EXAMINING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: COPING, RESILIENCE, AND CHANGES TO LEVEL OF EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION, DEPERSONALIZATION, AND PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT TO DETERMINE TEACHER BURNOUT OCCURRENCE LEVEL

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Teacher burnout has become a prevalent issue in the public school system in the United States. Research about special education teacher burnout is lacking and virtually no research exists on how teachers of students with disabilities manage job-related stress. This exploratory study examines the perspectives of 18 teachers of students with disabilities and their stress-related coping strategies which incidentally occurred during a global health crisis through a mixed-method research approach (i.e., qualitative, quantitative). Specifically, the study explores teacher stress and teacher burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) as well as coping strategies, resources, and resilience.

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Dedicated to the Indigenous children who didn't survive the Indian boarding schools and *shik'éí dóó shidine'é* (my relatives and people) whom we lost to COVID-19. We will remember them in our hearts and minds until we reunite with them.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Special education teachers (SET) have an essential role in the education of students with disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal law that defines the right and mandates the provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) and related necessary services for eligible students ages 3-21 (U.S. Department of Education, 2022; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2022). SETs have an essential role in the application and execution of the IDEA law, they are responsible for the education of students with disabilities in the U.S. (Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP], 2022). In 2020-21, 7.2 million students, approximately 15 percent of all public-school students, received special education services under IDEA (NCES, 2022). In 2020, there were 463,200 SETs according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022). SETs are essential to an educational organization since they are specifically trained to teach and work with students and coordinate services with other specialists to deliver the necessary services. Their role is crucial in providing special education services directly to students on a day-to-day basis.

SETs are prone to job-related stress which can turn into burnout without effective intervention (Brunsting et al., 2014; 2021; Bettini et al., 2019). Thus, teacher burnout is an issue for both individuals (i.e., teachers) and for educational organizations (i.e., schools, districts, states). This study examines how special education teachers and licensure students seeking special education teacher licensure managed and coped with occupational stress. Data collection for the study occurred during the COVID-19 health crisis, however, the study was originally focused on teacher burnout and was adjusted to include the context of the

crisis. The focus of the study is on the lived experience of teacher burnout experienced by SETs and it is intertwined with the lived experience of job-related stress impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and considers the stress associated with the pandemic. More information is needed about how SETs manage job-related stress and what they need to instruct students with disabilities in school settings. This study examined extant data of lived experiences of SETs during 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years to determine how teachers coped with job-related stress in various school settings. The data will contribute to the literature about the complex factors contributing to burnout in SETs. The educational landscape needs research so it can inform the development of policy and programming to ensure there is responsiveness to current trends and challenges.

The status of the licensure students (who were graduate students) changed to licensed teacher during the duration of the study when they advanced and graduated from their special education teacher licensure program and began their professional career as a SET. There were two groups of licensure students, those in the first year of the licensure program and those in the second year of the licensure program.

The study sought to examine coping strategies, resilience, and resources used by special education teachers and the licensure students in a graduate special education licensure program. There is limited data about the unique SET perspective regarding teacher burnout and teacher resilience. SET burnout will continue to be an issue in the future so current research-based solutions are needed. Educational leaders, policy makers, and teacher preparation programs need relevant, updated information to inform future policy and programming. An identified need collected collaterally is for SET specific burnout prevention coursework to be integrated into all teacher prep programs. Since this information

is not directly measured it is unknown whether all participants received burnout specific coursework prior to graduation. Identifying effective approaches for reducing stress among SETs is integral for ensuring optimal learning environments for students. Healthy, well-adapted teachers contribute to positive learning environments (Bettini et al., 2020; Brunsting et al., 2021).

American Indian/Alaska Native Education

> Like the miner's canary, the Indian marks the shift from fresh air to poison gas in our political atmosphere; and our treatment of Indians, even more than our treatment of other minorities, reflects the rise and fall in our democratic faith.
>
> Felix S. Cohen, 1953, p. 390

The conditions that are faced by American Indian/Alaska Natives (AI/AN) are what can occur if detrimental factors are not met with strategies and corrected in the educational landscape. The historical educational experience of AI/AN students has neither produced positive outcomes nor enhanced their ability to benefit from it. Although the educational landscape looks different today, the quality of education that AI/AN students receive is marginal, especially in Special Education where the state of education is bereft of lasting positive gain.

Special Education. National education data show a disproportionate number of AI/AN students receive special education services (OSEP, 2020; NCES, 2022, U.S. Department of Education, 2022). In 2020–21, the percentage of students served under IDEA was highest for AI/AN students (19 percent) of students grouped by race/ethnicity (NCES, 2022). During 2018-19, 1.35 percent of students with disabilities in the U.S. were identified as AI/AN (OSEP, 2020). Data also show that AI/AN students with disabilities exiting the school

system receive the lowest rate of alternative certificate and have the highest rate of dropping out of school.

In Oregon, 1,437, or 21.8% of, K-12 AI/AN students were identified by local service providers as students experiencing disabilities during 2020-21 (Oregon IDEA Federal Data, 2020). My decision to include the present state of AI/AN students in this paper is a generalization of a larger problem, but more importantly because they are representative of students in the Pacific Northwest. AI/AN students who receive special education services are also at risk of being negatively affected by SET burnout and that adds to the level of complexity of these phenomena.

Type of Disability. AI/AN students, ages 3–21, who are identified to have specific learning disabilities (SLD) and speech or language impairments together accounted for more than 50 percent of those who received special education services in school year 2018-19 and 2020–21 (NCES, 2022; OSEP 2020). SLD is defined by IDEA (2022) as a disorder in "one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, the disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations." SLD includes conditions associated with perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. SLD does not include learning issues that arise due to visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; intellectual disabilities; emotional disturbance; or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage (IDEA, 2022). Speech or language impairment is defined by IDEA (2022) as "a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance." A speech or language disorder includes conditions associated with

impairments to speech, voice, or language skills which can prevent students from receiving reasonable educational benefit in school settings. These impairments occur as various disorders and specifically in four major areas where they can occur: Articulation, fluency, voice, and language. Articulation is a speech impairment where a child produces sounds incorrectly (e.g., lisp, difficulty articulating certain sounds such as “l” or “r”; Prelock et al., 2008). Fluency is a speech impairment where the flow of speech is disrupted by sounds, syllables, and words that are repeated, prolonged, or avoided and where there may be silent blocks or inappropriate inhalation, exhalation, or phonation patterns (e.g., stuttering). Voice is a speech impairment where the voice has an abnormal quality to its pitch, resonance, or loudness. A language impairment is where a student has problems expressing needs, ideas, information, and/or in understanding what others say.

Exiting the School System. AI/AN students, ages 14-21, with disabilities exiting the school system differed by type of disability (NCES, 2022). Students typically earned a diploma, received an alternative certificate, or dropped out of school without a diploma or an alternative certificate. In 2017-18, the percentage of AI/AN students with disabilities, ages 14-21, who graduated with a regular high school diploma was 75 to 76 percent; received an alternative certificate was lowest (4 percent); and dropped out of school was highest (20 to 25 percent) than all other students with disabilities (OSEP, 2020; NCES, 2022).

An alternative certificate is typically not an academic credential and there are no state course or grade requirements necessary to earn a certificate of completion according to the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS, 2020). A student successfully working toward his/her IEP goals is generally eligible to receive an alternative certificate. The decision of whether a student is working toward a diploma or an alternative

certificate is typically made by the IEP team the year before a student enters high school. NCES data show that students with speech or language impairments typically have the lowest rate (3 percent) of receiving an alternative certificate (NCES, 2022).

In 2017-18, AI/AN students with disabilities, ages 14-21, who exited the school system were more likely to drop out of school than students from other ethnic/race groups with disabilities. The percentage of exiting students who dropped out was highest for AI/AN students (20 percent). NCES data (2022) show that students with emotional disturbances typically have the highest rate (27 percent) of dropping out of the school system.

In 2018-19, the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) data showed they enrolled 22,611 students and 20 percent (4,457) of their students were identified as having a disability (BIE, 2022). The BIE is responsible for the education of AI/AN students, they either fund and/or oversee BIE-operated schools or fund tribally-controlled schools for PK-Higher Education. The BIE fulfills the trust responsibility for educating AI/AN students on behalf of the federal government as stipulated in treaties and executive orders that the federal government entered into with tribes.

School Discipline. In 2017-18, AI/AN students with disabilities, ages 3 to 21, were removed at a rate of 27 students per 100 students from their educational environment for discipline issues (OSEP, 2020). Disciplinary removal is defined as any instance in which a student with a disability is removed from his/her educational placement for disciplinary purposes. Discipline removal includes in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, expulsion, removal by school personnel to an interim alternative educational setting for drug or weapon offenses or serious bodily injury, and removal by a hearing officer for likely injury to the child or others.

Special education data show the inequities that AI/AN students with disabilities experience in school systems. AI/AN students are more likely to be referred to and placed in special education services than students from other ethnic groups (NCES, 2022, OSEP, 2020).

Indigenous Woman Scholar Positionality

Through the lens of an Indigenous woman scholar, a *Diné asdzáán,* my viewpoint consisted of resiliency that was culture based and included protective factors that guided my teaching and helped me deal with stress. Although none of the teachers/participants who participated in the study self-identified as an Indigenous individual, it's important to share my positionality as a *Diné* woman scholar while engaging in research about this topic. My *Diné* upbringing coupled with my lived experiences teaching culturally diverse students in rural, urban, and suburban settings gives me a unique perspective. I grew up on an Indian reservation practicing my *Diné* way of being and cultural heritage. I attended a boarding school located in my community and I experienced a sense of belonging because my *Diné* way of being was centered in the school curriculum, practices, and policies. Many of the school staff and teachers were my relatives and they encouraged me to excel in school. They still ask my mother how I'm doing and express their pride and support of me when I see them. Those positive connections that I experienced at school is what I'm seeking for Indigenous students to experience in school systems. Some of my *Diné* relatives had disabilities and I observed their experiences with family, peers, community, school systems, health care systems, and employment. My *Diné* relatives with disabilities experienced bullying by their peers and relatives and were misunderstood by educators, school administration, school staff, and employers. In my observation, I noticed the opportunities for

improvement for practices and policies and the need for notable, innovative, culturally relevant practices in the future.

In keeping with the barriers and lived experiences of my relatives I have seen the need for change. As an individual whose community and ancestors were subjects of cultural genocide, I realized that culture, our language and *Diné* way of being underscored our survival. Colonial boarding schools were the vehicle for the delivery of a weaponized education/agenda used to achieve forced assimilation of Indigenous youth and future generations. The genocide of Indigenous peoples included the use of the formal government-funded and Christian-based boarding school system as tools of oppression to achieve cultural genocide. The insidious process had a devastating impact on Indigenous populations which is well documented by health, social, and academic achievement outcome data. In many cases, Indigenous children did not receive quality education or learn relevant skills to prepare them to participate in the society they were assimilated into, nor did they have adequate knowledge to participate in their own culture (Whitehat, 2021). Although Indigenous children were not taught Indigenous knowledge while they were away at school many of them had opportunities to learn their language and culture from their family and community when they returned to their homeland. Indigenous peoples are resilient, coping, thriving, and present, practicing survivance like Vizenor (1999) suggested, despite the attempted erasure of our identity and the silencing of our voice. Many Indigenous peoples overcome barriers and setbacks due to the spirit of Indigenous resilience which our ancestors taught us and has been passed down since time immemorial. *Diné* look to *Naayéé neizghání dóó Tó bájíshchíní* (the Hero Twins) from *Diné* Creation stories for inspiration and resilience. The Hero Twins survived many hardships, to include being raised by a single mother, and slayed the *Anaye*

(evil giant monsters) that roamed the landscape so future generations of *Diné* can thrive. No matter how difficult the situation and being knocked down repeatedly we are taught to get back on our feet, face the enemy, and slay the monsters of contemporary times like the Hero Twins did. We pray for the strength and the will to slay the monsters daily and for the protection and guidance of *Diyin Diné'e* (our Holy People).

The portrayal of Indigenous communities/populations as damaged or depleted is problematic, so much so that this type of research has been termed damaged-centered research by Indigenous scholar Eve Tuck (2009). Damage-centered research is extended to research about and the education of individuals with disabilities. Researchers and practitioners often fail to see the individual as a human and their strengths, instead the focus is typically on their deficits (i.e., disability, lack of abilities/skills). Indigenous peoples deemed disabilities differently than non-Indigenous peoples do and I will briefly share that perspective.

Initially, prior to settler colonialism, the Indigenous peoples of the Americas functioned as collective societies. Indigenous peoples were cognitively diverse, and their society acknowledged neurodivergence and varying ability among their citizens and no one was perceived to be deficient based on their attributes. Everyone contributed to society based on their ability level and embodied a sense of belonging. Eventually, the Indigenous way of life was disrupted by settler colonialism and the installation of a colonial empire that laid the foundations for a capitalistic empire in the Americas. The Indigenous way of being was erased, silenced, marginalized, corrupted, and oppressed to make room for Eurocentric values and culture centered on monetary greed, power, and White Supremacy. Indigenous children experienced forced assimilation to the Eurocentric values with lasting negative

outcomes which are present in current educational outcomes. More specifically, the practice of labeling students based on their physical and cognitive abilities using deficit lens and deficit models in the schools, workplace, and society have lifetime effects, often a negative impact.

Such practices are not limited to Indigenous children, students from all backgrounds are subjected to these questionable practices including students with disabilities. Incidentally, the Eurocentric values did/does not acknowledge or allow Indigenous values and/or Indigenous knowledge systems which include inclusivity, equity, and appreciation for diversity of all people to be included in the domain of special education. The Eurocentric values were/are not aligned with the culture of Indigenous peoples. The mismatch results in learning and behavior challenges for Indigenous students and their teachers. Indigenous students are currently identified and eligible for special education services at a higher, disproportionate rate than students from other ethnic backgrounds (U.S. Department of Education, 2022; NCES, 2022; OSEP, 2020). Often, Indigenous students with disabilities do not receive the quality educational services they are eligible for as evidenced by a recent lawsuit against the Bureau of Indian Education by Havasupai students and their guardians (*Stephen C., et al., v. Bureau of Indian Education, et al.,* 2021*)*. The quality of education for Indigenous students is important to note as it is a typical indicator of issues experienced by students with disabilities receiving services from school systems.

As an Indigenous woman scholar, I premise that the effect of the policies and practices endured by Indigenous students historically, are not unlike the unprecedented changes and disruptiveness that the pandemic created for teachers and students alike. This positionality allows me to draw this comparison but also informs my views on resiliency. My personal

experience as a teacher was guided by my Indigenous identity which lends itself to resilience against burnout and stress. As an Indigenous woman scholar, I engaged in this analysis with minimal bias and want to make my perspective clear about the phenomena at hand.

Teacher Stress

Numerous researchers have studied teacher stress and their research suggests that there are multiple contributing factors such as school climate, teacher workload/expectation, personal attributes, motivation to teach, and years teaching. Some researchers have hypothesized that teacher stressors include the socio-emotional demands of teaching many students (Roeser et al., 2012), making numerous critical decisions daily (Iancu et al., 2018), classroom management, challenging student-teacher relationships, and interpersonal conflicts with students, parents, or colleagues (Unterbrink et al., 2012; Iancu et al., 2018). Researchers have also considered the imbalance created by increasing teaching demands (e.g., problematic student behaviors, administrative demands), inadequate teaching resources (e.g., school support personnel, instructional materials, training), a lack of collaborative time with colleagues, and limited administrative support as factors contributing to teacher stress (McCarthy et al. 2016; Iancu et al., 2018; Roeser et al. 2013). Still, other researchers have observed that teachers in low-income areas report significant challenges such as increased workloads (often associated with education reform), low teacher salary, lack of professional recognition, lack of opportunities for professional development, challenging work conditions, lack of autonomy, and lack of voice (Wolf et al., 2015; Iancu et al., 2018).

Teacher Burnout

The response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors in the workplace by educators is defined as teacher burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). If the stress is not reduced,

it could advance into teacher burnout. Maslach and colleagues (1986) defined the burnout syndrome with three symptoms: reduced professional efficacy (feelings of reduced competence and achievement in one's work with people), cynicism (an impersonal and unfeeling response toward recipients of one's service, care, treatment, or instruction), and emotional exhaustion (feelings of being emotionally overextended/exhausted at one's work; Madigan & Kim, 2021). Their research contributed to the identification of the three components of burnout: lack of resources for experiencing emotional events (emotional exhaustion), feelings of detachment and cynical towards one's own occupation (depersonalization), and feelings of professional inefficacy (personal accomplishment; Maslach et al., 2001). Teacher burnout manifests when teachers are exposed to stress for extended periods of time and experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach, 2003).

Stress & Burnout among Special Education Teachers

SETs are not exempt from stress and burnout. In fact, SETs are at a particularly high risk for burnout as their working conditions align with many factors that have been identified as stressors (Brunsting et al., 2014; 2021; Bettini et al., 2019). Moreover, within the field of special education, SETs who work with students who have emotional and behavioral disorders are particularly susceptible to experiencing high levels of stress and burnout (Brunsting et al., 2014; Park & Shin, 2020). SETs typically experience stressors which are different than stressors experienced by general education teachers (i.e., working with students who have challenging behaviors, students with emotional disorders; Brown & Brown, 2002). Despite the well-established trends of high stress and high teacher burnout among SETs,

there is currently a need for more research and literature focused on lived experience of SETs management of job-related stress.

There is a gap in the literature regarding SET voice about burnout and job-related stress experienced by SET and how they manage stress. Previous research focused on variables related to SET burnout (Park & Shin, 2020), SET working conditions that contribute to burnout (Brunsting, et al., 2014), student misbehavior associations with the three dimensions of teacher burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment; Aloe, et al., 2014), and not on the lived experience of teachers. van Manen described lived experience as the essence or nature of lived experiences by individuals (Barnacle, 2004). His approach is descriptive; it describes lived, or existential meanings, as meanings that occur in the immediacy of everyday life. These researchers made recommendations about developing interventions for and measuring the effectiveness of interventions for SET burnout that consider the level of self-efficacy, stress, support from school personnel, student age, type of student disability (Park & Shin, 2020), role conflict, role ambiguity, administrative support (Brunsting et al., 2014), and student misbehavior (Aloe et al., 2014). The lived experience of SETs coping and responding to stress in their work environments reveals extraneous factors. Part of that is learning about additional concerns learned from their responses and how that leads to more inquiry not addressed in this study. For instance, it is not clear if their teacher preparation program or their employer provide resources to manage job-related stress and prevent burnout. If resources are provided, we do not know their efficacy rates and how that is measured for SETs. We also do not know if changes to the components of teacher burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) are associated with reported coping strategies that build resilience for SETs during the academic year.

Anecdotally, there are further limitations regarding sources of literature about teacher burnout of SETs (or teachers in general) who teach AI/AN students. This bears further inquiry and scrutiny since there is a disproportionate number of AI/AN students who receive special education services (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

The current study will help decrease the knowledge gap about these phenomena and add to our understanding. SETs work with a vulnerable segment of students in the educational system and they are experiencing burnout on a national scale.

Definition of Key Terms

Providing a definition of the key terms is essential in understanding the major concepts within this research study. These terms can have different interpretations. The researcher aimed to define the following terms so that readers are aware of and comprehend the terms in the manner that the researcher intends.

Teacher Burnout. Burnout is defined as a response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Teacher burnout occurs when teachers undergoing stress for extended periods of time experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach, 2003).

Teacher Stress. Teacher stress is defined in terms of unpleasant negative emotions (i.e., anger, frustration, anxiety, depression, nervousness) that teachers experience due to some facets of their job and/or because of situations that occur in the school setting or because of the school setting (Kyriacou, 2001).

Coping. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines coping as, “the use of cognitive and behavioral strategies to manage the demands of a situation when these are

appraised as taxing or exceeding one's resources or to reduce the negative emotions and conflict caused by stress." A coping strategy is an action, a series of actions, or a thought process used in response to a stressful or unpleasant situation or to modify an individual's reaction to a situation (APA, 2022).

Resilience. The APA (2022) defines resilience as, "the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands." Numerous factors contribute to people's ability to adapt to adversities such as (a) the ways in which individuals view and engage with the world, (b) the availability and quality of social resources, and (c) specific coping strategies (APA, 2022).

Special Education. Qualifying for special education services is a process. Upon completion of the initial evaluation and eligibility for special education services for the child is determined, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is created. An IEP is a written statement for each child with a disability which is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with IDEA law (OSEP, 2022). The IEP typically describes the child's current levels of functioning, sets measurable educational and functional goals, and establishes the level of services that the district must provide for the attainment of these goals.

Special Education Teachers. Special education teachers (SET) work with students who have a wide range of learning, mental, emotional, and/or physical disabilities (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). They adapt general education lessons and teach various subjects to students with mild to moderate disabilities and teach basic skills to students with severe disabilities. Many SETs typically work in public schools teaching students ages 3-21, preschool to high school. SETs work with general education teachers, specialists,

administrators, and parents to develop and implement Individual Education Plans (IEPs). SET duties vary by work setting, students' disabilities, and specialties.

Resource SET. Some SETs work in classrooms or resource centers specifically for students with disabilities. Teachers plan, adapt, and present lessons to meet students' needs individually or in small groups in these settings.

Inclusive Classroom SET. SETs who teach in inclusive classrooms instruct students with disabilities who are learning in general education classroom settings. They work with general education teachers to adapt lessons to help students with disabilities understand them.

Life Skills SET. Some SETs work with students who have moderate to severe disabilities. They help students develop functional life skills such as basic academics, communication, and self-care. Students receiving these services may be eligible for services until age 21.

