Teacher Burnout: Understanding the Lived Experiences of Teachers during COVID-19

by

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Abstract

I explored the potential ways teaching during the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted teachers' outlook on their profession. Participants included 30 full-time teachers and two former teachers from Marazul High School (MHS), a suburban high school in Northern California. I utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods design for the study combining the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey (MBI – ES), focus groups, and interviews. The MHS teachers who experienced high levels of burnout left the profession, and the MHS teachers who did not experience burnout stayed in the profession. Student behavior was the most discussed topic when in the focus groups and interviews. Based on the data, it is also possible that teachers' relationships with administrators impacted their decision to remain in (or to leave) the profession.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother. Even when she was feeling knocked down from teaching during COVID-19, she pushed through and found a way to make herself continue doing what she loved. She inspires me to make any negative situation into a learning experience, and to surround yourself with people who have the same mentality.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my loved ones and thesis committee chair for helping me push myself to write this thesis. I could not have accomplished this without them. I would also like to show my appreciation for Marazul High School for allowing me easy access to communicate with participants, and for those who shared their story. I hope that the participants' stories help those still in teaching.

Preface

Half of my undergraduate experience was amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Along with the rest of the world, this had a major impact on how I participated and viewed my education. Furthermore, my mother is a teacher, and I had a firsthand experience hearing the adjustments she had to make during virtual learning in COVID-19. Seeing the frustrations, breaking points, and moments of disappointment she had to experience inspired me to investigate teacher burnout. As I enter the field of teaching, I wanted to hear how teachers dealt with their burnout during one of the most trying times they have experienced: COVID-19. I felt like if these teachers stayed in their classrooms even after the pandemic, then they were the best people to talk to about managing teacher burnout. These teachers inspired me to listen and keep my mind open about teaching in our world today.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The teaching profession is an emotionally taxing career. Whether teaching in-person or virtually, educators have countless daily personal interactions with students, parents, and coworkers. It can be difficult to take care of oneself when there are so many other people the teacher is supposed to take care of throughout the workday. If a teacher cannot manage their own needs while taking care of others, this will drain teachers emotionally, and, in some cases, lead them to experience teacher burnout. Teacher burnout is a mentality, caused by extended periods of stress that leads to exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decline in teacher success (Kant & Shanker, 2021).

Teachers reported feeling burnt out because of multiple components related to COVID-19: parent-teacher interactions, teaching adjustments, and student-teacher relationships. Teachers felt anxious communicating with parents during COVID-19 since there were constant changes in curriculum and educational procedures (i.e., masking in classrooms, grading procedures) (Aloe et al., 2013). Along with the stressful parent-teacher correspondence, teachers experienced stress from the unanticipated changes to their pedagogical expectations due to COVID-19 (Mseleku, 2020; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021; Pressley, 2021). Teachers were expected to adapt to the new COVID-19 teaching adjustments (i.e., online learning) without proper training or support causing teachers to feel stressed (Mseleku, 2020). Teachers carried this stress daily which caused strains on the relationships with their students (Lambert et al., 2009). Students' classroom misbehaviors added to this strain on the student-teacher relationships; therefore, students' classroom disruptions further added to teachers' stress (Chang, 2013). Teachers' stress

from COVID-19 and student-teacher relationships contributed to their feelings of professional burnout (Fernet et al., 2012; Spilt et al., 2011).

In this research, I investigated teachers' experiences during COVID-19 and how that could have impacted their teacher burnout. I used willing teacher participants from Marazul High School and used the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to quantitatively assess participants' outlook on the profession. Using the MBI data, I created questions for the focus groups which spanned over three days. From here, I chose individual participants to interview based on their responses in the focus groups, and I interviewed former teachers from MHS who quit during COVID-19.

In the end, I discovered correlations between different groups of teachers. In terms of the MBI data, current teachers had low Emotional Exhaustion scores, low Depersonalization scores, and high Personal Achievement scores meaning they showed less signs of burnout. Meanwhile, former teachers had high Emotional Exhaustion scores, high Depersonalization scores, and low Personal Achievement scores meaning they showed signs of burnout. Former teachers showed the most signs of burnout, according to the MBI scores. Furthermore, current teacher participants spoke positively of onsite administration while former teachers spoke negatively of district administration. Student behavior was the most discussed topic in both focus groups and individual interviews. This will all be described in more detail in Chapters 1 through 5.

Background

I am a future high school mathematics teacher and graduate student at Wittenberg University in Springfield, OH. I conducted a study on teacher burnout with former and current educators from Marazul High School (pseudonym). MHS is in a suburb near

Sacramento, California. At the time this study took place, MHS had about 1700 students enrolled and 72 teachers (2021a). Of the students enrolled, 78.1% were White, 11.5% were Hispanic, and 10.4% were either African American, American Indian, Asian, Filipino, or two or more races (California Department of Education, 2021b). At MHS, 16.25% of all students were socioeconomically disadvantaged, or "students who are eligible for free or reduced priced meals; or [had] parents/guardians who did not receive a high school diploma" (California Department of Education, 2021b, Student Population Box 2). Additionally, MHS had a very high rate of graduation (California Department of Education, 2021b). Furthermore, the student-teacher ratio was approximately 24:1, meaning there were about 24 students for every 1 teacher (California Department of Education, 2021a).

In California high schools, all 11th grade students are required to take the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments. Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments are "comprehensive, end-of-year assessments for English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics and measure progress toward college and career readiness" (California Department of Education, 2021b, para 1). In the 2021-2022 schoolyear, Marazul High School had 86.26% of their 11th grade students meet or exceed the standard for English/Language Arts (ELA) in the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment (California Department of Education, 2021a). According to the California Department of Education (California Department of Education, 2021a), in ELA meeting or exceeding expectations means "the student has met the achievement standard and demonstrates progress toward mastery of the knowledge and skills in English language

arts/literacy needed for likely success in entry-level, credit-bearing college coursework after completing high school" (Table 1). More specifically, out of all the 11th grade students at Marazul High, 86.26% of them had ELA skills at a high enough level to survive in a low-level college classroom. Furthermore, in the 2021-2022 schoolyear, MHS had 64.40% of their 11th grade students meet or exceed the standard for mathematics (California Department of Education, 2021a). Like the ELA definition of meeting the standard, a student must demonstrate a level of understanding in mathematics that is needed for entry-level college coursework success (California Department of Education, 2021a). MHS's 11th grade students had 64.40% who had mathematics knowledge high enough to keep up in a basic college classroom. These scores showed how competent the students were at MHS, the high school that the participants taught at.

I selected this school for my study based on convenience. This high school was located approximately four minutes from my state of residence, and I was in close contact with many of the teachers on campus. This allowed me to have many teachers willing to participate and help bring as many perspectives as possible to the study.

I chose an explanatory sequential mixed methods design because this allowed me to conduct the most thorough version of my study. I collected quantitative data from my participants and used my analysis of the quantitative data to influence my qualitative data procedures (Creswell, 2014). In using this design, I could hear from a broad group of teachers first and slowly start to narrow down my group to get more personal and specific information about teacher burnout during COVID-19.

Importance of Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand the lived experience of teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic in order to add to the limited body of research on teacher burnout during COVID-19. During COVID-19, teachers faced many adversities in their careers due to the sudden changes being made in education. Studies show that the stress caused by these changes was one of the contributors to teachers experiencing burnout (Mseleku, 2020; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021).

I researched teacher burnout because I wanted to shed light on the personal experiences of teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Even though it has been a couple of years since the start of the pandemic occurred, the world is still living in the wake of its damage. Understanding the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on teachers might allow students, teachers, administrators, and parents to help teachers recover from the aftermath of COVID-19. Overall, educational stakeholders can use my research in conjunction with findings from other researchers to recognize the effects COVID-19 has had on teachers and consequently find ways to help lessen the volume of teachers leaving the field, especially since the COVID-19 Pandemic happened.

Research Question

I explored one major question throughout the course of this research: In what ways did teaching during the COVID-19 Pandemic impact teachers' outlook on their profession? The purpose of this question was to explore the significance of teaching during COVID-19 on teachers' attitudes towards schooling.

Definition of Terms

I used the following terms consistently throughout this study.

- **Burnout:** “problematic relationship between the person and the work environment, which is often described in terms of imbalance or misfit” (Kant & Shanker, 2021, p. 967).
- **Collective teacher efficacy:** “A group [of teachers’] shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment” (Aydoğmuş & Serçe, 2021, p. 237).
- **COVID-19 Pandemic:** “[The] coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. The WHO further asserted that people infected with the COVID-19 virus experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment” (Mseleku, 2020, p. 588).
- **Depersonalization:** “Depersonalization can be seen in a person’s behavior toward others who have provided them with care or service without considering the individual as a unique individual and in a manner that is deprived of emotion” (Akbaba, 2014, p. 1253).
- **Emotional exhaustion:** “Emotional exhaustion includes feeling tired and excessively weary from emotion” (Akbaba, 2014, p. 1253).
- **Emotional intelligence:** “The subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use that information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Kant & Shanker, 2021, p. 966).
- **Feelings of low personal accomplishment:** “A feeling of low personal accomplishment is defined as a person’s negative self-assessment and the absence of personal accomplishment” (Akbaba, 2014, p. 1253).

Summary

The goal of this study was to better understand the lived experience of teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic. People are still living in the aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic, so I want to share personal stories of educators' teaching experiences during COVID-19. By understanding the effects of teaching during COVID-19 on teachers, it could motivate students, teachers, administrators, and parents to recognize the stressors that COVID-19 brought to the teaching profession and work to find ways to support educators. I will now explore the previous literature about teaching during COVID-19, student-teacher relationships, and understanding teacher burnout.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

In this study, I focused on teachers' experiences of burnout during COVID-19. To conduct a thorough study, it was necessary for me to learn more about my topic through existing research. This review will cover the research literature in the following areas: teaching during COVID-19, student-teacher relationships during COVID-19, and understanding teacher burnout.

Teaching During COVID-19

In March 2020, the entire world was affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic (Mseleku, 2020), and one of the most significantly impacted sectors was education. Schools were forced to make immediate changes in their everyday routines to lessen the spread of the virus, including switching their teaching modes. Specifically, this meant moving from a face-to-face teaching setting to virtual teaching (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021).

With the COVID-19 Pandemic, schools started using two main types of e-learning systems. First, they used platforms like Google Classroom, Canvas, Microsoft Teams, and Blackboard to promote student-to-student interactions. Secondly, to mimic a classroom-like experience, schools adopted systems like Zoom, WebEx, Google Hangouts, and Slack (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). These systems are learning platforms widely used in educational organizations to streamline designing, dispensing, and grading assignments. Primarily, they have been created to simplify sharing files between students and teachers. Due to the emergency status of the pandemic, these systems were pushed on to teachers without giving them another option.

Teachers were faced with extreme urgency to implement these new e-learning procedures no matter their expertise in using the e-learning tools. Some teachers were not given enough time to adjust to teaching online or did not have any experience with educational technology (Mseleku, 2020). This contributed to online teaching difficulties for teachers such as how to set up a class online, how to conduct an online class, and how to measure the effectiveness of the teacher's online teaching. All these difficulties could lead to a student's failure, and/or cause them to disengage from the class (Mseleku, 2020). In fact, studies show that students do not learn as effectively in online education as they do in a traditional in-person classroom (Hong et al., 2021; Mamun et al., 2021). The reason for these online learning inefficiencies can be split into three main problems.

The first problem involves situational factors including availability of digital resources, learning atmosphere, and institutional support (Mamun et al., 2021). When students were sent home for virtual learning during COVID-19 they were unknowingly being placed in inequitable learning situations. This is represented in a study conducted by Mamun (2021) with 988 engineering students in Bangladesh. Mamun used an instrument developed by their study to measure students' readiness for learning in an online environment. Using a 52-item Likert scale online survey, Mamun (2021) found that COVID-19 situational factors significantly impacted students' online readiness. One of the significant factors affecting students' online readiness was their availability and quality of internet. About 35% of students used mobile data as their main internet source during the pandemic, which caused them to have slower connection speeds than all other internets in Bangladesh. Further, this study found that about 32% of students were uncomfortable with the synchronous online learning format (Mamun et al., 2021). More

specifically, the level of digital resources available to a student (which could be impacted based on socioeconomic status or race), the type of learning environment at home (whether they had a clean, quiet space to focus on schoolwork), and the degree of institutional support (how much the school was helping their students transition to online learning) had significant repercussions on students' online readiness.

Secondly, a lack of self-motivation and self-efficacy impacted the effectiveness of online learning (Hong et al., 2021; Mamun et al., 2021). Hong et al. (2021) conducted a study with 279 high school students from Jiangsu, China using an online survey to measure the students' learning inadequacy during COVID-19. Hong et al. focused on online learning and a lack of internal motivation. Hong et al. found that internet self-efficacy and self-efficacy of interacting with learning content positively correlated to mind-unwandered. In other words, the more motivated students were to use online learning, the more on-task thoughts the students had in an online education context. Further, internet self-efficacy and self-efficacy of interacting with learning content negatively correlated to online learning internet cognitive fatigue. The more driven students were to use online learning, the less they experienced a reduction in their online accomplishments. During COVID-19, Hong et al. (2021) reported that out of his participants 15.5% of students spent less than two hours a day on online courses, 49.8% of students spent two to four hours, and 10.4% of students spent more than six hours. When students are in an online learning environment, they have increased dropout rates, and this dropout rate correlates to students' low self-efficacy (Hong et al., 2021). Hong et al. showed a small example of what students experienced with lowered self-efficacy during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Finally, internet cognitive fatigue and getting distracted from one's work affected students' online learning experience during COVID-19 (Hong et al., 2021; Mamun et al., 2021). Mind-unwandered is defined by Hong et al. (2021) as "task-related thoughts which can probe on-task thoughts in online education contexts" (p.144). Hong et al. discovered that mind-unwandered negatively related to perceived ineffectiveness of online learning. When students were on-task during their online learning they were less likely to think that online learning was not beneficial to them. Furthermore, the more a student experienced internet cognitive fatigue, the more the student felt their education was not effective in an online learning environment. During COVID-19, as mentioned earlier, 60.2% of the participants spent two hours and more on online courses (Hong et al., 2021). When students waste extra mental energy searching for information on assignments their motivation is decreased (Hong et al., 2021). Nearly 93% of U.S. schools were forced to go online during COVID-19 at least for a small period, so most students have experienced the struggles of learning online with distractions and mental fatigue as factors (McElrath, 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, if teachers gave students more self-motivation to engage with their online learning, then students may have felt less like their learning was ineffective with virtual education (Hong et al., 2021). Teachers could have given students more self-motivation by teaching the students how to inspire themselves to engage with their virtual assignments. For example, educators could teach students how to create a self-reward system. If they complete an online assignment, they reward themselves with an activity they enjoy (i.e., going on a walk, reading a book, watching an episode of their favorite show). Teaching students how to be self-motivated to engage

with their online learning could have made students feel confident that they could complete tasks, therefore increasing their self-efficacy as well.

