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## What Aspects of Teaching Generate Burnout in Teachers with Five or Less Years of Experience?

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What aspects of teaching generate burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty  
of the Department of Leadership Education

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by

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**Abstract**

The educational field can prove to be a stressful occupation with various aspects being more stressful than others. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the aspects of teaching that generate burnout in teachers with five years or less of teaching experience. The study used an anonymous online survey to collect data from teachers in the state of Minnesota. Research questions aimed to understand which aspects of teaching are the most stressful, how grade level (elementary, middle school, or high school) impacts burnout, and if professional development could help limit burnout. A total of 289 individuals participated in this research study.

*Keywords: beginning teacher, burnout, education, mental health, stress, well-being*

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In 2017, between forty and fifty percent of teachers with five or less years of experience left the teaching field due to burnout (Ryan et al., 2017). The first five years of teaching are critical in determining if a teacher will continue in the profession (Hopkins et al., 2019). Many first-year teachers are not prepared to handle the stress created by the career (McCarthy et al., 2020). Educational professionals deal with an abundance of emotional demands within the work day. Teachers must have the flexibility to shift attention quickly to manage and deal with all the responsibilities of the career. This constant shifting of focus takes an emotional toll on teachers; therefore, stress management is crucial for educators to help prevent burnout (Taylor et al., 2021). Teachers tend to leave the profession because the stress and demands of the job outweigh perceived ability to overcome these obstacles, resulting in feelings of fatigue and burnout (Kelly & Northrop, 2015).

Burnout is a psychological response developed from extended exposure to stressors within a career (Salovita & Pakarinene, 2021). Teaching is a profession likely to lead to burnout (Taylor et al., 2021), due to the high levels of daily stress and emotional demands (Fiorilli et al., 2017). The workload and demands of teaching have been growing over time, yet the resources and training to combat burnout remain unchanged (Ryan et al., 2017). Teachers require sufficient training to deal with the stressors within the career (McCarthy et al., 2020).

### **Problem Statement**

Teachers are leaving the profession at increased rates due to workload, stress, and poor mental health (Ryan et al., 2017). The reasoning behind poor mental health and burnout in teachers is documented in the research (Oullette et al., 2018). However, more should be known about the connections between burnout and teaching factors, grade range (eg. elementary, middle

or high school) and professional development (Ouellette et al., 2018). Teachers provide mental health training for students (Ouellette et al., 2018), yet teachers do not receive training for how to support personal mental well-being (Lever et al., 2017). Teachers need support and professional learning to learn how to manage burnout (Coldwell, 2017)

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore burnout in teachers who were in the profession for five or less years. The study investigated teaching factors, grade range, and professional development to make connections to teacher burnout.

### **Background of the Problem**

Beginning teachers have great responsibilities at the beginning of a career (McCarthy et al., 2020). Tasks include: planning engaging lessons, meeting state standards, grading, providing feedback, and student management. Teachers may also endure: isolation, heavy workloads, navigating a new school, insufficient access to materials, and often burdensome responsibilities experienced teachers do not want to manage, such as coordinating extracurricular activities (McCarthy et al., 2020). Education is a profession where beginning teachers are expected to manage the same workload as experienced teachers (Gray et al., 2017). Teachers become more effective with experience; therefore, a beginning teacher requires additional support and training to help reduce stress and prevent burnout (Ryan et al., 2017).

The workload and demands of the educational profession have been growing over time, yet the resources and training provided to educators have remained relatively unchanged (Ryan et al., 2017). Teachers create engaging lesson plans aligned to the state standards - sometimes with little to no resources provided - while also experiencing a daily plethora of intense emotional demands (Fiorilli et al., 2017). Some of the emotional demands teachers face are time

pressures, difficulties with discipline, low student motivation, perceived lack of administrative support, large class sizes, and attempting to meet all the diverse needs of the students (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

The inability to successfully manage workload and emotional demands are issues in many occupations and appear to be especially prevalent amongst teachers. Research suggests that as teacher workloads increase, more time is spent at work, particularly in the United States (Huyghebaert et al., 2018). The United States is ranked lowest in regard to the amount of time teachers are provided to prepare lessons and collaborate with colleagues during the work day (Sorenson et al., 2011). Teachers in the United States have an average of three to five hours allotted a week to prepare for classes during the workday, compared to fifteen to twenty hours a week in Europe and Asia (Sorenson et al., 2011). The extra hours teachers spend at work preparing lessons or entering grades can lead to difficulty detaching psychologically from work, contributing to interrupted sleep, greater family conflict, and increased levels of stress (Huyghebaert et al., 2018). Stress is the clearest indicator for high turnover rates and burnout among educators (Ryan et al., 2017)

One-third of teachers report being stressed or extremely stressed, and this escalates for beginning teachers (Taylor et al., 2021). New teachers have reported how time constraints, such as not having enough time to eat or use the restroom, are additional physical and emotional strains that were not anticipated when entering the field (Gray et al., 2017). Another additional stressor is a teacher's personal expectations. A beginning teacher's career choice is influenced by the belief in an ability to be effective with students (Kraft et al., 2016). Teachers typically enter the occupation wanting to motivate students and contribute to student growth. This proves to be



more difficult when considering the multitude of tasks a teacher completes in a day (Gray et al., 2017).

Discrepancies between teacher training programs and the actual profession cause stress for new teachers, leading to attrition. Each year 250,000 teachers are hired in the United States. Of those 250,000, nearly half are new to teaching, and the other half are migrating from other school districts with varying years of experience. An astounding forty to fifty percent of those new teachers will leave the profession within the first five years, and nearly thirteen percent will change schools yearly (Ryan et al., 2017). Teacher attrition costs the United States \$2.2 billion annually, and the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future estimates that teachers leaving a high turnover school can cost the school upwards of \$17,862 per teacher. The costs associated with teacher attrition and migration are due to recruiting, training, and hiring costs. Stress is the number one reason for teacher burnout and attrition (Ryan et al., 2017).

When a teacher can manage stress, the teacher experiences less fatigue and higher job satisfaction. Without stress management, teachers are prone to chronic stress, which leads to fatigue and burnout. In burnout literature, teachers are the largest vocational subgroup, yet it is unclear how to combat teacher stress and promote mental health effectively and efficiently (Taylor et al., 2021).

### **Research Questions**

The goal of this study was to answer the following three research questions:

RQ1: What factors of teaching generate burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?

RQ2: How does grade range (elementary, middle, or high school) contribute to teacher burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?

RQ3: What teacher professional development topics help prevent burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?

### **Significance of the Study**

The results of this study may be beneficial for school administrators, teachers, and individuals working in the field of education. Teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate, with upwards of 30-50% of beginning teachers leaving within the first five years of beginning a career (Lindqvist et al., 2014). A considerable factor leading to the attrition of teachers is the inability to cope with job-related stress, causing poor mental health and burnout (Ryan et al., 2017). The turnover rate and mental health of teachers not only costs the United States \$2.2 billion annually (Ryan et al., 2017), it is also negatively affecting the students (Harding et al., 2019).

Student success and development is directly correlated with teacher practices and the quality of the classroom learning environment (McLean & Connor, 2015). Having positive student-teacher relationships leads to increased student achievement (Harding et al., 2019). When exhausted or suffering from poor mental health, teachers are less able to focus on building relationships with students, have a lower ability to reinforce positive behaviors, are less likely to respond appropriately to negative student emotions, and have a difficult time with overall classroom management (McLean & Connor, 2015). Exhaustion and poor mental health in teachers contribute to lower reading ability, lower math scores, and less growth in literacy for students (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Students in high-quality classroom learning environments where teachers report lower levels of stress and fatigue showed greater improvement in math; notably, students who came into the school year performing weakly in mathematics showed considerable improvement (McLean & Connor, 2015).

This study may prove beneficial for school administrators, teachers, and others affiliated with the education system if they are concerned with what aspects of teaching cause the most stress, or considering areas where teachers think additional training could be beneficial. Lower levels of stress and greater mental health could decrease the rate of teacher attrition, save money, increase student achievement, and improve teachers' overall health and wellbeing. Teachers currently are not adequately trained to cope with the stress accrued daily from the job (McCarthy et al., 2020), although more direct training may be beneficial. This study aimed to provide insight into teacher burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience and the role professional development may play.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are multiple limitations in this study. First, the survey was voluntary, and participants could drop out at any time. Another limitation to the study is the list of emails the researcher used for sending out the survey. The emails the researcher used were the last known email addresses the Professional Education Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) had on file, and they were not updated if teachers moved to a different district. Finally, in qualitative research, the data is at the discrepancy of the researcher (Anderson, 2010). The researcher was diligent in attempting to avoid any bias, although unintentional bias may have occurred.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

In this qualitative study, the research was restricted to teachers who received a teaching license from the Professional Education Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB). This means the participants received teaching licensure in the state of Minnesota.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following operational terms support this research study:

***Beginning Teacher:*** A teacher with five or less years of teaching experience.

***Burnout:*** feelings of exhaustion or fatigue, reduced performance, and cynicism often caused by a person's job (Mayo Clinic, 2020).

***Mental Health:*** A person's social, emotional, and psychological well-being, which impacts how they think, act and feel (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

***Well-Being:*** The positive state connected to the experience of emotions and the cognitive assessment of a person's life (Czerw, 2019).

## **Summary**

Chapter One provided the introduction for teacher burnout in teachers with five or less years of experience. This chapter also outlined the problem statement and the purpose of the study. Chapter One provided a comprehensive background of the problem, focusing on burnout in teachers with five or less years of experience. The research questions were stated, essential terms were defined, and the limitations and delimitations of the study were discussed. Finally, the chapter concluded with the significance of the study.