Program Director. Some SETs are program directors who oversee the special education program department at their site or district. They provide leadership and are responsible for the implementation and maintenance of the special education program and services and ensure their compliance with state and federal laws. They coordinate program services, instruction, staffing, and funds to ensure program objectives and services are achieved within budget.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences, attitudes, coping, resilience, practices, and barriers of job-related stress management as reported by SETs in the Pacific Northwest. Factors contributing to teacher burnout have been researched and continue to be discussed within the educational community on a national scale due, in part, to the ongoing

global health crisis. There is a dire need to understand the stressors that provoke burnout tendencies in SETs. There is an equal need to understand teacher resilience to mitigate the negative impact of the job-related stress. Extant data of teacher burnout surveys and interviews from 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years were extracted to determine what type of coping skills or strategies were used by licensed teachers, licensure students, and graduate students. The efficacy that these strategies to build resilience and address emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment associated with teacher stress and teacher burnout for SETs will bear further measurement. The study utilizes mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) to describe how teachers of student with disabilities students coped with the stress of their occupation during a school year and which type of teacher was affected by job-related stress. The existing knowledge and literature about SET burnout will be aided by the components of this study that are focused on the lived experiences of teachers. Research tailored to respond to the crisis with facts, insights, strategies, and tools which are appropriate for the SETs in the region and SETs in similar settings is in current demand. The current teacher shortages demand solutions for administrators and policy makers, in the implementation of initiatives that promote and increase coping skills and resilience to decrease burnout and vacancies. The information this research highlights could ultimately assist school district leaders with solutions in the retention of highly qualified SET.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this descriptive, non-experimental exploratory study is to examine the experiences, attitudes, coping, resilience, and barriers to job-related stress management as perceived by SETs in the Pacific Northwest to decrease the knowledge gap about these phenomena. Chapter 2 will examine and interpret relevant literature on special education teacher burnout and whether teacher resilience, coping skills, and resources for stress had a direct or indirect influence on teacher burnout. Details within Chapter 2 are composed of the following topics that were critically analyzed and synthesized throughout the literature review: (a) Impact of burnout on teachers, students, and the profession, (b) teacher stress interventions, and (c) teacher resilience. This overview is a steppingstone toward the goal of identifying solutions to the research questions. The literature review contains articles that are focused on the research problem and assist in the interpretation of the results of the data collection.

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation study will use a phenomenological approach that focuses on how individuals view their experience within their given context. A phenomenological approach captures each participant's narrative account, which reflects how they view and express their experiences through interviews (Ramsook, 2018). Phenomenology will be used to discover meaning and achieve understanding by drawing out insightful descriptions of the way SETs experience and manage job-related stress. The meaning and understanding of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, lack of accomplishment, stressors, accomplishments, and other experiences will be described and analyzed using phenomenology as a research approach.

The application of phenomenology as a research methodology emphasizes the understanding and description of the experience with the essence of the phenomena, selection of individuals who have experienced the phenomena, and the triangulation of data from different instruments and procedures and multiple sources to substantiate the convergence of information to assess and authenticate the conclusions about the phenomena (Ramsook, 2018).

Phenomenological research design calls for an examination of the text, such as transcripts (i.e., the spoken accounts of personal experience), to isolate themes according to Sloan and Bowe (2014). The themes represent written descriptions of lived experience. Reading the text requires reflection on the content to discover something telling, meaningful, and thematic (van Manen 1997; Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Once phenomenal themes are isolated, the researcher identifies the theme while interpreting the meaning of the phenomenon or lived experience. The data is determined to be valuable to the study or not during this process. Phenomenology reduces an individual's experiences with a phenomenon to a description of its essence so a researcher can identify it as an object of human experience (Creswell 2007) and give voice to it. The descriptions are written phrases or statements that represent the meaning found in relation to the phenomena (Smith et al., 2009).

Phenomenology recommends the use of purposive sampling in the data collection process for the selection of participants since only certain individuals have lived the experience (van Manen, 1997). According to Ramsook (2018), participants should be selected based on the certainty that they possess actual experiences and intimate knowledge about the phenomena that is studied. They should be able to provide authentic data from which meaning can be drawn. This method of investigation relies on the use of multiple instruments to gather data

on participants' experiences, beliefs, motivations, and understandings. Individual and semi-structured interviews are used for focus and direction to access participants' experiences. During the process, interviews are recorded and memos, field notes, and anecdotal records are kept. These methods enhance the validation and triangulation of data, so that a rich, detailed account can be formulated. Triangulation is described by Ramsook (2018) as the use of multiple sources of data to compare data from various sources or procedures to substantiate the convergence of information to assess and increase the authenticity of the conclusions.

Descriptions about the lived experience of job-related stress management, coping skills, and resilience are needed to increase the knowledge base about teacher burnout to develop an appropriate response. The need for research and literature about teacher resilience is needed during current times to cope with the ongoing global health crisis which has negatively impacted the wellbeing of students, families, school staff, educators, and school administrators. The current study was adjusted to include the context of the COVID-19 pandemic while exploring SET burnout. Teacher burnout was an issue before the pandemic and the issue has been exacerbated by COVID-19 health crisis (Hurwitz, et al., 2021).

Documentation

I conducted a literature search using a variety of keywords that were closely related to the focus and topic of the study. The key search terms: *burnout, teacher burnout, teacher stress, Special Education teacher burnout, teacher attrition, and teacher resilience*. Combinations of the above key terms were used for relevant search engine results. The search took place in various databases provided through University of Oregon libraries. Search engines including Academic Search Premier, APA PsycNet, ERIC, and ProQuest Education Journals cataloged

within the EBSCO database presented the scholarly and peer-reviewed editorials. Google Scholar was also used to search for literature. Numerous articles met the topic criteria; however, publications more than 15 years old were excluded from the analysis. An exception is seminal literature about teacher burnout that served as the foundation for the phenomena. Teacher burnout is a worldwide issue, but my search was focused on the phenomena for special education teachers in the U.S.

Burnout Impact

Burnout research by Maslach has been applied to education and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is often used to measure teacher stress (Brunsting et al., 2014; von der Embse et al., 2019; Brunsting et al., 2021). Burnout is described as a likely occurrence when there is a major mismatch between the nature of the job and the nature of the person who performs the job according to Maslach and Leiter (1997). These researchers theorized that when the mismatch between people and the demand of the job is too big it can take a toll on individual people. The mismatch can be experienced in numerous ways: work overload, lack of control, lack of rewards, lack of community, lack of fairness, and value conflict (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Work overload occurs when there is too much work to accomplish in too little time with few resources, often beyond human limits. Work overload can occur when individuals are given more work responsibilities and negatively impacts quality, workplace collaborations, and innovation (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Lack of control develops when individuals have limited opportunity to make choices and decisions. It's compounded when they don't have input in the outcomes for which they are accountable. Policies and management that have a narrow approach leave little room for innovation or improvement and, as a result, workers feel little responsibility for the outcomes (Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

Lack of reward occurs when individuals and their contributions are not recognized or are devalued. Eventually, the loss of internal reward (i.e., pride, value in work) is experienced by workers, along with low pay for their contributions (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Lack of community manifests when there is a lack of positive connections between colleagues in the workplace. People thrive best in a community with others but their job responsibilities demands may isolate them from the praise, happiness, comfort, and humor shared with others (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Lack of fairness develops when individuals are not treated with respect and their self-worth is diminished. Individuals lose trust in an organization that is unfair, dishonest, and disrespectful (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Value conflict develops when there is a mismatch between job requirements and personal principles. Individuals perform best when they believe in their work and their pride, integrity, and self-respect can be maintained (Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

When the mismatch between the individual and their job is not addressed or balanced, burnout is most likely to occur. Individuals are at risk for burnout when the mismatch begins to erode their values, dignity, will, and spirit over time (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Indicators of burnout: chronic exhaustion, cynical and detached from work, and feeling ineffective. Maslach and Leiter (1997) named these indicators the three dimensions of burnout. They describe *exhaustion* as feelings of physical and emotional exhaustion. Individuals feel drained, spent, and unable to unwind or recover and lack the energy to deal with projects or people associated with work. Exhaustion is usually the first reaction to the stress of job demands or change (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Maslach and Leiter (1997) describe *cynicism* as taking a cold, distant attitude toward work and the people associated with the workplace. Individuals often minimize their involvement at work and may give up their ideals to protect

themselves from exhaustion and disappointment. People may find it safer to feel indifferent or make assumptions that things won't work out rather than get their hopes up when the future is uncertain (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). *Ineffectiveness* is described by Maslach and Leiter (1997) as growing sense of inadequacy, feeling overwhelmed, lack of accomplishment, and loss of confidence in their ability to make a difference. Others in the workplace lose confidence in them as they lose confidence in themselves (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Maslach and Leiter (1997) theorize that burnout is an issue of the social environment rather than flaws in individual characters, behavior, or productivity. These researchers understand that the structure and functions of the workplace shape how individual workers interact with each other and how they perform their job responsibilities.

Impact on Teachers. The consequences of chronic stress can lead to negative physiological and psychological outcomes for teachers. Physical health could start to decline and health issues and risks for cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and blood sugar (e.g., diabetes) can increase (Hagermoser-Sanetti et al., 2020). Cognitive and physical functioning can decline, and mortality risk can increase. Researchers who study teacher stress recommend stress prevention or stress reduction practices to reduce or prevent the physical consequence of stress. Teachers under chronic stress are also at higher risk for mental health disorders (e.g., anxiety, depression) than other occupations according to Hagermoser-Sanetti et al. (2020). Without any intervention, the stress and emotional demands associated with teaching can lead to emotional exhaustion, cynical attitudes about teaching, and lower job satisfaction (Capone & Petrillo, 2020; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The combination of these conditions negatively impacts student achievement.

Impact on Students. Teacher stress and burnout can have a negative impact on students. Researchers found that teachers who experienced elevated levels of chronic stress had difficulty developing and modeling healthy and high-quality relationships with their students, were absent more often (often resulting in inconsistent instruction), were more irritable and less patient, and were less effective in delivering instruction and managing student behavior (Hagermoser-Sanetti et al., 2020). As a result, students of teachers experiencing chronic stress are more likely to have low academic outcomes, exhibit challenging behavior, and feel like their needs are unmet (Hagermoser-Sanetti et al., 2020).

If chronic stress evolves into burnout, it has a negative impact on student achievement. Teacher burnout is associated with low student academic achievement and low student motivation according to research by Madigan and Kim (2021). These researchers found associations between teacher burnout and low student reading ability, low student mathematics test scores, and less growth in student literacy skills over time (Madigan & Kim, 2021). This means that students taught by a teacher experiencing burnout are more likely to perform worse on exams, tests, and receive lower grades than students taught by a teacher not experiencing burnout (Madigan & Kim, 2021). This finding may be attributed to the burnout effect which can affect teacher ability to prepare for their classes, produce materials, and deliver instruction, which can result in less effective instruction and student achievement (Maslach & Leiter, 1999; Madigan & Kim, 2021). Teacher stress and burnout negatively impact the profession.

Impact on the Profession. Chronic stress has a negative impact on the teaching profession. High rates of chronic stress for teachers can result in low levels of job satisfaction and minimal coping skills. Stress can manifest as less time for: lesson preparation,

relationship development, school-wide contributions, and supporting colleagues (Hagermoser-Sanetti et al., 2020). Stress is often experienced by teachers during their profession. The source of the stress and the way each teacher responds to the stress varies. New teachers can experience stress when they enter the profession and are vulnerable to teacher attrition (Fitchett et al., 2018). Educators could experience stress from starting a new job (e.g., working with new colleagues, students, and parents) and about their level of competency to perform their job. Educators also experience other stressors depending on their teaching assignment, student population, organizational climate, and level of administrative support, among other factors. These issues can develop into job-related stress if new teachers are unable to resolve the issues or if they are unprepared to cope with the stress. If the stress is not reduced, it could advance into the beginning of teacher burnout.

When teachers experience burnout, many leave the field. Many new teachers leave their profession within three to five years of entering the field for several reasons and one of the reasons is experienced burnout (Fitchett et al., 2018; Hagermoser-Sanetti et al., 2020). These teachers are replaced by new teachers and the cycle continues. In recent years there has been a decline in the number of prospective teachers completing teacher preparation programs and in the number of teachers entering the profession (Hagermoser-Sanetti et al., 2020). Chronic teacher stress is a primary factor associated with the high rate of teachers leaving the profession, other than retirement, and a primary reason for the recent nationwide teacher shortages (Hagermoser-Sanetti et al., 2020). Approximately 50% of teachers entering the profession leave in the first five years (Ingersoll et al., 2014; Fitchett et al., 2018; Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). If teachers are receiving support and encouragement from their employing district, they are likely to continue their career as a teacher (Ansley et al., 2016).

Teachers are feeling more stressed today (95% in 2018) than they did over 30 years ago (38% in 1985) according to researchers Hagermoser-Sanetti et al. (2020). This adds to the evidence that teaching has become a stressful occupation over the years. During the past year, teachers have had to navigate increased teaching demands during a global crisis (Hurwitz et al., 2021) alongside concerns about teacher and student health and safety (Nelson & Murkami, 2020), learning recent technology to teach remotely, shifting from in-person to remote teaching and vice-versa when schools closed and opened to students and staff (Hurwitz et al., 2021), dealing with challenging student behaviors, and everything in between (Vargas-Rubilar & Oros, 2021). Even before the global health pandemic teachers were experiencing increased job-related stress (Cormier, et al., 2021).

Teacher Stress Interventions

Emerging Research. Multiple studies have examined the effectiveness of interventions designed to reduce teacher stress (Ansley et al., 2021; Iancu et al., 2018; von der Embse et al., 2019; Brunsting, et al., 2014; Ingersoll, 2003). For example, Iancu et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analysis to examine the effectiveness of interventions for reducing teacher burnout. These researchers focused their analysis on interventions aimed specifically at teachers and reviewed them in isolation from interventions aimed at other occupations. They examined three burnout components: emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization. Iancu and colleagues (2018) investigated the following intervention approaches in their study: cognitive behavior therapy, mindfulness, social-emotional, psychoeducational, social support, and professional development. These researchers concluded that the existing approaches are effective for emotional exhaustion ($d = 0.18$) and personal accomplishment ($d = 0.14$). However, the intervention effectiveness is almost null

for depersonalization (d = 0.03). Mindfulness-based interventions reported significant and homogeneous effects on emotional exhaustion (d = 0.31) and personal accomplishment (d = 0.28). Cognitive behavioral interventions reported significant effects on emotional exhaustion (d = 0.20). Social support-based interventions reported significant effects on personal accomplishment (d = 0.27). Some approaches (i.e., psychoeducational interventions (d = 0.09), social-emotional interventions (d = 0.04) had almost null effects on all burnout components. Interventions that lasted between one and three months reported stronger effect sizes on emotional exhaustion (d = 0.33) and personal accomplishment (d = 0.26) compared to interventions with different lengths (Iancu et al., 2018).

Ansley et al. (2021) examined the impact of an online stress intervention on teacher burnout and teacher efficacy using an online professional development program created for teachers that offers instruction on coping strategies and promotes social-emotional competencies. Fifty-one teachers and classroom staff were randomly assigned to the intervention or the control group. Participants in the intervention group were assessed by a measure and encouraged to select two coping strategies included in the online program, to begin with slight changes, and to practice consistently (Ansley et al., 2021). After four weeks, programs participants demonstrated increases in coping practices, teacher efficacy, and personal accomplishment. Program participants demonstrated decreases in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Ansley and colleagues (2021) concluded that teacher participation in a stress management program benefits them personally and professionally. Their evaluation suggested that teachers continue their use of coping strategies after completing a stress management program. Ansley and colleagues (2021) concluded that

participation in a stress management program reduces teacher burnout and increases teacher efficacy.

Issues. The response to teacher stress in the U.S. has been slow despite availability of international research that report the connections between teacher stress to burnout and to attrition (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Sutcher et al., 2016). In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified burnout as an officially recognized syndrome due to unmanaged, chronic workplace stress. WHO (2019) specified that burnout presents energy depletion and exhaustion, mental distance from one's job, negativism and cynicism and decreased professional efficacy. Untreated burnout can lead to ill health, absence from school, and a decrease in the quality of learning environments (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019).

Despite these alarming trends, the action to address burnout has been lacking in recent years. There is a robust international research base about the proactive components of teacher resilience (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). Unfortunately, the construct of teacher resilience and its potential influence on teacher retention (Gu, 2014) has not received much attention in literature in the U.S. (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019).

The response to teacher stress reduction has led to an increase in teacher stress interventions development but they lack empirical evidence, specifically efficacy and usability (e.g., treatment duration or dosage; von der Embse, 2019). Typically, treatments for stress and anxiety disorders are often conducted in a clinical setting and many have not been adapted for teacher stress or school settings (von der Embse, 2019). That is changing, research about school-based interventions for stress and anxiety disorders are gaining increased attention. Teacher stress is unique to the profession and has specific dimensions and manifestations, and the interventions should address these characteristics (Ingersoll,

2003). Research by Brunsting and colleagues (2014) recommended that SETs: (a) Increase their awareness of the risks of burnout to their career, their health, and to their students; (b) continue developing classroom management skills and increase confidence in their use; (c) identify role conflict and ambiguity and problem solve to alleviate issues; (d) seek support from colleagues and administrators; and (e) engage in self-care techniques and stress management. Ingersoll (2003) suggested factors such as organizational characteristics and school conditions are responsible for teacher turnover and school staffing problems, rather than retirement or teacher shortages. Teacher stress interventions can address these issues to increase the well-being of teachers and retain them in the profession.

The results of these studies vary due to several factors. First, researchers in the field do not have agreement on the assessments used to measure teacher stress. Second, some of the studies examined interventions provided to teachers who may or may not be experiencing work-related stress (Iancu et al., 2018). Third, the interventions that were evaluated may not have been appropriate for the type of stress the teachers were experiencing (Iancu et al., 2018). As a result, the outcomes were mixed and the effect sizes vary from null to large in these studies (von der Embse et al., 2019; Iancu et al., 2018).

Teacher Resilience

Despite the robust international research on teacher resilience there has been a lack of research about teacher resilience in the U.S. (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). Teacher resilience can generate broad descriptions, but Gu and Day (2013) offer a specific definition as the "capacity to manage the unavoidable uncertainties inherent in the realities of teaching" (p. 39) and to "maintain equilibrium and a sense of commitment and agency" (p. 26). Other researchers described resilience as a response to environmental stress/adversity where people

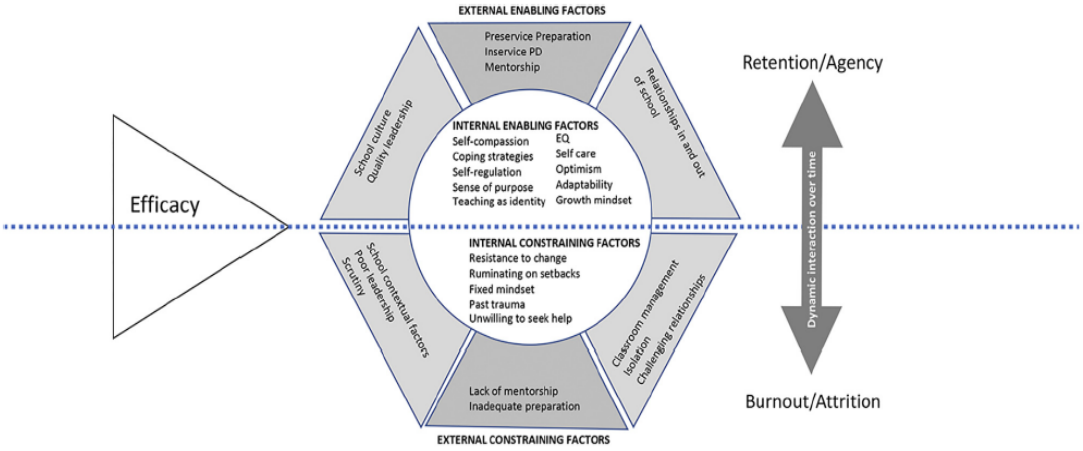
experience a strengthening effect to the adversity (Rutter, 2012), resilience develops from a dynamic interplay between personal and contextual factors and resources (Mansfield et al., 2016), resilience is an interaction between risk and protective factors over time (Beltman, et al., 2011), and resilience makes future challenges easier to manage (Rutter, 2012).

Although stressful life events, trauma, and adversity can have an impact on brain function and structure, and can result in PTSD, depression and other psychiatric disorders, many individuals do not develop illnesses after experiencing stressful life events (Gu & Day, 2013). Gu and Day (2013) theorized that many individuals are resilient due to successful adaptation and effective responses to environmental challenges and resistance to the effects of stress. Factors and mechanisms such as genetics, epigenetic, developmental, psychological, and neurochemical factors could enhance resilience.

Research by Drew and Sosnowski (2019) explored the construct of teacher resilience and three propositions emerged from their study that comprise a theory of teacher resilience. These researchers found that: (1) Resilient teachers embed roots in their school communities to withstand challenges, by responding to a sense of purpose to navigate constraining factors and benefit from enabling factors; (2) resilient teachers embrace uncertainty, by reframing negative experiences into learning experiences; and (3) resilient teachers use relationships with colleagues, students, and school leaders to weather challenges (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). These researchers created a situational map to illustrate the dynamic interaction between internal and external enabling and constraining factors to either predict positive outcomes such as resilience and agency or negative outcomes such as burnout or attrition (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019), illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Situational Map of Teacher Resilience (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019).



Drew and Sosnowski (2019) concluded that the outcome considered how the factors counterbalance over time and result in positive outcomes like resilience and agency or negative outcomes like burnout and attrition. These researchers recommended boosting the enabling factors to offset the adversity that teachers face daily. They identified enabling factors such as social, emotional, psychological, and behavioral competencies to support teachers in overcoming challenges and to focus their energy on managing daily stressors. Their research suggested that teacher efficacy mediates resilience by energizing enabling factors or by compounding constraining factors.

According to Drew and Sosnowski (2019), reframing the uncertainty helps teachers retain power which helps in balancing constraining and enabling factors. Agency can enable teachers to be innovative and adaptive within their work environments and consider input from administrators, colleagues, parents, and policymakers (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). Teacher resilience is a precursor to agency, according to Biesta and Tedder (2007), they observed that resilient teachers who have resources available to them take action to respond

to work challenges rather than react to environmental demands. SETs typically experience particular stressors which are different than stressors experienced by general education teachers (i.e., working with students who have challenging behaviors, students with emotional disorders; Hastings & Brown, 2002). Physical resilience is the ability to face physical challenges and it plays an important role in health and how people age. Physical resilience is how the body adapts to change and recovers from physical stress and medical issues (Cherry, 2022). Physical resilience is the ability to face physical challenges and it plays an important role in health and how people age. Physical resilience is how the body adapts to change and recovers from physical stress and medical issues (Cherry, 2022). The goal of teacher resilience is to build agency for teachers to adapt to their work environment and navigate barriers perpetrated by constraining factors.

Career Adaptability

Career adaptability is an area of study that can be explored to help address SET burnout and retain SETs. SETs leave their position at a rate of 17% to 29% annually, 20.4% in Oregon during 2018-19, due to various factors and with few SETs filling the vacancies (Mason-Williams et al., 2020; Oregon Secretary of State, 2020). People encounter job transitions, career alternatives, uncertainties, and changes at every stage of life. Selecting a suitable career path is an important step in an unpredictable work environment. Career adaptability is an individual's capacity to adapt to and cope with changing career tasks, engage in self-learning, regulate the course of their career, and transitions in career roles (Savickas, 1997), including the transition to career life and future career moves. It includes finding a balance between career roles and the pressure from work environments. Savickas (1997) describes career adaptability as an individual's readiness and their psychosocial

resources to cope with changing work demands and work conditions. This study underscores the need to support teachers and improve skills and resources needed to remain in the teaching profession.