In the end, online learning during COVID-19 forced teachers to adjust quickly, and it resulted in inefficiencies in students' education at this time. In Chapter 4, I describe teachers' stories about their experiences with transitioning to online learning and how they saw that transition affecting their students. Students and teachers alike were frustrated by this feeling of chaos when it came to online learning, so this caused the relationships between them to be impacted.

Student-Teacher Relationships During COVID-19

A major component of education that changed due to COVID-19 was student-teacher relationships. One aspect that impacts a student-teacher relationship is stress experienced by the teacher (Chang, 2013; Fernet et al., 2012; Lambert et al., 2009; Spilt et al., 2011). Since COVID-19 caused many unexpected and rushed changes in teachers' daily routines, they experienced more stress than usual (Mseleku, 2020).

Lambert et al. (2009) describe stress as perceiving "that one is facing demands that exceed the resources one has for coping" (p. 973). In the context of education, when a teacher feels like they have more expectations than resources to manage these expectations, then the teacher's response will be stress. Lambert et al. used the Classroom Appraisal of Resources and Demands (CARD) and Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to measure teacher stress and coping in the classroom with 521 elementary teachers in the Southeastern United States. First, the researchers found that students' classroom behavior problems negatively affected teacher's feelings of effectiveness and caused them to be less enthusiastic about their teaching skills. They concluded that the more students

misbehave in the classroom, the less happy and confident teachers feel in their pedagogical skills. Both stress and negative classroom behavior could strain a student-teacher relationship.

Typically, teachers' perceptions of students will change based on negative behavior or if they have discipline concerns with that student (Chang, 2013; Lambert et al., 2009; Spilt et al., 2011). Chang (2013) used a modified MBI survey in her study that found teachers who reported feeling high levels of anger or frustration from one disruptive classroom event positively correlated with teacher burnout (which I will discuss in more detail in the following section). Namely, teachers who reported getting angry or frustrated from a single disruptive classroom event experienced a higher level of professional burnout. In the end, Chang (2013) found the main contributor to teachers' anger-frustration emotion was a lack of problem-solving ideas for dealing with students' classroom misbehavior.

Furthermore, teachers will eventually create their own ideas of how they relate to each student and base their responses to students on the narrative they have created in their heads (Spilt et al., 2011). In one study, Spilt et al. (2011) collected multiple research articles about teacher well-being and teacher-student relationships, then combined the relevant information to form this investigation. Spilt et al. found that when teachers create their own idea of how they relate to a student, it is hard to change unless the teacher has a corrective experience with that student, or the teacher takes time for self-reflection on their relationship with that student (Spilt et al., 2011). Once this negative narrative is created, the teacher gets in the habit of acting a certain way with specific students which affects their daily interactions in the classroom and reinforces their

burnout and stress. More specifically, teachers could have created a negative narrative using a common problem that occurred during COVID-19: lack of attendance due to a student's at-home learning environment (Hong et al., 2021). Teachers could have refigured this in their mind and told themselves that a certain student was not attending class simply because they did not have the desire to. This type of negative narrative would cause a teacher to have a negative interaction with that student (Spilt et al., 2011).

Student misbehavior is one of many factors contributing to teacher burnout. Fernet et al. (2012) studied 806 French-Canadian educators teaching grades 1-11 to predict how perceived school environment factors and motivational factors impact teacher burnout. Fernet et al. defines autonomous motivation as when teachers "perform their job for the intrinsic value of achieving meaningful and interesting goals or because they personally grasp the value of their work activities" (p. 516). Teachers act with autonomous motivation when they are doing their job because they are motivated from within themselves. Also, these researchers define self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 516). Teachers have self-efficacy when they have confidence in themselves to complete tasks to achieve a goal. Using a combination of multiple questionnaires, scales, and MBI, Fernet and others (2012) found that students' disruptive behavior negatively correlated to teachers' autonomous motivation and self-efficacy. Furthermore, that negative correlation caused higher levels of professional burnout. In other words, the more students engaged in disruptive behavior, the less autonomous motivation and self-efficacy the teacher had; therefore, the teacher experienced job burnout.

In summary, teachers were experiencing more stress during COVID-19 which negatively affected their relationships with students. Teachers change their opinion of students based on negative student-teacher interactions or a narrative teachers create in their heads. Also, student misbehavior is a contributor to teacher burnout. In Chapter 4, I describe teachers' discussions about student behavior in their classrooms and how it relates to teacher burnout.

Understanding Teacher Burnout

Teacher burnout is a phenomenon experienced by teachers everywhere (Pressley, 2021). Teacher burnout is a mindset, caused by stress, that leads to exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decline in teacher success (Aloe et al., 2013). One of the main reasons teachers quit their jobs is due to teacher burnout (Aloe et al., 2013; Pressley, 2021). Prior to COVID-19, about 8% of teachers left the field per year, and between 20-30% of new teachers (<5 years experience) left the education profession per year (Pressley, 2021).

Early Career Teachers (or ECTs) have an increased burnout risk if they encounter poor student behavior, isolation, a lack of personal connections at work, and too many responsibilities. Moreover, feeling disconnected from one's school community has a bigger influence on burnout than being overworked (Hogan & White, 2021). Other research suggests four main predictors of teacher burnout: administrative support, anxiety in communicating with parents, COVID-19 anxiety, and current teaching anxiety (Aloe et al., 2013; Pressley, 2021). It should also be noted that ethnicity, location of teacher, or the type of instruction did not affect teacher burnout during COVID-19 (Pressley, 2021). This shows that no matter the ethnicity, teacher location, or type of instruction, teachers'

perceptions of burnout during COVID-19 were consistent with the main predictors of teacher burnout.

Moreover, studies showed a connection between teachers' burnout, job satisfaction, and individual performances (Aydoğmuş & Serçe, 2021; Kasalak & Dağyar, 2022; Zincirli, 2014). Zincirli (2014) used 359 volunteer teachers throughout Elazig, Turkey in a relational screening model to study the effect of teachers' job satisfaction, and burnout, on their individual performance perceptions of themselves. Zincirli used the Job Satisfaction Scale, Burnout Scale, and Individual Performance Scale to collect data, and analyzed the data using the Structural Equation Model. Zincirli found that teachers' job satisfaction had a significant negative correlation with burnout. In other words, the more satisfied teachers were with their job, the less teachers reported feeling burned out. Contrarily, teachers' job satisfaction had a significant positive correlation with individual performance. When teachers were more satisfied with their job then they were more satisfied with their individual performance. Furthermore, teacher burnout had a significant negative correlation with their individual performance (Zincirli, 2014). In other words, the more burnt out the teachers felt, the less content they were with their individual performance.

Teachers' job satisfaction and satisfaction with life negatively influenced teachers' outlooks on their careers. Specifically, when teachers reported feeling more satisfied with their job and life, then they reported a smaller level of career burnout. Furthermore, collective teacher efficacy correlated to these ideas. Aydoğmuş and Serçe (2021) conducted a study on collective teacher efficacy with 411 teachers working in pre-K (5.8%), grades K-5 (30.9%), grades 6-8 (36.7%) and high school (26.5%). They used

three predetermined researched satisfaction scales and Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to collect data and used hierarchical regression analysis to analyze the data. The researchers defined *collective teacher efficacy* as a group of teachers' "shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment" (p. 237). When teachers join and believe in their abilities to coordinate and accomplish valuable projects then they have collective teacher efficacy.

Collective teacher efficacy had a consistent effect on the relationships between satisfaction with life and career burnout; and job satisfaction and career burnout (Aydoğmuş & Serçe, 2021). In other words, collective teacher efficacy significantly impacted the relationship between satisfaction with life and career burnout. If teachers have collective teacher efficacy, then it will positively influence their satisfaction of life causing them to experience less career burnout, and vice versa. Also, collective teacher efficacy significantly impacted the relationship between job satisfaction and career burnout. If teachers have collective teacher efficacy, then they will be satisfied with their job and experience less career burnout, and vice versa.

Additionally, there is a give-and-take relationship between teacher burnout and teaching enthusiasm. Teaching enthusiasm predicts the level of burnout a teacher experiences, and teacher burnout influences the level of enthusiasm a teacher feels (Kasalak & Dağyar, 2022). Specifically, more teaching enthusiasm predicts less job burnout, and more job burnout leads to less enthusiasm.

Concerns about teacher welfare and teacher burnout are closely related. Teacher welfare can be described as teachers' psychological wellbeing. When a teacher has a negative mindset, it is more likely they will feel burnt out (Aydoğmuş & Serçe, 2021;

Kant & Shanker, 2021; Kasalak, 2022; Spilt et al., 2011; Zincirli, 2014). More specifically, stressed teachers recorded higher levels of emotional exhaustion, higher levels of depersonalization, and lower levels of personal accomplishment as determined by the MBI (Lambert et al., 2009). In other words, stressed teachers reported higher levels of teacher burnout. If teacher welfare is negatively affected, then it could impact their outlook on teaching.

Another element impacting teacher welfare is the emotional intelligence of the teacher. Kant and Shanker (2021) define emotional intelligence as "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use that information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 966). Kant and Shanker gathered two-hundred university educators in the Gaya District in India to participate in their study measuring emotional intelligence. They used Weisinger's emotional intelligence test to measure the educators' emotional intelligence and found that the mean value of the Gaya district educators' emotional intelligence ratings was 35.69. Educators with mean scores of 45 and higher are labeled as having high emotional intelligence, those with mean scores of 27 to 46 are labeled as having moderate emotional intelligence, and those with mean scores of 26 and below are labeled as having low emotional intelligence (Kant & Shanker, 2021). The researchers found that 11.5% of educators had high emotional intelligence, 73.5% had moderate emotional intelligence, and 15.0% had low emotional intelligence (Kant & Shanker, 2021).

Furthermore, Kant and Shanker (2021) used Maslach Burnout Inventory to measure the feelings of burnout amongst the university educators. They found that out of

the 200 Gaya District educators, 17.5%, 74.0%, and 8.5% experienced high, moderate, and low levels of burnout, respectively. In the end, the study showed there is a significant negative correlation between emotional intelligence and burnout. In other words, the higher an educators' emotional intelligence, the less burned out the educator reported feeling (Kant & Shanker, 2021).

To recap, teacher burnout is a mindset, caused by stress, that leads to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decline in teacher achievement (Aloe et al., 2013). The more burnt out a teacher is, the less satisfied they are with their job and individual performance. The more satisfied a teacher is with their job and their life the less burnt out they feel. When a teacher has a negative mindset, they are more likely to experience burnout. If a teacher has higher emotional intelligence, then they usually experience less burnout. In Chapter 4, I describe teachers' burnout stories and how they personally feel about themselves as teachers.

Summary

After a thorough literature review, I have a better background for understanding teacher burnout in the times of COVID-19. Teaching during COVID-19 was unlike any other time in the teaching profession because of the forced push to virtual learning, and the lack of self-motivation in the students. In this study, I give teachers an outlet to explain their transition to online learning and how they dealt with students' inability to motivate themselves. Moreover, student-teacher relationships were negatively affected because of teachers' increased stress, and student misbehavior at this time. In this study, teachers told stories of how their student relationships were suffering during COVID-19. Furthermore, teacher burnout is experienced when a teacher is emotionally exhausted,

has low feelings of self-accomplishment, and does not feel like they can connect personally to their students. In this study, teachers describe their struggles or lack thereof with experiencing burnout during COVID-19. The following chapter details the methods I used to conduct this study.

Chapter Three

The purpose of this study is to better understand the lived experience of teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic to add to the limited body of research on teacher burnout during COVID-19. I used an explanatory sequential mixed methods design for the study using Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) survey, focus groups, and interviews. I chose an explanatory sequential mixed methods design because this allowed me to collect quantitative data from my participants, then use my analysis of the quantitative data to influence my qualitative data procedures (Creswell, 2014). By using this design, I could get feedback from a large group of teachers, then narrow down that group to get specific information about teacher burnout during COVID-19.

Participants

This study involved 28 full-time teachers from Marazul High School, two former teachers from Marazul High School, and two full-time teachers from Big Sky High School (MSHS). Big Sky High School is an alternative education high school located on the same campus as Marazul High School. BSHS teachers go to the same events as the MHS teachers, they are paid the same as MHS teachers, and BSHS students go to the same events as MHS students. Since BSHS teachers are included in all the MHS teacher activities, I will refer to all these teachers as MHS teachers.

I chose all the participants from my former high school (Marazul High School) and the school next to it, so this constitutes a convenience sample (Bui, 2020). First, 32 former and current teachers participated in the Maslach Burnout Inventory survey. Then, 10 current teachers participated in the three 20-minute focus group interview sessions, and one additional current teacher participated in the last 20-minute focus group

interview session. Lastly, I individually interviewed three current teachers and two former teachers. In Table 1, I listed the participants' pseudonyms, if they are a current or former teacher, and if they participated in the focus groups, individual interviews, or both.

Table 1

Participants Table

Pseudonym	**Type of Teacher**	**Focus Group Participant?**	**Individual Interview Participant?**
Alison	Current	Yes	No
Angelo	Current	Yes	No
Bradley	Current	Yes	Yes
Camila	Current	Yes	Yes
Deakon	Current	Yes	Yes
Enrique	Current	Yes	No
Jose	Former	No	Yes
Megan	Former	No	Yes
Michelle	Current	Yes	Yes
Naira	Current	Yes	No
Valeria	Current	Yes	No
Xavier	Current	Yes	No

I assigned pseudonyms to each participant and will refer to them according to their pseudonym throughout my discussion of focus group and individual interview data.

Refer to Table 1 while reading Chapter Four and Chapter Five of this study for participants' pseudonyms, teaching status, and what they participated in.

The MHS principal's secretary sent an email to all 72 teachers containing the consent form, which allowed them to select which parts of the research they would like to participate in. I sent an email to both former teachers with the same consent form. There were 37 total responses to the consent form. However, two of the respondents said they did not want to participate, and, since this study focused on classroom teachers, one was removed because the person was an administrator during 2019-2022. Also, two participants said they would participate in the MBI survey, but never followed through with doing it. All current teachers who said they would like to do the focus groups and could meet at the allotted times participated in the focus groups. For the current teacher interviews, I chose them after participating in the focus groups if they seemed to have many experiences with teacher burnout during COVID-19, or if they did not seem to experience teacher burnout during COVID-19. For the former teacher interviews, I chose them based on my knowledge of who quit teaching at Marazul HS between 2020-2022 and who was willing to participate.