Chapter Two will consist of a review of the literature employed for this study. Chapter Three outlines the methodology and describes how the data was collected and analyzed. Chapter Four presents the results from the research, and Chapter Five consists of the conclusion, discussion, and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter consists of a literature review encompassing the topic of teacher burnout. Included in this chapter are the following sections: burnout, mental health and well-being in the workplace, teacher burnout, the crucial years, workload, work-life balance, teacher burnout and student achievement, and professional development. The literature review will begin by focusing on awareness before transitioning to focus on teacher burnout. The chapter will then explore various aspects of education that impact burnout before reviewing the impact on students. Finally, the literature review will examine teacher professional development in regard to burnout. The literature review summarizes current scholarly research in order to highlight the reasons for burnout in teachers, especially those who have been in the career for five or less years.

### **Historical Overview of the Problem**

#### ***Burnout, Mental Health, and Well-Being in the Workplace***

The professional work of many adults takes a considerable amount of time and is often very consuming (Czerw, 2019). Considering adults spend a significant amount of time at work, issues surrounding burnout are common in the workplace (Patterson et al., 2021). Financial implications and the negative stigma around “invisible” injuries often hinders people from seeking the assistance needed to improve overall mental health and well-being (Kelloway, 2017). To reduce the stigma, it is imperative to get the education community to value mental health and recognize burnout. Mental health is the most neglected of all human health conditions, with less than one-percent of most countries’ health budgets going towards mental health (Patel et al., 2016). Fortunately, mental health illnesses can be treated effectively by emphasizing the importance of early intervention (Patel et al., 2016). Issues involving mental health can even be

prevented by incorporating best practice interventions and focusing on a person's overall well-being (Patel et al., 2016).

Mental health and well-being are often used interchangeably to describe a person's psychological and emotional state. Mental health allows people to cope with stress and realize the extent of innate abilities. Mental health issues arise when people are experiencing daily worries, stress, and anxiety which could lead to burnout (Patterson et al., 2021). Well-being is the positive connection to experiences and cognitive understanding of life (Czerw, 2019). A person's well-being is directly linked to mental health and is analyzed from two angles: hedonic and eudemonic. Hedonic well-being is associated with a pleasant, happy life. This includes pleasure, enjoyment, and comfort a person receives from life and day to day experiences. Eudemonic well-being correlates with a valuable life. Eudemonic focuses on growth, authenticity and meaning; this causes eudemonic to be more complicated and complex than hedonic (Czerw, 2019).

Hedonic well-being was more readily associated with a person's professional life compared with eudemonic well-being until recently. A shift to explore and focus on meaning and engagement in the workplace has recently occurred (Czerw, 2019). This shift brought to light the importance of evidence-based interventions (EBI's) (Patterson et al., 2021), along with teaching prevention, intervention, and accommodation tactics to workplace leaders (Kelloway, 2017). Leaders impact employees' mental health and well-being both directly and indirectly. By training leaders on how to recognize common mental health issues, leaders are better able to implement the appropriate interventions (Kelloway, 2017). High levels of professional well-being have positive outcomes; including the prevention of health issues such as hypertension and depression (Patterson et al., 2021). Professional well-being also accounts for the following positive

consequences: fewer employee absences (Patterson et al., 2021), more effective use of work time, increased work quality, improved interpersonal relationships amongst colleagues, less conflicts, increased loyalty to the organization, conflicts that are better solved, and greater innovation (Czerw, 2019).

As more research is developed, organizations are becoming more willing to attempt to enhance employees' well-being to decrease burnout (Kelloway, 2017). The goal of well-being in the workplace is to allow employees to thrive physically, professionally, and emotionally (Amedee, 2017). To reach this goal, more research must be conducted to determine the most effective approaches organizations can take to enhance employee well-being (Kelloway, 2017). More research must also be completed to determine how to limit burnout in the workplace and ensure employees seek the assistance they require (Patterson et al, 2021).

### ***Teacher Burnout***

Burnout is a psychological response caused by extended exposure to stressors in the workplace (Salovita & Pakarinene, 2021). High levels of stress caused by intense emotional demands within the field of education (Fiorilli et al., 2017), leads teaching to be the profession most likely to generate employees who experience burnout (Taylor et al., 2021). The inability to cope with high levels of job-related stress is the number one cause of teacher burnout (Ryan et al., 2017), followed closely by the imbalance between available resources, and the demands teachers face (Fiorilli et al., 2017).

Teacher burnout often develops gradually when resources are depleted and stress levels rise (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). The resources in education include: teacher efficacy, support from colleagues, principal engagement, recognition from the public, and professional development. The depletion of these resources can lead to work that is undesirable, unfulfilling,

and unrewarding (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). The depletion of these resources also leads to emotional exhaustion, derisive attitudes, decreased job satisfaction, feelings of detachment, and diminished feelings of accomplishment (Fiorilli et al., 2017). Burnout is the end stage of resource depletion, meaning teachers need support prior to diminishing resource stores (Schonfeld & Bianchi, 2016).

Burnout is closely related to a teacher's work-related and social support networks. The perception of support is more significant than where the support comes from (Fiorilli et al., 2017). Teachers who reported experiencing lower levels of support from principals, colleagues, and parents documented higher levels of burnout, thus highlighting the importance of the availability and perceived availability of support (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). Work-related sources of support relate to a teacher's job-demands and feelings of exhaustion (Fiorilli et al., 2017). When teachers attain high quality social interactions and support from colleagues, they feel less ostracized which leads to less exhaustion (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). Professional well-being is directly linked to an individual's personal and social well-being (Czerw, 2019). Non-work related supports allow teachers to feel greater personal accomplishment and less depersonalization. Having hobbies and friends outside of school helps a teacher gain distance from the high demands of the career (Fiorilli et al., 2017). It is crucial for teachers to have solid support networks both inside and outside of work to help limit the level of burnout experienced.

Teachers who build strong relationships with students typically exude positive energy in the classroom which leads to lower levels of burnout. When a teacher can build strong relationships with students, student success and classroom management increase, helping to decrease burnout (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). Teachers in secondary schools (eg. middle school and high school) report higher levels of burnout compared to elementary school teachers



(Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). Secondary teachers report higher levels of depersonalization and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment. The higher rates of burnout in secondary teachers most likely stems from the greater number of students these teachers service each day (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). When a teacher is working with a large number of students each day, it can lead to a greater sense of distance. This feeling of distance can make it more difficult to build strong, meaningful relationships with all students. Larger class sizes can also lead to higher levels of burnout for the same reason (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021).

When it comes to teacher burnout, emotional competence is important which means training should be provided to staff to help educate on how to deal with the stress of the career (Fiorilli et al., 2017). Burnout and depression often overlap. Due to the overlap between burnout and depression, it is crucial teachers receive the necessary support and training. When burnout and depression are viewed as two completely separate entities, it leads to diminishing thoughts on the severity of burnout and prevents individuals from seeking professional help (Schonfeld & Bianchi, 2016).

### ***The Crucial Years***

The first five years of a teacher's career are crucial for determining longevity in the profession (Hopkins et al., 2019). Roughly 24% of teachers leave in the first year, 33% leave by year three, and an astounding 40-50% of teachers leave after just five years in the career (Farrell, 2016). Teachers who left the profession in the first five years often experienced burnout (Kelly & Northrop, 2015). The first three years of a teacher's career are often referred to as the survival and discovery years, and years four through six are focused on building stability (Hopkins et al., 2019). The years of survival and discovery are necessary because the expectations explained

during teacher preparatory programs are often in stark contrast compared to the true reality of the job, leading to feelings of shock and stress for new teachers (Ryan et al., 2017).

The two main areas where new teachers feel under prepared are dealing with complex classroom situations (eg. classroom management) and regulating emotional resources (Voss et al., 2017). Many teacher preparation programs do not allow novice teachers an opportunity to practice using classroom management techniques in an organic manner. This causes new teachers to feel unprepared to handle the multifaceted social situations occurring in the classroom, most notably negative student behavior (eg. talking out of turn, disrupting others' learning). These issues with discipline are one of the top causes of stress in teachers which can lead to burnout (Voss et al., 2017). Classroom management is linked to teachers' stress and student success. As teachers feel less control over classroom management abilities, teacher stress levels rise, student success decreases, and negative student behaviors increase (Voss et al., 2017).

Teaching is one of few occupations where a novice worker possesses the same responsibilities as more experienced colleagues. Beginning teachers are expected to perform at the same level as more experienced colleagues when determining how to set up a classroom, and deciding which standards are the most essential to teach (Farrell, 2016). Many first-year teachers are not prepared for the demands that accompany the career and even more have not been trained in how to cope with stress (McCarthy et al., 2020). Standardized test scores lead to high levels of stress for beginning teachers. Research suggests experienced teachers help students earn higher scores on standardized mathematics tests when compared to first year teachers (Ryan et al., 2017). This can cause administration to put pressure on new teachers to raise student test scores. Test-based accountability pressure from administration can cause beginning teachers to experience increased stress, attrition, and burnout (Ryan et al., 2017). Building trust between

new teachers and the school can improve teacher practice, enhance beginning teachers' resilience, and lead to less turnover or burnout (Hopkins et al., 2019).

Teaching is a complex and highly important profession. The practices and achievement of beginning teachers is linked to overall satisfaction with the career choice. Expectations versus reality, professional support, relationship building, and a willingness to become familiar with a school's values all play a vital role in new teachers' overall satisfaction (du Plessis et al., 2020). It is paramount that new teachers feel validated for lived experiences (du Plessis et al., 2020). Therefore, beginning teachers typically require more training and investment early on in a career to help boost confidence (Ryan et al., 2017). Many new teachers tend to work in isolation, causing feelings of alienation from other staff (Farrell, 2016), and limiting the growth of self-efficacy (Hopkins et al., 2019). It is important to help beginning teachers gain a sense of belonging (du Plessis et al., 2020). When new teachers feel supported by administration and colleagues, feelings of burnout decrease and likelihood of remaining in a school increases (Hopkins et al., 2019).