Summary & Current Study

Research about the impact of burnout on educators, students, and the profession highlights the need to proactively mitigate the effects of teacher stress. Burnout can negatively impact educators when they are not aware of it or lack access to resources to navigate teacher stress. Research about teacher stress interventions and teacher resilience are emerging and offer promising outcomes; but it is unknown if they are adequate and appropriate for educators experiencing stressors from multiple sources in various settings. This study aims to understand how SETs managed teacher stress and what type of resources/training, coping strategies/skills, and resilience they used to overcome burnout. Further, this study is focused on teacher perspectives and lived experience to examine the concerns associated within the SET profession. This information can be used to inform course design for teacher licensure programs and professional development opportunities for the profession. Lastly, this information will add to the body of knowledge needed to prevent and reduce burnout and increase resilience.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study: how do special education teachers manage job-related stress and what is their perception of their experiences, attitudes, coping, resilience, practices, and barriers regarding job-related stress management and burnout? Specifically, the researcher sought to address the following questions.

(1) What resources or training did the licensure students and special education teachers receive or have access to address stress management and/or teacher burnout during the academic year?

(2) What coping strategies or skills were used to build resilience by special education teachers during the academic year?

(3) What was the source of job-related stress experienced by the teachers during the academic year?

(4) What were the levels of stress, burnout, emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization of teachers?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I provide an overview of mixed methods, thematic analysis, and the theoretical framework followed by a description of the setting and context for the teachers lived experiences, participants, and research site. The chapter includes a description of the three groups of participants and ends with a description of data collection, data analysis, measures used, and steps taken to ensure trustworthiness.

Research Method and Design

The study utilized a mixed methods approach, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. Mixed methods were chosen as the design for this research to enable an exploration of teachers' lived experiences with job-related stress. The study was conducted using a convergent mixed-methods design, with a qualitative component to give context to the quantitative results. Qualitative data and quantitative data were collected and analyzed concurrently and independently. Data collection for each strand of data occurred independently and there was no interaction between the strands during implementation. The interaction of the strands was distinct (i.e., separate research questions, data collection) and only interacted at the end of the study during interpretation. The design gives equal priority and emphasis to both strands of data as they contribute equally to the study. This method was selected to be used with different, but complementary data, to develop a better answer to my research questions. The design allowed me to expand an understanding from one method to another to converge and confirm findings. Integration of both strands data occurred during data interpretation and allowed me to draw conclusions when synthesizing the results of the qualitative and quantitative data.

Quantitative methods were suitable for the survey data where the phenomena under investigation were quantifiable and assessed through descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The survey data was focused on the impact of stress on burnout components (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment), in the workplace, and on perception of stress. A qualitative approach was appropriate for the thematic analysis of interview data, enabling a rich evaluation of discussions about the lived experience and perspectives about job-related stress management.

In this mixed-methods study, changes in teacher stress are investigated through qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Qualitative and quantitative data is converged to explore the relationship between teacher burnout components, work life, and perceived stress. Source of stress, resources, and coping strategies to manage job-related stress, and the resilience that manifested were also explored. The use of qualitative data or qualitative data alone cannot add to the existing knowledge and literature gap about SET burnout. The intent for the use of the mixed methods is to obtain and analyze complementary data to best understand the research problem (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

Philosophical Approach

The aim of the study was to explore teachers' lived experience and perceptions of their job-related stress. It was posited that perceptions were a result of experienced stress, and it was recognized that perceptions are intangible and unconsciously held. Therefore, a qualitative approach was needed to analyze the teachers' descriptions of their lived experience and a phenomenological approach was needed to analyze those descriptions to determine perceptions.

Teacher stress can be viewed as the situation that arises when negative affect (i.e., anger, depression) results from the teachers' profession and is typically mediated by an appraisal of threat to the teacher's self-esteem or well-being and by coping mechanisms used to reduce perceived stress (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978). An ontological perspective considers teacher stress to be a human conceptualization of the phenomena experienced in the world. Teacher stress is regarded as a reality of the world that involves the way individuals relate to phenomena, make sense and meaning, and form personal understanding. Thus, teacher stress is a human construction created to make sense of and understand the world, to communicate our understanding, and work with our surroundings. The focus of the research is the relationship between teacher stress and teachers. Specifically, determining teachers' stress perceptions involves focusing on the relations between the teacher and their experience of stress. Experienced stress involves qualitative experience dependent on the teachers' descriptions and understanding of their lived experience – the internal relationship between the experiencer and the experienced. This ontological perspective of stress supports an epistemological stance of experiencing stress through subjective, descriptive sense-making and meaning. This view has an impact on data collection and data analysis in terms of how experience stress is presented and how new knowledge is presented.

Phenomenological research design was used to guide the study which is informed by semi-structured interviews which are designed to tease out the lived experience of teachers which adds to the emerging knowledge base. The interviews will be coded using a thematic analysis approach to data analysis. The goal of this approach in research is to discover meaning and achieve understanding by drawing out insightful descriptions of the way individuals experience their situations. The approach examined shared perspectives in which

they responded to open-ended questions designed to gather information about their lived experiences of managing job-related stress. I analyzed the semi-structured interviews with each participant to focus on their lived experiences and analyzed the data through themes in relation to the research questions. The interviews were discussions of the participants' lived experience. This method of inquiry provides rich, detailed accounts of SET perspectives and lived experience regarding teacher burnout, coping strategies and skills, resilience, and resources that are lacking within current research. Using phenomenology as a methodological approach, the research utilized semi-structured interviews and surveys to access descriptions and perceptions of the attitudes, coping, resilience, practices, and barriers of current SET in a deliberate effort to examine the results and the themes that emerged.

Analytic Design

Thematic analysis is an appropriate approach to study the phenomena of teacher burnout for the use of lived experiences of SETs, licensure students, and graduate students to identify themes that emerged in this study. There is a lack of knowledge (specifically descriptions of teacher experiences, attitudes, coping, resilience, practices, and barriers) and voice regarding stress management and burnout of teachers who work with students with disabilities. A deductive thematic analysis was needed to explore the experience of teachers who teach students with disabilities managed occupation-related stress during a global health crisis based on prior research (i.e., teacher resilience; Drew and Sosnowski, 2019) and factors of the MBI-ES.

Braun and Clarke (2006) provided the six-phase guide used in my study as a foundation in conducting thematic analysis.

Phase one: Familiarization with the data collected is focused on reading and re-reading the data while noting initial ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I named the files (i.e., interview transcripts) to represent the source from which the data came from (i.e., focus group, individual interview) a unique identifier by participant type (i.e., licensure student, licensed teacher), and date originally created. I made sure the documents were in Word form for a consistent structure. Once I organized the data, I immersed myself in the data to become familiar with it. I read the interview transcripts at least twice to begin the identification of patterns and meaning while taking notes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I identified significant language, patterns, and themes throughout the interview transcripts.

Phase two: Generation of initial codes is focused on coding interesting features of the data in a systematic way across the data set while collating data relevant to each code (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I hand coded the data sets and my initial review produced numerous codes which informed the start of a codebook. The codebook included definitions of the themes/terms, to assure all members of the coding team understand inclusion criteria for the coding process. My codes were reviewed by a second coder who analyzed each data set. Within this process new codes were added as needed. This phase involves reducing the data into meaningful and manageable chunks of text (i.e., passages, quotations, phrases, words) and producing initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Attride-Stirling, 2001). We had research meetings 2-3 times a week during the coding process to allow time for debriefing and listen to the research team examine how their thoughts and ideas were evolving as they engaged with the data set.

Phase three: The search for themes within codes involves collating codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

During this phase I analyzed and sorted the codes using a table to identify themes and organize the data. The draft of theme development and code placement occurred during this phase (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The codes formed main themes, some of which matched a research question, and some subthemes emerged. The themes were checked by a second coder. This phase was focused on theme development, it's the initial and most basic level of analysis that is used as an organizational tool (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase four: Reviewing themes is checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), thus generating a thematic map of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This phase was focused on refining the draft themes identified in phase three using a two-level analysis of the codes. The first level analysis involved reading through the codes for each theme to determine if a coherent pattern had developed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). If a coherent pattern was identified, I completed a second level analysis. If codes did not fit, I had to determine if the issue was the theme or the codes and the information for that specific theme. The second level analysis involved reading through the entire data set to ensure the themes fit in relation to the data. I was able to check to see if I missed any additional data that needed to be coded (Braun & Clark, 2006). The themes and subthemes were reviewed during team meetings. We also checked the themes to see if they reflected the participant voice and made necessary adjustments.

Phase five: Definition of theme is generating clear definition and names for each theme during ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The goal of this phase was to clearly define the themes and what they are not (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I focused on defining each theme, identifying the essence of the theme to determine what aspect of the data and research questions the theme fits under (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The team organized the themes in a way that reflected the data and displayed in a meaningful and useful way with consensus.

Phase six: Producing a report is a write up, a final analysis of the data. This phase involves selection of vivid examples, final analysis of selected extracts, and relating the analysis to the research questions and literature to produce a scholarly report of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This final phase is focused on analyzing the data and writing a narrative about that data that goes beyond a description of the data and makes an argument in relation to the research questions while providing a concise, logical, and interesting account of the story told by the data across themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

I had the assistance of four coders, one was a doctoral student in the special education program and the others were undergraduate students; two were in the special education program and one in the family human services program. Prior to coding the transcripts, I met with the coders to train them to analyze qualitative data by hand and provided an overview about teacher stress, teacher burnout, and resilience. Before each coding activity we discussed job-related stressors, coping skills or strategies for stress management, and resilience to stress. Coding training consisted of coding text related to the concept to be coded and practice coding. Two coders blindly coded each interview transcript using Google Docs prior to the consensus meeting. For example, Coder A and Coder E coded a data set, Coder B and Coder E coded another data set, Coder C and Coder E coded another data set, and Coder D and Coder E coded another data set during each round of coding. During the consensus meeting the pair of coders reviewed the transcripts and compared their coding. We discussed any coding disagreements until consensus was reached. We also discussed the themes and any theme disagreements until consensus was reached during thematic analysis.

Consensus coding is used to address trustworthiness and credibility for qualitative data analysis (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). The codes were arranged into themes and checked by a second coder.

The research design for the proposed study is descriptive, non-experimental, and exploratory. Descriptive research is a type of research that is used to describe the characteristics of a population. Data is collected, without changing the environment, and can be used to answer a wide range of what, when, and how questions regarding a particular population or group. Data from descriptive studies can be used to examine the relationships between variables. Data collection methods utilized in this study include surveys and interviews that were used to examine the experiences, attitudes, coping, resilience, practices, and barriers of job-related stress management as perceived by SETs to decrease the knowledge gap about these phenomena. A non-experimental approach involves the examination of relationships between independent variables (IV) and dependent variables (DV), in which the researcher does not manipulate or control the independent variable (Gliner et al., 2009). Exploratory research is a methodological approach that investigates research questions that have not previously been studied extensively.

Participants

SETs and licensure students pursuing SET licensure who provide direct services to students with disabilities in school settings are the focus of this study. The sample for this study included certified SETs and graduate students seeking SET licensure in the Pacific Northwest. This sample was appropriate for this study because these teachers have comprehensive understanding regarding the phenomenon under exploration for this research study which included their individual experiences and perceptions pertaining to teacher stress

in special education. This sample supported the problem, purpose and allowed for the research questions to be answered comprehensively.

Eighteen participants agreed to participate in the study and share their lived experiences. Each participant provided general background information such as gender, ethnicity, educational background, and educational experience. Participants shared their job-related or program-related stressors in a focus group during Spring 2020 (T1). Individual interviews provided participants an opportunity to share their experiences during Fall 2020 (T2), Spring 2021(T3), and Fall 2021(T4). The following is an overview of each group. Participants in each group participated throughout the study.

Licensed Teacher Group. The licensed teacher group was comprised of ten licensed SETs. They provided direct services to students with disabilities in rural, suburban, or urban school districts. The SETs self-identified as 100% Caucasian, three identified as male, seven identified as female, ranged in age from 36 years old to 62 years old (M = 45.9 years), and their SET experience ranged from one year to 30+ years (M = 14.1 years) during the initial data collection. Participants in this group were licensed teachers from T1 to T4. I refer to teachers in this group as licensed teachers for this study.

Licensure Student Group. The licensure student group was comprised of eight teacher candidates who were enrolled in a SET licensure program at a state university and had plans to work as a SET providing direct services to students with disabilities upon program completion. There were two groups, the second-year licensure students and the first-year licensure students. During T4 participants in this group were all licensed SETS.

Second Year Licensure Students. This group was comprised of five teacher candidates enrolled in a SET licensure program at a state university and had plans to work as a SET

providing direct services to students with disabilities upon program completion. They completed their student teaching during Spring 2020. The participants in this group self-identified as 100% female, two as Caucasian, two as Hispanic, and one as Multi-Race, ranged in age from 23 years old to 30 years old (M = 27.6 years), and three had experience as an educational assistant that ranged from 2 years to 10 years (M = 2.9 years). Participants in this group were licensure students during T1 and licensed teachers from T2 to T4. These licensure students completed their program coursework and student teaching during Spring 2020, earned their SET licensure, and started working as a licensed SET during Fall 2020. I refer to teachers in this group as second year licensure students for this study.

First Year Licensure Students. This group was comprised of three teacher candidates enrolled in a SET licensure program at a state university and had plans to work as a SET providing direct services to students with disabilities upon program completion. They were enrolled in graduate courses and completed their practicum during Spring 2020. These licensure students self-identified as 100% Caucasian, two identified as male, one identified as female, ranged in age from 25 years to 32 years (M = 27.33 years), and one had experience as an educational assistant for 4.5 years. These students completed their program practicum, student teaching, and course work during the school year 2020-2021. Participants in this group were licensure students during T1 to T3 and licensed teachers during T4. These licensure students completed their program coursework and student teaching during Spring 2021, earned their SET licensure, and started working as a licensed SET during Fall 2021. I refer to teachers in this group as first year licensure students for this study.

Study Context

This section provides context for the time during data collection. Data was collected at four data points (i.e., Spring 2020, Fall 2020, Spring 2021, Fall 2021). Schools were impacted by events that occurred in the region as well as the national and global scale during data collection. Teachers were impacted by the events and shared their lived experience in interviews.

Spring 2020 (T1). During Spring 2020 the rapid spread of the COVID-19 caused a global crisis, and the U.S. experienced a lockdown and lots of activity came to a halt. Places of business were closed and only people deemed essential workers reported to work. Many schools closed and switched to remote learning for students and remote teaching for teachers and staff to learn and work from home. These changes caused confusion, frustration, and stress for teachers and special education teachers. Schools scrambled to resolve situations when some students and staff didn't have access to the internet or devices to access learning or work. Parents, students, and school staff learned how to use software applications and learning platforms to work, learn, and assist those working and learning at home.

Fall 2020 (T2). During Fall 2020 many schools remained closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some schools had planned to offer in-person learning but changed their plans and continued remote learning. Many schools were affected by the wildfires which caused emergency evacuations, thick smoke, and delays to the beginning of the school year. Many students, parents, and school staff had adjusted to remote learning but there were still glitches, and many families still didn't have access to the internet, devices, or school.

Spring 2021 (T3). During Spring 2021 schools offered remote learning and hybrid learning to comply with state guidelines to limit the spread of COVID-19. Hybrid learning was a combination of remote learning and in-person learning where students learned at home

on certain days and at school in-person on other days. Hybrid learning required teachers to prepare for remote instruction and in-person instruction.

Fall 2021 (T4). During Fall 2021 most schools opened the school year with in-person learning and mask, vaccination, and physical distancing guidelines for students and staff. Some staff had different views about the vaccination guidelines and resigned from their job by the vaccination deadline which contributed to staff shortages. Some schools experienced staff shortages and offered limited services. Students, teachers, and staff experienced various adjustments for being back in school.

Measures

The research team developed interview questions and an interview guide to conduct the interviews. The interview questions were reviewed by the team and feedback was provided. These documents guided the semi-structured interviews which were conducted to query the participants with open-ended questions to support the research study purpose. The purpose focused on gaining insight into the lived experience of SETs experiencing job-related stress and burnout. The semi-structured interview approach allowed the researchers to establish rapport with the participants and it ensured that all pertinent questions were covered within the interview. Interview data was collected from individual interviews using approximately 11 questions and 60 minutes were scheduled for each interview. Interview sessions were recorded, and the audio files were transcribed.

The research team created a survey to collect data to document the participant's perception of experienced teacher burnout. The survey consisted of 22 items from Maslach's Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES, 2018), 28 items from the Areas of Worklife Survey (AWS; Leiter & Maslach, 2000), and 10 items from the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS;

Cohen, 1994). These items were selected to measure perceived stress, quality of workplace setting, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment associated with teaching students with disabilities.

MBI-ES. The Maslach Burnout Toolkit includes the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES) and the Areas of Worklife Survey (AWS) for an assessment to aid burnout prevention and remediation for human services professionals, medical personnel, educators, and for general professional use (Maslach et al., 1986). The MBI-ES is an adapted version of the original MBI intended for use with educators, including teachers, administrators, other staff members, and volunteers working in educational settings (Maslach et al., 1986). The 22-item MBI-ES comprises three subscales: (1) Emotional Exhaustion (EE; nine items) measures feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work, (2) Depersonalization (DP; five items) measures an unfeeling and impersonal response toward the recipients of instruction, and (3) Personal Accomplishment (PA; eight items) measures feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work. The MBI-ES is comprised of questions with a 7-point scale ranging from 0 (feeling has never been experienced) to 6 (feeling is experienced daily), where greater values indicate that the respondent experienced those feelings in question with increasing frequency.

Studies have reported on the psychometric properties of the MBI-ES. Reliability was shown to be moderately strong with alpha coefficients ranging from .71 to .90 in the U.S. sample and .63 to .85 for the Greek sample (Kokkinos, 2006). Kokkinos (2006) conducted a study which examined the psychometric properties and factor structure of the MBI-ES in a sample of 771 Greek Cypriot teachers. An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Components Analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was used with a cut-off point of

.30 to judge the saliency of factor loading (Kokkinos, 2006). EFA solutions revealed five factors accounting for 56.32% of variance. The scree plot indicated three main factors with two cross-loading items which explained 42.07% of item variance. Another EFA analysis with varimax rotation with a constrained three-factor solution with 46.94 % variance. Results, using exploratory factor analytic techniques, support the three-factor structure of the construct which was evaluated against alternative models.

AWS. The Areas of Worklife Survey (AWS) is used to assess employee perceptions of work setting qualities (i.e., workload, control, reward, community, fairness, values) that could indicate whether they experience work engagement or burnout. It is used in conjunction with the MBI (Leiter & Maslach, 2000) and is used across various occupational settings to identify key areas of strength or weakness in organizational settings for each of the six areas of work life: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values (Leiter & Maslach, 2003). The AWS is comprised of 28 items with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (very often) to indicate a respondent's degree of agreement with positively or negatively worded statements to assess the constructs underlying the analysis of the six areas of work life. The scale produces a score for each of the six areas of work life. The scoring for the negatively worded items is reversed. For each of the six subscales, the AWS defines a job-person fit or match as a high score (greater than 3.00), which indicates a higher degree of congruence between the workplace and the respondent's preferences; it defines a mismatch as a low score (less than 3.00), which indicates more incongruence between the worker and the workplace (Leiter & Maslach, 2003). The AWS has adequate psychometric properties.

An analysis by Leiter & Maslach (2003) indicates good internal consistency reliability with Chronbach's alphas ranging from .70 to .90. The correlations were significant among the subscales. The researchers collected data from 6,815 workers in the U.S., Canada, Italy, and Finland. A principal component factor analysis of the sample provided evidence supporting a six-factor structure for the AWS. The scree plot determined that Eigen values leveled after six factors and the 28 items were assigned to the appropriate factor (Leiter & Maslach, 2003).

PSS. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is a 10-item psychological instrument used to measure the perception of stress (Cohen, 1994). The PSS-10 measures "the degree to which situations in an individual's life are appraised as stressful" (Cohen, 1994). The scale includes items about levels of experienced stress, feelings, and thoughts during the last month. The PSS-10 is comprised of questions with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (very often) to indicate how often an individual has felt or thought a certain way within the past month. Scores range from 0 to 40, with higher composite scores indicating greater perceived stress. The PSS-10 possesses good psychometric properties.

An analysis by Roberti, et al. (2006) indicates good internal consistency reliability with Chronbach's alphas ranging from .82 to .89: Total Score (10 items; $\theta = .89$), Perceived Helplessness (6 items; $\alpha = .85$), and Perceived Self Efficacy (4 items; $\alpha = .82$). The researchers collected data from 285 undergraduate college students enrolled at public universities in the southeast United States. The scree plot results yielded two factors that accounted for 61.9% of the variance. These researchers conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using the maximum likelihood (ML) method with promax rotation to account for correlations between the factors ($r = .65$). Pattern coefficients indicating loading greater

than .30 were assessed. The factors were labeled Perceived Helplessness (Factor 1; six items) and Perceived Self-Efficacy (Factor 2; four items). For Factor 1, pattern coefficients ranged from .53 to .81, with an Eigenvalue of 5.07 and accounting for 50.66% of the variance. For Factor 2, pattern coefficients ranged from .57 to .83, with an Eigenvalue of 1.12 and accounting for 11.23% of the variance (Roberti et al., 2006).

Procedures

Following institutional review board approval, licensure students and licensed teachers were recruited to participate in the study. The lead researcher contacted participants via email or phone. A research team of eight individuals assisted with the study. Participants were recruited and selected using purposive sampling using the following criteria: experience teaching students with disabilities, SET licensure (obtained or in progress), and currently teaching at a school. A sample of eight licensure students and 10 teachers volunteered to participate in a focus group organized by the researchers and to complete surveys. Participants worked at different schools in the area. The focus groups were conducted via video conferencing (i.e., Zoom) to facilitate conversations about the lived experience of teaching students with disabilities during a school year. Before signing a written informed consent, participants were informed that the researchers were interested in their lived experiences related to teacher stress. If the participants agreed to participate in the research, they were included in the study. The interview proceeded after participants gave their verbal informed consent to participate.