Out of the 32 MHS former and current teachers included in this study, 30 identified as White or Caucasian (94%), one identified as Asian or Pacific Islander (3%), and one identified as Biracial or Multiracial (3%). Refer to Figure 1. Female teachers comprised 47% of all participating MHS teachers, and 53% identified as male teachers. Among the participants, 9% were considered early career teachers (<5 years teaching experience) (Pressley, 2021), 38% of them had 5-19 years teaching experience, and 53% had 20+ years teaching experience. See Figure 2 for a visual representation. In terms of

subjects taught by participants, 19% taught English, 16% taught Mathematics, 13% taught Physical Sciences, 9% taught Social Sciences, 9% taught Spanish, 6% taught Art/Leadership, 6% taught Agriculture Science/Mechanics, 6% taught Special Education, 3% taught Technology, and 13% taught two or more subjects. Refer to Figure 3. It is important to note that I did not have access to data that would allow me to determine whether the group of 32 participants was representative of the races, genders, years of experience, and subjects at Marazul High School overall.

Figure 1

Participant Races

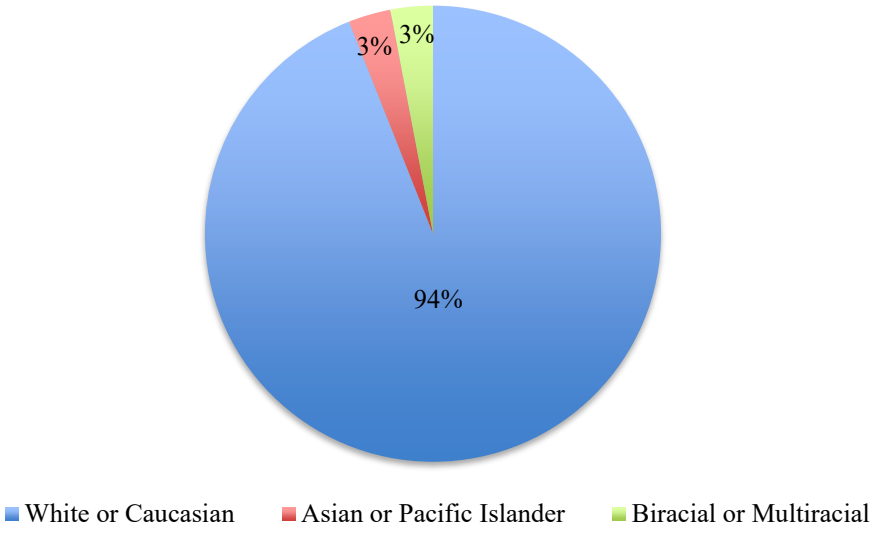


Figure 2

Participant Teaching Experience

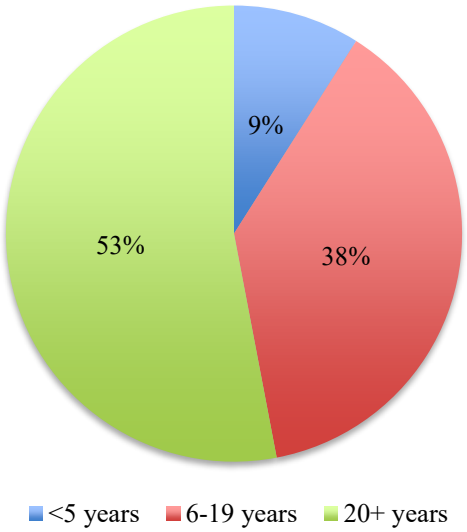
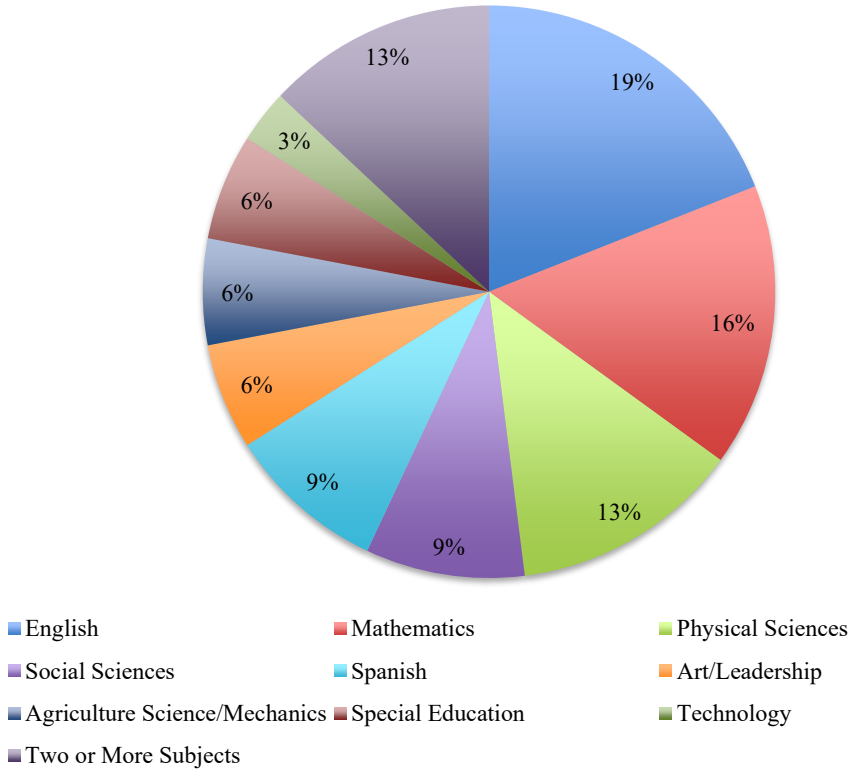


Figure 3

Subjects Taught by Participants



Setting

I conducted this study at a suburban high school located in Northern California. In the community, about 90% of the population is White; around 2% is Asian; more than 7% is two or more races; and less than 1% is Black, American Indian, or Alaska Native. Less than 0.5% are foreign-born, and around 10% are in poverty (https://www.census.gov). These demographics are reflected in some aspects of the student population at MHS. For example, about 80% of MHS students are White. However, the community demographics differ because less than 12% of students were Hispanic, and more than 10% were either African American, American Indian, Asian, Filipino, or two or more races (California Department of Education, 2021b). At the high school where the research took place, more than 16% of all students were socioeconomically disadvantaged, or "students who are eligible for free or reduced priced meals; or have parents/guardians who did not receive a high school diploma" (California Department of Education, 2021b, Student Population Box 2). This number is slightly higher than the 10% of community members in poverty (https://www.census.gov).

Teachers chose whether they would like to do the MBI survey, focus groups, and/or individual interviews. I emailed the MBI surveys to the consenting teachers and gave them two weeks in November 2022 to take these on their own devices. The focus groups consisted of three 20-minute discussions. All of these were during teachers' lunches (between 12:15 and 1:15 PM). The meetings happened in the Administration Conference Room in December 2022, and I placed participants in a discussion circle of chairs. I did the individual interviews throughout December in person or over the phone

at locations and times easiest for the interviewees (i.e., local ice cream shops, classrooms).

Data Collection

When using an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, "the researcher collects quantitative data in the first phase, analyzes the results, and then uses the results to plan (or build on to) the second, qualitative phase" (Creswell, 2014, p. 224). In this study, I administered the Maslach Burnout Inventory survey to the consenting former and current MHS teachers and used their scores to influence the topics we discuss in the focus groups and individual interviews. I used audio and video indices and created codes before transcribing these indices to illustrate the codes. I transcribed relevant portions of each of them for coding. In the sections below I describe in more detail the data collection instruments used in this study.

Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is considered the leading measure of burnout and was published in 1981 by Christina Maslach, Susan E. Jackson, and Michael P. Leiter. There are five versions of this survey: human services, medical personnel, educators, general population, and general student population (Maslach et al., 2018). For the purpose of this study, I used the MBI for Educators Survey (MBI – ES) and administered the survey online using the guidelines in the MBI – ES manual. I gave the survey to the first 32 current MHS teachers who responded to my emails, and two former teachers who I reached out to based on my knowledge of who quit the profession between 2020 and 2022. Note, I asked the former MHS teachers to take the MBI – ES in the mindset from their last year of teaching before they quit.

The MBI for Educators Survey measures three major causes of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal accomplishment. The MBI Manual measures these aspects of burnout using three scales:

1. The emotional exhaustion scale "assesses feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work" (Maslach et al., 2018, p. 31).
2. The depersonalization scale "measures an unfeeling and impersonal response toward students" (p. 31).
3. The low personal accomplishment scale "assesses the feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with students" (p. 31).

The items used to calculate these scale scores are in the form of seven-point Likert scale statements about teachers' personal perspectives in an educational context (Maslach et al., 2018). This MBI – ES survey allowed teachers to share their outlook on teaching in a way that can be quantified and analyzed in a numerical way. Namely, this is a quantitative method of data collection (Creswell, 2014). Refer to Figure 4 for an example of the item format in the MBI– ES from the Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual (Maslach et al., 2018).

Figure 4

MBI – ES Item Format (Maslach et al., 2018)

Item 8: I feel emotionally drained from my work							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
How often?	Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

It should be noted that the MBI – ES does not give a clinical diagnosis of a teacher being burnt out or not; rather it is used as a helpful mechanism for measuring the school climate for teachers (Maslach et al., 2018). In terms of the MBI – ES reliability, the MBI Manual recorded the Cronbach alpha estimates as 0.90 for Emotional Exhaustion, 0.76 for Depersonalization, and 0.76 for Personal Accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2018). For the MBI – ES validity, the Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual (2018) cites multiple studies confirming that there is a strong correlation between teacher burnout and teachers' working conditions, and between teacher burnout and students' misbehaviors.

Focus Groups

In line with the explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the quantitative data collected from the MBI surveys influenced the topics and questions discussed in the focus groups (e.g., because the teachers had high Emotional Exhaustion scores in the MBI – ES, in the focus groups I asked them if teaching mainly energized or drained them

every day) (Creswell, 2014). The focus groups consisted of three 20-minute meetings in the Administration Conference Room, and I recorded them via iPhone camera. I chose the subjects of my focus groups using convenience sampling, a type of non-probability sampling (Bui, 2020). I emailed all the participants who said they would like to be in the focus groups and chose all current MHS teachers who could meet during at least one of the three sessions.

When using semi-structured focus groups, a researcher brings some topics and questions to discuss, but also adds topics and questions as the focus groups continues (Creswell, 2014). I created a list of topics and questions I wanted to cover before the focus groups; then I incorporated other topics and questions based on what the teachers discussed organically in the focus groups. I started the focus groups by introducing myself; then I explained that anyone could speak at any time. I set the tone of the groups by first asking MBI type questions (e.g., "Do you feel like teaching mainly energizes or drains you emotionally every day? Why?"). Then I continuously asked teachers how their responses affected their outlook on teaching. See Appendix A for examples of the topics and questions I prepared for the focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to give multiple perspectives of the experience of teaching during COVID-19 and how that impacted teachers' experience with burnout.

I used many of Bui's (2020) strategies to establish reliability and validity in these focus groups. More specifically, I addressed the role my bias played in the collection and analysis of data in my study (see more in the limitations section in Chapter 5), and I triangulated data through multiple sources (i.e., MBI online survey, focus groups, individual interviews). Furthermore, I engaged in member checking when I felt uncertain

about the way I interpreted the data (e.g., I could not understand what someone said, I did not know why teachers were especially upset about giving up their preparation period).

Individual Interviews

Continuing with the explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the MBI – ES quantitative analysis and the focus group interview qualitative analysis influenced the individual interviews (e.g., because the teachers had high Emotional Exhaustion scores in the MBI – ES and discussed how student behavior negatively impacted them in the focus groups, I asked about specific instances where teachers felt emotionally tired from their students in the individual interviews) (Creswell, 2014). I chose to interview three teachers from the focus groups that had many examples of burnout during COVID-19 or did not experience teacher burnout during COVID-19. Also, I reached out to two individuals who were not in the focus groups and quit the profession in the last two years. These individuals had to fill out the consent form and MBI online survey before participating in the individual interviews. For both former and current teachers, I met with them at a time and place that was most convenient for them (i.e., ice cream shop, classroom). The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and an hour.

I conducted these interviews in-person and over the phone over the course of a month and recorded the interactions via iPhone camera. I used a semi-structured interview design for the former and current teachers utilizing both prepared questions and topics, and questions and topics brought up in the interview (Creswell, 2014). For the focus group participants, I used their answers from the focus group questions to guide my topics for the interview. See Appendix B for examples of the questions I prepared for the interviews.

The individual interviews helped me get a personal look at how the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted teachers' outlook on their profession, and their willingness to stay in their profession. This was an important addition to the focus groups because it allowed me to hear more specific details about individual teachers' stories.

I continued to use Bui's (2020) strategies to establish reliability and validity in these individual interviews. Particularly, I addressed my bias in the data collection and analysis process (see more in the limitations section in Chapter 5), and I triangulated data through multiple sources (i.e., MBI online survey, focus groups, individual interviews). Moreover, I employed member checking when I felt like I was unintentionally misinterpreting data (e.g., I thought that a teacher was energized by teaching during COVID-19, but instead teaching during COVID-19 did not affect his outlook on teaching).

I used quantitative data from the Maslach Burnout Inventory, and qualitative data from focus groups and individual interviews to triangulate the data. This increased the validity of the data because I used multiple methods to verify one phenomenon (Bui, 2020). In this case, I used the data collected to verify how teachers' outlook on the profession was impacted by teaching during COVID-19.

Data Analysis

I analyzed each measurement instrument separately, and looked at the entire data set as one. In the sections below I describe in more detail the specific data analyses used in this study.

Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey

Using the teachers' responses to the MBI – ES statements, I calculated the score in the three separate categories: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal achievement. It should be noted that there is no specific score that defines a teacher as burnt out (Maslach et al., 2018). To calculate the categorical scores using the guidelines from the manual, I took the average of the responses and saw where the teachers' means land on the seven-point response scale. For example, if the teacher's average Depersonalization score was 3.5, then I would interpret that as the teacher experienced depersonalization several times a month, but not quite every week. The higher the score in Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization the more a teacher is experiencing burnout. The lower the score in Personal Achievement the more a teacher is experiencing burnout.

I noted the mean, highest, and lowest scores in each of the three categories. I looked for correlations between participants' scores and their race, gender, teaching subject, or years of teaching experience. Additionally, I did some descriptive statistics (including finding means and percentages) to shed light on participants' overall level of burnout (e.g., X% of participants scored a 4 on depersonalization, which indicates that most teachers felt depersonalized at least once a week). In terms of the research question, the MBI analysis showed me a numerical value for teachers' outlooks on their profession post-COVID-19. This quantitative analysis allowed me to see how often teachers are experiencing burnout in late 2022, which was right after the COVID-19 push for educational adjustments from 2020 to 2022.

