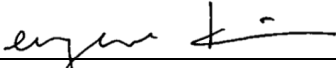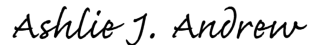ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL STRESSORS AND DESTRESSORS IMPACT ON TK-12 CATHOLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AND RETENTION, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the School of Education, Concordia University Irvine.

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PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL STRESSORS AND DE-STRESSORS IMPACT ON
TK-12 CATHOLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AND RETENTION

by

Julie L. Tipton

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of
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ABSTRACT

To effectively increase teacher satisfaction and retention, it is essential that research supports and understands the factors that contribute to the stress and burnout in educators today (McCarthy, Lambert, O'Donnell, & Melendres, 2009). Research is plentiful in identifying that teachers are leaving the profession. Job-related stress is the number one cause for teacher disability, according to the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS). A thorough investigation of the cause of this stress and a plan to mitigate based on sound educational research is critical to keep highly qualified teachers in education.

The explanatory research method was selected to investigate professional and personal stressors and de-stressors and the relationship to teacher stress and retention. The initial convenience sampling group consisted of TK-12 teachers from 41 catholic schools from a diocese in southern California with a sample population (*N*=374). The anonymous survey provided quantitative and qualitative information that was gathered to analyze the data and determine the findings. Results indicated the impact of stressors and de-stressors on teacher stress that influences retention noting a significant correlation for all teachers, notably highest for high school teachers.

Schools need to be a place of support and encouragement not only for our students, but for the professionals that serve those children. All teachers should receive high levels of support and just financial compensation. Educators that enjoy low personal and professional stress and experience satisfaction in the workplace will want to continue serving in the ministry of teaching.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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There is no adequate way to express my gratitude to the amazing ten members of Irvine 9. From day one, my new brilliant friends and colleagues inspired me, gave freely, made me laugh, challenged me to think deeply, and spread their love through every interaction! This journey would not have been the same without each one of you!

To my husband, Clay, for being my biggest cheerleader and our daughters, Bailey Jo and Riley, who I am confident never, want to hear the word dissertation ever again! To my family and friends, I am forever grateful for your love, patience, understanding, and encouragement! Let's celebrate!

CHAPTER 1

I've been blessed with the amazing opportunity to serve as an elementary school teacher and school principal across the United States in four different Catholic schools. Each experience was unique and wonderful but unfortunately, I have witnessed firsthand the increasing strain of our education system on teachers over the past twenty years. As demands and expectations increase, so does the enormous stress and pressure on our teachers. These demands and expectations take a toll on our teachers personally and professionally as they respond to a new generation of school cultures, millennial parents, students, technology innovations, high stakes testing, and a wide variety of other environmental demands. Our schools are not systemically addressing how to provide ongoing support and education for our experienced teachers, the inculcation of new teachers, nor strategically preparing pre-service teachers for the real world of education today. Every year, I continually witness teachers entering the teaching profession excited and motivated to make a difference in the world and impact the lives of their students in a meaningful way. They sign their contracts with great excitement and anticipation for the school year to come. Within months or short years, these same teachers are leaving their positions for new ones due to disappointment and disillusionment. Very often, they are leaving the education profession entirely for a multitude of reasons. This mass exodus must be stemmed to keep our teachers teaching. It is up to those in roles such as principal, superintendent, supervisor, and professor to make the difference for all teachers.

One teacher stands out for me as a perfect illustration of the growing problem of teacher satisfaction and retention in the education system today, her name is Susan. I met Susan earlier in my teaching career. She was a second-year teacher when I was hired at the same school seventeen years ago. She is a bundle of energy and was a natural teacher; creative, enthused, and

believed wholeheartedly in her mission to serve and educate. She faithfully served her school and church in a ministry of servant leadership and love. She is a dedicated professional, continually striving to inform herself of best practice and protocol. She enthusiastically spent hours setting up her classroom every year, purchasing items to make a bulletin board just perfect, weighing every decision in the process to make sure her students had a nurturing and stimulating environment. Every year, the parents requested Susan for their children as they could not only see her passion daily but Susan's results with students were excellent throughout the year. She was able to connect with all students and impact those that had enjoyed little success at school in their past education. She prepared lessons that were hands-on, fun, and engaging. Susan and her classroom were the definition of great teaching and facilitating a learning environment that met the needs of all her students.