Focus Group. Focus groups were used to facilitate a conversation with licensure students and licensed SETs about their lived experience of teaching students with disabilities during Spring 2020. The stress data will be the only data used for this study from the focus groups.

The rest of the data collected during Spring 2020 will not be integrated into the triangulation of data because the responses in a focus group cannot be equated with responses to individual interviews.

Surveys. The effects of job-related stress on quantitative outcome variables (i.e., MBI-ES, AWS, and PSS) were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA. Data collection enabled testing for the level of burnout over time (baseline, 6 months, 12 months, and 18 months). In particular, level of emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, depersonalization, workplace qualities, and perception of stress were analyzed. The ANOVA incorporated longitudinal trends over time, with adjustment for teacher type.

Interviews. The researchers conducted individual interviews with 15 teachers and three licensure students during Fall 2020, Spring 2021, and Fall 2021. Separate interview questions were used for SETs and licensure students. Different questions were asked at each interval. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom to facilitate conversations about the lived experience of teaching students with disabilities during a school year. The interview sessions were recorded, and the audio files were transcribed. Participants were asked to tell their story rather than analyze their experience.

During the interviews, teachers and licensure students were asked to share the stories of their lived experience during the academic school year. They were asked to discuss questions regarding: what were the biggest shift to their role since the pandemic begin, the source of their job-related stress during the pandemic, aspects of their job that cause emotional exhaustion, feelings of indifference or a negative attitude toward students, both positive feelings of accomplishments, negative impacts on feelings of professional accomplishment, how equipped they are/what actions they have taken to cope with/manage job-related stress,

their greatest success/accomplishment, were they able to contact their students, and what does their direct interaction with students look like. They were not specifically asked about stigma, burden, or perceived benefits but they were asked to talk about how their experiences had affected them.

SET were prompted to answer several questions beginning with: “What has been the biggest shift to your role as a special education teacher since the start of the pandemic?” and “What is causing you the most job-related stress during this pandemic?” First year teachers were asked to discuss the shift from being a licensure student to teaching. Teachers were asked if they experienced any emotional exhaustion, cynicism, lack of accomplishment, source of stressors, accomplishments, and any other information that represented their lived experience teaching students. The interviews facilitated details from the lived experiences of special education teachers working with students in school settings.

Licensure students were asked to share the stories of their lived experience during the academic school year. Licensure students were prompted to answer several questions beginning with: “How has the pandemic impacted your plans to become a special education teacher?” and “What is causing you the most stress during this pandemic related to your licensure program?” Students were asked if they experienced any emotional exhaustion, cynicism, lack of accomplishment, source of stressors, accomplishments, and any information that represented their lived experience teaching students. The interviews gathered details from the lived experiences of licensure students working with students in school settings.

The stories shared by the licensure students and teachers about their lived experiences will be examined for themes. This study searched for themes related to (1) resources or

training received or had access to manage job-related stress experienced by teachers, (2) coping strategies or skills used by teachers to manage stress, (3) type of resilience that manifested, and (4) source of job-related stress experienced by the teachers experience.

Data Analysis

Qualitative Data. Interview data associated with each research question were analyzed separately, guided by the procedures for thematic analysis to create a coding scheme (Saldana, 2016). Descriptive coding was used to analyze qualitative data from the interview transcripts. The primary function of descriptive coding is to categorize the content of the data (Saldana, 2016). Qualitative data associated with each category was extracted from the data and placed together for an organized narrative of the category. A code was used to describe the data. Codes can range from a word to several sentences (Saldana, 2016). The codes were captured as words or phrases on a code list and categorized into overarching concepts through selective and axial coding. The codes were organized into categories and subcategories (Saldana, 2016). Categories emerged from the data. The categories were organized into themes or concepts (Saldana, 2016). The themes and concepts were used to gain insight into the lived experience of teachers managing job-related stress. I aggregated all data across all participants and individual level data was not summarized.

Data from the survey and the interviews was triangulated in the analysis to gain a robust insight which would not be possible with a single method. Verbatim transcripts were analyzed by the researchers using thematic analysis to identify common meanings, relational themes across texts, and patterns expressing relationships between themes. Coding consensus was established with a second coder to assure the validity of the coding system. The second coder read the interviews, coded the interview data, and discussed and reviewed the initial

codes and coding until consensus was reached and a coding scheme was achieved. Themes and subthemes were established, defined, and reviewed during the analysis.

Quantitative Data. Descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, frequency distributions) were used to summarize the survey results. I calculated the MBI-ES scale scores using method 1 (sum) for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2018, p.26). The scale score for emotional exhaustion is the sum of nine items. The scale score for depersonalization is the sum of five items. Higher scores for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization indicate higher degrees of burnout. The scale score for personal accomplishment is the sum of eight items. Lower scores on this scale indicate higher degrees of burnout.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study which was to examine SET experience and perceptions of teacher stress. Their participation in the study was voluntary and they understood the procedures of the study. Participants understood the potential benefits of the study and that their privacy would be respected. Participant anonymity was maintained during each step of the study and during data analysis. The writing is unbiased toward any group (e.g., age, ethnicity, gender, experience).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The chapter includes a narrative of the themes and findings constructed from the analysis of data to answer the research questions using mixed methods. I used thematic analysis to code the qualitative data and identify the emergent themes of the study. I analyzed the semi-structured interviews with each participant to focus on their lived experiences and analyzed the data in relation to the research questions. Interview data were organized by codes and themes. During this process, frequency counts of codes were identified. The frequency count provides a summary of how often a concept was identified in each interview and across time and participants. The following themes are organized by how often they were mentioned. The themes that were mentioned most frequently are at the top and themes that were mentioned less frequently are at the bottom for each research question.

RQ 1. What resources or training did the licensure students and special education teachers receive or have access to address stress management and/or teacher burnout during the academic year?

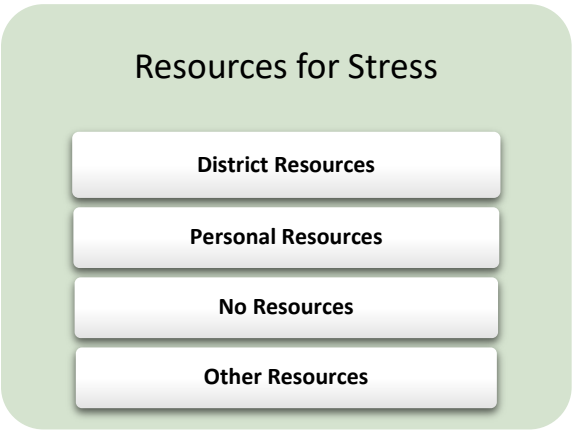
To answer this research question, I examined the source of reported resources or training to manage job-related stress in the interviews with the teachers. The themes that emerged from the interviews were: (a) district resources, (b) personal resources, (c) no resources, and (d) other resources. Figure 2 provides a brief description of the themes that emerged about resources for job-related stress for the teacher groups; a detailed discussion of the themes follows the figure.

District Resources. The most reported resource to address job-related stress by teachers was the school district that employed them. District resources are resources provided by the

school district to support their teachers to manage stress. According to the participants their district offered a wellness program at no cost to school staff. The wellness program consisted of self-care, counseling, therapy, telehealth, social emotional learning curriculum, mindfulness practice, and support groups. This theme was illustrated by one participant who stated:

Figure 2

Resources for Job-related Stress



Note. Themes that emerged about resources for job-related stress.

> I think they sent out an announcement about their clinic had something going on. Maybe it was a therapist or someone you could talk to. I don't like leaving my house in general. Anyway, so that part of COVID is really working for me. I'm going to be totally honest, I'm a homebody. So, I wouldn't have like gone and met someone new, and sat in a new office kind of a thing. Right now, my therapist is doing calls. So that's just easier for me, but I think they sent that out, but that's about it.

Another participant also indicated the availability of supports by stating:

> I haven't taken them up on it. But, yes, our district is pretty good about offering free classes through [redacted] and stress classes. They did a, I think it's on Veterans Day or a

> day before Veterans Day, they're offering a Zoom stress relief seminar thing. And then ongoing yoga and wellness programs that they have through our district. One of our HR people or benefits people sends out emails on a fairly regular basis about things that you can choose to get involved in if you want to. And that's for all staff, classified and certified… Like I said, I haven't really taken them up on it, but I think it's great that they do offer that…

Personal Resources. The second most reported resource available to address job-related stress by teachers was *personal* resources. Personal resources included the participants' support system and resources available to manage stress such as access to fitness, yoga classes, and social support outside of school. For example, participants identified their personal social support system (i.e., family, spouse, parents, friends, coworkers) and pets (e.g., animal therapy) which were available to make connections and manage their job-related stress. As one participant said:

> I have a lot of friends and great family. I know not everybody has that connection and I don't take it for granted. Because I live in my house alone, I have had people checking in on me every week constantly and I have people I check in on. It's like a big old network of folks. So, we all keep in touch and even when we couldn't hang out together… We would keep in touch and everyone was very respectful.

Social gatherings (i.e., hanging out, happy hour) and hobbies (i.e., quilting, gaming) were also identified as an important resource to participants. Participants identified these opportunities and their support system to give and receive social support to manage stress.

> I have outside interests like I quilt, so I have a group of people that I quilt with. I have what I call my pod people. So, during the pandemic, you had your pods of people. So,

> these were three ladies who were my pod people. And I keep connected with them and I try to go out once every other week with one of them… I've got a no work thing, I can't talk about work.

In addition to social support from friends and family, many participants also reported having access to counseling, therapy, and telehealth. Teachers had access to emotional regulation (i.e., awareness of emotional state, using the zones of regulation for themselves that they taught their students), spent time outdoors, exercised at the gym, practiced yoga, and took their medication to manage job-related stress. Some participants found resources on their own and used them to manage stress:

> I definitely done different trainings. I went through a series of courses through [redacted], which is a group. [I] did those a few years ago, they were very empowering. I have done therapy. I have done a lot of stuff with the kids, so zones of regulation and those things. I try and do yoga twice a week. I have a Zoom yoga class. I attend Monday and Thursdays, most Mondays and Thursdays.

No Resources. Some teachers reported that they did not have resources to address job-related stress. These participants were not aware of any available resources or didn't report seeking out resources for managing stress. As participant said, "I don't think that I've specifically looked for anything." Moreover, some of the provided resources were appropriate for general education teachers but not for SETs. One participant's comment captured this theme:

> The union sent out a thing about a book study that I did. And it was all about educators, but it was super Gen. Ed. focused, so it was kind of hard to relate to at times because it doesn't speak to the emotional stress of de-escalating students all day. And like having to

de-escalate myself and how to do that quickly and effectively. I think that's where I kind of needed it most, but other than that I haven't really looked. Nobody has really offered.

Other resources. Some participants found resources other than those offered by a school district to manage job-related stress. These teachers reported that the teacher union offered resources such as gym memberships at no cost for their members and a book study group that read and discussed literature and topics about racial injustice and other subjects. Other participants reported that their cooperating teacher or an advisor associated with their graduate program were available to assist them with feedback and model how to manage staff, handle situations, plan and teach lessons, and incorporate inclusion practices:

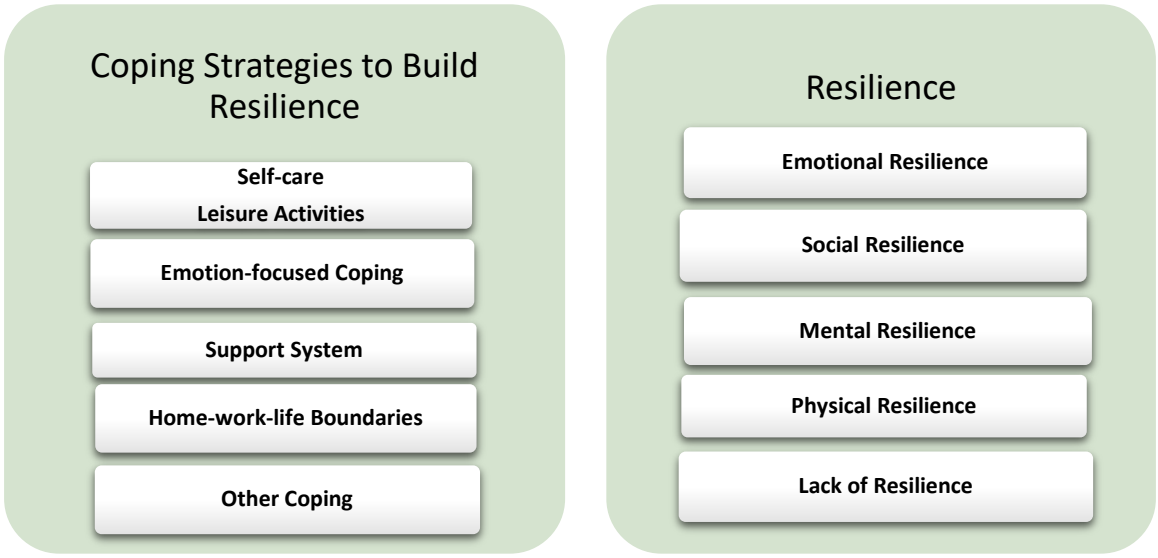
> With my cooperating teacher … I was able to physically go into the classroom. Even though students weren't there, we were able to be on Zoom in the same room. And with her entire staff team, there were a few times where we were able to talk through what it looks like to manage staff. Because there was one staff in particular that was very opinionated and so it was very good for me to watch how she interacted with her. And then also there were a few times where she would talk about a situation that happened earlier in the day. And gave me pointers of how she was planning on handling it and why. I really appreciated that because that's definitely something I'm scared and nervous for with being a special ed. teacher and the staff management part. I definitely got a few good pointers of how to plan lessons from the different classes and different professors. I feel like those have all been really constructive feedback.

RQ 2. What coping strategies or skills were used to build resilience by special education teachers during the academic year?

While I was answering the research question, "What type of resilience manifested in special education teachers during the academic year?" I examined the reported resilience to job-related stress in the interviews by the groups. The themes that emerged from the interviews were: (a) emotional resilience, (b) social resilience, (c) mental resilience, (d) physical resilience, and (e) lack of resilience. The themes that emerged from the interviews to answer the research question, "What type of coping strategies or skills did teachers use during the academic year?" overlapped with reported resilience to job-related stress: (a) self-care, (b) leisure activities, (c) emotion-focused coping, (d) support system, (e) home-work-life boundaries, and (f) other coping. I combined the research questions and themes into one research question and one theme titled "Strategies to build resilience." Figure 3 provides a brief description of the themes that emerged about coping and resilience to job-related stress for the teacher groups.

Figure 3

Strategies to Build Resilience to Job-related Stress



Note. Themes that emerged about coping and resilience to job-related stress for the teacher groups.

Emotional resilience. The most reported type of resilience by teachers was emotional resilience. Emotional resilience is the ability to apply positive emotions (e.g., optimism, joy, hope, curiosity) when needed by an individual (Cherry, 2022). Participants engaged in emotional regulation during times of stress and demonstrated awareness of their emotional response. Participants focused on the positives in a situation and on the things that can have meaningful impact, expressed gratitude, and were aware of their emotions. They reflected on their experiences, engaged in journaling, practiced acceptance, celebrated accomplishments, and built their confidence. One participant expressed

their emotions:

> I'm just so grateful for my team and my district, they've been very good, and my administrator has been wonderful, my students, my parents, my community partners. Oh hey, another positive, I've had far more participation of community partners at IEP meetings than ever before because of them being virtual so it's easier for them to attend and not have to physically drive to my location or whatever… I get it's one of those things where I got to figure out if there a way to keep that because there's more than there used to be. So almost debating would it be better to do virtual IEP meetings but I'm not sure.

Emotion-focused coping. The second most reported coping used by teachers to build resilience was emotion-focused coping, such as the use of emotional regulation and mindfulness to manage job-related stress. Participants used these coping strategies to regulate their emotions and live a more emotionally balanced life. Teachers used mindfulness skills and relaxation techniques to focus on their present experience and tune into their emotions. Some teachers listed their work and personal priorities and decided what could be delegated

and postponed. They accepted that some job tasks would be unfinished and that they had limited control of situations with other school staff and issues at work. Teachers focused on the positives in the situation. They engaged in meditation and relaxation, let issues go, and were honest about their feelings and emotions. One participant shared:

> I have pretty strong coping mechanisms because I've had a really varied life, I've had a death of a spouse, I've had some really big events in my life and I myself just personally have pretty strong coping mechanisms where I can let it go because to me in the big picture of it all I've had worse things happen.

Similarly, another participant indicated, “I usually just cry about it. So, I hold it together and then usually, it's in my car or at home, I just start crying… then I'm like, “Okay, it happened, now can we move on?”

Social resilience. The second most reported type of resilience by teachers was social resilience. Social resilience is the ability to reach out to others for help as needed (Cherry, 2022). Teachers connected with others and worked together to resolve issues that affect people both individually and collectively. Participants focused on building positive relationships and making connections with students, staff, colleagues, and peers. One participant’s comments illustrated the importance of positive teacher-student relationships:

> You know, I think it's just really important for educators and other people to know that the relationships that you build with students really is the most powerful thing that you can do. Because the ones that I had really, really strong connections to stayed really strong even through the pandemic and came back. Those students were still able to just pick up and keep going like nothing really happened. So, when you have those really strong, positive relationships with students, I think that it really goes a long way in

> helping to continue positive production towards success and just help them be able to cope and deal with things and know that they can handle things because you believe in them. If they have somebody like that in their corner, and then that just also kind of reciprocates back to you. That's what I think was [one of] the best things.

Teachers expressed having compassion, understanding, and appreciation for students, families, and other staff and they knew students were counting on them to be there for them. Teachers expressed their goal of building a strong team and focus on collaborating as a team. They also want to take action to address issues, integrate teacher burnout prevention into teacher preparation programs, professional development, and school practice because they recognize that the school systems are unsustainable for teachers and need to change. One participant would like to see teacher burnout addressed during teacher preparation:

> I think that one thing that should be talked about in the education program is what teacher burnout is and how do you prevent it. Like what you're doing. I think it's super important for students to know before they go into a school setting that teacher burnout is very real and that you control whether or not you get burned out. You have to stop and take a rest if you feel burnt out because teachers don't like being burnt out and students don't like learning from teachers that are burnt out. So, yeah, I wish that was a topic that was discussed more.

Teachers made efforts to take care of others like one participant was practicing, “I've done a lot more reaching out sending like dropping little gifts off on porches. Baking for others and dropping it off I mean. I'm really taking care of a lot more people.”

Support system. The third most reported coping used by teachers to build resilience was a support system. Having a support system such as family, friends, coworkers, or a support

group was reported by teachers to be an important coping strategy for stress and for building resilience to stress. In some cases, teachers engaged in volunteer work, became active in the teacher union, or spent time with their pets and animals. Teachers made connections with and cared for others as stated by one participant:

> I have a bunch of friends that are teachers. We all got vaccinated early on in the same round. I was able to hang out in groups of people with other teacher friends and be vaccinated together. And I feel very fortunate to have a solid, secure family and friend group around me doing Zoom games through the pandemic and having a few people I could hang out with in person.

Similarly, another participant used support groups to cope with personal stress and grief after experiencing the loss of a parent:

> I think because I have this really personal stress during this as well, related to my dad, I reached out to this group. They're a nonprofit that provides grief support for people in their 20s and 30s, who don't often have that support… a lot of support groups you go to, or a lot of grief support groups, it's mostly older folks or people… People who aren't living in this weird little shitty one-bedroom apartment. And so being able to connect with people who are experiencing the same thing, especially right now, that's been really one of the most helpful things that's helped with the stress. And then also, some of my friends have also been impacted by this and trying to build connections about that has been really helpful. So just trying to find some ways to connect even though I'm in this little box all day, has been the biggest thing.

Mental resilience. The third most reported type of resilience by teachers was mental resilience. Teachers reported being able to adapt to change and uncertainty which are signs of

positive response to stress. Participants were able to remain calm and flexible during stressful experiences. They improved their skills, learned new skills and applied them. Participants gained new experiences and learned from their experiences. They were able to demonstrate their creativity, get organized, set goals, and keep going. This theme was illustrated by one participant who stated:

> …Going into SPED, I feel like I always knew like I had to be flexible, you know, with the change and stuff like that… With the pandemic, I feel like, that opened it up more to, "Hey, you really have to be really flexible," like I never saw myself teaching online. That was not something that I was looking into. Although it has been hard, I feel like one of the good things is being able to say like, "Hey, I got experience teaching online." I went through all these different models; I've tried different curriculums. Now I feel like it has pushed me out of my comfort zone a lot. I feel like it has also made me grow a bit more, a bit faster than I would have if all of this didn't happen. Looking at the challenges, not in a negative light, more of what can I get out of this experience?

Some participants reached out for support (i.e., counseling, therapy, support groups, resources) when needed to build their mental resilience to job-related stress.

Physical resilience. The fourth most reported type of resilience by teachers was physical resilience. Teachers demonstrated physical resilience when they practiced awareness of their well-being and made intentional healthy choices. Participants tended to their body by getting enough sleep, nutritious diet, and engaging in regular exercise to strengthen their physical resilience. Participants worked on improving their work-life balance by setting boundaries and managing their time to work specific number of hours, leave work at school, and focus on their family and home during non-school time. As one participant indicated:

> I think establishing a routine during this whole part was really important for me because it's so hard to separate work from life right now. Without setting that very clear time management structure I would either work all day or do no work all day and it just wasn't healthy, I think that's the biggest thing.

Teachers practiced self-care and dedicated time to focus on themselves as demonstrated by a participant:

> I need to be at a least at place where I'm okay or happy or not happy but at a place where I'm okay to teach and support in whatever ways I can. So that's when I realized that I also need to take a step back and take care of myself, you know, just do what I can do to make sure I am at a place where I can still function and do what I'm supposed to do…

Many teachers also highlighted the importance of physical exercise such as running, walking, hiking, working out, boxing, biking and playing softball, badminton or disc golf to cope with stress and build their physical resilience to stress. As one participant stated:

> Boxing has been a really good outlet as well… days where I come [home] and I feel like it's just been really horrible… after 20 minutes of boxing, it's like "Okay, I can stop thinking about it," and put that day away and come back with a new mentality the next day.