### ***Workload***

Workload is the amount of work an employee must complete in a certain amount of time (Huyghebaert et al., 2018). Over the past decades, the teaching profession has seen numerous changes regarding workload (Huyghebaert et al., 2018). Some of the various job demands teachers may face on a daily basis include: time pressures, lesson planning, issues with student behavior, conflicts with colleagues, grading assignments, feelings of lack of support, low student motivation, and difficulty meeting the many diverse needs of the student population (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Teachers' perceptions of the ever-expanding teaching role and ability to manage workload impacts the level of stress experienced (Huyghebaert et al., 2018). As workload

increases, job demands, and job-related stressors increase, teachers' feelings of exhaustion and burnout increase while self-efficacy decreases (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

When prolonged exposure to high workload is experienced, teachers are more likely to feel physically and emotionally depleted. High workload can lead to burnout, especially if a person feels they do not have adequate time to complete the work (Avanzi et al., 2018). In the United States, teachers have an average of three to five hours a week to prepare lessons and communicate with colleagues (Sorenson et al., 2011). The limited amount of planning time, paired with expectations from administration, parents, and the community leads to high workloads and increased feelings of burnout (Avanzi et al., 2018). When workload increases, emotional exhaustion increases while job satisfaction and performance decrease (Huyghebaert et al., 2018).

Teachers experience greater sleep disturbances and fatigue when the level of workload increases. The higher the workload, the more time is necessary to recover and replenish emotional resources. Unfortunately, a greater workload typically leads to more time spent at work and in return there is less recovery time available. With the school day devoted to completing mandated tasks, a teacher spends more time at school or working at home to get caught up (Gray et al., 2017). Compared to more experienced teachers, beginning teachers spend more time working at home to catch up due to a lack of experience (Gray et al., 2017). The lack of recovery time then leads to greater exhaustion. Teachers who are over committed experience even more sleep disturbances compared to other teachers (Huyghebaert et al., 2018). Teachers tend to have fewer absences when they have increased workloads. This is especially true for teachers who have a new grade level assignment, have large class sizes, or are new to the career. Research suggests this is due to not feeling comfortable enough to take a day off when there is

too much to do. Not taking necessary absences can lead to lowered mental health, exhaustion, and burnout (Ost & Schiman, 2017).

To combat high workload and feelings of burnout, it is imperative teachers receive the necessary social and emotional support (Avanzi et al., 2018). Job resources such as positive relationships, opportunities for development and growth, and perceived fairness can help teachers feel less overwhelmed by workload (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Schools can design compatible teams where teachers can discuss and receive support from colleagues. Some schools may also be able to create teams of co-teachers who can share the workload burden. It is important to be intentional with these teams, otherwise it could lead to greater issues instead of helping decrease stress (Krammer et al., 2018). Professional development and teacher preparatory programs could better prepare teachers on what to expect for workload and how to manage the high demands of the profession.

### ***Work-Life Balance***

Professional work impacts employees' private lives, especially when it comes to a work-life balance (Czerw, 2019). Maintaining a work-life balance can often be especially difficult for teachers to accomplish. Teachers repeatedly commit time outside of contract hours to plan lessons, and even attend school sponsored events on evenings and weekends (McIlveen et al., 2019). Teachers bring home physical (eg. papers to grade) and emotional (eg. misbehavior or student concerns) work items, causing difficulty in detaching from the job (Nilsson et al., 2018). The aforementioned physical and emotional work from school can cause high levels of stress, establishing the potential to impact a teacher's family life (McIlveen et al., 2019).

As technology has become more prevalent in society and classrooms, it has become even more difficult for teachers to maintain a work-life balance. Information and communication

technology (ICT), such as phones and computers, allow for easy access to work. Digital learning environments (DLE) also increase the likelihood of a teacher working outside of contractual hours. Not only do DLE's require a significant amount of time to create, but they allow students to contact teachers outside of school hours and provide easy access for teachers to log in and check assignments (Bauwens et al., 2020).

Psychologically detaching during non-work hours is important for teachers to help decrease levels of burnout. Regularly detaching from work restores depleted emotional resources and increases overall well-being (Bauwens et al., 2020). School climates that reduce time pressures and provide teachers with recovery periods during the day help teachers maintain a better work-life balance. When work environments encourage employees to have a work-life balance, employers tend to develop employees with greater well-being, higher self-efficacy, greater job performance, and less burnout (Nilsson et al., 2018).

### ***Teacher Burnout & Student Achievement***

Students gain knowledge, various life skills, and valuable experiences within the classroom (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Depending on a student's classroom experience, there is also the opportunity to build intrinsic motivation and enhance well-being (Madigan & Kim, 2021). If a teacher is not experiencing burnout, there is an increased likelihood of helping students achieve success. On the other hand, if a teacher has poor well-being or is experiencing burnout, it can lead to decreased student well-being and lower student achievement (Harding et al., 2019).

A positive classroom learning environment fosters student learning and builds strong relationships between teachers and students. Teachers' well-being directly impacts ability to provide educational instruction (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Teachers who have strong emotion regulation, positive well-being, and powerful self-efficacy create more positive classroom

learning environments and develop students who earn higher test scores. Studies show students who start the school year exhibiting weakness in math skills had significant gains when a positive classroom learning environment was experienced (McLean & Connor, 2015). Teachers who are not experiencing burnout build stronger relationships with students. These positive teacher-student relationships are critical for students' well-being (Harding et al., 2019), and can increase student achievement (Kraft et al., 2016).

When teachers become stressed, it can lead to negative classroom learning environments, limiting the amount of growth students are able to achieve (McLean & Connor, 2015). Teachers who experience burnout are more likely to experience depersonalization which could result in negative relationships with students (Klusmann & Richter, 2016). These negative relationships typically arise when teachers become annoyed by students or do not hold positive views of students' abilities (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Emotional exhaustion can lead teachers to demonstrate less favorable behaviors towards students (Klusmann & Richter, 2016), such as using fewer encouraging words or becoming annoyed (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Negative relationships can cause students to think the teacher does not care about them as a learner or an individual, which can be detrimental to the students' well-being and academic success (Harding et al., 2019).

Teachers underperform at work when experiencing burnout, exhaustion, and other mental health inhibitors (Harding et al., 2019). Teachers who experience burnout and exhaustion become more distanced from work (Klusmann & Richter, 2016), and typically spend less time planning thoughtful lessons (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Burnout affects teachers' abilities to prepare for classes, therefore students who are taught by teachers experiencing burnout tend to earn lower standardized test scores compared to students taught by teachers who are not

experiencing burnout (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Students who are English language learners or students attending low socioeconomic schools show even less growth, compared to students the same age, when taught by a teacher who is experiencing burnout (Klusmann & Richter, 2016).

Teachers' mental health impacts student achievement, and student well-being (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Students can be susceptible to the contagion effect. This means students may mimic the emotional cues received from the teacher. Due to the contagion effect, students may experience fatigue, low levels of motivation, and cynical attitudes towards school (Madigan & Kim, 2021). When students lack motivation, performance on assignments decreases. This can lead teachers to doubt effectiveness, further increasing teacher burnout. By reducing teacher stress, not only would teachers' well-being increase, but student success and well-being would also improve (Klusmann & Richter, 2016).

### ***Professional Development***

Teaching is emotionally taxing work, meaning teachers need care, support, and access to professional learning to feel valued and competent (Coldwell, 2017). Professional learning occurs outside of professional development sessions (Kyndt et al., 2016), and can be both formal and informal (Coldwell, 2017). Teachers learn through collaboration, interaction, sharing ideas, extra-curricular activities, experimenting, consulting, information sources, reflection and encountering difficulties (Kyndt et al., 2016).

Professional development focuses on students, with little to no focus on career development and teacher retention (Coldwell, 2017). In Minnesota, teachers who hold a Tier 3 license must complete 75 hours of professional learning hours in three years and Tier 4 license holders must complete 125 hours in five years (License renewal conditions, 2020). The five sections of professional development required by the state of Minnesota are positive behavior



intervention strategies, reading preparation, key warning signs for early onset mental illness in children and adolescents, English learners, and cultural competency. Districts decide what other professional learning teachers must complete (License renewal conditions, 2020). Professional development can build teacher motivation to help decrease teacher attrition and burnout. New teachers can especially benefit from professional development to help build confidence and decrease stress. New teachers require more assistance, yet typically have less varied options regarding professional development compared to experienced teachers (Coldwell, 2017). There is currently limited research and literature regarding how professional development impacts teachers' feelings of burnout.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical framework provides the scaffolding for research and allows the study to provide organization, construct meaning, make connections to related literature, and identify strengths and weaknesses (Collins & Stockton, 2018). Well-Being Theory models the theoretical framework addressing teacher burnout in this research study.

#### ***Well-Being Theory***

People want to live a life with happiness, satisfaction and meaning (Coffey et al., 2016). Well-being (eg. positive emotional strength) and flourishing (eg. physical health) contribute to these three states. Martin Seligman created well-being theory, comprising five indicators, to build understanding regarding human happiness (Coffey et al., 2016). Seligman chose these five indicators, composed of both eudemonic and hedonic factors, due to the natural reward of each (Coffey et al., 2016). The five indicators are positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement (Coffey et al., 2016).

Positive emotions are good feelings (Coffey et al., 2016). Teacher burnout is caused by high levels of stress in the workplace (Salovita & Pakarinene, 2021), which decreases the positive emotions experienced. Engagement occurs when a person is satisfied and absorbed in life's activities (Coffey et al., 2016). This well-being theory indicator correlates with teacher achievement being linked to overall satisfaction in the career (du Plessis et al., 2020). The ability to build strong student-teacher relationships promotes overall well-being and decreases teacher burnout (McLean & Connor, 2015). Seligman's well-being theory states relationships allow a person to feel valued and supported (Coffey et al., 2016). Teachers who experience less support reported lower levels of well-being and higher levels of burnout (Saloviita & Pakarinene, 2021). The fourth indicator is meaning, which is a person's sense of purpose (Coffey et al., 2016). When teachers enter the profession, the main purpose is wanting to make a difference in the lives of students. If this purpose is not met, teachers experience higher levels of burnout (Gray et al., 2017). Finally, achievement is a drive to obtain self-growth (Coffey et al., 2016). Self-growth for educators can occur through formal or informal professional learning (Coldwell, 2017). Teachers' learning and growth occurs through collaboration, interaction, experimentation, reflection, and overcoming obstacles (Kyndt et al., 2016).