Focus Groups

To analyze the focus group data, I utilized three major methods. First, I created video indices for each session. Then, I coded the focus groups. Finally, I transcribed sections that were relevant to my research question. Each time I found one of the codes in the video indices and transcripts, I highlighted it and counted how many times each of those codes appeared in the indices and transcripts. I made the codes clear and concise by removing codes that were not relevant to my thesis question (i.e., talking about workday); adding codes that I originally did not have but were crucial to my thesis question (i.e., talking about burnout); and combining codes that were similar (i.e., combining "talking about interacting with students," "talking about cheating," and "talking about student behavior" to one code: "talking about student behavior," or changing "talking about communication with district" to "talking about district"). I did not analyze the data according to race, gender, teaching subject, or years of teaching experience. Instead, I analyzed the data by looking at the top three most discussed codes. More specifically, analyzing the focus group data allowed me to get a more in-depth understanding of teachers' outlooks on their profession during COVID-19, which helps answer my research question.

Individual Interviews

To analyze the interview data, I used three major strategies. First, I constructed audio indices for each session. Then, I transcribed sections that were applicable to my research. Finally, I coded the interviews. This helped me see recurring topics in each teacher's interviews and see topics across multiple teachers' interviews. The codes were explicit and succinct because I removed codes that were not relevant to my thesis

question (i.e., talking about Canvas, talking about communication with MHS, talking about taking time off); adding codes that I originally did not have but were either crucial to my thesis question or came up multiple times in the interviews (i.e., talking about teachers' mental health); and combining codes that were similar (i.e., combining "talking about disrespect between admin and teachers," "talking about disrespect between parents and teachers," and "talking about disrespect between students and teachers" to one code: "talking about disrespect"). Similar to the focus groups analysis, each time I found one of the codes in the audio indices and transcripts, I highlighted it and counted how many times each of those codes appeared in the indices and transcripts.

First, I analyzed the individual interview data per participant, then I looked at all the interviews as a group. When I looked at all the interview participants, I found the top three most discussed codes overall, top three most discussed codes for females, top three most discussed codes for males, top three most discussed codes for former teachers, and top three most discussed codes for current teachers. I originally planned to analyze the codes according to White vs. non-White participants; however, all individual interview participants were White. I looked for a correlation between participants' responses and years of teaching experience or based on STEM vs. non-STEM teachers.

This type of analysis granted me a deeper understanding of teachers with very many or very few personal experiences of teacher burnout during COVID-19. For those who also participated in focus groups, it allowed me to follow up on topics that they discussed during the focus groups that I wanted more details on. The individual interviews provided focus group participants an opportunity to share their thoughts they may not have felt comfortable sharing in a group and provided them more time to talk in

a one-on-one setting. For the former teachers who did not participate in the focus groups, it allowed me to have the most intimate look at their outlooks on their profession when they quit during COVID-19. All in all, the individual interviews directly answered my research question in showing me a personal look at how COVID-19 impacted or did not impact teachers' outlook on their profession.

Procedures

Upon approval from Wittenberg's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I began the current study. First, I emailed the consent form (See Appendix C) and first email for participants to the principal's secretary (See Appendix D). She then sent that email to the staff at Marazul High School the following week and I gave them two weeks to respond. Throughout these two weeks I followed up with respondents who I was not sure would be able to participate (i.e., respondents who were administrators during 2020 to 2022, respondents who were not main subject teachers) to determine whether they fit my participant criteria. Also, I reached out to teachers who left the profession between 2020 to 2022 to invite them to participate in my research so they could give more points of view on teaching during COVID-19. Then, I emailed the Maslach Burnout Inventory survey (Maslach et al., 2018) to the consenting former and current MHS teachers and gave them two weeks to complete it. I analyzed this data using the calculated mean score analysis for each teacher (Maslach et al., 2018) and descriptive statistics, and used the responses to influence the focus groups topics.

Next, I emailed all the current teachers who indicated on the consent form that they were interested in taking part in the focus groups to coordinate our three 20-minute sessions. I chose all participants who wanted to participate in the focus groups and could

come to at least one of the three meetings. I conducted the focus groups over the course of one week during the teachers' lunches. The teachers met in the Administration Conference Room and sat around a long table while I introduced topics for discussion (see examples in Appendix A). I recorded these focus groups via iPhone camera. Then, I analyzed the focus group videos using the video indices and transcriptions of relevant portions I created for coding. I chose three focus group participants for the individual interviews who seemed to have many experiences with teacher burnout during COVID-19, or if they did not experience teacher burnout during COVID-19. Also, I interviewed two teachers who quit the profession during the COVID-19 Pandemic (between 2020 to 2022). These former teachers had to take the MBI survey to be interviewed. All interviews lasted between thirty minutes to an hour long and I recorded them with my iPhone camera. Then, I created audio indices to help organize the interview responses. Also, I created codes before transcribing these indices to illustrate the codes. Refer to Figure 5 for my complete research timeline.

Figure 5

Research Timeline

Summary

In summary, I used an explanatory sequential mixed method research design at Marazul High School to better understand the lived experience of teachers during COVID-19 and how that impacted their outlooks on their profession. Data collection included Maslach Burnout Inventory online surveys (Maslach et al., 2018), focus groups, and individual interviews. Data analysis included calculated mean score analysis for the MBI survey for each teacher (Maslach et al., 2018), analyzing the MBI survey data overall, and creating audio and video indices, transcribing, and coding data for the focus groups and individual interviews. The following chapter describes my findings.

Chapter Four

Findings

This study is focused on gaining a better understanding of the lived experience of teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic to add to the limited body of research on teacher burnout during COVID-19. Using an explanatory sequential mixed methods design allowed me to collect quantitative data (i.e., MBI – ES) from my participants, then use my analysis of the quantitative data to influence my qualitative data (i.e., focus groups and interviews) procedures (Creswell, 2014). I will use this chapter to present my research findings.

Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey

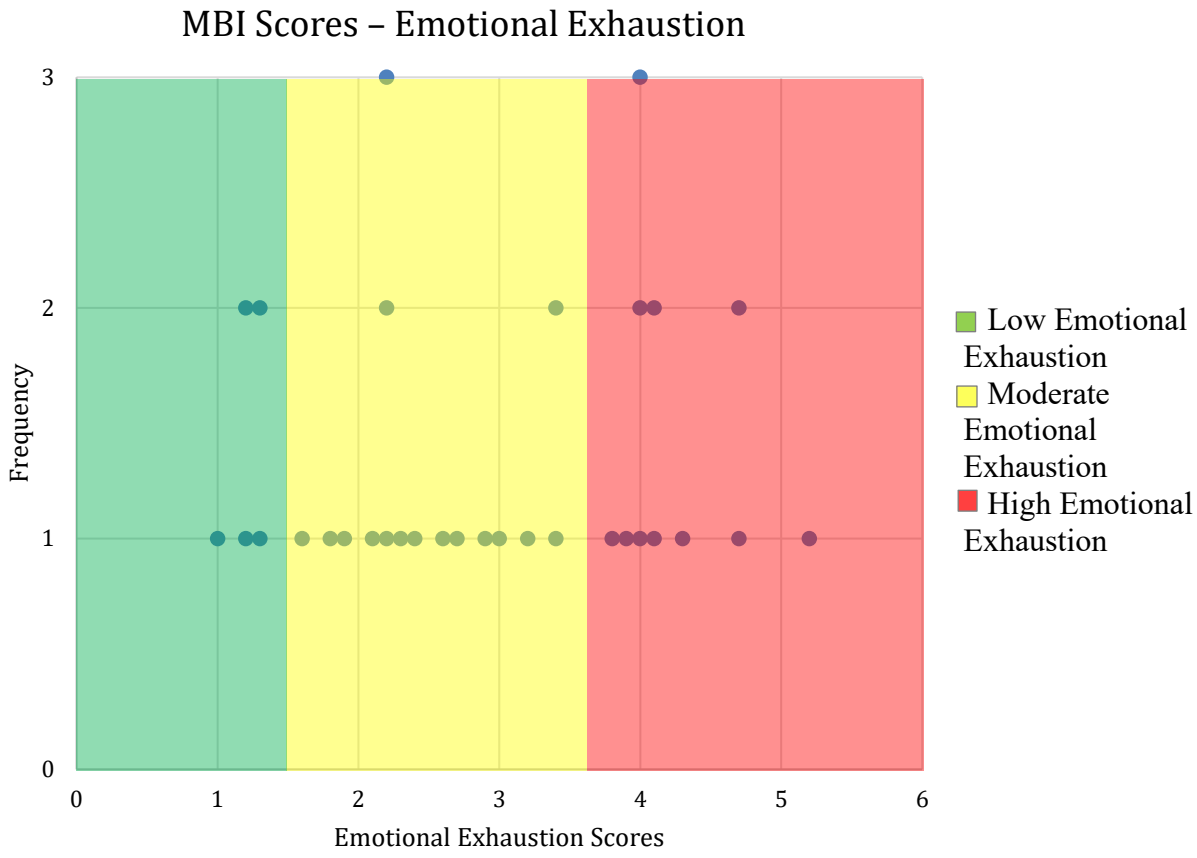
After the current and former MHS teachers completed the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey, I used descriptive statistics to analyze their results. Scores on the MBI – ES measure participants' feelings in the three categories Maslach et al. (2018) have linked to burnout (i.e., Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Achievement); however, there is no specific score that diagnoses a teacher as "burnt out" (Maslach et al., 2018). I could not find any connections linking scores to race, gender, teaching subject, or years of teaching experience. Instead, I found patterns for participants who achieved the highest Emotional Exhaustion score, highest Depersonalization score, and lowest Personal Achievement score. Note, these specific mean scores in each of the three categories indicate a teacher who is experiencing burnout. For each of the three MBI – ES categories, I represented the frequency distribution of data using a dot plot, meaning there is a data point for every participant. Then, I found natural breaks on the graph to determine participants' threshold for high,

moderate, and low levels of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Achievement.

First, I will discuss the findings from the Emotional Exhaustion category of the MBI – ES. After finding the natural breaks on the graph, I used the mean scores of 0 to 1.4 to represent low Emotional Exhaustion, 1.5 to 3.6 to represent moderate Emotional Exhaustion, and 3.7 to 6 to represent high Emotional Exhaustion. Refer to Figure 6 to see the Emotional Exhaustion data displayed on a graph.

Figure 6

Emotional Exhaustion Scores



In Figure 6, the straight lines between colors represent the thresholds for low, moderate, and high Emotional Exhaustion scores. I chose to color-code High Emotional Exhaustion red to indicate the higher the participants' Emotional Exhaustion score, the more they are experiencing burnout (Maslach et al., 2018). Out of the 32 participants, 5 (16%) experienced low Emotional Exhaustion, 16 (50%) experienced moderate Emotional Exhaustion, and 11 (34%) experienced high Emotional Exhaustion. This spread of data is not far from a normal distribution, which includes 68% of the data in the center and 16% of data on both the left and right sides of the graph.

The lowest mean score for an individual teacher was 1, meaning that teacher experienced emotional exhaustion a few times a year or less. The highest mean score for an individual teacher was 5.2, which meant that teacher was emotionally exhausted about a few times a week. It should be noted that the teacher with the highest Emotional Exhaustion score was Jose, one of the teachers who quit during COVID-19. In other words, the teacher who was the most emotionally exhausted was a teacher who eventually left the profession. Refer to Figure 7 for the seven-point scale from the MBI Manual used to indicate how often participants felt emotionally exhausted based on their MBI – ES Emotional Exhaustion mean score (Maslach et al., 2018).

Figure 7

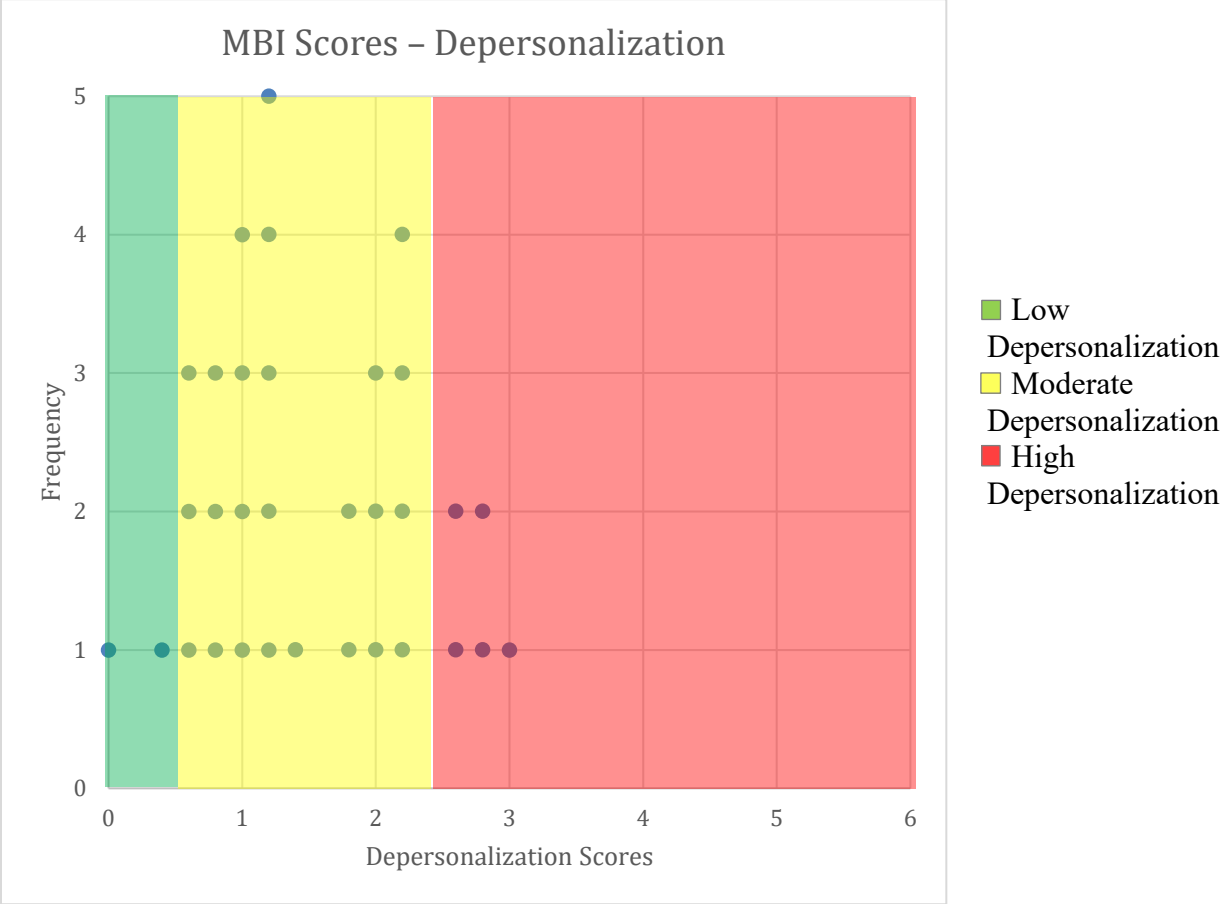
MBI – ES Seven-Point Scale (Maslach et al., 2018)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

Next, I will discuss findings from the Depersonalization category of the MBI – ES. After plotting the data and finding the natural breaks on the graph, I used the mean scores of 0 to 0.5 to represent low Depersonalization, 0.6 to 2.4 to represent moderate Depersonalization, and 2.5 to 6 to represent high Depersonalization. Refer to Figure 8 to see the Depersonalization data displayed on a graph.

