participant because you are an Elementary teacher at a Title I school located in [site redacted].

Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation in this study will involve interviews. The first interview will last approximately 45 minutes and the. Both interviews will be transcribed. Once they are transcribed, they will be returned to you for verification purposes. The Maslach Burnout Inventory will also be given. Your participation in this study will be confidential and when the research study is written or published your name will be used under a pseudonym. Your participation is completely voluntary and the risks are minimal. If you consent to participate you may withdraw at any time. To withdraw, please contact me by email at [Researcher’s email redacted] or by phone at [Researcher’s telephone number redacted] as soon as possible. Discontinuing in the study involves no penalty.

Compensation

There will be no compensation for your participation, but the results of your participation may provide an opportunity for schools to understand the teacher stress and preventive and coping strategies for teachers.
Consent

You will need to sign a consent form, which by signing, you acknowledge that you understand the purpose of the study and your role in participating. Your signature will indicate that you are older than 18 years of age and that you voluntarily consent to participate. You will be provided a copy of this consent form. If you have any questions, please contact me at [Researcher’s email redacted]. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact a research participant advocate at Concordia University. The number is [Researcher’s telephone number redacted]. I will contact you to get you response to this invitation.

Sincerely,

Kelly Thompson

Email:________________________________________

Phone:________________________________________
Appendix D: Consent Form

**Research Study Title:** Factors that Cause Teacher Stress, Burnout, and the impact on Teacher Retention.

**Principal Investigator:** Kelly Thompson

**Research Institution:** Concordia University

**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Donna Graham

**Purpose and what you will be doing:** The purpose of this survey is to understand factors that Cause Teacher Stress, Burnout, and how it effects Teacher Retention. We expect approximately 16 volunteers. No one will be paid to be in the study. We will begin enrollment on 1/25/2017 and end enrollment on 4/25/2017. To be in the study, you will participate in an interview with the principal investigator and take the Maslach Burnout Inventory Survey.

**Risks:** There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, we will protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption or locked inside a file cabinet located in my home office. When we or any of our investigators look at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. We will only use a secret code to analyze the data. We will not identify you in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after we conclude this study.

**Benefits:** Information you provide will help identify factors that cause teacher stress and help leaders understand the importance of combatting teacher stress to help with teacher
retention. You could benefit from this by understanding what the stress factors are that affect you.

**Confidentiality:** This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

**Right to Withdraw:** Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the questions we are asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions.

**Contact Information:** You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Kelly Thompson at email [Researcher’s email redacted]. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee

**Your Statement of Consent:** I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

_________________________________  ___________
Participant Name                       Date

_________________________________  ___________
Participant Signature                 Date

_________________________________  ___________
Investigator Name                     Date
Investigator Signature  

Date

Investigator: Kelly Thompson  
email: [Researcher’s email redacted]
Appendix E: Interview Process

The interview location will be determined ahead of time, the interviews will only be one a day, after school hours. The participant will be welcomed to the interview location and asked to take a seat. Each interviewee will be asked if they are comfortable and if they need anything before we get started. They will be reminded of the informed consent form and given a copy of it. Each interviewee will be provided with a drink and a snack. Once the interview has ended the interviewee will be thanked for their time and asked whether they have any specific questions.
Appendix F: Interview meeting script

Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Kelly Thompson and I am a Doctoral student at Concordia University. Thank you for taking the time to complete this interview with me. This interview will be tape recorded with your permission. This is so that I can accurately document the answers that you provide. If, at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please let me know.

During the interview, I will review confidentiality. I will then explain how I will protect the integrity of the data and the safety by using coding for confidentiality. Regarding withdrawal from the study, I will state that, if a participant withdraws from the study or no longer participates prior to the end, I will try to incorporate the data they provided while in the study with their permission. If the participant does not consent to using any of the data, they provided for the study I will destroy all data pertaining to the participant will review what the study is and what the will be given. I will then explain the Maslach Burnout Inventory and explain they will be asked to take the Maslach Burnout Inventory Educator Survey. I will go on to interview the participants using the following predetermined questions.

During the individual interview, I will ask the following:

1. How long have you been teaching?
   a. How many years have you taught/worked at this school? This district? Which grades?

2. Describe your experience teaching at a Title I school.

3. Do you feel you have adequate resources to meet the student’s needs?

4. How often if ever do you feel stressed from your job?

5. How often Do you think about leaving the teaching profession?
6. If you could transfer to a non-Title I school, would you?

7. What do you feel causes you stress at work?

8. Do you think stress preventative strategies, and coping skills will help reduce stress?
Appendix G: Probe Questions

Probe Questions

All of the following probes were developed using Rubin & Rubin, 2006, pgs. 164-171.

1. Continuation probe- Use when interview should keep explaining.
   “Then what…” “and”.

2. Elaboration probe- To be used when more details are needed.
   “Could you give me an example?” “Such as?” “Can you tell me more about…?”

3. Attention Probe- Show that you are listening and paying attention
   “That is interesting”, “Can I quote you on that?”

4. Clarification probe- If something is unclear this is to be used.
   “Can you run that by me again?” “I am afraid that I did not follow that”.

5. Steering probe- Bring a topic back to focus.
   “Sorry that I distracted you. Let’s circle back to the topic.”
Appendix H: Maslach Burnout Educator Survey

The following statements are about job-related feelings. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job.

If you have never had this feeling, choose the number “0” (zero = never).

If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by choosing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

Response Scale:

FREQUENCY SCALE

0 = never to 6 = every day

EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION

1. I feel emotionally drained from my work.

2. I feel used up at the end of the workday.

3. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.

4. Working with people all day is really a strain for me.

5. I feel burned out from my work.

6. I feel frustrated by my job.

7. I feel I am working too hard on my job.

8. Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.

9. I feel like I’m at the end of my rope.

PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT

10. I can easily understand how my students feel about things.

11. I deal very effectively with the problems of my students.

12. I feel I’m positively influencing other people’s lives through my work.

13. I feel very energetic.

14. I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students.

15. I feel exhilarated after working closely with my students.

16. I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.

17. In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.
DEPERSONALIZATION

18. I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects.
19. I’ve become more callous towards people since I took this job.
20. I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.
21. I don’t really care what happens to some students.
22. I feel that students blame me for some of their problems.
Appendix I: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does “fraudulent” mean?

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

What is “unauthorized” assistance?

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
  - Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the wo

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

**Digital Signature** Kelly Thompson

**Name** Kelly Thompson

**Date** 9/25/17