Teacher burnout is grounded in the well-being theory. The five indicators of the well-being theory can help guide ideas surrounding teacher burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience. Well-being is beneficial for not only teachers, but also individuals and society (Coffey et al., 2016).

## **Summary**

Chapter Two contained a comprehensive literature review surrounding the topic of teacher burnout. The chapter focused on the following areas: burnout, mental health and

well-being in the workplace, teacher burnout, the crucial years, workload, work-life balance, teacher mental health and student achievement, and professional development. Current scholarly research, grounded in well-being theory and related to the topic of this paper, was reviewed and scrutinized to complete the extensive literature review in this chapter. Chapter Three will provide an overview of the methodology used to complete this research study.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

Teaching is a demanding occupation that comes with stressors beginning teachers are not prepared or trained for, increasing the likelihood of burnout (McLean et al., 2020). The purpose of this study was to explore burnout in teachers who have been in the profession for five or less years. The study investigated teaching factors, grade range, and professional development to make connections to teacher burnout. Chapter Three addresses research methodology, including the following: research design, rationale for the research method, research questions, setting and sample, selection of participants, instrumentation and data collection, Institutional Review Board (IRB) process, and data analysis.

#### **Research Design**

The design of this research study is qualitative in order to understand the relationship between teachers' daily experiences and feelings of burnout. Qualitative research is exploratory and interprets human experiences (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Qualitative research studies attempt to uncover an in-depth understanding of complex topics and provide an explanation even when research results may be omnifarious. When conducting qualitative research, the idea is to gain information about people's lived experiences and make sense of social processes (Staller & Staller, 2010).

#### **Rationale for the Research Method**

This study used a qualitative design to allow participants to share lived experiences. Lochmiller and Lester (2017) state that qualitative research is used to explore and interpret the experiences of the participants. Within the realm of qualitative research, this study implemented an approach grounded in phenomenology. In phenomenological research, the researcher seeks to

understand the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell et al., 2007). More specifically, this study used hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology is oriented around a person's lived experiences and the researcher then uses an interpretive process to find commonalities regarding these lived experiences (Creswell et al., 2007). Hermeneutic phenomenology allows the researcher to choose a specific experience of interest, in this case burnout in teachers with five or less years of experience, and interpret commonalities amongst individuals who have had this experience (Creswell et al., 2007). In this study, the researcher compared the responses from each individual and interpreted commonalities found amongst them.

### **Research Questions**

The goal of this study was to answer the following three research questions:

RQ1: What factors of teaching generate burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?

RQ2: How does grade range (elementary, middle, or high school) contribute to teacher burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?

RQ3: What teacher professional development topics help prevent burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?

### **Setting and Sample**

The setting of this study was the state of Minnesota. The researcher collected information from teachers who received a teaching license from the Professional Education Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB). This means the participants received a teaching license in the state of Minnesota.

The sample for this study is teachers who obtained a teaching license through the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB). The researcher sorted the sample to ensure all information collected was from teachers who had five or less years of experience.

### **Selection of Participants**

It was imperative for teachers with five or less years of teaching experience to participate in this study. Participants were randomly selected using a Microsoft Excel algorithm to obtain a sample of 5,000 individuals out of a total population of 112,000 people. After participants were randomly selected, an anonymous survey was sent to 5,000 individuals who received a teaching license from the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) in Minnesota. Since some of the teachers who received the survey had more than five years of experience, the first question in the survey filtered responses so data would only be collected from teachers with five or less years of experience. Participants varied in years of experience, gender, age and grade levels taught.

### **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

This study used an eight question Qualtrics survey created by the researcher. Survey questions focused on teaching factors, grade range (elementary, middle, or high school) and professional development (see Appendix A). Most of the questions required participants to use a Likert scale to rate experiences and opinions.

Data was collected electronically through Qualtrics. All data was kept confidential by not using participants names or key identifying features. Information was generalized and the demographic information was used as information regarding the overall population being sampled.

### **Institutional Review Board (IRB) Process**

Winona State University requires all graduate students completing research involving human subjects to complete an Institutional Review Board (IRB) process to protect the rights of the participants (WSU, 2021). This research study was exempt from a full board review, meaning the research did not involve vulnerable populations (eg. individuals younger than 18 years of age) and there were no foreseeable risks to participants (WSU, 2021). Completing the IRB process demonstrates the researcher's level of commitment, responsibility, and preparedness in this research study.

### **Data Analysis**

Once the data was collected, the data analysis was completed by the researcher. The researcher looked for themes regarding teaching factors, grade range (elementary, middle, or high school), and professional development about burnout. The collected data was analyzed by using percentages.

Data was categorized by teaching experience and grade level as shown below.

Similarities and differences were discussed.

Teaching Experience:

- A. 1-3 years
- B. 4-5 years

Grade Level:

- A. Work with children birth-5
- B. Work with elementary students (K-5)
- C. Work with middle school students (6-8)
- D. Work with high school students (9-12)

## **Summary**

Chapter Three discussed the research methodology of this study. This chapter consisted of the research design, the rationale for the research method, research questions, setting and sample, selection of participants, instrumentation and data collection, Institutional Review Board process and data analysis. Chapter Four will consist of the research results. Chapter Five includes the conclusion and discussion of the research.



## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to gain a deeper understanding of the aspects of teaching that generate burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience. To accomplish this goal, the researcher sent an online Qualtrics survey to 5,000 individuals who had a teaching license in the state of Minnesota according to the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB). This chapter will provide a description of the sample and a complete analysis of the data collected from the survey.

### Description of Sample

The participants in this study were individuals who were listed as having a teaching license through the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB). There was a total population of 112,000 individuals, but due to policy at the university, surveys could only be sent to a random sample of 5,000 individuals. Out of the 5,000 individuals who received the survey, 348 people responded for a response rate of 7%. Due to the inability to know how long a person had been teaching, the first survey question filtered out any individual with more than five years of experience. After factoring out these individuals, the survey received 289 responses that were able to be used and analyzed for this study. The sample consisted of 62 males (22%), 219 females (77%), and 1 non-binary individual (0.35%). The participants varied in age with 220 individuals between 20-30 years old (76%), 45 individuals between 30-40 years old (16%), 19 individuals between 40-50 years old (7%) and 3 individuals between 50-60 years old (1%).

The researcher obtained all the information for this research study from an anonymous online survey managed through Qualtrics. Participants were sent an email that contained information about the purpose of the study, a consent disclosure, and a link to the survey (see

appendices). All individuals were informed the survey was confidential, voluntary and that no identifying information would be obtained by the researcher. Participants had the option to end the survey at any time without fear of consequences. The survey remained open for two weeks to ensure participants had adequate time to complete the survey.

### **Data Analysis**

This research study addressed three research questions:

RQ1: What factors of teaching generate burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?

RQ2: How does grade range (elementary, middle, or high school) contribute to teacher burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?

RQ3: What teacher professional development topics help prevent burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?

The researcher used an online survey to ask participants questions to find answers regarding the three aforementioned research questions. To uncover themes and commonalities, each of the eight survey questions were analyzed and paralleled with one of the three research questions. The researcher used interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) to complete the data analysis presented in this chapter. IPA is when the researcher attempts to understand a person's lived experiences and find commonalities (Creswell et al., 2007).

### **Demographic Questions**

#### ***Question 1: How long have you been teaching?***

The first question in the survey asked participants how long they had been teaching. Participants who completed the survey were given six options for question 1: 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years, 5 years, and More than 5 years. Participants who selected “More than 5 years”

were exited out of the survey and saw a screen saying thank you. The first question was designed to ensure only individuals with five or less years of experience completed the survey.

**Table 1**

**Years of Teaching Experience for the Participants**

Teaching Experience (in years)	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
1	83	24%
2	107	31%
3	60	17%
4	22	6%
5	15	4%

*Note.* There were 59 participants (17%) who selected ‘More than 5 years’ for question one. These participants were exited out of the survey since they did not fit the research parameters.

The majority of participants (72%) were within the first three years of teaching. Only 10% of participants had been teaching for four or five years. The percentages for question 1 do not add up to 100% due to the participants who selected “More than 5 years” and were exited out from the remainder of the survey.