Figure 8

Depersonalization Scores



In Figure 8, the straight lines between colors represent the thresholds for low, moderate, and high Depersonalization scores. I chose to color-code High Depersonalization red to indicate the higher the participants' Depersonalization score, the more they are experiencing burnout (Maslach et al., 2018). Out of the 32 participants, 2 (6%) experienced low Depersonalization, 25 (78%) experienced moderate Depersonalization, and 5 (16%) experienced high Depersonalization. Figure 8 shows that the data appears on the left side of the graph with all the scores being a 3 or below. I was expecting these scores to be closer to a normal distribution (like the Emotional

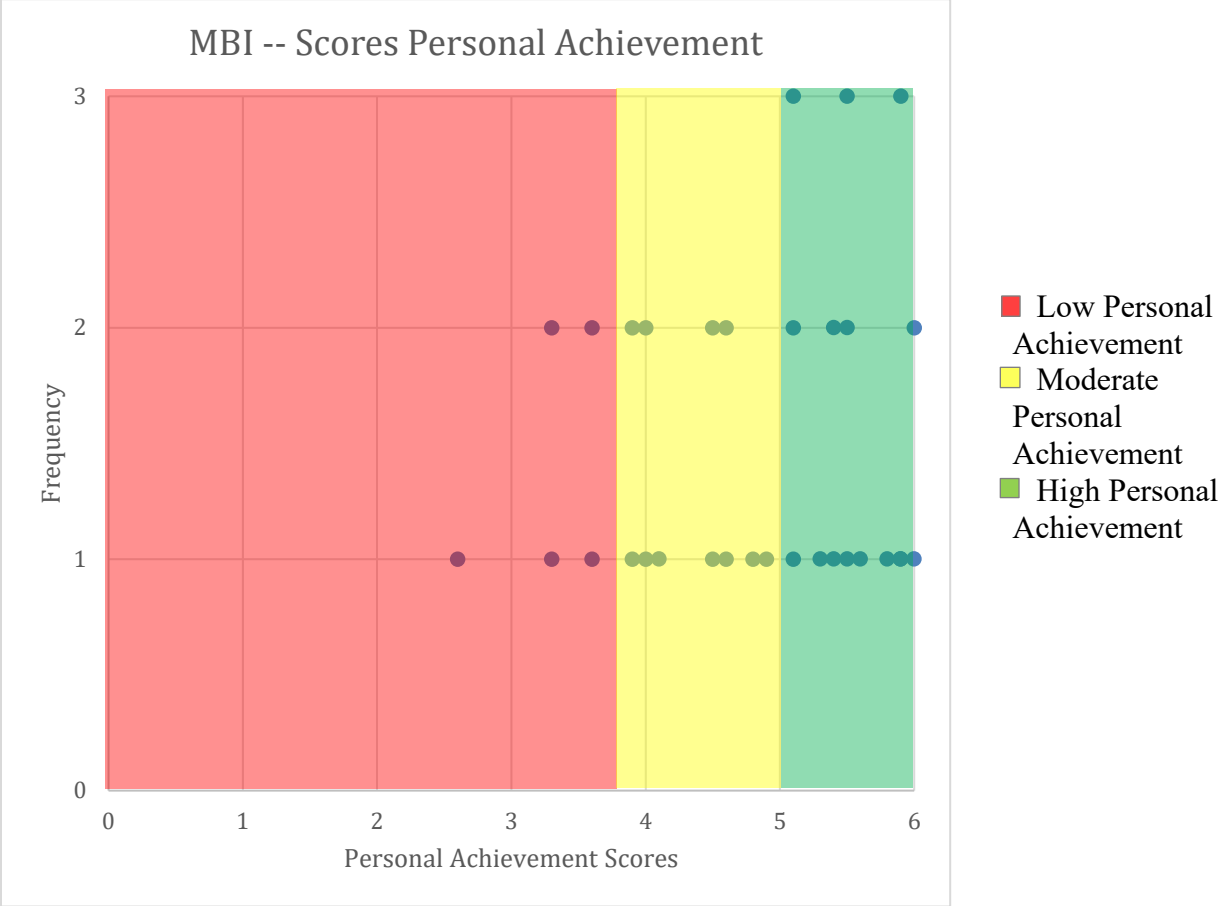
Exhaustion graph), so I was surprised to see that the participants' scores were this low. This tells me that this group of teachers feels depersonalized from teaching not often.

The lowest mean score for an individual teacher was 0, meaning that teacher never felt depersonalized from teaching. The highest mean score for an individual teacher was 3, which meant that teacher was experiencing depersonalization a few times a month. Moreover, the teacher with the highest Depersonalization score was Megan, one of the teachers who left teaching during COVID-19. In other words, the teacher who felt the most depersonalized from teaching was a teacher who eventually left the profession. Refer to Figure 7 for the seven-point scale from the MBI Manual used to indicate how often participants felt depersonalized based on their MBI – ES Depersonalization mean score (Maslach et al., 2018).

Finally, I will discuss findings from the Personal Achievement category of the MBI – ES. After plotting the data and finding the natural breaks on the graph, I used the mean scores of 0 to 3.7 to represent low Personal Achievement, 3.8 to 4.9 to represent moderate Personal Achievement, and 5 to 6 to represent high Personal Achievement. Refer to Figure 9 to see the Personal Achievement data displayed on a graph.

Figure 9

Personal Achievement Scores



In Figure 9, the straight lines between colors represent the thresholds for low, moderate, and high Personal Achievement scores. I chose to color-code Low Personal Achievement red to indicate the lower the participants' Personal Achievement score, the more they are experiencing burnout (Maslach et al., 2018). Out of the 32 participants, 5 (16%) experienced low Personal Achievement, 11 (34%) experienced moderate Personal Achievement, and 16 (50%) experienced high Personal Achievement. Figure 9 shows that the data appears on the right side of the graph with all the scores being a 2.6 or above. I was expecting these scores to be closer to a normal distribution (like the Emotional Exhaustion graph), so I was surprised to see that the participants' scores were

this high. This tells me that this group of teachers feels personally accomplished often. Refer to Figure 7 for the seven-point scale from the MBI Manual used to indicate how often participants felt personally accomplished based on their MBI – ES Personal Achievement mean score (Maslach et al., 2018).

The highest mean score for an individual teacher was 6, which meant that teacher felt personally accomplished every day. The lowest mean score for an individual teacher was 2.6, meaning that teacher felt personally accomplished about a couple times a month. It should be noted that Megan was the teacher with the lowest Personal Achievement score. Namely, the teacher who felt the least personal achievements from teaching was a teacher who eventually quit the profession.

In general, the average MBI – ES scores from former and current teacher participants from Marazul High School were not concerning because they were not showing alarming signs of burnout. Table 2 shows participants' mean scores in each of the three categories. Participants averaged a mean score of 2.90 in Emotional Exhaustion, 1.51 in Depersonalization, and 4.79 in Personal Achievement. These means are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Overall Mean MBI – ES Scores

MBI – ES Category	Overall Mean MBI – ES Scores
Emotional Exhaustion	2.90
Depersonalization	1.51
Personal Achievement	4.79

Table 2 shows the contrast between the average scores in Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Achievement. On average the group felt emotionally exhausted about once a month, felt depersonalized several times a year but not every month, and felt personally accomplished a few times a week.

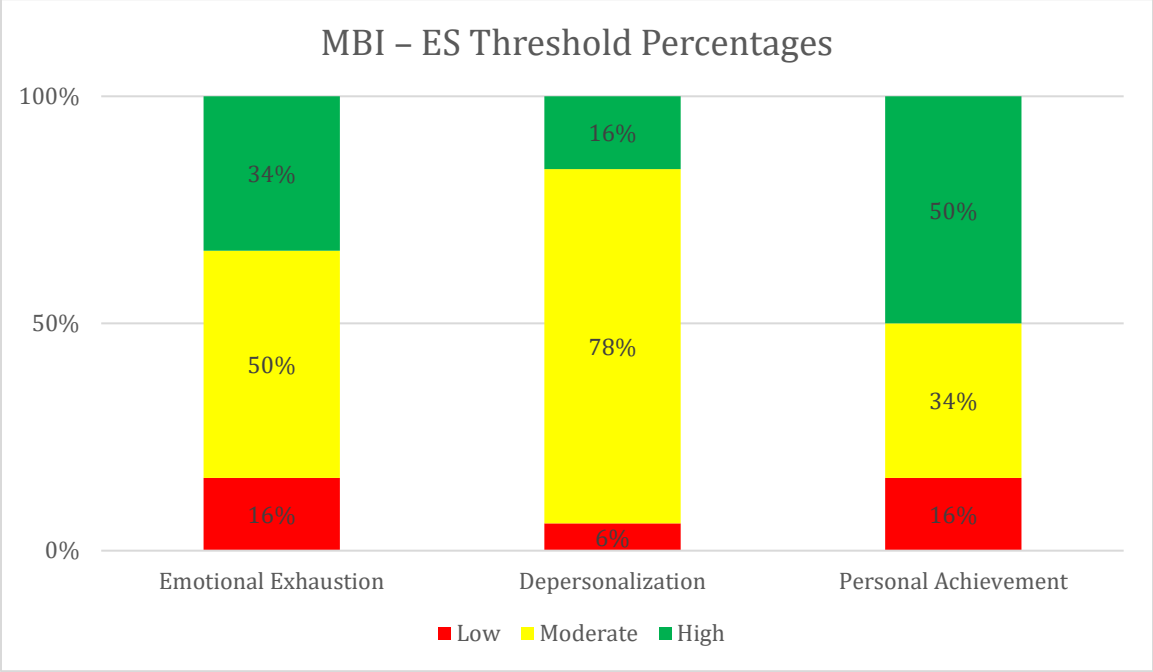
I took each of these mean scores and analyzed it next to the seven-point scale (refer to Figure 7) from the MBI Handbook. After I looked at the scores, I noticed the overall Emotional Exhaustion mean, 2.90, is close to the center of the seven-point scale, 3. High Emotional Exhaustion is a sign of teacher burnout, but the participants' scores were consistent with medium Emotional Exhaustion. In terms of Depersonalization, the average score was 1.51 which was relatively low on the seven-point scale. High Depersonalization is an indication of a teacher experiencing burnout, so the fact the participants from MHS have such a low score in this category is a positive sign. Likewise, another sign of teachers feeling burnt out is low Personal Achievement. However, the participants' Personal Achievement average group score was 4.79, which is very high on the seven-point scale. These findings, in conjunction with the findings

above regarding the distribution of mean scores in each category, could suggest that, overall, the participants in this study may not be experiencing high levels of burnout.

Besides evaluating the mean scores on the seven-point scale, I also investigated the difference in thresholds in each category. Figure 10 shows the percentage of participants' MBI – ES responses in low, moderate, and high thresholds for Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Achievement. In addition to plotting the data in individual graphs in Figures 6, 8, and 9 above, I created this bar graph in Figure 10 to show the distribution of data in all three categories. As explained previously, the threshold for each category was defined by the natural breaks in the graphs (see Figures 6, 8, and 9 above), so they are vastly different ranges. For example, low Emotional Exhaustion is represented by mean scores between 0-1.4, low Depersonalization is between 0-0.5, and low Personal Achievement is between 0-3.7. Refer to Figure 10 to see the percentage of mean scores from the participants in each threshold.

Figure 10

MBI – ES Threshold Percentages



On average, 16% of participants experienced low Emotional Exhaustion, 6% experienced low Depersonalization, and 16% experienced low Personal Achievement. In other words, only a small percentage of participants felt low levels of emotion in each of these three categories. In Emotional Exhaustion, 50% of the responses were considered moderate, while 78% of participants experienced moderate Depersonalization, and 34% experienced moderate Personal Achievement. Moderate Emotional Exhaustion was experienced by about half of the participants, moderate Depersonalization was experienced by most of the participants, and moderate Personal Achievement was experienced by about a third of the participants. Lastly, there were high levels of Emotional Exhaustion from 34% of participants, Depersonalization from 16% of participants, and Personal Achievement from 50% of participants. About a third of

participants felt high levels of Emotional Exhaustion, a small portion felt high Depersonalization, and half of participants felt high levels of Personal Achievement.

In summary, I had two major findings after I quantitatively analyzed the MBI – ES data. First, the teachers with the overall highest levels of Emotional Exhaustion, highest levels of Depersonalization, and lowest levels of Personal Achievement were the former teachers of MHS. This supported the narrative behind the MBI – ES that when teachers feel emotionally exhausted, depersonalized, and not personally accomplished in their job, then they feel burnt out. This could suggest that burnout may have impacted teachers to leave the profession during COVID-19. Second, the average mean scores of the group suggested that, on average, the participants in this study may not have been experiencing high levels of burnout. These findings imply that the teachers still currently teaching at MHS are not experiencing strong levels of burnout, while the former teachers were experiencing strong levels of burnout right before they left the profession.

Focus Groups

Following analysis of the MBI – ES, I analyzed the data from the three days of focus group sessions with 10 to 11 of the current MHS teacher participants. I generated 16 codes for the focus groups and used some of these same codes in the individual interviews. Refer to Appendix E for the code definitions used in the focus groups.

Each day of three days of focus groups had its own theme, so the topics discussed on each day vary. The first day was centered around teachers' outlook on teaching. The second day we discussed student-teacher relationships during COVID-19, and the third day was focused on teachers' work environment before and after COVID-19. I decided to look at the data as a group of three days instead of individual days because I felt that

those findings were more applicable to answering my research question due to the extreme variations in answers day-to-day based on the day's theme.

Overall, the top three most discussed codes over the course of the three focus group sessions were "talking about student behavior," "talking about onsite administration," and "talking about parents." Refer to Table 3 to see the number of occurrences of each code from most used to least used over the course of all three focus group sessions.