Self-care. The most reported coping strategy used by teachers to build resilience was self-care. Teachers engaged in physical exercise and activities, received counseling or therapy, set boundaries, or took a break or sick day from work. Teachers practiced self-care strategies by getting enough sleep, establishing routines, healthy diet, and other techniques such as massage or acupuncture, and taking medications to manage stress. As one participant indicated:

> That's been another silver lining of the pandemic is that I never thought I could work from home but I'm finding it actually to be better for my mental health because I can check out during the day. When I'm at work, when I'm in the building, I'm just constantly working constantly even when eating lunch. I'm answering emails or I'm looking at the story for the next group coming up. At home, I will get up and walk away from the computer and I'll go torture my cat with my love for a little while or I'll go do some dishes or I'll go switch out the laundry. And it's like… checking out of work at points during the day has been really helpful.

Leisure Activities. Teachers reported engaging in leisurely activities, a sub-set of self-care, such as hobbies, being outdoors, traveling or taking a vacation, watching TV, or rearranging their home to cope with stress and increase their resilience to stress. Teachers engaged in hobbies such as playing video games with others, cooking, baking, wood burning, reading, playing the guitar, singing karaoke, and painting. One participant who took a trip out of town said, "I know that I need a clean break … just a complete change of view, a different view, different food, different things to look at, and I know how good that is for mental health."

Similarly, another participant reported watching TV shows:

> I also watch the [redacted] a lot. I feel like I grew up watching that show. And now I don't even watch it. I just listen to it sometimes. But just having that nostalgic moment with [redacted] just really calms me down… Yeah, that's what I do.

Home-Work-Life Boundaries. The fourth most reported coping used by teachers to build resilience was having home-work-life boundaries. Teachers reported that they established home-work-life boundaries to manage job-related stress and increase their

resilience to stress. Home-work-life boundaries, for this study, means the establishment of where one's needs, comfort, and limits are regarding work and personal life. Some teachers left their work at school or stopped working after a specific time. While teachers were working from home, some established a work zone and home zone to create a boundary as stated by a participant, "I've had to designate this is the work area of my home and this is my rest area of my home." Teachers managed their time and turned off devices or computers associated with work when a set time was reached. One participant used this strategy, "I set my alarm to stop working. It goes off at 5:00 pm, 5:15 pm, or 5:30 pm. … I try to honor that. I try not to work on the weekends." Another participant said, "I stopped taking work home because I know I wasn't going to work on it." Similarly, a participant shared:

> I can come home and just be done with work and I won't [answer] even if people call me or something like that because my parents and teachers all have my cell phone number. I will just turn my phone off and not take calls and just going to focus here at home, on my family and that helps and so then that's what I do.

The teachers said they wanted to focus on being at home to cope with job-related stress and have a balance between work and home life.

Other coping. Teachers also reported other forms of coping with stress such as completing household chores, having funds, eating, and procrastination. One participant reported not having any outlets for stress at a particular time:

> … I had a surgery and I had pain before that. So pretty much since we've been in shutdown, my ability to cope with stress by doing something physical is hugely compromised from what it used to be. So yeah, I've been having a hard time emotionally with handling anything that comes my way, whether it's work related or, you know, in

> my private life or anything. It's just I don't have my outlets so post-surgery I had to lay on the couch for weeks, so I don't really have good outlets right now.

Lack of resilience. Some teachers lacked the resilience described above. The participants who lacked resilience felt burnt out and one contemplated leaving the teaching profession as stated by one participant:

> I'd say it's like it's a lot harder than I thought. A lot… I know this job is not easy. I know it's not but it's just I understand why there's such a burnout. I get it and I'm feeling it. I never ever thought that I would even contemplate leaving public education.

RQ 3. What was the source of job-related stress experienced by the teachers during the academic year?

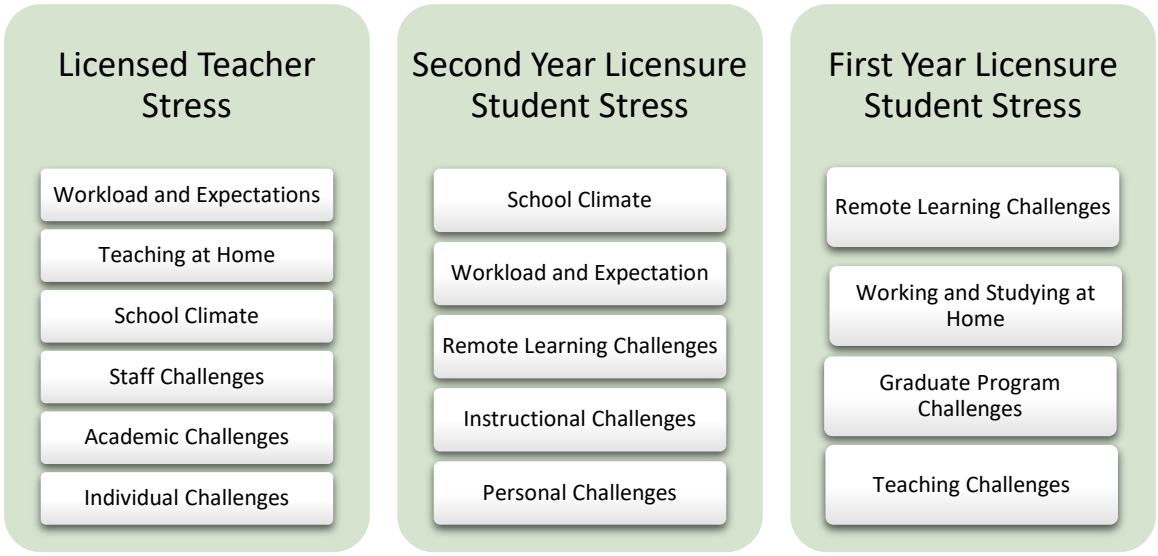
To answer this research question, I examined the source of reported job-related stress in the interviews with the teachers. I found this question was connected to issues relevant to the participants' level of support, teaching experience, and school climate. The themes that emerged from the interviews were different for each teacher group: (a) workload and expectations, (b) teaching at home, (c) school climate, (d) staff challenges, (e) academic challenges, and (f) individual challenges. Figure 4 provides a brief description of the themes that emerged about job-related stress for each teacher group; a detailed discussion of the themes follows the figure.

Licensed Teacher Stress

Workload and Expectations. The most reported source of job-related stress by licensed teachers was workload and expectations. SETs reported that their workload and expectations comprised of paperwork, documentation of educational services and hours, preparation, attending meetings, managing educational assistants, resolving issues, and collecting data.

Figure 4

Reported Job-related Stressors



Note. Themes that emerged about job-related stress for each teacher group.

Finding time to write IEPs was a common source of stress for SETs as one SET shared:

> I didn't have the energy to even figure out how to manage the IEP related stuff at first when I was trying to get 43 students on Google classroom who never really had had to do anything like that, didn't even know how to access their district email in order to do it.

Similarly, one licensed teacher shared:

> I am so far behind, I have a goal of getting them done within a few days of my IEP. I have one that's almost been three months since I held the IEP meeting that I still haven't finalized yet. But, anyhow, finding uninterrupted time to actually focus on writing the IEP is a stressor…"

SETs were responsible for creating distance learning plans which were adapted from in-person learning and increased their workload as illustrated by one participant:

> What's causing the most job-related stress for me—I don't know if this was statewide or just our district, the expectation that we write IEP distance learning plans that are

> bridging the gap from the real IEP for this period of time while we're at home. That was a major workload, immediate crunch for me and only recently—I have 29 students, 28, so only recently have I gotten to the point where I'm actually meeting the students and doing something besides those. So that was the crush of it all. And, I would say paperwork is always a stressor in our field and now this brings a whole new level of what's the right document, what language needs to be in there so that—that to me has been the most stressful.

SETs were responsible for holding remote IEP meetings and the paperwork and gathering signatures needed for the IEPs. Signatures had to be redefined for electronic paperwork. One participant said, "The whole electronic legal paperwork for SPED is difficult… we struggled with how [to] get signatures and what counts as a signature?"

SETs experienced an increase in caseloads, workload, responsibilities, functioned at full or over capacity, and limited time to complete tasks. Staff shortages contributed to the increased number of students. In some cases, SETs were reassigned to other roles at the school or relocated to another site within the district. Teachers work through some of that and help them out as much as we can. One participant illustrated this theme:

> I think it's probably the lack of time that I have to communicate with families and to really think about making the instruction I give students as quality as possible. All of the other demands seem to be eating up my time. And those are the two things that at the end of day. It's like, well, I'm out of time. And I don't know what I'm teaching tomorrow, but I'll figure it out when they show up and it seems kind of backwards to what we should be doing as educators.

State guidelines for special education changed during school closures when schools shifted to remote instruction. State guidelines for instruction, support, and instruction time were redefined to document remote instruction. These changes and adjustments caused confusion during the process. Although state achievement tests were paused during school closures, testing resumed when schools reopened. As one participant expressed, “We're state testing next week which I'm trying not to be stressed about, but it feels like a big old waste of the very few precious hours we have with them… that's something that's not different from most school years.”

Teaching at Home. The second most reported source of job-related stress by licensed teachers was teaching at home. Mandated **s**chool closures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 ushered in remote teaching and learning. Schools scrambled to provide devices and internet access for students, teachers, and staff to access work and instruction. Licensed teachers experienced various stressors while teaching from home: lack of connection with students, working at home, communication with parents, and technology issues. SETs were unable to connect with some students and, therefore, unable to teach and provide support for them. SETs who were able to connect with students remotely reported a lack of student engagement through the screen. One SET shared, “I’m limited to the extent of what I can do… I can’t reach through the screen and getting an engagement… some kids aren’t able to even login because of stressors and family things that are happening at the home.” Students often had their videos and microphones turned off during instruction and SETs had difficulty engaging students in learning activities.

Licensed teachers experienced challenges working at home during school closures. Some SETs had their own children attending school remotely from home. As one participant indicated:

> So, I'm at home teaching, and I have two kids and I am home teaching my two kids, and the biggest stress is finding time to be balancing those things. I mean, my wife is super supportive, she comes up with a schedule for the day for my two girls and they're great but it's … a hard balance of… Well, after I teach my kids or taught my kids for 3-4 hours then it's jumping on lesson planning and trying to schedule times to do meetings with kids. I mean, it's been a pretty big struggle. So that has been one of the bigger stressors.

Other family members were also at home while SETs were teaching from home. SETs were concerned about student and family privacy and had to find closed, quiet spaces in their home away from distractions. One participant shared:

> Just carving out a space in my home—I actually had to carve out a space in a different room with a door that could close because [of] confidentiality. The interactions and it took me a little bit to get my head wrapped around that because I thought, "Well, I could just sit with the computer facing this way and nobody can see it and they don't know which kid it is and it will be fine." And the 50th time someone came in to get a drink of water I thought I was gonna lose my mind. It's so hard already to focus and get the kids to stay with you that those little home distractions, much less little ones that you're actually trying… kids who are trying to graduate who really need you right now.

SETs increased their screen time due to the timing of meetings, instruction, preparation, and workload that were required to teach and work remotely. SETs struggled to balance

working at home and responded by establishing home-work boundaries to balance their work and home life.

Licensed teachers reported limited to no contact with parents and families during school closures. SETs who communicated with parents discussed issues, special education compliance and paperwork, and asked for family support to help their student. One participant shared:

> I think the most stressful part of this shift for me has been talking with parents, kind of taking on that roll of therapist, you know, as one of the few people that they get to talk to and have extended conversations with. There's an emotional load that comes with that. And then, I'm supposed to be having these compliance conversations and these paperwork conversations on top of that and it just feels really awkward and really uncomfortable to acknowledge everybody's having a hard time. "No, your student's not the only one, but hey, I'm gonna email you this statement. Can you say that you agree to this thing that the district is recommending you agree to?" So that's been really hard on me.

SETs also experienced limited to no access to technology needed for work and instruction. As one participant indicated, "There's definitely this stress of staying on top of connecting with kids everyday technology-wise because the internet goes out, their internet goes out, we mistype our code in, the kids can't… there's so many layers of technology that is stressful." Similarly, another participant struggled with technology:

> I think that even though we're doing okay with the technology, it doesn't always work. [I] had my formal observation with the principal and the same thing I've done a hundred maybe a thousand times now… it froze and started reeling through slides quickly and I'm

like, “I'm sorry.” It was like a slot machine. I said, “I don’t even know what's happening,” and had to shut everything down and come back, and hope, and pray the kid will even come back to Zoom and even come to the group again. So that is a nightmare.

School districts restricted access to buildings during school closures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Teachers reported that school building closures meant limited to no access to material and files need for work and instruction as one participant indicated:

My district does not allow us in our building at all so I have had to do everything from home and can’t even go in to print or grab files or things like that. We were given one day when I handed stuff out to students, and they were allowed to come by… That’s it. So that’s been really stressful, not having at least minimal access.

School Climate. School climate was reported as a source of job-related stress for licensed teachers. SETs reported experiencing various stressors: frequent changes, lack of control, COVID-19 exposure, and challenges with the switch to hybrid learning and/or in-person learning. SETs shared their experience with frequent changes: adjustments to schedules, workplace environment, and messages from school administrators about school procedures when schools closed and reopened. As one participant illustrated:

I would say for me the most job-related stress has been the constant change. For weeks, we would find out state department of education says this, and our district says this. Two days later we get another email or message saying, now you’re gonna do it this way. Oh, and now you’re gonna document this. Then two days later, now you’re gonna document all your STI minutes. I don’t know how. We’re really doing our STI minutes, you know. One minute we were told you don’t have to do the same STI minutes in the IEP and then a week later it was “Oh now here’s a document, you do have to document the STI

> minutes on their IEPs." Well, how do we do that when we're not in a full day of school? But we're supposed to count supplemental activities. Just the constant change of what they're expecting, you know.

SETs reported lack of control over the changes that occurred in schools: schedules, messages from school administrators, staff shortage, and state and district guidelines. When schools re-opened, SETs experienced concern about their exposure to COVID-19:

> I mean it's definitely the most stressful year I have ever had, and I think a lot of it is the unknown. I mean we hear so much about COVID, but I mean the only way I can send a student home is if they are showing symptoms, you know. So, when you think of the system of universal precautions, like they always teach me in the CPR classes. Things like that. I have to assume that I am exposed to COVID every single day, right. So, I wear my mask. I never take it off and I wash my hands until hands are dry, and I have to use a gallon of lotion every night, right. And I eat lunch in my car. I am not allowed to have my mask off around students, so something like we are short-staffed or super busy, I can't take a lunch break. I can't sit with students and have lunch.

Similarly, another participant expressed concerned about family and student exposure and response to COVID-19:

> The other part is I do worry about the health of our kids with the pandemic and their family members because some of our kids are pretty fragile. We do have some families that don't believe in (they are pretty vocal about it) the vaccination and it is kind of stressful. I mean we just had some fifth-grade boys come in and say that they could not believe that other kids were getting vaccinations because they were getting microchipped and they're going to have heart attacks probably. And I said, "Oh no, no. We are not

> going to talk about that, and we have to depend on science. We have to respect every family's culture." But for myself I am triple vaccinated because… I want to believe in science and, to me, a vaccination feels better than getting COVID… The health part is stressful a bit because when I am around someone else, like an elderly relative, I start to think I have been around all these kids, have I been exposed and am I asymptomatic.

SETs reported that precautions were added to their responsibilities: routine sanitation of surfaces, masks, social distancing, etc. Many SETs said that their district procedures were limited, slow, and ineffective.

Staff Challenges. Licensed Teachers reported staff challenges as a source of job-related stress. SETs experienced the impact of staff shortage, stressed staff, negative relationships with staff, and lack of program leadership. Staff shortage occurred when some staff members resigned their position from the schools and remaining staff were reassigned to cover vacancies to keep the school operational and SETs experienced stress associated with the situation. Some staff resigned to avoid the vaccination requirements to work in the schools. The coverage required SETs to be flexible with their staff, students, and schedules as one participant indicated:

> Being short staffed has been pretty stressful. I feel the stress of my staff having to cover so much and then having to rearrange schedules… It takes so much time to have a student with a particular staff and making sure those students know, "Okay, on this off day you are gonna be with this staff." It's pretty complicated but it works because of our remind communication system and Google Classroom communication system, but it's still challenging…

Some SETs experienced issues and negative relationships with other school staff and teachers due to these tensions which was illustrated by one participant:

> [There's] stress from coworkers and staff climate. It's been that way for a couple of years now, the school used to be really (in my view) a well-oiled machine. We're all working in the same direction, focusing on the student needs. There was no ego, and I feel like, things changed in the last few years. Now it tends to be more about supporting teachers, classroom teachers, and the gene ed. teachers. We're here to help them out as opposed to… we're both looking at what the student needs.

General education teachers needed support and there were not enough school staff to assist them. One participant shared:

> My special education children are having more access to the general education classroom, but then some of the general education teachers started freaking out a little that they can't keep pace with the classroom and access the curriculum being used and were worried about that. So then when we had small group instruction. All of my students were getting sent back to me for their reading and math small group instruction and social skills, however. With this new remote pandemic and how we're teaching my program is currently understaffed and only running at half capacity and being remote.

SETs reported that lack of communication within the special education team was an issue due to staff shortage and staff proving support with or being reassigned to other roles. Issues were not addressed and resolved within the team as they came up. One participant's comments captured this theme:

> I think we gain a lot from being able to check in as a team, even if it's brief on a regular basis, once a week, you see your staff... and you're able to support each other and you're

> able to problem solve a lot. So, you might have, like, an issue came up at a job site with a student and that staff runs into me on the way out to the school bus and says, "… this happened, what do you think I should do," and we talked about it and it's solved. Now, there are issues that come up with students. And they're different, but I don't want to say they're more or less than what would normally come up with students. They are just happening in a different way and we don't have those natural problem-solving situations. So instead, you turn to email, trying to talk two minutes before you're going to start class, or you save it for a staff meeting

SETs reported that lack of problem resolution became an issue due to program leadership. Poor leadership resulted in unclear job roles and responsibilities for staff and one participant said, "I think what is causing the most stress for me is the lack of leadership in my program, because we don't have a program coordinator and we don't have administrative support."

Academic Challenges. Licensed teachers reported academic challenges as another source of job-related stress. SETs experienced issues with the quality of instruction and support, lack of data, inappropriate curriculum and instruction, and student needs. These issues contributed to the stress experienced by SETs.

SETs reported that the quality of instruction and support was low or lacking during school closures. They expressed that students could not be supported during remote instruction like they would when they are in-person at school. Many students fell behind in their academic, developmental, behavior, and social skills and it was noticeable when students returned to school for in-person instruction. Although many students had low academic skills, there were limited school staff to work with them. Student support systems

(i.e., interventions, RTI) were not in place to address behavior issues and low academic skills. When schools reopened and students returned there were many students with low academic skills in general education classrooms without student support. One participant captured this theme:

> The second grade in our building is a hot mess, second grade in general. They're the kids that had kindergarten up until March [2020] and then they've been… COVID kids until now. So, they're really appearing like first graders. So, there's a lot of stress around that these kids have so much to make up and the teachers, they have big classes. They're trying to do groups of kids and they are having like 10, low, low kids in a group. Kids that we would have by now been looking at for SPED but they're not SPED because they've missed school. So, there's just a lot of trying to help them, taking on some groups for second grade that are not SPED kids. I'm trying to help the teachers work through some of that and help them out as much as we can.

SETs experienced challenges associated with lack of data to inform instruction, decisions, IEPs, and reports. SETs faced challenges collecting data about student progress because they lacked interactions with their students or when their team did not collect data. A participant stated:

> So, we write progress reports every term, we're required to. It's part of the IEP and I'm strict about it. And I collect data... when I talk to my team and say, "Hey, I noticed no progress reports are finalized from the fall and the winter and you guys haven't put in your things. What are you going to do about it?" [They say] "Well, no one's going to check it. No families care. Why are we going to do it?" And I get that point because it's true. No one, most likely, is going to look at it and they don't want to put in the energy to

> do that. But for me I made a commitment when I did that IEP meeting, that I would fill them out, whether they read them or not, whether I like it or not, whether we're in a pandemic or not. That's the commitment I made and they are done and I want them finalized…

Similarly, one participant shared their experience about lack of student data when students weren't receiving instruction or support from other teachers:

> I'm not able to get much data or any accurate data and I have IEPs coming up… I don't see this kid or I haven't seen this kid all year and I don't have anything on them. Yet I still have to do an IEP.

Licensed Teachers shared that their students experienced curriculum and instruction that was inappropriate for their ability level. The curriculum and activities needed to be adapted for students with disabilities. One participant stated:

> Our district adopted an [online] curriculum at the last minute that's horrible… it's not friendly for special ed. kids, it's hard for teachers… its difficult. [It's] stressful coming up with Seesaw activities all the time that [we] constantly have to adapt for our SPED kids because they can't quite do it that way…

Licensed Teachers reported that their students didn't receive the level of academic, developmental, behavior, and social support and services that were appropriate for their needs. As a result, their needs were unmet. The needs of students who don't receive special education services experienced similar issues. Requests for special education evaluation and services increased too. One participant captured this theme:

> It's coming from the gen. ed. teachers, not on purpose, but there's that panicky underlying feeling of we've got these kids who have missed all this instruction. They're all testing out

> really low… the first thing they go to is they need sped services. And there's a lot of tension around because sped [is] saying no, we're not going to start evaluating kids because [they] haven't had school. Yet, we're trying to help teachers because we have [a] lower caseload. I can do some intervention with teachers and help, so there's that kind of the stress that I'm noticing.

Individual Challenges. Licensed Teachers reported individual challenges as another source of job-related stress. SETs experienced stress symptoms, grief, worry about student welfare, and lack of student progress.

SETs experienced physical symptoms such as physical exhaustion, headaches, and energy depletion associated with sitting for long periods of time and increased screen time. Teachers reported experiencing stress from workplace dysfunction, poor relationship between staff, lack of program leadership, and the staff shortage. Frequent changes to schedules and school practices also contributed to the stress of teachers. Some teachers reported having odd dreams, nightmares, and lack of sleep right after the school closures. One participant shared:

> I do have nightmares… I have had headaches and strange dream nightmares since March that I'd never had in my whole life… they're kind of weird dreams that wake you up. I do wake up at two or three in the morning and say, “Oh my gosh. That one kid, I didn’t even see his face on camera for five days,” and I don’t know what to do. I text the parent, I'm afraid something’s wrong. I'm not allowed to do a home visit I mean I'm stuck. And that part is hard I feel like we’ve got some kids out there who are really struggling and we can’t get to them. And usually we can find a way, but that’s my stressor right now.