Over the past ten years, the parochial school in which she is employed has experienced five administrator changes and the student enrollment has steadily declined. The administration changes have increased the instability, inconsistent demands, and unclear expectations which have a tremendous impact on teacher success and satisfaction. The teaching staff has also seen a significant turnover among their peers and there is an overwhelming feeling of mistrust, competition, and lack of collaboration amongst the fractioned teachers. The ongoing stress of implementing new and many unproven initiatives with little direction and/or support, addressing parent concerns and expectations which are at times unreasonable, and managing a record number of diverse student needs and behavior issues, have all left Susan questioning her effectiveness as a teacher, her professional decision making, and a desire to personally continue teaching altogether. Susan is one of the best teachers I have ever had the opportunity to work with, to observe, and to learn from. I have been a principal in four schools since I left working

with Susan and still hold her in the highest regard. Whenever we get together, she shares her latest strategy, triumph, challenge, and current reading for professional growth. Susan proudly reads a book a week, listens to podcasts, and regularly attends professional development to continue her quest for excellence.   Susan is an educator twenty-four hours a day. When she is not in the classroom, she is continually thinking about innovating her instruction and classroom but talks more often now about frustrations, roadblocks, and challenges to that creativity, innovation, and excitement. How did she go from an extremely energetic, confident, and stellar teacher to the teacher that is feeling so disillusioned today? Unfortunately, she is not alone. Many of the teachers like Susan do not make it to ten years or longer, many are leaving within the first five years. Unfortunately, some are leaving before they even reach the five-year teaching mark or even within the first two years (Anhorn, 2008). The profession has changed, and many teachers are dissatisfied, burned out, and demoralized (Walker, 2018).

I recognize I became an administrator because I wanted to make a difference for teachers, to be a teacher's principal. I, too, had many different experiences as a teacher interacting with different principals over the years. I am married to a United States Marine and have enjoyed the opportunity to work in many states, districts, dioceses, and schools. I have learned a lot about what type of administrator and leader I wanted to be. I also learned some behaviors and leadership styles I did not want to repeat having witnessed from others. I believe that I am always working on being a successful teacher's principal but is it enough in the turbulent times of education today? The feeling that we as leaders in education are failing to adequately prepare and supporting our teachers continually nags at me. How can we ensure that our best and brightest teachers stay in the profession? How can educational leaders personally help to promote a skilled and gratified generation of teachers for the future? There is a crisis in our

schools, and it is a problem that will not be remedied by a few but instead will require systemic change, a paradigm shift. This study will provide an in-depth analysis of the environmental and personal demands of teaching and the implementation of de-stressors to deescalate these stressors. By investigating the stressors and de-stressors in teachers, there is an opportunity to implement programs and strategies to minimize or alleviate the stressors.

Educators are experiencing stress and burnout because of increased pressure and changes in the 21st-century learning environment. Teachers are expressing frustration, anxiety, and exhaustion and are leaving the profession in record numbers (Rosales, 2011). The list of stressors for teachers is extensive and growing. The stressors can be strategically divided can be divided into internal (personal) and external (environmental) origins. Instead of focusing on the teacher's personal stress and burnout which has been the source of many studies in the past, research must look at the systemic problem of teacher dissatisfaction and demoralization (Walker, 2018). Teachers are dealing with more stress both in the school environment and personally than ever before. "A 2014 Gallop survey revealed that 46% of all TK-12 teachers reported high daily stress" (Walker, 2016). What strategies can be implemented to successfully manage stress and navigate the demands of the 21st-century learning environment in kindergarten through eighth grade in Catholic schools today? What can be learned that can be applied to support all teachers in all types of schools across the nation?

Statement of the Problem

The research on educator stress and burnout in education goes back over thirty years but has been primarily focused on workplace conditions and external demands on educators (McCarthy, Lambert, O'Donnell, & Melendres, 2009). The research evaluates and focuses on educator concerns in much generalized groupings and does not examine the role of educators

individually, to understand the intrapersonal and interpersonal factors related to stress and burnout, which leads to retention concerns. In addition to retention issues, over the past thirteen years, there is a growing concern with the decline of credentialed teachers and the inability to find qualified and credentialed teachers to fill open positions.