Table 3

Focus Group Code Table – All Three Days

Code	Number of Occurrences
Talking about student behavior	33
Talking about onsite administration	14
Talking about parents	14
Talking about online learning	10
Talking about burnout	8
Talking about district	8
Talking about using technological devices	8
Talking about decision-making	6
Talking about masking	3
Talking about meetings	3
Talking about pay/salary	3
Talking about Canvas	2
Talking about social distancing	1

When talking about student behavior, teachers mainly referred to it in a negative context. For example, teachers described feeling like students had a lack of work ethic and less mental endurance post-COVID-19. On the first day of the focus groups, teachers bonded over the fact that getting students to do work was extremely difficult. When they referred to the expression "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make them drink," Camila said she felt like she was "trying to drown the kids to make them want to learn" (A. Isaac, focus group interview, December 5, 2022). At this comment, all the

other teachers around the table nodded their head in agreement. In the focus groups, teachers mostly felt like students were unmotivated during COVID-19 and they struggled to get students to complete assignments. Also, some teachers were attributing student behavior, like lowered mental endurance, to adding to teachers' exhaustion. Naira said the entire curriculum planning process is different since kids' mental endurance is not the same after COVID-19. Below is a transcript excerpt of teachers discussing students' mental endurance on the first day of focus groups:

> Naira: I'm constantly having to rethink the classroom. Whereas, when I first started teaching in [the early 2000s] or something, you could just assume that we could have a discussion for 45 minutes.
>
> //All the teachers start laughing with her.
>
> N: It's not there anymore. I feel like mental endurance is really, really bad.
>
> Camila: Yeah, that perseverance piece just isn't there anymore.
>
> Valeria: I feel like I am constantly having to change how I do things. From classroom management, to how assignments are done, or how I'm getting them to do stuff for me – I'm constantly having to change (A. Isaac, focus group, December 5, 2022).

In other words, teachers felt like they had to alter their normal way of teaching to hold students' attention long enough to transfer information. Compared to their previous lesson plans, teachers spent extra time creating overly elaborate lesson plans, which caused them to be more exhausted. This illustrates the way teachers experienced emotional exhaustion (the first category of the MBI – ES) through students' lack of work

ethic and lowered mental endurance during COVID-19 and speaks to some of the ways student behavior impacted them.

During the focus groups, teachers also described a rise in cheating (which relates to the code "student behavior"), negative parent involvement (which relates to the code "talking about parents"), and disrespect from students after COVID-19 (which relates to the code "student behavior"). Bradley and Valeria discussed the students' lack of understanding of cheating boundaries. On the first day of the focus groups, Bradley and Valeria said:

> Bradley: I heard kids in my class saying, 'How could you fail IM-2 [a sophomore-level math class]? Everyone was cheating during COVID!'… if they're talking about it so openly in my class, then they're probably cheating in my class, too. //All the teachers laugh and make sounds of agreement.
>
> Valeria: I think there was a lot more cheating going on because they got into that habit when they were home [during COVID-19] of sharing. So, them understanding what's okay and not okay – their boundaries on that are not clear (A. Isaac, focus group, December 5, 2022).

In other words, students did not have an explicit understanding of the definition of cheating or the moral dilemma with cheating after COVID-19. According to the teachers, students generally knew that cheating was bad before COVID-19. However, during COVID-19, some students were passing their classes due to sharing answers from student-to-student, so they may have been under the impression that this would not be considered cheating. Through my focus groups, I can confirm that the teachers in the current study still considered sharing answers from student-to-student cheating.

During COVID-19, teachers felt like students increased their degree of disrespect toward teachers. On the second day of focus groups, I believe Naira told the most accurate story to represent the new accepted level of disrespect in schools. Towards the beginning of returning to in-person activities during COVID-19, Naira went to her son's basketball game and each student was only allowed two spectators in the gym. Also, it was mandatory that everyone had to wear a mask. She saw the principal walk up to a mom and daughter without masks and tell them to wear a mask. Then, the mom told her daughter that she did not have to do that (in front of the principal). Naira said she understood that personal beliefs were different about masks, but what that showed the daughter was that she did not have to listen to the principal. She concluded her story with the following:

> Naira: I think the whole mask thing ruined authority.
>
> //Teachers are nodding, snapping, and verbally saying "yes" in agreement.
>
> N: Because there were so many arguments about it, I think a lot of kids – what they learned was, it's okay to not listen to what authority says. So, I think that's what has made it hard in the classroom sometimes is because I think there's not as much respect for authority from kids (A. Isaac, focus group, December 6, 2022).

In other words, teachers felt like students were being disrespectful to them because they saw their parents being disrespectful to other authority. This illustrates the way teachers experienced disrespect from students during the pandemic and speaks to why they were impacted by student behavior.

Along with a rise in disrespect post-COVID-19, teachers reported feeling like parents were getting more involved in their kids' educational journey. Some teachers said

that this increase in negative parent involvement contributed to their feelings of burnout during COVID-19. Teachers felt like parents were starting to demand more from teachers once their kids came back to school after virtual learning. This is represented in a conversation between Angelo and Camila during the focus groups:

> Camila: It feels like they [parents] learned during COVID that there were a lot of resources provided to them, and now they're expecting all those same resources. And it's like, no. Your kid is sitting in my class; I don't need to provide 15,000 resources for them. Like, they're in my class every day, and they can come to intervention every day, and they can come before school, and after school. It's like, I shouldn't have to provide all this extra stuff for you [kids/parents]. //Teachers are nodding and making sounds of agreement.
>
> Angelo: Well, they just got so accommodated [during COVID-19] that they feel like anything they ask for they're going to get (A. Isaac, focus group, December 5, 2022).

In other words, parents felt like the bar for providing resources was set during COVID-19, and they expected teachers to make that their minimum level of requirement even after the pandemic. Teachers saw this extensive supply of online resources that they provided as a temporary act for pandemic learning, but parents now expected that as part of a new standard of teaching post-pandemic learning.

Furthermore, teachers spoke about parents during the focus groups in a mostly negative way. Like mentioned earlier, parents felt like they were entitled to a bigger role in their child's learning agenda post-COVID-19. This caused mostly negative relationships between parents and teachers because they felt like they were not on the

same page. Michelle spoke about how teachers were so highly praised and respected at the beginning of virtual learning during COVID-19, but that quickly went downhill. On the Focus Group Day 3, Michelle recounted her struggles with technology during the beginning of virtual learning:

> Michelle: I consider myself tech savvy, but I was still spending all day Saturday and Sunday trying to set up things virtually. Then, it would crush me when I'd get an angry parent email saying I did something wrong, and an admin was Cc'd in the email. I felt like I was working so hard, but the parents didn't care. I even had conversations with parents hoping they would give me the same grace that I have their kids, but they didn't. I really thought I wasn't going to stay in teaching at this time (A. Isaac, individual interview, December 7, 2022).

In other words, Michelle felt like she was not being appreciated by parents for work she was putting into her classroom during COVID-19. This is something that most teachers also spoke about, and they felt like their hard work was not getting the recognition it deserved. This illustrates the way teachers experienced negative parental involvement during COVID-19 and speaks to the negative ways it affected teachers.

However, teachers discussed onsite administration in a positive light. In fact, most of them said that they were not upset with MHS administrators because they were just doing the best they could with the orders the district gave them (A. Isaac, focus group, December 7, 2022). One teacher explained how one of the vice principals at MHS saved his career during COVID-19. He said, at the start of COVID-19, he had his first mental breakdown ever after more than 30 years of teaching. He went from teaching his class in an agriculture welding shop to being relocated to a traditional classroom on the other end

of MHS's campus. He was extremely uncomfortable with technology, so when he was expected to move his class online, he panicked. One of his colleagues called the vice principal to come help him, and here is how he helped:

> Deakon: I had no clue what I was going to do. How – I don't know. I've never been so frustrated in my life of not being able to teach. Luckily, she [colleague] went up to the office to talk to the VP and said, 'you better get down there because Deakon's about to blow a gasket.'
>
> //All teachers laugh.
>
> D: He [VP] came down to my office and said, 'you go over there, and I'll sit over here.'
>
> //Pointing first at a chair in the room, then pointing at Deakon's computer.
>
> D: He said, 'now, what do you want?' So, I said, I needed Miller's Open Book [online welding textbook with assignments and quizzes]. So, he sat there and boom. He found everything so quickly and even made a video for me. He told me to just hit this one button every day, and I said I could do that. That saved my bacon. I never ever thought I was going to have a nervous breakdown until that day when I had no clue what to do. He saved my bacon (A. Isaac, individual interview, December 13, 2022).

In other words, the onsite administration at MHS helped this teacher feel supported during a time where he was helpless. The other teachers commented on how the onsite admin always try to help, and they appreciated the admin's willingness to support them. This illustrates the way teachers experienced support from their onsite admin during COVID-19 and speaks to something that positively influenced them. Onsite

admin support could have influenced the low levels of burnout the participants experienced during COVID-19.

In summary, after all three days of focus groups, student behavior, onsite administration, and parents were the most discussed codes. Student behavior and parents were discussed in mostly negative contexts by the teachers, whereas onsite administration was regarded in a positive light. In the following section I will connect the individual interviews with the focus group findings.

Individual Interviews

After the focus groups, three current MHS teachers from the focus groups and two former MHS teachers participated in the individual interviews, and I coded these interviews with 18 codes. Out of those interview codes, 10 of them overlapped with the focus group codes. Refer to Appendix F for the code definitions used in the individual interviews. I looked at the most discussed codes out of all the interviews, then I broke them down into smaller categories to analyze: current teachers v. former teachers. I decided to focus on these categories since I did not feel there was enough differentiating data when looking at other categories like gender, STEM/non-STEM, or years of teaching experience. Additionally, this decision aligns with the way I analyzed the MBI – ES data analysis.

Overall, the most discussed codes over all five interviews were “talking about student behavior,” “talking about district administration,” and “talking about masking.” Mostly, the participants spoke negatively about each of these categories in their interviews. Refer to Table 4 to see the total codes used in all five individual interviews.

Table 4

Individual Interview Code Table – All Interviews

Code	Number of Occurrences
Talking about student behavior	130
Talking about district administration	55
Talking about masking	48
Talking about using technological devices	37
Talking about colleagues	32
Talking about onsite administration	31
Talking about parents	31
Talking about teachers' mental health	27
Talking about communication with district	24
Talking about burnout	21
Talking about synchronous learning	17
Talking about atmosphere on MHS campus	11
Talking about social distancing	8
Talking about Zoom/Google Meets	8
Talking about moving original teaching locations	7
Talking about retirement	5
Talking about tenure	2

When talking about student behavior, participants mainly referred to it in a negative context. All the teachers I interviewed spoke about students' lack of work ethic

when coming back to school post-COVID-19 online learning. In Deakon's interview, he accurately summarized students' behavior for teachers:

> Deakon: After they [students] had two years of no structure, hanging out at home – you know – turning on their Zoom and then turning off their camera and sleeping and playing video games – The lack of work ethic drives me nuts. It drives me bonkers. Dealing with kids who don't want to work…
>
> Me: So, you feel like coming back from COVID, you feel like that was the big thing that made you go wow?
>
> D: Absolutely, oh yeah. All of a sudden, they want the grade, but they don't want to do the work. I think a lot of teachers felt that (A. Isaac, individual interview, December 13, 2022).

In other words, Deakon believed that, during pandemic learning, the lack of routine during online learning caused students to become less motivated to put in the work during class. This was something that many teachers spoke about during their individual interviews. This illustrates how teachers felt like they had to motivate more students to do their work post-COVID-19 and speaks to the negative effect that students' behavior has on teachers.

Additionally, participants spoke about district administration in a mostly negative context. Teachers felt like they were not supported by the district when they were making decisions in their classroom. Both Megan and Camila described their experiences enforcing the district's mask mandate in their classroom only to have the district turn around and not back the teachers up when parents started complaining. Only one teacher, Bradley, felt like the district was finding the best ways to support him while he was

navigating online teaching during the pandemic. Jose, Megan, and Deakon said they felt like the district did not treat them as a human and that the district did not care about them. Megan and Jose described feeling untrusted by the district since they were trying to micromanage the teachers' schedules during COVID-19. For example, in Megan's interview she said:

> Megan: This was the start of the 2021 schoolyear during Zoom class…Wednesday was a really short day… Well, Wednesday I carved out time because the district said this is for you. That's when I was tutoring these kids [the students who received an 'incomplete' grade or were going to fail her class]. They would set up a time on Zoom, and it's like, okay. We are going to Facetime together; we are going to work. Well then that [time] got taken away from me because now the district wanted to make sure I was 'using my time wisely in meetings' (A. Isaac, individual interview, December 9, 2022).

In other words, Megan felt like the district did not trust and respect her as a professional teacher enough to use her planning periods effectively, so they forced her to go to meetings which caused her to have to plan her next lessons outside of school time. This type of frustration with the district micromanaging teachers since they did not trust them was a frustration that most of the interviewed teachers shared. This illustrates how teachers felt like the district did not support them during COVID-19 teaching and speaks to the negative effects of the district on teachers. During the focus groups, participants focused more on how the onsite admin supported them; however, in the interviews, participants focused more on how the district did not support them.

When talking about masking, participants spoke about it in a negative way. This was mostly because of the pressure for teachers to uphold the masking policies. Teachers were forced to teach online to kids with their cameras off, then everyone on campus was required to wear masks and be socially distanced while being behind physical barriers in the classroom. All of this to say that student-teacher relationships were negatively impacted by these COVID-19 restrictions since the two groups could not be close to each other and start to build that bond. Camila said that her whole classroom management system is built around the connections she builds with her students, so when COVID-19 came it impacted her immensely. Originally, Camila just focused on teaching math, but during COVID-19 she had to focus more on nagging students to put a mask on or pull their mask up. Not only did this affect her relationships with her students, but it also affected her ability to control her classroom. This could have impacted how Camila felt about being depersonalized from her students (a category measured in the MBI – ES). This illustrates how teachers had to adjust to pandemic learning and speaks to the negative effects of masking on teachers.

Now that I have summarized the data as a whole, I am now going to highlight the differences between current and former teachers' responses. The top three most discussed codes for former teachers were "talking about student behavior," "talking about district administration," and "talking about using technological devices." For current teachers, they mostly discussed student behavior, district administration, and masking. Refer to Table 5 to see the comparison of most discussed codes from current and former teachers of MHS. The top three codes are at the top of the table, and the bottom row shows how often the other codes were talked about for current and former teachers.