Similarly, another participant shared their experience with physical exhaustion:

> There's this strange exhaustion that I have never had, and I've always worked super hard and worked lots of jobs and I taught… I've done lots of things and I really think it's the screen time. Ironically, we're on the screen, but like on Wednesdays I have 6 back-to-back half hours with no breaks. It's just the nature of what I'm the teaching and most days I have six groups. I try to get out, run around, see kids but I have 10 minutes [in] between or 5 minutes. But I go home and I used to just work here till 7 at night or 6 at night or 5 at night… if I go home at 4:30 or 5 I will just fall dead asleep like sitting in a chair. I hear a lot of teachers telling me that they're falling asleep super early like… what? And I have for the first time in my life, fallen asleep just doing paperwork at my desk in my room… then wake up. But we're all waking up at like 3:30 or 4:00 in the morning… I know it's part of the stress.

SETs worried about the welfare of their students and families, especially if they had no contact with them. One participant's comment captured the concern:

> I think what is causing the most stress for me right now is just not knowing. Like, there are some students who I have had zero contact with them or their families and they're the families that need the most support, that regularly use [the] school to get the things they need. So just thinking about what they're doing and where they're at has been really stressful for me.

Teachers also worried about the stress experienced by students and their families. Teachers got a glimpse of their students' home life and they knew some of the students were not in good situations. Teachers worried over their students' needs and wellbeing and wondered if they were experiencing abuse or neglect. A participant stated:

> I am truly worried about child abuse and other things that I know are going on. I mean, they are. I make many calls a month, school wide, and we know this is a safe place and numbers have gone down. That's because children are home with perps, and that's something that wakes me up at 2:00 and 3:00 in the morning because there's just very little you can do.

SETs experienced grief from not seeing their students and colleagues during school closures. SETs work with a team of staff to provide educational services to students and their contact ended abruptly. A participant stated:

> … The stress was mostly the grief. I'm very social with my staff. We're very caring for each other and… not being able to see them and the students in person. We did the parades and those things, but that part was really hard. I'm really a cheerleader on the staff and it's really hard because many teachers are truly depressed during this time because they don't know when it's gonna end. Is it gonna happen in the fall? Are we doing it again? I think this because it's societal but also the parents are saying, "When are we done with school this year?" We don't know.

Some teachers were directed to pack up their classroom after being told not to be in the building. A participant shared their experience:

> We're not supposed to be in the building either, but I was told last Friday that we need to have our rooms completely packed up by Friday… and so I don't know how to do that and not be in the building. I've been in this room 15 years and I had like, a sensory pool. I have [a] basket—I have a crazy set up that I'm now discombobulating and trying to safely pack… So that just added a whole new load of stress.

SETs expressed concern about their students' progress during remote instruction. Students were not receiving the level of support they needed to make growth and maintain the skills they had learned. Teachers were concerned about student regression in the areas they had experienced growth and that they would not achieve their current goals. A participant said:

> They don't have a support system at home or a skill base that would also assist them, so I don't know if that's stress… What I'm worried about is what it looks like when they come back… this regression behaviorally, developmentally, that is causing some lost sleep too.

Second Year Licensure Student Stress

Analysis of the interview transcripts identified five themes that emerged from the interviews as the source of job-related stress for second year licensure students: (a) school climate, (b) workload and expectations, (c) remote learning challenges, (d) academic challenges, and (e) individual challenges. The themes for these licensure students answered the research question that centered on the common experiences of job-related stress experienced by participants as they worked through the school year, and their stress was influenced by events that occurred in the region and in society. These participants linked their experiences with job-related stress to school climate, workload and expectation, and the COVID-19 pandemic. I found this question was connected to issues relevant to the participants' teaching experience, school climate, and level of support.

School Climate. The most reported job-related source of stress by second year Licensure Students was school climate. Teachers in this group experienced challenges with the

transition from in-person teaching to remote teaching when schools closed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. A participant (who was a new teacher) shared:

> "… the going back and forth between in person to virtual and we just got told like two days ago, we could be going back in person in a month. So, like the back and forth and there's like no consistency. I think that's been really hard, but I don't think that's like I'm a new teacher thing. I think it's like everybody."

These teachers reported issues with school administration, specifically their lack of problem solving and limited teacher support. In particular, there was no support in place for new teachers and identified issues were not addressed. A participant shared their experience, "I think the most stress is like seeing something, identifying an issue, and talking to administration… "Hey, this is something that I see as an issue…" and they agree with you, but then they don't address it."

They experienced issues with general education teachers and acceptance by other people in the workplace. A participant shared their experience with teachers in their workplace:

> The most stress would probably be other teachers, other Gen. Ed. teachers. I think as a Special Ed. team we are all just trying to get through it, maybe not successfully, but we are kind of together on that. Gen. Ed. teachers are just so stressed out right now, and I totally feel for them because I could not do what they are being asked to do. But it's to the point that they sat in the staff meeting and told us it was inequitable for students with disabilities to be in the classroom because Gen. Ed. peers would miss instruction. We're now at the point where Gen. Ed. is voicing that they want exclusion and that's the only option and I get that it's coming from all this stress and burnout and all this stuff that I am feeling as well, but it's really hard to be collaborative and problem solve with people

> who just have the idea, “This kid is out. I don’t want them there. They don’t belong there.”

The changing schedule, COVID-19 guidelines, the risk of exposure to COVID-19, and not understanding their job role were experienced by this group of teachers.

Workload and Expectations. The second reported job-related source of stress by second year Licensure Students was the workload and expectations. These teachers reported their workload (i.e., paperwork, documentation, IEPs, meetings, lesson plans, managing Education Assistants) and the amount of screen time to teach and work was their job-related stress. A participant shared:

> I think there's like four hours straight, where I'm just teaching, and on video and, you know I give the kids breaks and stuff, but then I'm moving things around and there's a kid who needs help, or if they have a question before I send them back to their Gen Ed small group or whatever. So, it's not actually a break for me it's which is it wasn't, it is what it is, but that aspect of just like how on I am the whole time.”

They experienced headaches and eye strain associated with the amount of time they spent looking at a screen. The teachers’ expectations included communicating with parents, coworkers, and students and helping students transition to school. In particular, the sixth graders required assistance from the teachers to adjust to middle school at the request of parents. Participants reported challenges with time management, not having enough time to eat lunch, or taking any breaks during the school day.

Remote Learning Challenges. Second year Licensure Students experienced challenges with remote learning while they were taking courses and completing their student teaching in their graduate program during Spring 2020. They reported that they felt like the quality of

their learning, activities, and tasks were not of the same quality as in-person learning. A participant shared their experience:

> I'm right now in the math class …. and you're supposed to do a portion where you go observe a classroom. We had to watch a video and we had to give the assessment to another grad student over Zoom and I feel like I'm kind of losing that aspect, you know like, I can technically say that I've done this, but have I? So, I think that's kind of affecting a bit.

These Licensure Students reported limited focus and understanding of remote learning classes and practicum tasks and increased group work. A participant said, "… we might only have a couple classes left but the online format is really hard to learn and to stay focused, and I suffer from really bad migraines induced by technology so it's just like, compounded everything together."

Academic Challenges. Second year Licensure students experienced challenges to student academic learning. They were responsible for teaching students with low pre-academic skills during remote instruction. A participant shared:

> Just figuring out what to do every day because a lot of my kids are still at their pre-academic skills. And we have goals centered around circle time behavior. How am I supposed to record a circle time behavior? I had to rework one of the goals.

These teachers experienced low engagement with students who lacked support at home due to social inequity issues. A participant said:

> You have families that don't have Wi-Fi and can't use technology. And then the most stress is the equity difference. Oh, that kid who has that parent who can sit there and has the nice house with the Wi-Fi and things are doing great and they're learning. And then

> that kid still hasn't logged on because he lives in his car… that's been the most stressful, trying to support families when there's no supports."

When these Licensure Students were teaching, they reported lack of student support systems in the schools that address academic and behavior issues. Academic support like RTI (Response to Intervention) was not in place to support students. There was a lack of student data and information to inform instruction, progress, reports, and IEPs.

Personal Issues. Licensure Students shared that teacher culture is unhealthy and unsustainable for the long term. One participant thought about leaving the profession. A Licensure Student said:

> I think the biggest part I'm grappling with is it's not celebrated to be healthy; it's not encouraged. You know, like in our staff meetings, a colleague would be called on to do like a mindfulness thing where they would either read it or share a two-minute YouTube video and that was us taking care of ourselves. Whereas, the expectations still were like those meetings at 7:15 or stay late or whatever else and I think, for me, one of the biggest parts that I realized this year is how not okay I am with teacher culture.

First Year Licensure Student Stress

Analysis of the interview transcripts identified four themes that emerged from the interviews as the source of job-related stress for first year licensure students; (a) remote learning challenges, (b) working and studying at home, (c) graduate program challenges, and (d) teaching challenges. The themes for first year licensure students answered the research question that centered on the common experiences of job-related stress experienced by SETs as they worked through the school year, and their stress was influenced by events that occurred in the region and in society. Participants in this group linked their experiences with

job-related stress to remote learning and working, graduate program and teaching challenges, and the COVID-19 pandemic. I found this question was connected to issues relevant to the participants' teaching and classroom experience.

Remote learning challenges. The most reported source of stress by first year licensure students was remote learning challenges. These participants experienced challenges with remote learning when the university and schools closed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. First year licensure students struggled to focus and fully understand learning and tasks presented in the online format while they were completing courses, practicum tasks, and student teaching for their program. Subsequently, participants were concerned about the quality of their virtual learning, practicum tasks, and experiences occurring via Zoom (or similar video conferencing) and the lack of in-person peer interactions to share ideas, input, and support. A participant stated:

> With my practicum just being on Zoom is hard… because it was my first actual practicum, I think my teacher thought I knew what I was doing and how the system worked and so there are a lot of times where she was like, "Okay, so like when can you start teaching"? And I was like, "I don't know, am I supposed to teach now? Do I wait? What am I supposed to do? I don't know." And so, I ended up teaching the second week of the term. All of my classmates started on the fourth or fifth week of the term. I was like, "Oh, so that's why I was so stressed for a little bit". Because I started way too early. I got it, understand now. I had no idea that I was supposed to wait until I had a plan. I just jumped in with two feet and was like, "Okay, here I am". Which ended up working out for my benefit because I was able to build relationships with the students a lot faster. But it was very stressful for those first few weeks where I was like, "I'm teaching but I don't

> know what I'm teaching, and I don't know how I'm teaching or if I should be collecting data or anything." So, yeah that was very stressful.

Participants experienced the extra effort of talking to their professors and some hesitated to unmute their microphone to participate in class due to feelings of anxiety and noise in their home. A participant said:

> It's an added step to be able to talk to your professors. You can't just raise your hand and talk to them to the side. You have to interrupt all of the class, which is stress-inducing because I don't like drawing attention to myself, so I just don't do it and I don't ask questions. Which means I'm not fully understanding what's being taught, which is stressful when I try to do the assignments. So just like this spiral that kind of all builds on each other.

Working and studying at home. The second reported source of stress by first year Licensure Students was working and studying at home. The participants experienced challenges with unreliable internet, time management, and the home-family-school balance due to the amount of practicum activities, course work, and daily tasks. A participant shared their challenge, "There's no separation from this is school time and then this is home time. It's just like they blend and for me that doesn't always work because I like to have them separated." Another participant spoke to the challenges of working and studying at home:

> In terms of actually being able to study and focus on my classes, I think this is the longest … my face is on camera because I'm so frequently having to, you know, some kid comes in with a question or they're screaming at my door, whatever. So that has been the most stressful thing, is trying to do all of my work at home. Typically (for) my homework, I'll go to a café all day on Saturday and do homework and now I'm doing my homework

> from like midnight to 3:00 a.m. because it's the only time that it is quiet in my house. And that has been just a huge challenge.

Graduate Program Challenges. These licensure students experienced stress associated with their graduate program. Participants reported stress from managing the workload from practicum tasks and their classes to meeting university requirements. These participants reported that they lacked classroom experience for the context of their course work. A participant shared their experience:

> We're doing all of these hypothetical situations in our professional development classes. For someone who doesn't have much experience as to what a classroom actually looks like, that's been really hard for me to wrap my head around. We're supposed to be creating a data set and I'm like, I have literally only seen one class ever and it was six students and I know that's not normal. I know that I can't assume that's what the real-world experience is going be like.

Teaching Challenges. These licensure students experienced lack of student engagement through the screen and providing support for many students. Many students turned off their cameras, muted their microphones, and did not participate in discussions or tasks and during instruction. There were often no responses when participants tried to engage students in learning tasks. A participant shared their experience:

> When you're in a class of kids and you don't get any response from anyone, it was very stressful to be like, "I'm just talking to myself now." "Why is no one responding? Is anyone getting this"? I have no idea, because all their cameras are off too. It's even harder, there are some classes where they had their cameras on, so you can kind of see what they're doing and you could see their faces. But I mean, I had one class there was

> nothing. It was just eight or ten seventh graders, all with cameras off and muted and would not engage. And so, it was very stressful to be like, "Are you guys there? What's going on?"

The transition to in-person learning was a source of stress since it meant a shift to instruction and a return to the school building where schedules had to be worked out and educational assistants had to be managed. A participant said, "Preparing the classroom for in-person (was a big stressor). I spent a lot of time teaching in my living room and then going into the building and prepping the classroom. It just felt like two different worlds." Social and political issues such as race inequities and mask and vaccine mandates had to be addressed when the topics came up. A participant stated:

> I saw a teacher talking about race and racism and gerrymandering. I was in a prep and it was I just listening in on it… it was so great because if there's any comments brought up he shuts it down hard but in such a fair way. Like, "Nope. I'm not dealing with that kind of stuff, that stuff is not really what we're talking about. This is what's real." I definitely would feel stressed how to approach that without talking to someone."

RQ 4. What were the levels of stress, burnout, emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization of teachers?

To answer this research question, I conducted a quantitative analysis by analyzing the effects of job-related stress on quantitative outcome variables (i.e., MBI-ES, AWS, PSS) using the group means for each teacher group. Statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows (Version 28).

Maslach Burnout Inventory-Education Survey. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of teacher type on the MBI-ES subscale score in

licensure students and licensed teachers at four times periods. The MBI-ES subscale score (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment) was the dependent variables. Teacher type with three levels was the independent variable. When significance was discovered in main effects, a post hoc test was run to measure the direction of significance. In Table 1, I provide an overview of MBI-ES descriptive statistics for each group.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics and One-Way Analysis of Variance for Teacher Ratings on the MBI-ES

	Year 1 Licensure		Year 2 Licensure		Licensed		$F(2,15)$	$\eta 2$
Measure	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
EE T1	2.59	0.32	2.58	1.66	3.32	1.10	.82	.10
EE T2	3.26	0.80	3.76	1.45	3.14	1.17	.43	.05
EE T3	2.48	0.13	4.07	1.42	2.94	1.06	2.46	.25
EE T4	2.67	1.44	4.98	0.56	3.42	1.29	4.47*	.37
DP T1	0.80	1.39	0.72	0.72	1.32	0.98	.75	.09
DP T2	0.20	0.20	1.36	0.93	0.96	0.73	2.28	.23
DP T3	0.87	0.90	1.76	1.33	0.64	0.39	3.16	.30
DP T4	0.80	1.06	2.00	0.86	0.80	0.52	5.08*	.40
PA T1	4.54	2.11	5.03	0.59	4.95	0.87	.22	.03
PA T2	5.50	0.22	4.60	1.09	5.00	0.72	1.21	.14
PA T3	5.63	0.33	4.60	0.81	4.96	0.83	1.65	.18
PA T4	5.25	0.57	4.25	0.58	4.89	0.68	2.64	.25

Note. * $p<.05$; EE (Emotional Exhaustion), DP (Depersonalization), PA (Personal Accomplishment)

Emotional Exhaustion. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of teacher type on the Emotional Exhaustion subscale score in licensure students and licensed teachers at four times periods. There was a significant effect of teacher type on the Emotional Exhaustion subscale score at the $p<.05$ level for the three conditions [$F(2,15) = 4.47$, $p = 0.030$] at Time 4. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the first-year licensure students ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.44$) was significantly different than the second-year licensure students ($M = 4.98$, $SD = 0.56$) at Time 4. However, the Licensed Teachers ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.29$) did not significantly differ from the first-year licensure students and second year licensure students at Time 4. Taken together, these results suggest that teacher type has an effect on emotional exhaustion. Specifically, the results suggest that teachers with less classroom teaching experience feel more emotionally exhausted (i.e., lack of resources for experiencing emotional events). However, it should be noted that classroom teaching experience must be low to see an effect. Having some classroom teaching experiences does not appear to significantly increase emotional exhaustion.

Depersonalization. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of teacher type on the Depersonalization subscale score in licensure students and licensed teachers at four times periods. There was a significant effect of teacher type on the Depersonalization subscale score at the $p<.05$ level for the three conditions [$F(2,15) = 5.08$, $p = 0.021$] at Time 4. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the second-year licensure students ($M = 2.0$, $SD = 0.86$) was significantly different than the Licensed Teachers ($M = 0.80$, $SD = 0.52$) at Time 4. However, the first year licensure students ($M = 0.80$, $SD = 1.06$) did not significantly differ from the second year

licensure students and Licensed Teachers at Time 4. Taken together, these results suggest that teacher type really does have an effect on depersonalization. Specifically, the results suggest that teachers with less classroom teaching experience are more likely to have feelings of depersonalization (i.e., detachment and cynical towards their occupation). However, it should be noted that classroom teaching experience must be low to see an effect. Having some classroom teaching experience does not appear to significantly increase depersonalization.

Personal Accomplishment. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of teacher type on the Personal Accomplishment subscale score in licensure students and licensed teachers at four times periods. There was not a significant effect of teacher type on the Personal Accomplishment subscale score at the $p<.05$ level at any time. Taken together, these results suggest that teacher type does not have a significant effect on personal accomplishment (i.e., feelings of professional inefficacy).

Areas of Worklife Survey. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of teacher type on the AWS subscale score in licensure students and licensed teachers at four times periods. The AWS subscale score (i.e., workload, control, reward, community, fairness, values) was the dependent variable. Teacher type with three levels was the independent variable. When significance was discovered in main effects, a post hoc test was run to measure the direction of significance. An overview of AWS descriptive statistics for each group is provided in Table 2.

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics and One-Way Analysis of Variance for Teacher Ratings on the AWS

	Year 1 Licensure		Year 2 Licensure		Licensed		$F(2,15)$	$\eta 2$
Measure	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Workload T1	2.60	0.69	2.48	0.92	2.06	0.65	.91	.11
Workload T2	2.20	0.35	1.92	0.72	2.26	0.67	.47	.06
Workload T3	2.60	0.87	2.16	0.84	2.48	0.80	.35	.05
Workload T4	2.27	0.99	1.56	0.52	2.06	0.68	1.23	.14
Control T1	3.08	1.01	3.50	0.50	3.30	0.61	.39	.05
Control T2	3.42	0.38	3.40	0.65	3.18	0.76	.25	.03
Control T3	3.00	1.64	2.45	1.07	3.23	0.75	1.00	.12
Control T4	4.00	0.43	2.45	1.08	3.30	0.74	3.61	.33
Reward T1	3.75	0.43	3.90	0.38	3.50	0.99	.44	.65
Reward T2	3.83	0.29	3.25	0.43	3.10	0.58	2.36	.13
Reward T3	4.33	0.63	3.15	1.31	3.43	0.74	1.65	.23
Reward T4	4.67	0.38	3.40	1.41	3.18	0.84	2.66	.10
Community T1	4.00	0.20	3.08	1.29	3.48	0.74	1.02	.12
Community T2	3.73	0.50	3.48	0.64	3.54	0.69	.15	.02
Community T3	3.73	0.64	2.96	1.15	3.96	0.74	2.28	.23
Community T4	4.27	0.70	2.52	1.24	3.98	0.62	6.09*	.45
Fairness T1	2.83	0.73	2.83	0.94	3.12	0.69	.30	.04
Fairness T2	1.94	1.64	3.03	0.91	3.08	0.61	1.96	.21
Fairness T3	2.72	0.75	2.43	1.13	3.03	0.55	1.03	.12
Fairness T4	3.67	0.33	2.73	0.79	3.08	0.74	1.61	.18

Table 2 (continued).

	Year 1 Licensure		Year 2 Licensure		Licensed		$F(2,15)$	$\eta 2$
Measure	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Values T1								
Values T2								
Values T3								
Values T4								

Note. * $p<.05$

Workload. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of teacher type on the Workload subscale score in licensure students and licensed teachers at four times periods. There was not a significant effect of teacher type on the Workload subscale score at the $p<.05$ level at any time. Taken together, these results suggest that teacher type does not have an effect on workload (i.e., work overload can occur when individuals are given more work responsibilities and negatively impacts quality, workplace collaborations, and innovation; Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

Control. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of teacher type on the Control subscale score in graduate licensure students and licensed teachers at four times periods. There was not a significant effect of teacher type on the Control subscale score at the $p<.05$ level at any time. Taken together, these results suggest that teacher type really has no effect on control.

Reward. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of teacher type on the Reward subscale score in graduate licensure students and licensed teachers at four times periods. There was not a significant effect of teacher type on the

Reward subscale score at the $p<.05$ level at any time. Taken together, these results suggest that teacher type does not affect reward.

Community. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of teacher type on the Community subscale score in licensure students and licensed teachers at four times periods. There was a significant effect of teacher type on the Community subscale score at the $p<.05$ level for the three conditions [$F(2,15) = 6.09$, $p = .012$] at Time 4. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the first year licensure students ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.70$) was significantly different than the second year licensure students ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.24$) at Time 4. The mean score for the second year Licensure Students was also significantly different than the Licensed Teachers ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.62$) at this time. However, the Licensed Teachers did not significantly differ from the first year licensure students. Taken together, these results suggest that teacher type does have an effect on community. Specifically, the results suggest that teachers who are new to the profession do not feel like there is a sense of community. However, it should be noted that teachers must be new to the teaching profession to see an effect.

Fairness. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of teacher type on the Fairness subscale score in licensure students and licensed teachers at four times periods. There was not a significant effect of teacher type on the Fairness subscale score at the $p<.05$ level at any time. Taken together, these results suggest that teacher type has no effect regarding fairness.

Values. I was unable to perform an analysis to compare the effect of teacher type on the Values subscale score in licensure students and licensed teachers at four times periods due to lack of data.

Perceived Stress Scale. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of teacher type on the PSS score in licensure students and licensed teachers at four times periods. The PSS scores were the dependent variables. Teacher type with three levels was the independent variable. An overview of PSS descriptive statistics for each group is provided in Table 3.