The teacher shortage may be present for a variety of reasons, including a culture of "teacher bashing" that has "soured young people from seeking the career and increasing demand for teachers that has been met by a declining supply" (Ellison & Freeburg, 2015). The low salary is also a deterrent for many young people today as they plan for a lucrative and financially rewarding career. As the demand for highly qualified teachers increases, further provisions to recruit, train, and keep teachers in the professional will need to be deployed. Job-related stress is the number one cause for teacher disability, according to the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS).   The opportunity to reduce or eliminate stress would considerably assist teachers in their job satisfaction, the students they serve, and the education system (Goodwin, 2011). A thorough investigation of the cause of this stress and burnout and a plan to mitigate this stress based on sound educational research is critical and must be implemented to keep highly qualified teachers in education. Stress plays an integral part in the teaching profession. The stress and burnout of teachers across the nation are causing a crisis within the education system. Teaching is one of the most stressful occupations, which offers insight into why teachers leave the profession (Friedman, 2000). Understanding the sources and coping mechanisms of teachers will help us address teacher attrition better.

Purpose of the Study

Fifty percent of teachers are leaving the field within the first five years (Webb & Norton, 2013). A thorough investigation of the cause of this stress and burnout and a plan to mitigate

this stress based on sound educational research is critical and must be implemented to keep highly qualified teachers in education.

For this study and research, the stressors and de-stressors will generally be defined as the professional environment (external) and personal (internal) as they pertain to the socio-emotional health of educators. Specific stressors will be recognized and dissected, and de-stressors or interventions will be identified. The research findings will assist in identifying and mitigating the stress and burnout currently being identified in TK-12 teachers in Catholic schools and may ultimately be applied for teachers in different school settings. Research will assist in providing guidance for investigating local and systemic ways to minimize or alleviate the stressors. It is important and timely research to address how to assist teachers to enable them to survive and thrive as an educator in the 21st-century education system. An important outcome will be identifying how the education system and its leaders can improve, reform, and create a less stressful environment to prevent burnout and increase retention.

The researcher utilized an explanatory mixed methods research design. The explanatory research method was selected to investigate relating stressors and de-stressors to socio-emotional health and retention in a detailed manner not thoroughly investigated in current research. The purpose of this mixed-method study is to identify the stressors and de-stressors for teachers in TK-12 Catholic schools that affect retention. A result of this research will help to clarify and investigate stressors and de-stressors of educators, generate connections to understanding retention, and identify strategies or de-stressors for implementation to increase teacher satisfaction and improve retention. Research is plentiful regarding stress, distress, indicators of health and unhealthy stress, de-stressors, and identifying the discourse among teachers and attrition. Additionally, there is research identifying the environmental effects of the school

setting and leadership on teacher stress levels and itemized investigation aimed at individuals and their stress levels and strategies. There is little research on how to implement this research to challenge environmental and personal demands together to support and improve the socio-emotional health of teachers to recover retention.

Research Questions

The research questions that will be utilized in the collection of data will include:

Primary Question #1

What is the relationship between professional and personal stressors and de-stressors and the stress of TK-12 educators in Catholic schools?

Sub-Questions:

1. What circumstances within the context of parochial education are related to increasing stress?

2. What strategies can teachers employ to personally reduce and manage stress?

3. What strategies can be employed in the school environment to reduce stress for teachers?

Primary Question #2

What is the relationship between stress and retention for TK-12 educators in Catholic schools?

This study addresses research gaps in the area of (a) the role of educators individually, understanding their intrapersonal and interpersonal stressors and de-stressors, and (b) a thorough investigation of the cause of attrition and a plan based on sound educational research to keep highly qualified teachers in education.

Figure 1. 1. The Effect of Personal and Professional Demands and De-stressors (Tipton, 2019).

Hypotheses

1. Professional and personal stressors and de-stressors are associated with the stress of educators.

2. There is a relationship between the stress of educators and retention.

The collection of data took place using anonymous surveys to gather quantitative statistics as well as qualitative information to be coded and analyzed. For both quantitative and qualitative data, a convenience sample of transitional kindergarten through twelfth-grade teachers in a Southern Diocese in California was utilized. Data was accumulated using surveys

that include 10 demographic questions, twenty-two closed-ended Likert scale questions, and three open-ended questions, with one open-ended question additionally requesting a percentage for interval data (Sneyers, Jacobs, & Struyf, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