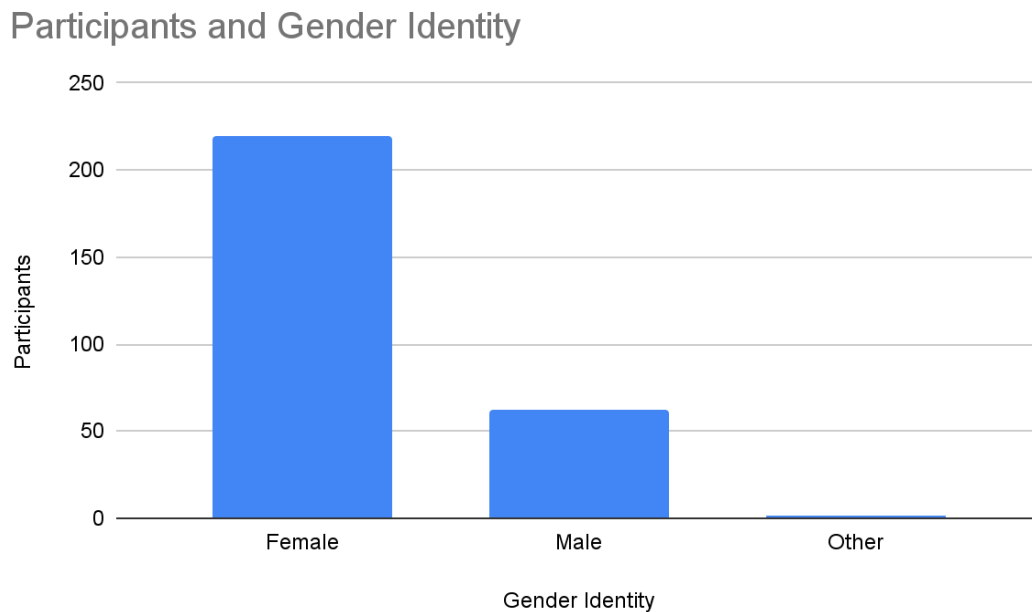
***Question 2: What gender do you identify as?***

The purpose of the second question was to make comparisons across gender identities in terms of burnout. Participants were able to select four answers for question 2: Male, Female, Other, and Prefer not to answer. If a participant selected “Other” they had the option to type in their gender identity. Table 2 shows the breakdown of participants and their gender identities. Of the participants, 219 (77%) identified as female, 62 (22%) identified as male, and 2 (0.7%) identified as other. Of these two participants who selected other, one wrote in “non-binary” as

their gender identifier. There was one participant who selected “prefer not to answer” for question 2. The majority of the participants in this research study identified as female.

**Figure 1**

**Participants and Gender Identity**



**Question 3: What is your age?**

**Table 2**

**Participants Age**

Age Range (in years)	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
20-30	220	76%
30-40	45	16%
40-50	19	7%
50-60	3	1%

*Note.* Participants had the option to choose 60+ years. None of the participants selected 60+ years so it was left off the table.

The majority of participants (76%) were between 20 and 30 years of age. Less than 10% of the participants in this study were over the age of 40. When participants completed the survey, they had six options to select for question 3: 20-30 years, 30-40 years, 40-50 years, 60+ years, and Prefer not to answer. None of the participants selected “60+” years and only one of the participants selected “Prefer not to answer”.

### **Research Question 1**

Research Question 1 asked, “What factors of teaching generate burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?” Question 5 on the survey correlated directly with Research Question 1. Survey question 5 said, “On a scale of 1-4 how much stress do you experience due to the following factors of teaching (4 is the most stress, 1 is the least stress)?” The following factors included: student behavior, time constraints (eg. using the restroom, lunch, prep), time pressures (eg. MCA testing, meeting all standards), classroom management, lesson planning, limited time to collaborate with coworkers, meetings (eg. staff, team, IEP, curriculum, etc.), grading student assignments, and other. The ranking scale is as follows: 1 is not stressful at all, 2 is somewhat not stressful, 3 is somewhat stressful, and 4 is very stressful. Table 3 below shows the responses from question 5.

**Table 3****How Much Stress Various Teaching Aspects Cause Participants**

Activity	Number of Participants			
	Not Stressful	Somewhat Not Stressful	Somewhat Stressful	Very Stressful
Student Behavior	18 (7%)	59 (24%)	85 (34%)	88 (35%)
Time Constraints (eg. using the restroom, lunch, prep)	21 (8%)	60 (24%)	82 (33%)	88 (35%)
Time Pressures (eg. MCA testing, meeting all standards)	23 (9%)	72 (29%)	77 (31%)	78 (31%)
Classroom Management	28 (11%)	78 (31%)	80 (32%)	64 (26%)
Lesson Planning	10 (4%)	76 (31%)	104 (42%)	58 (23%)
Limited Time to Collaborate with Co-Workers	34 (14%)	81 (33%)	78 (31%)	56 (22%)
Meetings (eg. staff, team, IEP, curriculum, etc.)	35 (14%)	96 (39%)	63 (25%)	55 (22%)
Grading Student Assignments	72 (29%)	97 (39%)	63 (25%)	18 (7%)
Other	20	6	12	31

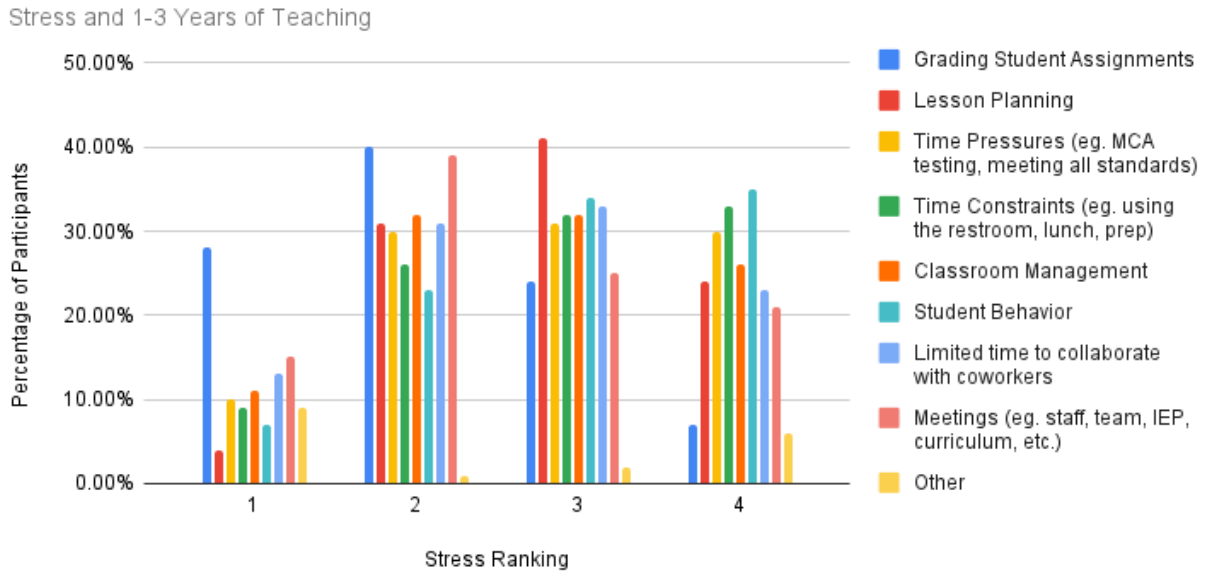
*Note.* Ranking is based on a 1-4 scale. 1 represented the least amount of stress (not stressful) and 4 represented the most amount of stress (very stressful).

Of the nine activities, five appear to have caused higher stress for teachers compared to the others. These five activities were student behavior, time constraints (eg. using the restroom,

eating lunch, prep), time pressures (eg. MCA testing, meeting all the standards), classroom management, and lesson planning. Student behavior had the most participants (69%) rank their stress level as either somewhat stressful or very stressful. The second activity to receive a majority of high stress rankings was time constraints (68%). Time constraints included not having adequate time to use the bathroom, eat lunch, or prepare for upcoming classes. Lesson planning had 65% of participants rate stress as somewhat stressful or very stressful, and time pressures were ranked as somewhat stressful or very stressful by 62% of participants. Time pressures included having to complete MCA testing (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment) and teach all of the standards within the school year. Classroom management had 57% of participants ranking their stress level as either somewhat stressful or very stressful. The area where participants recorded the least amount of stress was in grading student assignments. There were 68% of participants who ranked grading student assignments as somewhat not stressful or not stressful.

**Figure 2**

**Stress Ranking for Teachers with 1-3 Years of Experience**



**Figure 3**

**Stress Ranking for Teachers with 4-5 Years of Experience**

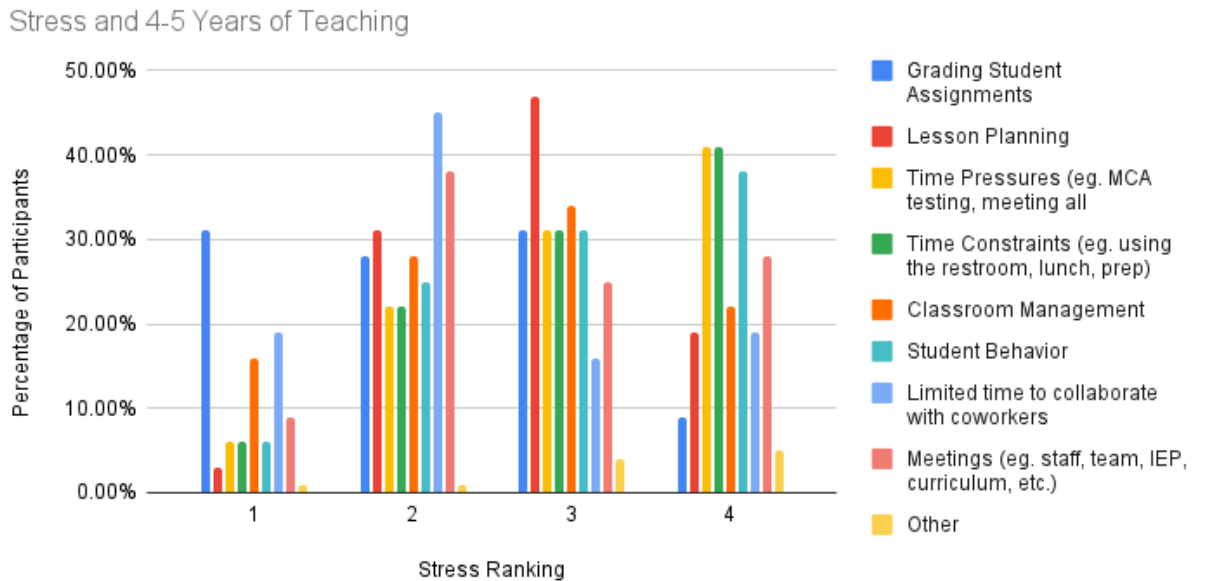




Figure 2 shows how teachers who were in their first three years of teaching ranked the various activities in regards to stress level, and Figure 3 shows the same information for teachers who were in their fourth and fifth years of teaching. For both groups, grading assignments had the most participants rank it at a stress level of 1 (not stressful). There was a slightly higher percentage of teachers in their fourth and fifth year of teaching who ranked time constraints (eg. using the restroom, lunch, prep) and time pressures (eg. MCA testing, teaching all standards) as a level 4 (very stressful) compared to teachers in their first three years. There were no major differences between the two groups in terms of ranking their stress for each activity.