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics and One-Way Analysis of Variance for Teacher Ratings on the PSS

	Year 1 Licensure		Year 2 Licensure		Licensed		*F*(2,15)	*η2*
Measure	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Perceived Stress T1	26.67	3.06	19.60	2.79	21.50	3.41	4.67*	.38
Perceived Stress T2	28.00	6.56	23.20	8.53	18.20	4.73	3.23	.30
Perceived Stress T3	23.67	4.93	24.40	7.77	16.20	4.39	4.53*	.38
Perceived Stress T4	25.67	1.16	26.80	6.83	18.10	3.87	7.09*	.49

Note. * $p<.05$

There was a significant effect of teacher type on the PSS score at the $p<.05$ level for the three conditions [$F(2,15) = 4.67$, $p = .026$] at Time 1. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the first year Licensure Students ($M = 26.67$, $SD = 3.06$) was significantly different than the second-year licensure students ($M = 19.60$, $SD = 2.79$) at Time 1. However, the Licensed Teachers ($M = 21.50$, $SD = 3.41$) did not significantly differ from the first year licensure students and the first year licensure students. Taken together, these results suggest that teacher type has no effect on their perception of stress. Specifically, the results suggest that teachers who are new to a school do feel like feel

like they are stressed. However, it should be noted that teachers must be new to the teaching profession to see an effect.

There was a significant effect of teacher type on the PSS score at the $p<.05$ level for the three conditions [$F(2,15) = 4.53$, $p = .029$] at Time 3. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the second-year licensure students ($M = 24.40$, $SD = 7.77$) was significantly different than the Licensed Teachers ($M = 16.20$, $SD = 4.39$) at Time 3. However, the first year licensure students ($M = 23.67$, $SD = 4.93$) did not significantly differ from the second year licensure students and the Licensed Teachers. Taken together, these results suggest that teacher type does not affect their perception of stress. Specifically, the results suggest that teachers who are new to the profession do feel like they are stressed. However, it should be noted that teachers must be new to the profession to see an effect.

There was a significant effect of teacher type on the PSS score at the $p<.05$ level for the three conditions [$F(2,15) = 7.09$, $p = .007$] at Time 4. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the second year licensure students ($M = 26.80$, $SD = 6.83$) was significantly different than the Licensed Teachers ($M = 18.10$, $SD = 3.87$) at Time 4. However, the first year Licensure Students ($M = 25.67$, $SD = 1.16$) did not significantly differ from the second year licensure students and the Licensed Teachers. Taken together, these results suggest that teacher type does influence their perception of stress. Specifically, the results suggest that teachers who are new to the profession do feel like they are stressed. However, it should be noted that teachers must be new to the profession to see an effect.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The current study is focused on teacher stress and coping/resilience among licensure students and practicing special education teachers. The study was not designed to focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, but it became a factor in the participants' responses and coping skills. The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the findings. Many of the stressors that the participants reported were associated with the pandemic (i.e., teaching at home, remote learning challenges, working and studying at home, teaching challenges). Overall, the findings indicated that special education teachers face a variety of stressors that were mitigated when offered some resources for coping with and combating stress. The resources offered were helpful but did not go far enough. In the future school districts should consider heeding the findings to combat the effects of stress, thereby retaining SETs.

In this study, I relied on the Situational Map of Teacher Resilience (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019) to frame the study. The situational map illustrates the dynamic interaction between internal and external enabling and constraining factors to either predict positive outcomes such as resilience and agency or negative outcomes such as burnout or attrition (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). Drew and Sosnowski (2019) explored the construct of teacher resilience and three propositions emerged from their study that comprise a theory of teacher resilience. These researchers concluded that: (1) Resilient teachers embed roots in their school communities to withstand challenges, by responding to a sense of purpose to navigate constraining factors and benefit from enabling factors; (2) resilient teachers embrace uncertainty, by reframing negative experiences into learning experiences; and (3) resilient

teachers use relationships with colleagues, students, and school leaders to weather challenges (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019).

Results of the qualitative analysis indicated several broad themes as well as subthemes within each broader area that included workload and expectations, teaching at home, school climate, staff challenges, academic challenges, and individual challenges that contribute to experienced stress. These themes and subthemes are presented as external enabling factors, internal enabling factors, internal constraining factors, and external constraining factors by Drew and Sosnowski (2019). Importantly, each broader area included several subthemes including IEP-related tasks, navigating technology (i.e., internet connectivity, device-related issues), workplace changes, staff shortage, lack of academic supports for students, and physical symptoms of stress. The COVID-19 pandemic underpinned these themes and subthemes.

The workload and expectations for SETs can be demanding and, sometimes, overwhelming (Ansley et al., 2016; Brunsting et al., 2014). SETs reported workload and expectations such as paperwork, documentation of educational services and hours, preparation for meetings, attending meetings, managing educational assistants, resolving issues with staff, students, and families; and collecting data as taking up much of their attention and energy. Teachers indicated that they often had limited time to complete job-related tasks, eat lunch, drink water, and take care of themselves

During the COVID-19 pandemic, school climates became more challenging due to school closures, changes in the way instruction and support were delivered, school closings, and school re-openings. SETs experienced stress associated with the changes of learning formats used by schools. They balanced hybrid learning setups with limited staff and time to

prepare for and deliver online learning and in-person learning. The transition to in-person learning from hybrid learning was complicated by staff shortages and strict precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. When schools re-opened, teachers experienced students who exhibited learning loss and low academic skills. Additionally, prioritization of high-need students with the level of support they need to make growth and maintain skills was indicated.

Reframing the uncertainty helps teachers retain power which helps in balancing constraining and enabling factors (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). Agency can enable teachers to be innovative and adaptive within their work environments and consider input from administrators, colleagues, parents, and policymakers (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). Resilient teachers who have resources available to them take action to respond to work challenges rather than react to environmental demands can demonstrate their agency (Biesta and Tedder, 2007). The outcome considered how the factors counterbalance over time and result in positive outcomes like resilience and agency or negative outcomes like burnout and attrition (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). These researchers recommended boosting the enabling factors to offset the adversity that teachers face daily. They identified enabling factors such as social, emotional, psychological, and behavioral competencies to support teachers in overcoming challenges and to focus their energy on managing daily stressors. Their research suggested that teacher efficacy mediates resilience by energizing enabling factors or by compounding constraining factors illustrated in the Situational Map of Teacher Resilience (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019) in Figure 1.

Although SETs faced a chaotic experience the findings indicated that they have and continue to use some options for coping with stress and increasing their resilience to stress.

For example, results of the qualitative analysis indicated several broad themes that included the use of self-care, emotion-focused coping strategies, support systems, and home-work-life boundaries to respond to the stressors. Subthemes within each broader area included physical exercise, leisure activities, emotional regulation strategies, spending time with family and friends, and completing household chores to manage stress.

SETs reported that using self-care strategies that are available to teachers allowed them to cope with their stress and increase their overall well-being. These findings are consistent with other research (Ansley et al., 2016) and suggest that the use of self-care strategies can increase physical, emotional, and emotional resilience to stress. For example, teacher engagement in leisure activities they enjoy, a subtheme of self-care, appears to give their mental health a boost and allows them to be better equipped to deal with daily challenges. Teachers also reported that spending some time away from daily stressors contributed to feeling refreshed and better equipped to manage stress. Even taking small breaks during the workday appeared to help teachers reduce stress levels and improve their ability to function well. In addition to these self-care strategies, the use of emotion-focused coping appeared to influence teachers positively, particularly when a situation can't be changed or when the circumstances are beyond their control, a finding that has been observed in other research on coping (Meichenbaum, 2017; Brown & Brown, 2002). Healthy boundaries can help teachers maintain a healthy balance in their schedule and in their life.

Having supportive relationships and a solid support system is an important coping mechanism that contributes to increasing social resilience to stress. Having social resilience means learning to be the kind of person that others are likely to support and care about by listening to and helping others when they reach out. When teachers have a support system to

manage their stress, it appears that they are more likely to connect with others to cope with job stressors in healthy ways (Ansley et al., 2016). Social support is especially important for new teachers to have while they adjust to the profession. New teachers need supportive people to listen to them and assist them.

In addition to personal strategies for coping and resilience, the findings also indicated that SETs utilized support services offered by their districts. For example, results of the qualitative analysis indicated several broad themes such as personal resources and district resources for stress management. Subthemes within each broader area included a wellness program, access to fitness and social support outside of school, and the teacher union to cope with stress.

Although cultural resilience was not a finding in this study it is an important type of resilience to consider for SET teachers. The resilience mentioned in my positionality helped me manage job-related stress while I was a teacher and throughout my life. AI/AN resilience has been reframed and is synonymous with cultural resilience (Oré et al., 2016). Cultural resilience is often equated with community resilience. Indigenous community or cultural resilience has been defined as the capacity of a distinct community or cultural system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change as to retain key elements of structure and identity that preserve its distinctness (Oré et al., 2016). Thus, AI/AN resilience is interpreted as the distinct AI/AN worldviews, beliefs, values, and practices that support individual and community resistance and positive transformation (Oré et al., 2016). For example, although the history of education for many AI/ANs has been harmful, pursuing an education in current times is encouraged. Parents, elders, and tribal communities support their young people to learn skills and knowledge so they can use them to assist their

community and help future generations. *Shimasani (*my maternal grandmother) survived the Indian Boarding School system, but she encouraged her children and grandchildren to do well in school and learn *Diné* language and culture so that we can sustain ourselves and use our *Diné* identity to stay grounded wherever life took us. *Shimasani* taught me to learn as much as I could and to face the challenge. When we are feeling down, we know we need to say prayers, participate in ceremony, and ask *Diyin Diné'e* (our Holy People) for guidance, protection, and assistance. The findings from this study showed that some teachers practiced meditation, mindfulness, chanting, and spirituality based on their beliefs to manage and cope with their stress. Practices such as meditation help individuals ground their feelings and experiences and to focus on the present. Being grateful, generous, and caring were values that SETs reported feeling and practiced. SETs also need to have knowledge about resources for stress management to cope with it. I also want to clarify that cultural resilience and other types of resilience should not be used to minimize or dismiss challenges or adversity experienced by any group of people. Rather, resilience is a concept to be considered alongside improving social and environmental contextual factors and conditions.

The study suggests that the participants' resources for stress management, coping skills and strategies, resilience to stress, and source of job-related stress had a role in their level of stress. Each broader area included several subthemes. When teachers have personal resources to manage their stress, they are more likely to cope with job stressors. Most teachers respond positively to resources they need to manage their stress and to cope with stress. Nonetheless, some gaps remain pertaining to systemic changes in prioritizing SETs. Some SETs reported that they had limited time to complete job-related tasks and take care of their needs. Those who lack resilience may feel overwhelmed by stressors and challenges, dwell on problems,

and use unhelpful coping mechanisms to deal with their stressors (Cherry, 2022; Ansley et al., 2016). Recovery from setbacks is slower for these individuals and they may experience more psychological distress as a result. These conditions can set up SETs for stress in the workplace and if left unaddressed can evolve into teacher burnout. Maslach and Leiter (1997) theorized that burnout is an issue of the social environment rather than flaws in individual characters, behavior, or productivity. These researchers understand that the structure and functions of the workplace shape how individual workers interact with each other and how they perform their job responsibilities. Respectively, districts can offer support that is relevant to SETs by offering a range of stress management that honors the well-being of teachers and staff and minimize unusual demands. For example, honor the 8-hours workday and don't expect teachers and staff to work beyond those hours.

Although teachers experienced several types of stress, I was struck by how much empathy teachers had for children's education and what children and their families were going through. It was apparent that SETs really care about their students and families. Some SETs reported the concerns they had for their students' health and safety when they couldn't see them in person or didn't have contact with them. Some SETs reported feelings of grief when they didn't have contact with their students. Teachers took action to connect with their students and families in creative ways (i.e., Face time, social media). They coordinated with I.T. and school administration to connect their students to the internet and devices they needed to learn. Teachers reported genuine concern for their students' progress and growth and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had on them in the short and long term.

Implications for Practice

Although it would be premature to offer major practice recommendations based on the limited size and scope of the current study, the results of this study offer preliminary results that may be important for practice. For example, one theme that was consistently mentioned by teachers in the qualitative section of the study was that professional and personal resources are available, but training and awareness about them needs to increase. Districts can offer training and professional development to increase awareness and acceptance of dealing with stressors, supports for stress management (i.e., training about self-care, and social emotional regulation, mindfulness; Meichenbaum, 2017; Ansley et al., 2016). Leadership at the local level can consider a commitment to support the coping practices by adjusting district policies and procedures to support self-care strategies and other coping skills. District leadership can seek feedback and input about issues and solutions, as well as what's going well, and address the issues and approaches based on the feedback (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). For example, in one study administrators provided various support for teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD). The participants identified emotional support (trust), informational support (opportunities for growth), appraisal (guidance and feedback), and appreciation as factors that contribute to job satisfaction and teacher longevity in the field (Cancio, et al., 2013). School leaders can get involved in the daily operation of the schools, observe the situations, and talk to students, parents, staff, and teachers at the school level to understand their experience. School leaders can consider collaborations by establishing partnerships within the community and district to address the issues and provide resources and solutions. School leaders can show their appreciation for teachers and staff by providing treats, prizes, retreats, or services to increase staff morale.

A second implication for practice is for school administrators to support stress management for SETs by allowing them more time for the IEP process, to communicate with the special education team, and allowing support staff to work with students instead of reassigning them to perform other non-instructional duties (Ansley et al., 2016; Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Stressors related to the day-to-day workloads of SETs were clearly a challenge for many of the teachers in this study. Therefore, finding ways to reduce those workload burdens is an important objective for school leaders to consider. The main role of special education assistants is to assist students with disabilities, which is a legal obligation and a legal provision under IDEA law. In a couple of studies, school administrators who provided constructive feedback to SETs about job performance, encouraged teacher participation in decisions about school issues, showed concern for the SET's students and programs, and promoted a sense of teacher appreciation increased SETs willingness to stay in the field (Cancio et al., 2013; Littrell et al., 1994). School administrators can consider limiting staff meetings and designating time and protect time for SETs and staff to complete paperwork, prepare for instruction, and collect and synthesize student progress data (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Setting aside time as a department to focus on IEPs for a specified time each week without interruption can be helpful. Uninterrupted time can also be allocated for instructional preparation and support, data collection and analysis, team planning and meetings to accomplish workload and responsibilities, share updates, and resolve issues. School leaders can create an action plan to address low student performance (i.e., summer programming, after school program, Saturday school, tutoring) and provide training and resources for parents to help their children at home.

A third implication of these findings is related to the importance of social support. One strategy for improving social support is the use of a mentorship program for new teachers and a professional development program designed specifically for SETs and staff to attract and retain qualified teachers and staff (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Schools leaders can provide quality leadership and encourage teachers and staff to gather and build a healthy sense of community. For example, in one study school administrators allowed time for SETs to engage in a team approach in which general education teachers, related service providers, and SETs worked together to provide services to students in need (Berry, 2012). School leaders can encourage and develop social support networks to support SET and staff where topics specific to working with students with disabilities can be addressed and supported. The researcher found a significant relationship between work-related support from colleagues and satisfaction and commitment. School leaders can provide encouragement, hope, and work collaboratively to resolve issues during challenging times (Conley & You, 2017). SETs and staff can engage in volunteer work and community work to assist their community, raise awareness about issues, and raise funds for causes they support. SETs can look to their community, family, and friends for support they need. Having positive relationships with colleagues, friends, family, and students can help SETs cope with stress.

A fourth implication is to identify strategies for (a) increasing available resources in schools, and (b) ensuring that teachers are aware of existing resources. Strategies such as requesting feedback from SETs and staff to improve school practices, the school and department climate, and resources for stress management are crucial to the sustainability and quality of special education services provided. The outcome is to respond to the needs specified by teachers and staff. Teachers reported that they would like to see adjustments

made to teacher responsibilities (rather than cutting out responsibilities) so that they are more productive. Relevant professional development and SET mentorship for new teachers is essential for the success of special education services. In one study, beginning SETs' access to school-based colleagues was examined (Jones et al., 2013). The researchers reported that beginning SETs' perception of colleague support was a strong predictor of their retention, commitment to their assignment, and the level of collective responsibility for students with disabilities among the faculty. Their findings suggest when beginning SETs feel they are a part of their school's professional community they are more likely to access important resources among their colleagues. Given these results, schools and districts administrator can make efforts to facilitate productive relationships between general education and special education faculty and to differentiate induction support for beginning SETs (Jones et al., 2013; Conley & You, 2017; Berry 2012).

Another implication of these findings is that that teacher preparation programs and mentorship programs could provide additional information regarding the stressors future and new teachers may face in practice along with strategies for coping with those stressors. Positive psychology interventions that increase wellbeing and reduce depressive symptoms include developing positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments (Falecki & Mann, 2021). Teachers could learn to plan and participate in healthy positive experiences. For example, teachers can express gratitude, savor positive emotions, and celebrate achievements. Teachers could become immersed in worthwhile pursuits, including the application of their strengths. For example, teachers can identify character strengths and apply them. Teachers can strive for meaningful goals, manage setbacks, and maintain mental resilience and embody a growth mindset (Falecki & Mann,

2021). Teachers could develop social and emotional skills to better connect and share with others. Teachers can practice forming positive relationships with students, families, coworkers, friends, and family. Teachers could reflect and plan for ways to act with purpose, to think beyond themselves, and contribute to higher pursuits (Falecki & Mann, 2021). Teachers can apply this by improving their teaching skills. Strategies could include identifying professional social support networks for SETs, engaging in regular exercise as a group or for the individual, and creating and updating a self-care plan. Cultural resilience can be integrated into AI/AN teacher preparation programs to respect and use AI/AN worldviews, beliefs, values, and practices to manage stress and cope with stress in their future as teachers.

Participants would like to have more district personnel available to reach out to access resources or to address issues. Districts can consider being responsible for the expense of teachers working from home during school closures and supplement the cost of childcare. Routine program evaluation can provide teachers with greater access to address and increase awareness of gaps in knowledge, services, and practices.

Implications for Future Research

This study provides several avenues for continued research on teacher stress. As indicated by this and other research (Brunsting et al., 2014; 2021; Bettini et al., 2019) teacher stress, burnout, and resilience has direct implications for the health and well-being of teachers. Although the current study did not explore how stress may or may not have affected teaching quality (and consequently students) there is a growing recognition that job-related stress can interfere with teachers' self-care when there are many expectations and demands (Meichenbaum, 2017). Particularly, when the work-life balance becomes unbalanced,

specific intervention or treatment should be supported. Future research that examines these linkages more directly is needed to better understand how stress directly impacts classroom interactions, the ability to implement effective programming, and SET relationships with other teachers, staff, departments, and school/district administration.

Similarly, there is a continued need to learn more about coping, resilience, and strategies for enhancing these resources among professionals. The findings from this study indicated that teachers rely on an array of strategies for coping with stress, including social support to share challenges and feel seen and heard (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). These findings parallel other research indicating that SETs need to have more autonomy over their workload and expectations. Incorporation of career adaptability, such as increasing teacher capacity to cope with the transitions in career roles and finding a balance between career roles and the pressures of the work environment (Gori et al., 2022) can be utilized to keep SETs in the field. Career adaptability considers an individual's readiness and psychosocial resources to cope with changing work demands and work conditions (e.g., vocational tasks, occupational transitions, work traumas; Savickas, 1997).

The burnout of educators who teach AN/AN students is an area that is understudied and lacks literature. In one study of general education teachers, researchers measured the work conditions for teachers of AI/AN students in Montana by studying the satisfaction and stress factors that contribute to teacher work life (Erickson et al., 2008). The researchers used the Quality of Teacher Work Life Survey (QTWLS) to describe the job-related stress and satisfaction of the teachers who were non-AI/AN and teach at schools with predominately AI/AN students. They reported there were differences in satisfaction and stress for teachers at schools with predominately AI/AN students and that job satisfaction was more of an issue

than job stress. The satisfaction factor *Student Value of Learning* scored lowest (4.91) among teachers and it measured teacher perceptions of student motivation, teacher-parent relationships, student attentiveness, and student disposition toward instruction. The stress factor *Distractions to the Learning Process* scored highest (5.26) among teachers and it measured teacher perceptions of interruptions to the learning process to include student absence, breaks caused by support staff during class, interference of instruction due to extracurricular events, and the number of breaks in the learning process. They recommended that teachers gain a shared understanding of the issues that AI/AN students experience in school and learn how to work through the issues. Erickson and colleagues (2008) also recommended that teachers establish positive parent-teacher relationships which can improve student attendance and communication with parents. Their recommendations can contribute to job-related satisfaction and decrease stress of teachers who teach AI/AN students to improve their work environment. Although this study was not focused on SET teachers it is an area of study that deserves research given the unique history of education for the AI/AN population in efforts to provide equitable education for all students.

Teaching modality is an area of study that needs further research. The findings in this study suggest that teaching modality (i.e., in-person, hybrid, remote) influenced teacher stress levels and experiences. Robust training, resources, and support for various teaching modalities can alleviate teacher stress as teachers prepare for and adjust to each one. Future research can focus on topics related to teaching in-person, hybrid, and remote learning and teaching.

Together, these findings suggest that future research can begin to explore strategies through interventions that target school-wide practices that privilege general education

teachers. For example, interventions that include SETs can be developed, implemented, and evaluated to determine how teachers meet their goals for IEPs, paperwork, documentation, and preparation. SETs can develop a tailored self-care plan that considers individual needs and situations. A custom plan can be a preventive measure to reduce feeling overwhelmed, overstressed, and burned out. The following can be incorporated to make a self-care plan: (1) assess your needs, (2) consider your stressors, (3) devise self-care strategies, (4) plan for challenges, (5) take small steps, and (6) schedule time to focus on your needs (Ansley et al., 2016). A reassessment is recommended since situations change and self-care will reflect those changes.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered with the findings. First, the study was conducted with a small sample and included three separate groups of teachers. The limited sample size limits the generalizability of the findings and future efforts that include a larger sample are needed. Second, during the time when these data were collected, schools and teachers experienced radical disruptions associated with COVID-19 that were unanticipated.

Assumptions. The following assumptions may have had an impact on this study. An overarching assumption for the current study is that study participants gave honest, accurate accounts of their personal experiences regarding teacher stress. Accordingly, this study aims to provide valid information, and the researcher assumed that all participants were honest during the semi-structured interview process and on the surveys across sessions. The research team who collected the data provided explicit details within the Informed Consent document to inform the participants of the purpose of the research study. The researchers ensured that

the participants were comfortable and in a familiar space to reduce the likelihood that participants experience aversive heightened emotion. The participants were willing, motivated, and familiar with their educational settings and material. Their voice is valued as a SET, as is their expertise in their own experience. Another assumption is that 18 participant cases are considered a typical representative sample population of the Pacific Northwest region. It must also be assumed by the researcher that the participants did not choose to participate in the study for any type of malicious reasons, including deception, and that their intentions are to contributing to the phenomena of SET burnout.