Table 5

Individual Interview Code Table – Current vs. Former Teachers

Code	Number of Occurrences for Current Teachers	Code	Number of Occurrences for Former Teachers
Talking about student behavior	68	Talking about student behavior	62
Talking about district administration	27	Talking about district administration	28
Talking about masking	26	Talking about using technological devices	24
Talking about using technological devices	8	Talking about masking	19

I was expecting a larger discrepancy between the frequency of the most used codes for former and current teachers, but Table 5 shows that the frequencies between them are very similar. The only major difference shown in Table 5 is that former teachers discussed using technological devices much more than current teachers. It is possible that using technology was more of an issue for former teachers, and this could have contributed to former teachers' feelings of depersonalization. Also, former teachers discussed student behavior in a negative light when attributing some of their unhappiness

to lack of interaction with the students during COVID-19. Both Megan and Jose mentioned that they never saw their kids' faces on Zoom once the district forced MHS to start online schooling (A. Isaac, individual interview, December 9, 2022). Once school became virtual, Jose and Megan said that students began participating and engaging with material less. Jose mentioned how no one was holding students accountable for their actions, so they were showing up to class late and not receiving retribution. He also mentioned TikTok challenges that inspired students to vandalize bathrooms and classrooms. Overall, Jose and Megan both described students' lack of respect towards teachers that rose after COVID-19.

Also, former teachers spoke very negatively about district administration. Jose said that he started feeling like the district did not care about him when they moved him to another school in MHS's district, Verdalina High School, during COVID-19. He did not want to leave MHS, but the district forced him to leave because his skill set was needed more at Verdalina High School. He was most bothered by the fact that the district did not ask if he wanted to leave, they simply told him he was moving. In the interview, he said:

> Jose: That lack of – just sort of – common decency and relationship building and respect of, like, me as a person really pissed me off. And it was really hard for me to recover from that, um, with the district.
>
> Me: So that was you being more frustrated with the district rather than MHS admin? Onsite admin?

> Jose: Oh yeah. I was definitely more frustrated with the district. For me, personally, yes… I put all the blame on the district office (A. Isaac, individual interview, December 8, 2022).

In other words, Jose was most frustrated with the district since they did not treat him as a person, rather they treated him like a cog in the machine. This could have contributed to his feelings of depersonalization. Once they moved him, he could not mend his relationship with the district, and this was the main reason he decided to quit teaching at the end of 2021. He was the happiest he had ever been when he was teaching at MHS, and the district stripped him of that happiness by forcing him to teach at VHS. He truly felt like the district did not care about him.

Meanwhile, Megan was more frustrated with mask enforcing in her classroom and said that dealing with masks is what started her path towards quitting. She felt like her onsite administrators were not supporting her when parents were attacking her for following district mask policy. In her interview, she said, "if no one was supporting me, why should I keep supporting them [MHS administrators]?" (A. Isaac, individual interview, December 9, 2022). Megan did not feel supported by her administrators on campus or at the district, and she said this was the main reason she quit in the middle of the Spring 2021 semester. This shows how the lack of support from onsite and district administration negatively affected Megan and speaks to her reasons to leave the profession.

Lastly, in the interviews, former teachers spoke about their frustrations with using technology in the age of pandemic learning. In the early days of COVID-19, Megan would start planning her lessons at 6AM; then in between teaching she would be

responding to parents and students' questions via email, so she would not be leaving her computer until 8PM. She felt like she was working twice as hard to only be performing half as effectively as her original standard of teaching. For Jose, he described feeling disheartened because he could not do hands on experiments in his science classes when switching to virtual learning. Pre-COVID-19, his classroom was setup where he barely lectured in class and his students would be performing interactive experiments that he could help them navigate in-person. This could no longer happen when MHS moved to online learning during the pandemic. This illustrates how the former teachers felt like technology was contributing to their unhappiness in the classroom.

In terms of the current teachers, they also described student behavior in a negative context. Similar to the former teachers, current teachers discussed feeling like they could not make the same connections to students online as they could in person. They felt like students' work ethic was lacking and as put best by Deakon, "they wanted the grade but did not want to do the work" (A. Isaac, focus group, December 13, 2022). Teachers felt like students were entitled to their grade without putting in the effort to deserve it.

At the beginning of her Fall 2022 semester, Camila (one of the current teachers) was taking role and did not recognize any of the students in her class. Eventually, most of them told her they were in her classes during hybrid or Zoom learning, and she realized that she did not recognize students who had already had her as a teacher before. She said this was because they were wearing masks, or they never turned their cameras on in Zoom. However, she admitted that this had never happened to her before where she has had a student in her class but did not know that. This illustrates how teachers could not make the same connection to students during pandemic learning (which could have

contributed to teachers' feelings of depersonalization) and speaks to the negative effect of student behavior, student relationships, and technology on teachers.

Furthermore, current teachers spoke about COVID-19 regulations (i.e., masking, social distancing) in a negative way. Due to the extreme restrictions, current teachers' relationships with students were affected. During the beginning days of COVID-19 hybrid learning, Bradley spoke about how he had a taped off section at the front of the classroom which was the only area he was permitted to be. This meant he was not allowed to approach students to build that closer connection to them. Also, he had to teach in a mask to students with masks and physical barriers around them. This meant there were tangible limitations to his teaching which "put a damper on [his] relationships with students" (A. Isaac, individual interview, December 12, 2022), but he overall did not feel impacted by teaching during COVID-19. And for the other two current teachers I interviewed they felt the same way. Deakon, Bradley, and Camila all realized that in the moment, teaching during COVID-19 felt like an insurmountable task, but once it was over, they did not feel personally affected by it. This illustrates how current teachers did not enjoy teaching during COVID-19, but it overall did not negatively impact their outlook on teaching.

Finally, current teachers spoke about district administration in a negative light. Similar to the former teachers, current teachers felt like they were not supported in their classrooms by the district administration. Specifically, Camila spoke about the district rushing to get students back on campus in the early days of COVID-19 and how the teachers felt unprepared for this move. (This is something Jose spoke about in detail during his interview). In her interview, Camila said:

> Camila: I know those kids during hybrid did not get my best, and I hate that. And I hated that. So that part — I don't know who I was frustrated at. Maybe a little bit at our district, the world, everything. And even our district a little bit…maybe trying half in person and half at home at the same time was the right decision. I don't know. There wasn't a right decision and I get that… The superintendent came down and we were talking. I said to him, 'I don't need you to tell me I'm doing a good job, because I understand that I'm doing the best that I possibly can. But what's hard is that every single day I go home thinking, *my kids didn't get the best out of me today*. And that eats at my soul.' Even though I can tell myself I tried my best and I'm doing the best that I can… it sucked that it was acceptable [by the district] that we were shoddy every day (A. Isaac, individual interview, December 13, 2022).

In other words, Camila was frustrated that the district was okay with teachers being sub-par for their students every day. This was a phenomenon talked about by the former teachers and current teachers alike. They had this idea that during COVID-19, the district lowered the bar for what they expected teachers to accomplish in their classrooms and teachers felt like they were not as effective as their normal selves. This illustrates how teachers did not feel like they were giving their students enough during COVID-19 learning due to the district lowering their standards and speaks to the negative effects the district administration had on teachers during the pandemic.

Table 6 shows the comparison of the top three most discussed focus group codes and individual interview codes. When looking at Table 6, the data is shown in

percentages of overall codes. For example, “talking about student behavior” represented 23% of all focus group codes and 24% of all individual interview codes.

Table 6

Focus Group and Individual Interview Code Tables

Code	**Percentage of Occurrences for Focus Groups**	**Code**	**Percentage of Occurrences for Individual Interviews**
Talking about student behavior	23%	Talking about student behavior	24%
Talking about onsite administration	9.9%	Talking about district administration	10%
Talking about parents	9.9%	Talking about masking	8.9%

In both the focus groups and individual interviews, teachers discussed student behavior the most. This illustrates how current and former teachers were heavily impacted by student behavior when it came to their lived experience of teaching during COVID-19 and burnout. This speaks to the effect that student behavior had on teachers’ burnout and experiences during COVID-19.

Summary

In conclusion, I found some major patterns after analyzing the MBI – ES, focus groups, and individual interview data. The biggest discovery from the MBI – ES was that

the teachers with the highest levels of emotional exhaustion, highest levels of depersonalization, and lowest levels of personal accomplishment were the former teachers of MHS. In other words, compared to the current MHS teachers in this study, the former teachers were experiencing the most feelings of burnout in their last year before they quit. According to my findings, current teachers in this study did not seem to be experiencing high levels of burnout.

The interviews and focus groups gave me a deeper insight on the specific nuances that affected former and current teachers during COVID-19 and what potentially contributed to their burnout (which was assessed by the MBI – ES). The MBI – ES found that former teachers experienced the highest levels of burnout and the interviews found that former teachers complained most about student behavior, district administration, and using technological devices. For current teachers, the MBI – ES found that most of them were not experiencing high levels of burnout; the focus groups found they spoke most about student behavior, district administration, and parents; and interviews found that they spoke most about student behavior, district administration, and masking. Overall, it could be possible that former teachers potentially felt most burnt out by student behavior, district administration, and using technological devices. Also, current teachers could feel burnt out by student behavior, district administration, and parents, but not enough to quit the profession. All these categories have impacted participants' Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Achievement in some way. In the following chapter I connect my findings to my literature review, discuss what I learned from this research, and more.

Chapter Five

This study is centered around gaining a better understanding of the lived experiences of teachers during COVID-19 to add to the limited amount of research conducted on teachers' experiences with burnout during the pandemic. I will use this chapter to discuss my findings, connect my research findings to the previous literature about teacher burnout and COVID-19, reflect on the way I conducted my study, and describe the limitations of my study.

Discussion of Findings

After I conducted this study, there were a few major findings. Note, my role may have impacted the findings and interpretations of this study since I could only use my personal experiences to interpret the data. First, the MBI – ES uncovered that the former teachers were experiencing more feelings of burnout in their last year before they quit than the current MHS teachers in this study. Throughout the interviews, the former teachers negatively talked most about student behavior, district administration, and using technological devices. Aloe et al. (2013) and Pressley (2021) said that the four main predictors of teacher burnout were administrative support, anxiety in communicating with parents, COVID-19 anxiety, and current teaching anxiety. Since the former teachers were showing signs of higher burnout, and they discussed district administration, this related to one of the four main predictors of teacher burnout. Furthermore, according to Lambert et al. (2009), stressed teachers reported higher levels of teacher burnout. The former teachers (who were experiencing burnout) discussed the negative effects of student behavior, district administration, and using technological devices on their wellbeing. This

could imply that these categories of teaching were causing the former teachers stress, which could have attributed to their burnout.

Moreover, the focus groups and individual interviews exhibited that teacher participants talked most about student behavior. There were multiple researchers who found that student behavior affected teachers' wellbeing. More specifically, Lambert et al. (2009) found that when students misbehave in the classroom, teachers feel less happy and confident in their pedagogical skills. Also, Chang (2013) discovered that the main contributor to teachers' anger-frustration emotion was a lack of problem-solving ideas for dealing with students' classroom misbehavior. Additionally, Fernet et al. (2012) found the more students engaged in disruptive behavior, the less self-motivation and self-efficacy the teacher had; therefore, the teacher experienced job burnout. In other words, the previous research discussed how student behavior has a large impact on teachers and this study showed further evidence that student behavior affects teachers' outlook on their profession.

Additionally, the MBI – ES showed that overall MHS teachers in this study were not experiencing high levels of burnout. As noted by Zincirli (2014), the more satisfied teachers were with their job, the less teachers reported feeling burnt out. Also, Kasalak and Dağyar (2022) found that teachers who are enthusiastic about their job are less likely to feel burnt out. The current MHS teachers reported MBI – ES mean scores of 2.90 for Emotional Exhaustion, 1.51 of Depersonalization, and 4.79 of Personal Accomplishment. This meant that MHS teachers in this study were not emotionally exhausted, not personally disconnected from teaching, and experienced high levels of personal

accomplishment. Also, on the last day of the focus groups the MHS teachers said they ultimately love what they do:

Raul: There's still a lot of good here [at Marazul High School]. It's not all bad.

\\ Everyone making sounds of agreement and nodding.

Angelo: There is. I mean, I wouldn't be here if it wasn't good.

Alison: I came back here [after leaving for a couple years] because it was so good (A. Isaac, focus group, December 7, 2022).

Angelo, who spoke above, is a STEM teacher who could be working in a research lab making much more money; Raul is a teacher who said he was going to retire 8 years ago but continues to teach because he loves it; and Alison taught at MHS, left to work at another school for a couple years, then came back to MHS. The MHS teachers who made it through COVID-19 still love their work environment and what they do daily in their classrooms. It could be implied that the MHS teachers were satisfied with their job, and teachers who are satisfied with their job do not feel burnt out, which relates to the findings of Zincirili, and Kasalak and Dağyar.

Further, participants noted student misbehavior as a major issue, but current teachers still did not feel burnt out. This could suggest that participants know how to manage their classrooms and mitigate student misbehavior – even if it is a large part of their stress. In other words, participants' main stressor could be student misbehavior, but since the teachers know how to handle the misbehaviors, it stops them from feeling burnt out.

I think that it is possible the positive experiences my participants had with onsite administrators helped them stay in the profession. Throughout the focus groups and

interviews, current teacher participants spoke highly of their interactions with onsite administration during the pandemic (i.e., Deakon getting technological help from the Vice Principal, teachers during the focus group saying that the onsite administration was doing the best they could with the unprecedented situation of COVID-19). However, the individual interviews revealed that the former teachers were feeling extremely unsupported by the district administrators, which was one of the reasons they quit. I believe that the positive interactions the current teacher participants had with their MHS onsite administration could have caused them to stay teaching; also, I believe the negative interactions the former teacher participants had with the district administration could have led to their high levels of depersonalization which caused them to quit teaching.

Overall, the findings from this study were consistent with the narrative of the literature. This may be because the people who participated in this study are an accurate representation of the people discussed in the previous literature. My study adds more personal narratives of teachers' experiences during COVID-19, teacher burnout during COVID-19, and gives insight to why teachers may have left their profession during COVID-19.

Reflections

During this study on understanding teacher burnout post-COVID-19, I experienced some triumphs and tribulations. When I reached out to Marazul High School to start corresponding with teachers, MHS was very attentive and helpful with my communication process. The email that I wrote, and the initial Consent Form/Survey was clear and concise which helped me gather the exact information I needed. Further, the volume of responses I got from the MHS staff was twice as much as I expected. I was

surprised to see the number of MHS teachers who wanted to discuss burnout with me. Also, I was surprised that the teachers who quit teaching during COVID-19 were willing to speak to me about their journey. I thought that the former teachers would be hesitant to share their honest experiences while leaving teaching during COVID-19, but they were very willing to share all the details. I believe former teachers were eager to discuss burnout with me because they did not have an outlet to do this. They wanted the opportunity to tell their side of the story so people could hear from the teacher themselves why they left the profession, and not just hearing the story of what the administration may have painted of that teacher when they left.