### **Research Question 2**

The second research question asked, “How does grade range (elementary, middle, or high school) contribute to teacher burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?” The researcher analyzed the data collected from survey question 4 to better understand RQ2. The fourth question explored the age level taught by the participants who completed the survey. Participants had five options for question 4: Early childhood (Birth-5 years old), Elementary (K-5), Middle School (6-8), High School (9-12) and Other.

To complete the data analysis for RQ2, the researcher first looked at the number of participants who completed the survey and what age range the participants worked with. A further analysis was then completed to look at how each age level ranked their stress levels for the various activities. Table 4 below shows the breakdown of the participants and the age level they work with. Table 5, Table 6, Table 7, and Table 8 each show the percentage of participants who work with each age level and the corresponding stress ranking for each activity. Table 5

shows Not Stressful, Table 6 shows Somewhat Not Stressful, Table 7 shows Somewhat Stressful and Table 8 shows Very Stressful.

**Table 4**

**Age Level Taught by Participants**

Age Level Taught	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Early Childhood (Birth - 5 years old)	14	6%
Elementary (K-5)	105	42%
Middle School (6-8)	55	22%
High School (9-12)	60	24%
Other <sup>a</sup>	15	6%

<sup>a</sup>Participants may have been dual licensed and teach K-8 or 7-12 depending on subject area. Participants may have also been substitute teaching, or could have recently left the profession.

Early Childhood accounted for 6% of the sample for this research. Elementary teachers made up 42%, and secondary teachers (middle school and high school) comprised 46% of the sample for this research study. The next section will analyze the aspects of teaching that cause the most stress for each of the following subgroups: Early Childhood (Birth-5 years old), Elementary (K-5), Middle School (6-8), and High School (9-12). Participants who selected “Other” were left off of this next part of the analysis due to the inconsistency between age levels taught. Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 will look at the participants from each sub category who ranked the various academic activities on a scale of 1-4. Table 5 below looks at the categories ranked as a 1 (not stressful).

**Table 5****Age Level Taught and Stress Ranked 1 (Not Stressful)**

Activity	Number of Participants by Age Level			
	Early Childhood (Birth - 5 years)	Elementary (K-5)	Middle School (6-8)	High School (9-12)
	Not Stressful			
Grading Student Assignments	10 (71%)	30 (29%)	8 (15%)	14 (23%)
Classroom Management	2 (15%)	14 (14%)	2 (4%)	8 (13%)
Limited Time to Collaborate with Co-Workers	2 (15%)	11 (11%)	9 (16%)	9 (15%)
Time Pressures (eg. MCA testing, meeting all standards)	2 (14%)	5 (5%)	4 (7%)	11 (18%)
Lesson Planning	2 (14%)	2 (2%)	1 (2%)	4 (7%)
Meetings (eg. staff, team, IEP, curriculum, etc.)	1 (7%)	13 (13%)	7 (13%)	10 (17%)
Time Constraints (eg. using the restroom, lunch, prep)	1 (7%)	9 (9%)	3 (5%)	7 (12%)
Student Behavior	0 (0%)	5 (5%)	4 (7%)	7 (12%)

*Note.* The section labeled “Other” was deleted due to the majority of participants skipping this question causing the percentages to be inaccurately skewed.

Table 5 above shows the percentages of each age level for a stress level ranking of 1 (not stressful). Early Childhood (Birth -5 years old) had 71% of participants rank grading student assignments as not stressful. Elementary had 29%, Middle School had 15% and High School had 23% of participants rank grading student assignments as not stressful. Student behavior received low percentages across the board for being not stressful. High school had the highest level of participants who ranked student behavior as not stressful with 12% of participants. Table 6 below will look at the various age ranges and the percent of participants who ranked their stress at a level 2 (somewhat not stressful) for the various aspects of education.

**Table 6****Age Level Taught and Stress Ranked 2 (Somewhat Not Stressful)**

Activity	Number of Participants by Age Level			
	Early Childhood (Birth - 5 years old)	Elementary (K-5)	Middle School (6-8)	High School (9-12)
Somewhat Not Stressful				
Classroom Management	6 (46%)	27 (26%)	18 (33%)	22 (37%)
Meetings (eg. staff, team, IEP, curriculum, etc.)	5 (36%)	36 (35%)	25 (45%)	25 (43%)
Lesson Planning	5 (36%)	30 (29%)	16 (30%)	20 (33%)
Time Constraints (eg. using the restroom, lunch, prep)	5 (36%)	18 (17%)	14 (25%)	19 (32%)
Time Pressures (eg. MCA testing, meeting all standards)	4 (29%)	20 (19%)	18 (33%)	24 (40%)
Grading Student Assignments	2 (14%)	47 (45%)	22 (41%)	23 (38%)
Limited Time to Collaborate with Co-Workers	1 (8%)	37 (36%)	19 (35%)	17 (29%)
Student Behavior	3 (8%)	23 (22%)	11 (20%)	20 (33%)

*Note.* The section labeled “Other” was deleted due to the majority of participants skipping this question causing the percentages to be inaccurately skewed.

Based on Table 6 above, there were two activities that had a greater difference in percentages compared to the rest. There were 14% of individuals within the Early Childhood age level to rank their stress for grading student assignments as somewhat not stressful. For Elementary there were 45% of participants, Middle School had 41% of participants, and High School had 38% of participants who ranked grading as somewhat not stressful. The other activity with a larger variation in percentages was “limited time to collaborate with co-workers”. For Early Childhood, 8% of participants ranked time for collaboration as a stress level of 2 (somewhat not stressful). Elementary was 36%, Middle School was 35% and High School was 29% for a somewhat not stressful rating. Table 7 below provides a model of education activities and the percentage of participants who ranked each activity at a stress level of 3 (somewhat stressful).

**Table 7****Age Level Taught and Stress Ranked 3 (Somewhat Stressful)**

Activity	Number of Participants by Age Level			
	Early Childhood (Birth - 5 years old)	Elementary (K-5)	Middle School (6-8)	High School (9-12)
Somewhat Stressful				
Limited Time to Collaborate with Co-Workers	9 (69%)	30 (29%)	13 (24%)	21 (36%)
Student Behavior	7 (50%)	35 (34%)	19 (35%)	20 (33%)
Time Pressures (eg. MCA testing, meeting all standards)	6 (46%)	38 (37%)	18 (33%)	10 (17%)
Time Constraints (eg. using the restroom, lunch, prep)	6 (46%)	33 (32%)	18 (33%)	16 (27%)
Lesson Planning	5 (36%)	52 (50%)	23 (43%)	20 (33%)
Meetings (eg. staff, team, IEP, curriculum, etc.)	5 (35%)	32 (31%)	8 (15%)	14 (24%)
Classroom Management	2 (15%)	36 (35%)	17 (32%)	19 (32%)
Grading Student Assignments	2 (14%)	24 (23%)	18 (33%)	15 (25%)

*Note.* The section labeled “Other” was deleted due to the majority of participants skipping this question causing the percentages to be inaccurately skewed.

Table 7 above shows that 69% of participants who worked in Early Childhood ranked their stress level at a 3 (somewhat stressful) in regards to limited time to work with co-workers. In comparison, 29% of Elementary participants, 24% of Middle School participants, and 36% of High School participants ranked limited time to work with co-workers as somewhat stressful. Each age range had similar ratings for lesson planning and student behavior. For lesson planning, the following percentage of participants ranked their stress as somewhat stressful: 36% of Early Childhood participants, 50% of Elementary participants, 43% of Middle School participants, and 33% of High school participants. The percentages of participants who ranked their stress as somewhat stressful for student behavior were 50%, 34%, 35%, and 33% for Early Childhood, Elementary, Middle School, and High School participants respectively. Table 8 shows the participants who ranked each activity as resulting in a stress level of 4 (very stressful) for the survey.



**Table 8****Age Level Taught and Stress Ranked 4 (Very Stressful)**

Activity	Number of Participants by Age Level			
	Early Childhood (Birth - 5 years old)	Elementary (K-5)	Middle School (6-8)	High School (9-12)
	Very Stressful			
Student Behavior	4 (29%)	40 (39%)	21 (38%)	13 (22%)
Classroom Management	3 (23%)	27 (26%)	18 (33%)	11 (18%)
Meetings (eg. staff, team, IEP, curriculum, etc.)	3 (21%)	23 (22%)	15 (27%)	9 (16%)
Time Constraints (eg. using the restroom, lunch, prep)	2 (14%)	44 (42%)	20 (36%)	18 (30%)
Time Pressures (eg. MCA testing, meeting all standards)	2 (14%)	40 (39%)	15 (27%)	15 (25%)
Lesson Planning	2 (14%)	19 (18%)	14 (26%)	16 (27%)
Limited Time to Collaborate with Co-Workers	1 (8%)	26 (25%)	14 (25%)	12 (20%)
Grading Student Assignments	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	6 (11%)	8 (13%)

*Note.* The section labeled “Other” was deleted due to the majority of participants skipping this question causing the percentages to be inaccurately skewed.

In Table 8, the highest percentage of participants to select a stress level of 4 (very stressful) for an educational activity was 42% of Elementary participants, and the activity was time constraints. The percentages for very stressful rankings for meetings was relatively similar across the board. Percentages for meetings were 21%, 22%, 27%, and 16% for Early Childhood, Elementary, Middle School, and High School respectively. The percent of participants who ranked their stress as very stressful was low in all age levels for grading student assignments. Early Childhood had 0% of participants who ranked grading assignments as very stressful, 3% for Elementary, 11% for Middle School, and 13% for High School.