Limitations. Although the researcher made a concerted effort to reduce potential weaknesses with the interpretation and validity of the study, the nature of using a mixed methods design can be challenging (Creswell & Clark, 2018). To reduce a potential weakness regarding interpretation, all interviews were recorded and transcribed. The researcher coded the interviews and reviewed participant responses to questions and created memos that describe the participant's position. To reduce threats to validity and instill ethical considerations, teachers were informed about the purpose of the study which was to examine SET perceptions of teacher burnout. Findings within this study are limited to the 18 SETs. This small sample could potentially limit possible answers to the research questions. The researchers used an interview guide that was adequately aligned to the research study's purpose and questions to promote data gathering that is relevant. The research questions were not focused on teaching modalities. This is important to consider since teachers had to adjust the modality of how they delivered instruction from in-person to online. During T1 focus group data was gathered whereas data gathered during T2, T3, and T4 were from individual interviews. This may have affected the comfort level and responses of participants

due to these different methods. In the current study these different formats were analyzed together but future research may want to consider the use of one method to gather data. The interviews were conducted outside of a regular work schedule so a possible limitation could be teacher fatigue. This tiredness could have a detrimental effect on the participant's responses as the participant may quickly give a response to conclude the interview. The researcher is aware of this limitation. The research team made efforts to facilitate the interviews with open-ended questions that elicit a conversational approach for engagement and thanked the participants for their time (Patton, 2015; Stake, 2010). The data was collected during the pandemic, data collected before the pandemic would provide a baseline and lead to valuable insights about teacher stress, coping, resilience, and resources for stress management.

Delimitations. It was anticipated that a variety of factors: age, gender, experiences, ethnicity, school climate, cultural factors, and the number of years teaching Special Education, could potentially influence a teacher's perception relating to teacher burnout. To accommodate for this variability, the researcher chose a representative sample (i.e., gender, ethnicity, age, experience teaching special education, and experiences) of a Pacific Northwest school population to explore perception of SET teachers in the region. In a similar manner, the study only considered the perceptions of SET and did not explore other teaching disciplines within the educational community. The study's scope is based upon previous and current reviews of the relevant literature. The researcher used data from surveys and interviews with current SET regarding their personal experiences and endeavors with limited knowledge of the scope of what the participants were willing to share.

My Motivation to Become a Licensed Teacher

My work with Indigenous students from various tribal nations in PK-12 education began in the largest public school district in Arizona as a paraeducator. My path was influenced by my youth and my desire to help my family members and other Indigenous youth with disabilities. My relatives who have a disability struggled in school and their experience motivated me to do something to change things. I knew the importance of gaining an education and I was motivated to help Indigenous youth. In my experience, the public-school curriculum was not culturally relevant for Indigenous students, and it contributed to their academic challenges. Culture and Indigenous knowledge systems support resilience for students and that inspired my journey to becoming a vessel for their success. Education provides Indigenous students an opportunity to overcome historical shortcomings and increase resiliency to participate in the workforce. The program that hired me as a paraeducator was situated within the city of Mesa, a conservative urban/suburban setting, to support Indigenous students and work closely with the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, and students from various tribes who relocated to the area for education and economic opportunities. The program director, a Diné/Hopi woman, mentored and motivated me to collaborate respectfully with the tribal officials, Indigenous parents, students, staff, and community while also working with the district departments to achieve achievement goals. Under her leadership, I experienced transparent, ethical leadership that collaborated with stakeholders to establish, achieve, and maintain achievable academic goals while navigating tribal sovereignty and challenging circumstances associated with the home/community life of Indigenous students. The program director recommended that I consider pursuing teacher licensure during a summer reading

program held on a tribal land. I told her that I was not interested because I was a business major at the time, and I knew teachers were not compensated well. But she didn't give up, she called me into her office one afternoon after the new school year had begun and told me about an opportunity for Indigenous paraeducators to receive paid training/tuition to become a licensed teacher. There were few Indigenous teachers in the classrooms and that influenced my change in careers and motivated me to reconsider becoming an educator.

My teacher preparation program afforded me opportunities to work in tribal communities that are adjacent to/situated within the Phoenix metropolitan area. The Indigenous education teacher licensure program at Arizona State University provided learning opportunities about the history of Indigenous education and how to instruct Indigenous students which were what I needed to help Indigenous students. I gained teacher experience working with Indigenous students in nearby the Akimel O'otham and Pascua Yaqui communities and completed my student teaching in a first-grade bilingual classroom that enrolled monolingual Spanish language speakers. The school and district served Indigenous students from the Guadalupe Pascua Yaqui community in an urban setting. Many Pascua Yaqui students were part of the district's desegregation efforts which did not consider their home life and cultural activities in the curriculum. I knew from personal experience what that felt like and I learned from that experience how a school district could fall short in their pedagogy for Indigenous students and how to mitigate these challenges.

My inspiration to pursue teacher licensure, work with tribal communities and their students is my greatest contribution to our youth. I am proud to be part of their journey and hope in my future I will be able to continue to be part of the solution. I have shared my language, songs, and culture with my students, and they shared their resilience to overcome

challenges with me. I am driven in my goal to come to terms with the historical mistreatment of Indigenous students in the educational landscape and want to use my degree to create new pathways. My humble beginnings as a sheepherder in the pastures of *Diné Bikéyah* (my homelands) and *shimasani* (my grandmother's) quiet whisper of encouragement echo in my mind. This is my way of honoring my culture and my ancestors, especially for those who never came home.

APPENDIX A: SPRING 2020 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Licensure Student Focus Group Questions

1. Why did you decide to pursue a license in special education? How has the pandemic impacted your plans to become a special education teacher?
2. What is causing you the most stress during this pandemic related to your licensure program?
3. What is your pre-service program doing to prepare you for teaching during a pandemic in the future?
    a. What resources and training do you need from your preservice program to prepare you for teaching and collaborating during a pandemic in the future?
    b. How has your pre-service program supported you in building resilience and coping skills to cope with the pandemic?
4. What do you anticipate will be the most stressful aspects of your future position as a special education teacher?

a. What aspects of the job do you anticipate will be the most *emotionally exhausting*?
b. What aspects of the job do you think could lead you to feel *indifferent* or having a *negative attitude toward your students*?
c. What aspects of the job do you anticipate will bring you the most positive *feelings of accomplishment*?
d. What aspects of the job do you anticipate will *negatively impact your feelings of professional accomplishment*?

5. Tell us about any training you received in your preservice program about how to manage common stressors of the job?
6. How equipped do you feel you are to manage stress when you begin working as a special education teacher?
7. What have you done to cope with the stress you have been experiencing?

a. How do you plan to build resilience to address the stressors of the job?
b. What other factors do you see as promoting resilience in your future work as a special education teacher?

Special Education Teacher Focus Group Questions

1. Why did you decide to become a special education teacher?
2. What has been the biggest shift to your role as a special education teacher since the start of the pandemic?
1. Do you feel prepared for this shift in your role? Why or why not?
3. What is causing you the most job-related stress during this pandemic?
    a. What are the most stressful aspects of your position?
    b. What aspects of your job are the most *emotionally exhausting*?
    c. What aspects of your job make you feel *indifferent* or make you have a *negative attitude toward your students*?
    d. What aspects of your job bring you the most positive *feelings of accomplishment*? e. What aspects of your job *negatively impact your feelings of professional accomplishment*?

4. How equipped are you to cope/manage stress related to your job during this pandemic?
    a. What have you done to cope with the stress you have been experiencing?
5. What do you see as your greatest success, or what brings you the greatest sense of accomplishment since the start of the pandemic?
6. Are you able to contact your students? If so, what has your direct interactions with students looked like since the start of the pandemic?
    a. How do you see your students dealing with stress?
    b. What do you see as your students' greatest successes?
7. Do you feel your licensure program provided enough opportunities (e.g., education, research, professional development, and support) to prepare you for the job in general?
    a. In your licensure program, did you receive any training on (a) risk of stress as a special education teacher or (b) how to prevent or manage occupational stress?
    b. Thinking retroactively, what could your licensure program have done differently to help prepare you for a pandemic?

APPENDIX B: FALL 2020 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Special Education Teacher Interview Questions

1. Discuss the shift from graduate student to teaching (for first year teachers)
2. Waiting to hear if in-person or remote?
3. Discuss any differences from Spring to Fall? How was it starting the year remotely?
4. Following our last interview, what resources for remote teaching were provided by your district?
5. What is causing you the most job-related stress during this pandemic?
   a. What are the most stressful aspects of your position?
   b. What aspects of your job are the most emotionally exhausting?
   c. What aspects of your job make you feel indifferent or make you have a negative attitude toward your students?
   d. What aspects of your job bring you the most positive feelings of accomplishment? e. What aspects of your job negatively impact your feelings of professional accomplishment?
6. How equipped are you to cope/manage stress related to your job during this pandemic?

a. What have you done to cope with the stress you have been experiencing?

7. What do you see as your greatest success, or what brings you the greatest sense of accomplishment since the start of the pandemic?
8. What has your direct interactions with students looked like since the start of the pandemic? How do you feel about the quality of individualized services you are providing to students on your caseload? (Make clear when asking this has to do with barriers of providing services remotely)
9. How do you see your students dealing with stress? What do you see as your students' greatest successes?
10. How do you see your parents/caregivers dealing with stress? What do you see as your parents'/caregivers' greatest successes?
11. Do you feel your licensure program provided enough opportunities (e.g., education, research, professional development, and support) to prepare you for the job in general?
    a. In your licensure program, did you receive any training on (a) risk of stress as a special education teacher or (b) how to prevent or manage occupational stress?
    b. Thinking retroactively, what could your licensure program have done differently to help prepare you for a pandemic?

Licensure Student Interview Questions

1. Have your feelings about how the pandemic has impacted your plans to become a special education teacher?
2. What is currently causing you the most stress related to your graduate program? Any stress related to your practicum?
3. What resources and training do you need from your preservice program to prepare you for teaching and collaborating in the future that you feel like you aren't getting?
4. How has your pres-service program supported you in building resilience and coping skills to cope with the pandemic?

    1. Do any aspects of your practicum feel *emotionally exhausting*?
    2. Do any aspects of your practicum make you feel *indifferent* or have a *negative attitude*?
    3. Do any aspects of your practicum bring you the most positive *feelings of accomplishment*?
    4. Do any aspects of your practicum *negatively impact your feelings of professional accomplishment*?
5. This Fall, have you received any suggestions or supports with how to manage common stressors of the job?
6. How equipped do you feel you are to manage stress when you begin working as a special education teacher?
7. What have you done to cope with the stress you have been experiencing?

a. How do you plan to build resilience to address the stressors of your practicum or graduate program?

b. What other factors do you see as promoting resilience in your future work as a special education teacher?

APPENDIX C: SPRING 2021 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Special Education Teacher Interview Questions

1. Please tell me a little bit about your current teaching schedule.
    a. Are you fully in-person, hybrid, or remote?
    b. If hybrid or in-person: When did you start transitioning to in-person?
2. How has the transition back to in-person learning gone?
3. What are the main differences in your duties/responsibilities from when we interviewed you last Fall to now (this Spring)?
4. Have any resources been provided to you for the transition back to in-person learning? Were any of those resources helpful? Why or why not?
5. What do your direct interactions with students look like?
6. How do you feel about the quality of individualized services you are providing to students on your caseload?
7. What aspect of your job is currently causing the most job-related stress or job-related satisfaction?
8. Thinking about your experience teaching over the last year, how do you currently feel about being a special education teacher?
9. How equipped are you to cope/manage any stress related to your job right now?
    a. Are you currently using any strategies to cope with stress at this time? No (no follow-up) Yes (What strategies are you currently using and how long have you been using them?)
10. When providing services remotely did you learn anything that you think will make you a better in-person special education teacher?
11. Anything else you would like to talk about to understand your experience in the last year that you didn't get to talk about today?

Licensure Student Interview Questions

1. Are you currently working in a classroom this term?
a. Is this a practicum, student teaching, or employment?
b. Are you fully in-person, hybrid, or remote?
c. If hybrid or in-person: When did you start transitioning to in-person?
2. How did the transition back to in-person learning go?

Your student teaching:

3. Tell me about doing your student teaching (was it in-person)? What were you biggest stressors?
4. What brought you the most feelings of accomplishment?

In your current placement:

5. What is currently causing the most job-related stress and what is causing the most job-related satisfaction?
a. Does anything make you feel emotionally exhausted? What about energized?
b. Are there any aspects of your job that make you feel indifferent or have a negative attitude? What about aspects of your job make you feel engaged with a positive attitude?

c. Are there any aspects of your job that negatively or positively impact your feelings of professional accomplishment?
6. Thinking about your experience as a licensure student over the last year, how do you currently feel about being a special education teacher?
7. Is there anything you learned in the last year that you think will make you a better educator?
8. What do you anticipate will bring you the most feelings of stress as a first-year teacher next year?
9. What do you anticipate will bring you the most feelings of accomplishment?

APPENDIX D: FALL 2021 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Special Education Teacher Interview Questions

1. How was the start of the year for you? Was starting the year in-person what you expected?
2. How do you feel about the quality of services you are providing to students on your caseload at this time?
3. How would you describe your current experience at your school, in your current position?

For these next questions, please think about your job and how you are feeling at the moment. *Prompt that if they don't have a response for a question, that's ok.

4. What aspect of your job is currently bringing the most job-related stress? What aspect of your job is currently bringing job-related satisfaction?
5. What aspects of your job feel emotionally exhausting right now? What aspects are emotionally satisfying?
6. Are there any aspects of your job that make you feel indifferent? or make you have a negative attitude? What about aspects that make you feel engaged with a positive attitude?
7. Are there any aspects of your job that undermine your feelings of professional accomplishment? What about aspects that enhance your feelings of professional accomplishment?
8. How equipped are you to cope/manage any stress related to your job right now? Are you using any strategies you feel comfortable sharing?
9. Where do you look for resources to help cope with job-related stress? Training, physical, emotional, spiritual outlets, family, friends?
10. How do you currently feel about being a special education teacher?
11. Anything else you think would help us understand your experience this Fall, which you didn't get to talk about today? For example, did you have any events or challenges in your personal life that you feel impacted your experience as a special education teacher?
12. Finally, anything else you think would be important to mention related to your experiences in special education since we first connected with you in Spring of 2020?

APPENDIX E: SPECIAL EDUCATION LICENSURE STUDENT SURVEY

Please complete the following survey packet. You may skip any question you do not want to answer. Please focus on your current experience as a student in a graduate special education program during a quarantine. For first-year students, please think about your current experience with attention to the professional practices seminar. For second-year students, you can respond to these questions with a combined experience of your current work finishing up your program and your student teaching.

Participant demographic information:

1. Gender: Male, Female, Transgender, Prefer not to answer
2. Race/ethnicity: Open response_____
3. Age_____
4. Have you ever worked as an educational assistant or paraeducator? YES NO
   For "No" skip next question
   A. How long did you work as an EA or paraeducator?

5. Have you worked as a teacher under an emergency license (i.e., for a district or program such as Teach for America)? YES NO
   For "No" skip next question
   a. What your emergency position? _____

6. Are you currently working while you pursue your graduate studies in special education?
   YES NO
   For "No" skip next question
   If yes, please describe your current position and how many hours a week you work (on average). (open response)

Have you engaged in a practicum or student teaching in the last year during your graduate program?
Yes No
Skip logic: If no, skip questions 7-18

7. In your last practicum/student teaching did you work in a Title 1 school?
   Yes No Unsure

8. Which setting best described the district of your recent practicum/student teaching? Urban, Suburban, Rural

9. Which best describes your most recent practicum placement : Resource room, self-contained classroom, separate school, therapeutic program, other: ___ (open response).

10. How many students were on your practicum/student teaching caseload? _____

11. How many classified staff work in your program?_____

12. What is the developmental level of the students you primarily work with? Birth to five, elementary, middle, high school, transition-age youth

13. What is the most common IDEA disability category of students you provide direct services?

Learning disability
emotional disturbance
intellectual/developmental disability
other health impairment
speech-language disorder
Other:_____

14. Rank order the teaching emphasis for students you most recently provide direct services in a practicum or student teaching.

Type in the order to show your rank order: (1-6, 1 being greatest emphasis):
Life/adaptive skills
Community and Independent living
Behavior
Academics
Social Skills
Communication

15. Rank order what was in your opinion, the biggest challenges of your work as a preservice special education teacher (1 through 8, 1 being greatest emphasis))

- Paperwork management
- Behavior management
- Working with other professionals
- Meetings
- Testing/Assessment
- Providing direct services (teaching)
- Scheduling
- Number of students on caseload

16. How supported did you feel by your most recent cooperating teacher?

Explain:

17. What percentage of your week working in your recent practicum or student teaching placement is spent doing the following (Should add to 100%)

Directly serving students_____%
Paperwork _____%
Lesson Planning _____%
Meetings _____%
Other: _____% Please describe:

18. Did you see your responsibilities at your placement as clearly defined? YES NO

If no, explain why.

19. On a scale of (very low quality) 1-10 (very high quality), how would you rate the quality of your preservice program for:

Evidence-based practices (academic) (Please explain your rating)
Evidence-based practices (behavior management)(Please explain your rating)

For the following questions, please think about your experience of your last student teaching placement and current experience wrapping up your graduate program. For graduate students who did not have a practicum or student teaching this year, please respond to your general experience as a graduate student some of these questions for you will be NA.

MBI-Educators Survey (22 items; With respect to copyright rules I will share the scale and one sample item)

All the below statements will use this scale:
0-never
1-a few times a year or less
2-once a month or less
3-a few times a month
4-once a week
5-a few times a week
6-everyday

1. I feel emotionally drained from my work

Areas of Work Life Survey (27 items; With respect to copyright rules I will share the scale and one sample item)

All the below statements will use this scale:
1-Strongly Disagree
2-Disagree
3-Hard to Decide
4-Agree
5-Strongly Agree

23. I do not have time to do the work that must be done

The Perceived Stress Scale (10 items)
0-Never
1-Almost Never
2-Sometimes
3-Fairly Often
4-Very Often

49. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
50. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
51. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?
52. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
53. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?

54. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
55. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
56. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
57. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?
58. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

APPENDIX F: LICENSED SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER SURVEY

Please complete the following survey packet. You may skip any question you do not want to answer. Please ask any questions as they emerge.

Participant demographic information:

1. Gender: Male, Female, Transgender, Prefer not to answer
2. Race/ethnicity: _____
3. Age_____
4. Have you worked as an educational assistant or paraeducator? If so, for how long? _____
5. Do you have another job outside of your position as a special education teacher or work in the summer? YES NO I have in the past

For currently licensed educators only:

6. Years experience working as a licensed special education teacher? _____

7. Years working as a general education teacher? _____

8. Do you work in a Title 1 school? Yes No Unsure

9. Which setting best describes your district location? Urban, Suburban, Rural

10. Which best describes your current position: Resource room, self-contained classroom, separate school, therapeutic program, other: _____

11. How many students are currently on your caseload?

12. How many classified staff do you supervise?_____

13. What is the developmental level of the students you primarily work with? Birth to five, elementary, middle, high school, transition-age youth

14. What is the most common IDEA disability category of students on your caseload?
    - Learning disability
    - emotional disturbance
    - intellectual/developmental disability
    - other health impairment
    - speech-language disorder
    - Other:_____

15. Rank order the emphasis on your support for students on your caseload:
    - Life/adaptive skills
    - Community and Independent living
    - Behavior
    - Academics
    - Social Skills
    - Communication

16. Rank order what are, in your opinion, the biggest challenges of your work as a special education teacher (1 through 8)

- Paperwork management
- Behavior management
- Working with other professionals
- Meetings
- Testing/Assessment
- Providing direct services (teaching)
- Scheduling
- Number of students on caseload

17. When you began teaching, did you receive any formal or informal mentorship or participate in a mentoring program?

If yes, tell us about what that program looked like:

18. What percentage of your week is spent doing the following (add up to 100%):

Directly serving students_____%
Paperwork _____%
Lesson Planning _____%
Meetings _____%
Other: _____% Please describe:

19. Do you see your job/role at your school as clearly defined? YES NO

If no, explain why.

20. On a scale of (very low quality) 1-10 (very high quality), how well did your preservice program prepare you for your current position? Explain your rating:

For the remainder of this packet, please respond to questions based on your current feelings concerning your current term as a licensed teacher in special education.

MBI-Educators Survey (22 items; With respect to copyright rules I will share the scale and one survey item)

All the below statements will use this scale:

0-never
1-a few times a year or less
2-once a month or less
3-a few times a month
4-once a week
5-a few times a week
6-everyday

1. I feel emotionally drained from my work

Areas of Work Life Survey (27 items; With respect to copyright rules I will share the scale and one survey item)

All the below statements will use this scale:
1-Strongly Disagree
2-Disagree
3-Hard to Decide
4-Agree
5-Strongly Agree

23. I do not have time to do the work that must be done

The Perceived Stress Scale (10 items)
0-Never
1-Almost Never
2-Sometimes
3-Fairly Often
4-Very Often

49. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
50. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
51. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?
52. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
53. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
54. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
55. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
56. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
57. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?
58. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction and a brief explanation of why we are revisiting them with an interview

- "Thank you so much for taking the time today to help us learn more about your thoughts and feelings about your current work as a special education teacher during remote instruction. Your experiences are very important to help us understand more about the challenges and celebrations of teaching.
- Briefly acknowledge that we are looking for candid, honest responses. We want to learn from their experiences.
- Informed consent: briefly review the consent form, have those interested to still participate sign and keep a copy for their records. This will also be an opportunity for those who have questions to ask questions.
- Ask to keep anonymity if they would like to use initials, numbers or aliases. You may change your name on Zoom to reflect how you would like to be identified.

During the interview

- If a person's response is unclear or more details are required to understand their thinking, the facilitator will follow-up "Can you tell me more about X" or "Could you give me a specific example of what you think this looks like"
- Some questions may be removed given the context of the responses/conversations.
- Be mindful of time and transition to a new question if the response is waning.

Wrapping up the focus group

- Interviewees will have a few minutes to ask any follow-up questions AND the facilitator will let all participants know that they can reach out with any questions by email.
- Thank the participants for their time AND current work in special education.
- Remind them they will receive their gift card via the email they provided.

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