In terms of the measurement instruments, I think they successfully collected the information I needed to paint the picture of burnout amongst teachers relating to COVID-19. I asked permission from Dr. Maslach herself to use the MBI – ES and I believe it was the best way to give a numerical value to how teachers view their profession. I do not think there was a better quantitative instrument to use for the purpose of my study. There was plenty of participation in the focus groups and I did not feel like one person was speaking more than anyone else. I think this was the right instrument to use next because it showed teachers that they were not alone in their thoughts about teaching during COVID-19. Then I got to hear parts of everyone's personal experiences with teaching during the pandemic and decide which ones related most to my research. Conducting focus groups was the quickest way for me to find people who would have stories that best related to my research. The individual interviews were beneficial because I got specific details through the teachers' anecdotes and gave them a space to talk freely about their

experiences teaching during the pandemic. Also, I was able to hear from former teachers, who I assumed would not want to be part of the focus groups which were held at MHS.

With the information I was trying to collect in the allotted time I was given, I would not have done any part of my research differently. I believe that the length of the MBI – ES, focus groups, and individual interviews was sufficient to collect the data I needed. Also, I would not have chosen other participants because I feel like those who participated in this study gave a detailed, personalized account of their experience teaching during COVID-19. I think the way I chose to ask questions allowed participants to feel like they could say their authentic answers and not be negatively judged for them. The way that I analyzed the data painted a story of how these participants felt teaching during COVID-19 and I would not collect or analyze the data in any other way.

Marazul High School can use these findings to celebrate what they are doing to retain the teachers they have. They can invest further into the administrative support they are giving their teachers since these participants are expressing their continued enjoyment of their career. MHS can also investigate the areas that participants were asking for change or assistance in what they were trying to do. Administrators at MHS can look at the MBI – ES scores for the participants and try to find ways to continue making teachers feel personally accomplished in their profession. Also, MHS can take notes on what caused the former teachers to leave and try to plan for how to prevent this in the future.

Future researchers could look more into the long term effects of teaching during COVID-19 on teachers who stay in the profession. These effects could include how teachers' work-life balance, emotional intelligence, classroom management strategies, and pedagogical beliefs have changed due to their experiences during COVID-19. Future

researchers could investigate the effects of student behavior on teachers' emotional exhaustion, the effects of student behavior on teachers' feelings of depersonalization, or the effects of student behavior on teachers' feelings of personal achievements. I am focusing on student behavior because it was the most talked about topic in the focus groups and interviews, which means it was the most important subject to teachers.

Overall, I have learned that the teachers who have stayed in the profession post-COVID-19 were not as negatively affected as I anticipated. I thought that teachers would have made major changes to how they operated their classroom, or how they viewed teaching in general, but overall, they had the same mindset as they did before COVID-19. This could lead to another potential topic for future research: the impact administrators have on teacher burnout. I believe there is a possibility that the positive experiences my participants had with district administrators helped them continue teaching. Also, I thought the former teachers would have cited more COVID-19 specific reasons for leaving (i.e., masking, social distancing, fear of receiving COVID-19); however, former teachers cited more general reasons for leaving (i.e., not being supported by onsite or district admin, being forced to move locations). This study has taught me that COVID-19 itself did not have as big of an impact on participants as I expected.

Limitations

Although I tried to be as thorough as possible with my research, there were limitations. First, my bias could have impacted the collection and analysis of data in my study since I was very familiar with Marazul High School. I could have unintentionally misinterpreted responses to make certain teachers' experiences sound different, or unintentionally not looked as deep into other teachers' experiences due to my bias. I am

also limited because I only received data from teachers connected to Marazul High School. In fact, I only had approximately half of the faculty participate, so I am limited by the number of participants I had. Plus, all individual interview participants were White, so this could have impacted the findings.

Other input that could have changed my findings involved the MBI – ES and focus groups. After I emailed the MBI – ES access codes to the teachers participating in the survey, some of the teachers who took it called me to say they felt like the statements were too vague, so this could have altered their responses. In the focus groups, there were teachers who said they would participate, but never showed up so their input could have changed my findings. Also, there could have been teachers who wanted to say something during the focus groups, but we did not have enough time or someone else was speaking so they never got to say their opinion. Lastly, I only conducted this research over the course of a year so it could have yielded other results if I lengthened the research over a longer period.

Conclusion

I explored one major question throughout the course of this research: In what ways did teaching during the COVID-19 Pandemic impact teachers' outlook on their profession? The purpose of this question was to explore the significance of teaching during COVID-19 on teachers' attitudes towards schooling. Using 28 full-time teachers from Marazul High School, two former teachers from Marazul High School, and two full-time teachers from Big Sky High School, I utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods design for the study combining the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey (MBI – ES), focus groups, and interviews.

Overall, my research showed that the MHS teachers who experienced high levels of burnout (as showed through the MBI – ES) left the profession, and the MHS teachers who did not experience burnout stayed in the profession. I believe that the low levels of burnout speak to participants' resiliency, and the high levels of burnout amongst the former teachers speak to their right decision to leave teaching when they did. Since the former teachers were unhappy in their education career, this could have caused negative effects to their mental health and their students' learning. Additionally, both of the former teachers I interviewed said they are much happier now that they are no longer teaching. All that being said, I believe that the former teachers made the right decision to leave teaching. Student behavior was the most discussed topic when I interviewed MHS teachers both in groups and individually, but current teachers still did not feel burnt out. So, even though participants' main stressor could be student misbehavior, teachers know how to handle the misbehaviors which stops them from feeling burnt out. Lastly, I believe that the beneficial interactions the current teacher participants had with their MHS onsite administration could have influenced them to continue teaching; also, I believe the bad interactions the former teacher participants had with the district administration could have caused their high levels of depersonalization which led to them quitting teaching.

Appendix A

Focus Groups Example Topics and Questions

Example questions:

- Do you feel like teaching mainly energizes or drains you emotionally every day? Why?
- Do you feel like you have had many personal accomplishments through teaching? Why or why not?
- Do you feel like you have the time and energy to concern yourself with your students' well-being outside of your classroom? Why or why not?
- Did you have any students during COVID-19 virtual learning, then in person? Did that relationship look different? Why or why not?
- What did your work environment look like before and after COVID-19?
- Can you tell me about student behavior during COVID-19?
- Now that distanced learning from COVID-19 is mostly over, what is your overall attitude towards teaching?

Example topics:

- The impact of COVID-19 on teacher burnout
- Student-teacher relationships during COVID-19
- Support for teachers during COVID-19 from parents/administration/students
- Teachers' expectations before and after COVID-19
- Teachers' mental health during COVID-19
- How teachers would like to be supported as they continue to deal with burnout

Appendix B

Individual Interview Example Questions

Example questions for current teachers:

- What did your work environment look like before and after COVID-19?
- Can you tell me about student behavior during COVID-19?
- Did you have any students during COVID-19 virtual learning, then later in person? Did that relationship look different? Why or why not?
- Did you feel burnt out while teaching during COVID-19? If you did, why? If you did not, why and did you have any strategies or resources that kept you from feeling burnt out?
- Now that distanced learning from COVID-19 is mostly over, what is your overall attitude towards teaching?

Example questions for former teachers:

- What did your work environment look like before and after COVID-19?
- Can you tell me about student behavior during COVID-19?
- What caused you to leave teaching during COVID-19?

Appendix C

Informed Consent Google Form

Informed Consent

Study Title: Teacher Burnout: Understanding the Lived Experiences of Teachers During COVID-19

Purpose of the Study: You are invited to participate in a research study examining teacher burnout to better understand the lived experiences of teachers during COVID-19. You must be a full-time teacher at Del Oro High School to participate.

Procedures: If you choose to participate, you will answer questions associated with your attitudes on teaching via an online survey. After taking this survey, I might choose you to participate in a focus group interview and/or choose you to have a follow-up individual interview. The interviews will take place in person or via Zoom. I will video record the interviews either using an iPhone camera or through Zoom. The survey is expected to take 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The focus group is expected to take three 20-minute meetings over the course of one week. The interview is expected to take approximately 30 minutes. Please note, you will be allowed to choose as many procedures as you'd like to participate in (i.e., you could do the online survey, but not the focus group or individual interview).

Potential Risks and Benefits: The anticipated risks in this study are minimal and no greater than those encountered in everyday life. There may be no direct benefits to the individuals participating; however, the results will improve our understanding of teacher burnout during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Confidentiality: If you agree to participate in this study, the report will include your responses from the survey, focus group, and/or individual interview, which I will share with colleagues at Wittenberg University. I will NOT share your name and any other identifiable information. When I collect and analyze any data that you produce, I will white-out your name and replace it with a pseudonym. I will refer to all participants with pseudonyms, and data reports will never include real names. I will be the only person who sees/hears all video recordings of the focus groups and interviews. I will delete the video recordings after I transcribe them. I could potentially share this anonymous data with the principal of the high school, or in future educational conferences.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may choose to not participate or end your participation at any time without penalty.

Questions or Concerns: If you have any questions or comments about this study, you may contact me: Ashley Isaac, 530-368-2145, isaaca522@wittenberg.edu

For questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research or IRB approval, contact Dr. Darby Hiller, Assistant Provost for Academic Affairs and Institutional Research, IRB Chair, at 937-591-1024, or by email at hillerd@wittenberg.edu.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ashley Isaac

* Required

1. Would you like to participate in this research? *

   Mark only one oval.

   - Yes
   - No

Giving Consent & Optional Demographic Questions

2. I have read and understand the consent form from Section 1. I certify that I am 18 years old or older. By typing my first and last name below, I indicate my willingness to voluntarily take part in this study. *
   ex: Tanya Blue

3. What is the date you are signing this consent form? *
   ex: 11/1/2022

4. Which research activities would you be willing to participate in? *
   PLEASE NOTE: you may participate in as few or as many research activities as you'd like.

   Check all that apply.

- [ ] Online Survey (10-15 minutes)
- [ ] Focus Group (three 20-minute meetings over the course of a week)
- [ ] Individual Interview (approximately 30 minutes)

5. Which of the following best describes you?

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ◯ Black or African American
- ◯ Hispanic or Latino
- ◯ Native American or Alaskan Native
- ◯ White or Caucasian
- ◯ Multiracial or Biracial
- ◯ A race/ethnicity not listed here

6. What is your gender?

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Female
- ◯ Male
- ◯ Non-binary
- ◯ Prefer not to disclose
- ◯ Other: _____

7. Which of the following best describes you?

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ I am currently a teacher *Skip to question 8*
- ◯ I used to be a teacher *Skip to question 10*

Current Teacher Questions

8. How long have you been teaching?

9. What subject(s) do you teach?

Past Teacher Questions

10. How long had you taught before you left teaching?

_____

11. What subject(s) were you teaching before you left teaching?

_____

Appendix D

First Corresponding Email to Participants

Note, names and other identifiable information has been changed for the privacy of the participants.

Subject: Graduate Thesis Study on Teacher Burnout -- Ashley Isaac

GOOD MORNING MARAZUL FIGHTING TIGER FACULTY!

My name is Ashley Isaac, and I am a graduate of the Marazul HS Class of 2017. Currently, I am getting my MA in Educational Leadership at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio, and I could use your help on my graduate thesis!

I am conducting research on understanding the lived experiences of teachers during COVID-19, and I am looking for teachers to participate in my study.

Please read through the Consent Form to learn more about the study, indicate whether you'd like to participate, and respond to a few optional questions related to your demographics and teaching experience: Consent Form.

This form takes approximately 5 minutes or less to fill out. Please fill this form out whether you are interested in participating in the research or not.

Thank you for your help, and hopefully I'll see you soon!

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email me: 530-368-2145, isaaca522@wittenberg.edu.

Best,

Ashley

Appendix E

Focus Groups Code Definitions

Code	Definition
Talking about burnout	When a teacher specifically mentioned burnout, or being burnt out
Talking about Canvas	When a teacher talked about Canvas
Talking about decision-making	When a teacher discussed a teacher, student, or administrator making a choice about something
Talking about district	When a teacher mentioned the district
Talking about masking	When a teacher mentioned masks, mask, or face coverings
Talking about meetings	When a teacher talked about attending or planning meetings
Talking about onsite administration	When a teacher discussed MHS administrators (e.g., vice principal, principal), MHS administration as a group, or how MHS administration handles situations
Talking about parents	When a teacher mentioned parents

Talking about pay/salary	When a teacher talked about their pay or salary, MHS administrators' pay or salary, or district administrators' pay or salary
Talking about social distancing	When a teacher discussed social distancing, being 6 feet apart, keeping kids apart from each other, staying in their teaching bubble at the front of the classroom, having to stay apart from the students, or physical barriers
Talking about student behavior	When a teacher talked about student-teacher interactions, student-student interactions, students cheating, students' work ethic, students' emotional needs, students' entitlement, students' motivation, or students' interests
Talking about online learning	When a teacher mentioned preparing for online learning, teaching online, making online videos, making online assignments, or communicating about online learning to other people
Talking about using technological devices	When a teacher mentioned using a phone, camera, computer, or iPad to complete duties MHS expected them to do
Talking about Zoom/Google Meets	When a teacher mentioned Zoom or Google Meets

Appendix F

Individual Interview Code Definitions

Code	Definition
Talking about atmosphere on MHS campus	When a teacher talked about traditions on MHS campus, the MHS work environment, or how students/teachers/administration at MHS acted different than teachers at other high schools
Talking about burnout	When a teacher specifically mentioned burnout, or being burnt out
Talking about colleagues	When a teacher talked about interactions between them and their colleagues, or about what their colleagues were doing
Talking about communication with district	When a teacher discussed sending emails to the district, receiving emails from the district, or emails sent/received from the district to parents
Talking about district admin	When a teacher mentioned district administrators
Talking about masking	When a teacher mentioned masks, mask, or face coverings

Talking about teachers' mental health	When a teacher mentioned being stressed, frustrated, or anxious due to the responsibilities of being a teacher
Talking about moving original teaching locations	When a teacher mentioned being forcibly moved from their original teaching location at MHS to another location either on campus or at another school in the district
Talking about onsite administration	When a teacher discussed MHS administrators (e.g., vice principal, principal), MHS administration as a group, or how MHS administration handles situations
Talking about parents	When a teacher mentioned parents
Talking about retirement	When a teacher discussed retiring, their retirement plan, or their retirement financial package
Talking about social distancing	When a teacher discussed social distancing, being 6 feet apart, keeping kids apart from each other, staying in their teaching bubble at the front of the classroom, having to stay apart from the students, or physical barriers
Talking about student behavior	When a teacher talked about student-teacher interactions, student-student interactions, students cheating, students' work

	ethic, students' emotional needs, students' entitlement, students' motivation, or students' interests
Talking about synchronous learning	When a teacher mentioned preparing for synchronous learning, or teaching live online, or communicating about synchronous learning to other people
Talking about using technological devices	When a teacher mentioned using a phone, camera, computer, or iPad to complete duties MHS expected them to do
Talking about tenure	When a teacher mentioned tenure
Talking about Zoom/Google Meets	When a teacher mentioned Zoom or Google Meets

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