For Table 5, Table 6, Table 7, and Table 8 there was data to show what activity was ranked highest for each age level and what activity was ranked lowest for each activity in regard to stress. In Early Education 79% of participants ranked student behavior as somewhat stressful or very stressful. For Elementary, 68% of participants ranked lesson planning as somewhat stressful or very stressful. For Middle School, 72% of participants ranked student behavior as somewhat stressful or very stressful. This was followed closely by 69% of Middle School participants ranking time constraints (eg. using the bathroom) as somewhat stressful or very stressful. For High School, 56% of participants ranked limited collaboration time as somewhat stressful or very stressful. All age ranges ranked grading as resulting in the lowest levels of stress. In Early Childhood, 85% of participants ranked grading as somewhat not stressful or not stressful at all, Elementary had 73%, Middle School had 56% and High School had 61% of participants ranking the category as somewhat not stressful or not stressful at all. High School participants also had 60% of participants rank meetings as somewhat not stressful or not stressful at all.

### Research Question 3

Research question three asked, “What teacher professional development topics help prevent burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?” To understand this question, the researcher analyzed question 6, question 7, and question 8 from the survey. Question 6 asked, “How much training have you received during professional development on how to cope with stress or feelings of burnout?” For question 6, participants could select one of five answers: None at all, Less than 2 hours, 2-5 hours, 5-8 hours, or More than 8 hours. Figure 4 shows the responses from the participants.

**Figure 4**

#### Professional Development Hours Regarding Stress and Burnout

Participants and Stress Professional Development Hours

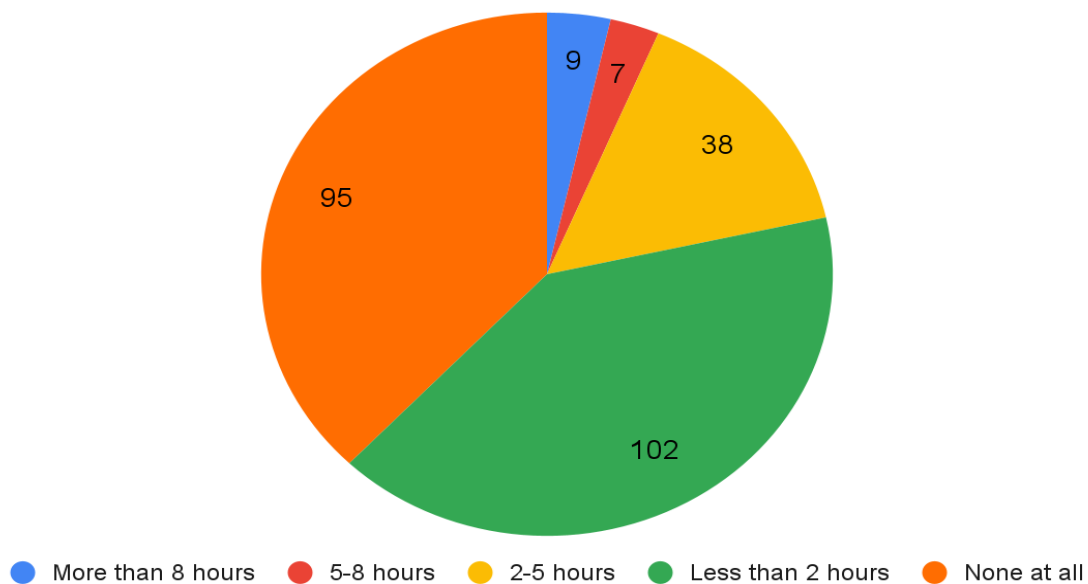


Figure 4 shows the majority of participants (79%) had less than two hours of professional development on how to cope with stress and feelings of burnout. Of that 79%, there were 38% of participants who received no professional development training on feelings of stress or burnout.

There were 4% of individuals who had received more than 8 hours of professional development on the topic of stress and burnout.

Question 7 asked participants, “Do you think you would experience less stress if your school district provided more specific training in regards to teacher's mental health, stress, and feelings of burnout during professional development?” Table 9 below shows how the participants answered question 7.

**Table 9**

**Would Professional Development Help Burnout?**

Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Definitely Yes	21	8%
Probably Yes	81	32%
Probably No	119	47%
Definitely No	30	12%

Over half of the participants (59%) did not think specific professional development regarding mental health, stress and burnout would help decrease stress levels. There were 8% of participants who thought it would definitely help. There were 40% of the participants who thought this specific training could be helpful, based on their responses of either Definitely Yes or Probably Yes. There were 12% of participants who strongly disagreed and said specific training would definitely not help.

The final question on the survey asked participants what professional training topics they thought would be most beneficial to help lower feelings of stress or burnout. Question 8 asked participants, “How helpful would the following professional development topics be in helping you feel less stressed or burned out?” Participants were able to respond with; Extremely Helpful,

Somewhat Helpful, Somewhat Unhelpful, or Not Helpful At All. Table 10 shows how participants ranked the following professional development categories: managing student behaviors, lesson planning tips, time management, mindfulness techniques, and stress management techniques.

**Table 10**

**Professional Development Topics**

Professional Development Topics	Number of Participants			
	Extremely Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Not Helpful At All
Managing Student Behaviors	109 (44%)	102 (41%)	20 (8%)	18 (7%)
Lesson Planning Tips	66 (26%)	108 (43%)	44 (18%)	32 (13%)
Time Management	45 (18%)	94 (38%)	60 (24%)	50 (20%)
Mindfulness Techniques	30 (12%)	122 (49%)	53 (21%)	45 (18%)
Stress Management Techniques	22 (9%)	123 (49%)	51 (20%)	55 (22%)

There were 85% of participants who thought professional development regarding managing student behaviors would be helpful. There were also 58% of participants who listed stress management techniques as being helpful. Professional development discussing lesson planning tips was voted as helpful by 69% of the participants who completed the survey. There was a fair number of participants who thought the various professional development topics would be somewhat unhelpful or not helpful at all, every category had a greater percentage of participants who clicked one of the options stating they thought it would be helpful.

## **Summary**

Chapter 4 provided a description of the sample and a complete data analysis of the information collected regarding the three research questions from this study. The researcher discussed the demographic questions, each of the research questions and the correlating survey questions. Chapter 5 provides a discussion and conclusions based on the results of the research. Chapter 5 will also discuss themes, leadership implications, and suggestions or modifications for future research surrounding this topic.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore burnout in teachers with five or less years of experience. The research examined what aspects of teaching impact burnout, how grade level impacts burnout, and if specific professional development topics can help limit burnout in teachers with five or less years of experience. Previous chapters provided a background of the problem, literature review, methodology, and results of the research. Chapter Five will provide the discussion and conclusion, as well as the theoretical connection, leadership implications, and recommendations for future research.

### Discussion

The researcher used an anonymous online Qualtrics survey to collect responses from teachers in the state of Minnesota. The survey consisted of eight questions designed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What factors of teaching generate burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?

RQ2: How does grade range (elementary, middle, or high school) contribute to teacher burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?

RQ3: What teacher professional development topics help prevent burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?

The data collected from the survey was analyzed and led to the emergence of four themes. Themes for research question 1 included (1) time and (2) behavior management. The theme for research question 2 was (1) similar stress levels regardless of grade level. The theme for research question 3 was (1) limited professional development about stress.

## Theoretical Connection

This qualitative research study was grounded in well-being theory. Well-being theory was founded by Martin Seligman, and focused around the concept that people want to live a life with happiness, satisfaction and meaning (Coffey et al., 2016). Contributing to these three aspects are positive emotional strength (ie. wellbeing) and physical health (ie. flourishing) (Coffey et al., 2016). Seligman established five indicators to accompany the well-being theory. The five indicators are positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement (Coffey et al., 2016). Positive emotion, engagement, and achievement were visible within the survey questions from this research.

Positive emotion refers to the good feelings an individual experiences (Coffey et al., 2016). When teachers experience burnout caused by stress, they are less likely to experience positive emotions (Salovita & Pakarinene, 2021). Engagement refers to when an individual is engaged and satisfied with the various aspects of life (Coffey et al., 2016). Question 5 of the survey connected to both of these aspects of the well-being theory. Question 5 asked, “On a scale of 1-4, how much stress do you experience due to the following factors of teaching? (4 is the most stress, 1 is little to no stress)”. If participants ranked their stress as a level 3 or a level 4, they likely experienced less positive emotions compared to participants who ranked their stress as a level 1.

The third aspect of well-being theory that connected to the survey was achievement. Achievement refers to the desire to achieve self-growth (Coffey et al., 2016). In education, self-growth can be achieved through formal or informal professional learning (Coldwell, 2017). Question 7 and question 8 from the survey connected to the aspect of achievement. Question 7 asked, “Do you think you would experience less stress if your school district provided more



specific training in regards to teacher's mental health, stress, and feelings of burnout during professional development?" Question 8 asked, "How helpful would the following professional development topics be in helping you feel less stressed or burned out?" Each of these questions asked participants to consider the impact of professional development which is a form of self-growth. Overall, this research was grounded in well-being theory. Well-being is beneficial for all individuals and can help guide understanding of burnout in teachers with five or less years of experience.

### **Research Question 1 Discussion**

Research question 1 asked, "What factors of teaching generate burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?" Two themes emerged from RQ1: (1) time and (2) behavior management.

#### ***Theme 1: Time***

Workload is the amount of work an individual must complete within a certain amount of time (Huyghebaert et al., 2018). A high workload can lead to burnout, especially when an individual does not have enough time to complete all their work (Avanzi et al., 2018). Question 5 on the survey asked, "On a scale of 1-4, how much stress do you experience due to the following factors of teaching? (4 is the most stress, 1 is little to no stress)". Participants were provided with nine teaching factors and asked to rank each factor in regards to the stress they experience. The nine factors were: grading student assignments, lesson planning, time pressures, time constraints, classroom management, student behavior, limited time to collaborate with coworkers, meetings, and other.

Across all age levels (early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school), time pressures (eg. MCA testing, meeting all standards) and time constraints (eg. using the restroom,

lunch, prep) had the most participants rank their stress as a level 3 or level 4 (somewhat stressful or very stressful). There were 62% of participants who ranked their stress level as somewhat stressful or very stressful in regards to time pressures, and 68% of participants ranked their stress as somewhat stressful or very stressful for time constraints. The data collected from the survey supports the idea that limited planning time leads to high workloads and increased feelings of burnout (Avanzi et al., 2018).

### ***Theme 2: Behavior Management***

Managing complex classroom situations is one of the main areas new teachers feel unprepared to deal with when first beginning a career (Voss et al., 2017). Classroom management is closely related to teachers' stress levels. When teachers feel less control in regards to classroom management, stress levels rise (Voss et al., 2017). Question 5 asked participants, "On a scale of 1-4, how much stress do you experience due to the following factors of teaching? (4 is the most stress, 1 is little to no stress)". There were 69% of individuals who rated student behavior as causing stress levels of 3 or 4 (somewhat stressful or very stressful). A total of 58% of individuals ranked their stress as somewhat stressful or very stressful in regard to classroom management. Question 8 on the survey asked, "How helpful would the following professional development topics be in helping you feel less stressed or burned out?" There were 85% of participants who said professional development about managing student behaviors would be extremely helpful or somewhat helpful.

### **Research Question 2 Discussion**

Research question 2 asked, "How does grade range (elementary, middle, or high school) contribute to teacher burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?" One theme emerged from RQ2: (1) similar stress levels regardless of grade level.

### ***Theme 3: Similar Stress Levels Regardless of Grade Level***

Recent studies show teachers in middle school and high school reported higher levels of burnout compared to early childhood and elementary school teachers (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). However, this research study showed stress levels were relatively consistent across the board. For example, the majority of participants ranked student behavior as somewhat stressful or very stressful. Percentages of participants who ranked stress as a level 3 or 4 (somewhat stressful or very stressful) were 79%, 73%, 73% and 55% for early childhood, elementary, middle school, and high school respectively. Each age level ranked grading student assignments as somewhat not stressful or not stressful at all for the majority of the participants. There were 14 early childhood participants, 105 elementary participants, 55 middle school participants, and 60 high school participants.

### **Research Question 3 Discussion**

Research question 3 asked, “What teacher professional development topics help prevent burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?” There was one theme that emerged from research question 2. The emergent theme was: (1) limited professional development about stress.

### ***Theme 4: Limited Professional Development about Stress***

Professional development focuses on students, yet incorporates little to no focus on career development, teacher retention, or stress management (Coldwell, 2017). Question 6 from the online survey asked, “How much training have you received during professional development on how to cope with stress or feelings of burnout?” Of the participants, 79% said they received less than 2 hours of professional development about how to manage stress. A total of 38% of the participants from the research study reported receiving no professional

development at all on how to manage stress or feelings of burnout. Teachers learn how to complete the job most effectively through collaboration, consulting, information sources, reflection and encountering difficulties (Kyndt et al., 2016), something these participants did not experience in regards to stress management.

## **Conclusions**

After conducting a survey consisting of 289 teachers with five or less years of experience in the state of Minnesota, reviewing the literature, and analyzing the results in Chapter 4, the researcher drew the following three conclusions:

1. Time constraints and behavior management cause the highest levels of stress and burnout for teachers with five or less years of experience.
2. Grade level does not greatly affect burnout in teachers with five or less years of experience.
3. Professional development is not enough to help prevent burnout for teachers with five or less years of experience.

## **Leadership Implications**

**Conclusion 1:** Time constraints and behavior management cause the highest levels of stress and burnout for teachers with five or less years of experience. Responses from the anonymous Qualtrics survey showed the majority of participants ranked factors involving time constraints and behavior management as somewhat stressful or very stressful.

**Implication:** School leaders have the responsibility to ensure teachers are doing the best to meet the needs of the students. If teachers are feeling stressed due to time constraints or behavior management, it is the role of the leadership to help alleviate this stress. School leaders could point out resources teachers can utilize such as getting class coverage, providing student

management techniques, or pulling students out of class to discuss expectations. Leaders within the school can also talk to leaders higher in the school system about longer lunch periods for staff (and students) and additional prep time for teachers.

**Conclusion 2:** Grade level does not greatly affect burnout in teachers with five or less years of experience. The results from this research showed teachers in all grade levels experience about the same amount of stress for the various factors of teaching.

**Implication:** Leaders must understand that regardless of the grade level a teacher works with, everyone is susceptible to stress in the workplace. Leaders should talk to staff about what is needed in order to best meet needs and reduce stress levels. Different grade levels may have specific needs or requests, so it is best to communicate openly to create the most cohesive work environment.

**Conclusion 3:** Professional development is not enough to help prevent burnout for teachers with five or less years of experience. Professional development alone will not help teacher retention or lower the amount of stress teachers experience.

**Implication:** Leaders should not incorporate mandatory professional development about managing stress and assume it will be enough to help reduce burnout in teachers with five or less years of experience. Leaders could offer optional professional development on stress and burnout for those teachers who want to attend. This could be in place of another professional development session, or be a completely optional session on its own day. Leaders could also help teachers create professional or personal learning networks where teachers can share ideas and techniques with one another. Leaders should not use professional development as a way to avoid talking with teachers. Instead leaders should try to implement change within the education system to help lower teacher burnout.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This research explored the aspects of teaching that lead to burnout in teachers with five or less years of experience. The first recommendation for future research would be to explore how teachers can be better prepared for dealing with behavior management in the classroom. Why is behavior management difficult for new teachers, and how can school leaders better equip new teachers to deal with student behavior? A second recommendation for future research would be to explore which school schedules have the least amount of time constraints for teachers. Does year round schooling or block scheduling create less stress for teachers compared to the traditional school calendar? Attempting to answer the two aforementioned questions could add valuable information to this research study.

### **Summary**

Chapter Five presented the discussion and conclusions from the research. This chapter provided the theoretical connection, four emergent themes, three conclusions along with leadership implications, and recommendations for future research. This entire research study explored the aspects of teaching that generate burnout in teachers with five or less years of experience.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Qualtrics Survey

##### Teacher Burnout

###### Start of Block: Years Taught

Q1 How long have you been teaching?

- 1 year (1)
- 2 years (2)
- 3 years (3)
- 4 years (4)
- 5 years (5)
- More than 5 years (6)

*Skip To: End of Survey If How long have you been teaching? = More than 5 years*

###### End of Block: Years Taught

###### Start of Block: Demographics

Q2 What gender do you identify as?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Other (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer (4)

Q3 What is your age?

- 20-30 (1)
- 30-40 (2)
- 40-50 (3)
- 50-60 (4)
- 60+ (5)
- Prefer not to answer (6)

###### End of Block: Demographics

###### Start of Block: Teaching Background

Q4 What age level do you teach?

- Early Childhood (Birth - 5 years old) (1)
- Elementary (K-5) (2)
- Middle School (6-8) (3)
- High School (9-12) (4)
- Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_

Q5 On a scale of 1-4, how much stress do you experience due to the following factors of teaching? (4 is the most stress, 1 is little to no stress)

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)
Grading student assignments (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lesson planning (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Time pressures (eg. MCA testing, meeting all standards) (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Time constraints (eg. using the restroom, lunch, prep) (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Classroom management (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student behavior (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Limited time to collaborate with coworkers (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meetings (eg. staff, team, IEP, curriculum, etc.) (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Q6 How much training have you received during professional development on how to cope with stress or feelings of burnout?

	More than 8 hours (1)	5-8 hours (2)	2-5 hours (3)	Less than 2 hours (4)	None at all (5)
Please choose the statement that best answers the question (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7 Do you think you would experience less stress if your school district provided more specific training in regards to teacher's mental health, stress, and feelings of burnout during professional development?

	Definitely yes (1)	Probably yes (2)	Probably not (3)	Definitely not (4)
Please choose the statement that best answers the question (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 How helpful would the following professional development topics be in helping you feel less stressed or burned out?

	Extremely helpful (1)	Somewhat helpful (2)	Somewhat unhelpful (3)	Not helpful at all (4)
Stress management techniques (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managing student behaviors (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mindfulness techniques (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Time management (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lesson planning tips (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**End of Block: Teaching Background**

## Appendix B

### Email to Participants

Dear Minnesota Teacher,

To better understand burnout in teachers who have been in the profession for five or less years, the attached survey has been created by a Winona State University graduate student in the Education Leadership program. Your experiences and opinions as a teacher with five years or less of experience will provide valuable insight on burnout.

Participation in this survey is completely optional. If you decide to participate you will be adding value to the research and allow for greater understanding regarding teacher burnout.

The 8-item electronic survey should take approximately 5 minutes to complete. All information collected will be kept confidential. No names of individuals, school districts, or any other identifying information will be collected during the survey. The first survey question documents your teaching experience. If you have five or less years of teaching experience, the survey will continue. For those who answer the first survey questions with “five or more years”, you will not be asked any additional questions.

There are no expected risks, discomforts, inconveniences, or dangers while participating in this study. The survey is anonymous, and all responses will be kept confidential. Information collected from this study will be expressed in aggregated form.

Thank you in advance for taking your time to participate in this survey. **By completing and submitting the survey, you are providing consent to participate in this research.**

If you have any questions regarding the survey, please email [researcher email].

Click here to complete the survey: [LINK]

Sincerely,  
Paige Peterson