In evaluating theoretical frameworks for research, it seems appropriate to tie two frameworks together as an amalgam to address how teachers manage stress and the demands of the 21st-century learning environment in Catholic Schools. The Servant Leadership Theory applies to educational leaders and their ability to navigate changes in education. That ability can increase or reduce stress for teachers.   The implementation and awareness to reduce the impact on teachers affect teachers personally and the overall culture of the school. Additionally, awareness at the system level can create a rippling effect on the leaders of individual schools and the teachers. Creating a plan for reducing and managing stress for success may be researched through the lens of the Isomorphic Theory of Stress but also utilized in the implementation. "A Theoretical Framework is a broad, historical and structural explanation that provides the justification, motivation, background, direction, boundaries, and solutions for the research question" (Personal Communication). The Isomorphic Theory of Stress correlates the one-to-one fit between the person and the environment and examines control, uncertainty, and interpersonal relationships (Quick, Nelson, Quick, & Orman, 2001).

Tahseen (2010) conducted a study to explore the relationship between a principal's leadership style and the effect on elementary teachers' stress levels in Punjab, Pakistan. Autocratic and Democratic leadership styles were researched. The study concluded there is a significant relationship between the principal's leadership style and teacher stress with a tendency for more stress for teachers under autocratic leaders. The evidence provides support

for a common vision, learning organizations, collaboration, and teachers having "a voice in decision-making" (p. 118). It is interesting to examine the effect of the Servant Leadership style and stress and how it relates to the teacher (person) and school (environment) fit. The spirit of servant leadership is important in a Catholic school. It is the call that inspires passionate leaders to be "ethical and lead in ways that serve the greater good of an organization, community, and society at large" (Northouse, 2016, p. 226).

The Isomorphic Theory of Stress is "defined as the one-for-one fit between specific, corresponding dimensions in the person and environment" (Quick, et al., 2001, p. 147). The Isomorphic Theory of Stress provides many opportunities for intervention and offers that it is the responsibility of the individual as well as the school leaders, district, or diocesan personnel to assist in managing stress. Teacher stress generally occurs when the risk and protective factors are imbalanced. Teacher stress will continue to prevail, according to Prilleltensky, Neff, and Bessell (2016), unless teacher preparation programs, superintendents, and administrators implement effective preparation to equip new teachers. This preparation must include the ability to deal with the daily demands of teaching, the emotional intensity of teaching, implementing organization tools, and supporting all aspects of entry into the profession. The responsibility of reform looms in schools everywhere, the leader exists in a "continuous conflict zone between the external demands and internal interests" (Prilleltensky, et al., 2016, p. 18). This pressure continues to challenge the role of leaders and trickles down to teachers. The satisfaction and retention of teachers may also strongly correlate to student stress and success. The four critical supports of the learner, knowledge, assessment, and community are important for an administrator to establish and align to "mutually support one another" (Brown, 2016, p.104).

Significance of the Study

To effectively increase teacher satisfaction and retention, it is essential that research supports and understands the factors that contribute to the stress and burnout in educators today (McCarthy, Lambert, O'Donnell, & Melendres, 2009).   Research is plentiful in identifying that teachers are leaving the profession, especially teachers with under five years' experience and in the special education field. A plan to support the socio-emotional health of teachers is becoming essential in sustaining the 21st-century teaching force. Teacher knowledge, training, practice, and "complex and personal phenomenon continually influences and made meaningful by factors and conditions both inside and outside classrooms and schools" (Cole & Knowles, 1993). An opportunity to support teachers through knowledgeable intervention will allow practical application at the local, district, and national levels.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions clarify the meanings of terms used in this research study:

Active strategies: Mobilized and centered on the elimination of stress (Carton & Eric, 2014).

Stress: "physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension causing a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize." (American Institute of Stress, 2019).

Stressors: Physical and psychological demands that initiate the stress response within individuals (Hargrove, Quick, Nelson, & Quick, 2011).

Eustress: Positive physical and psychological response to stress (Hargrove, Quick, Nelson, & Quick, 2011).

Diocesan: Greek word meaning "administration" and is a geographical area under the

administration of a bishop (Catholic Diocese, 2016).

Distress: Negative physical and psychological response to stress (Hargrove, Quick, Nelson, & Quick, 2011).

Palliative strategies: Do not address stress directly but are more centered on the reduction of stress effects in education employing meditation, journaling, and other strategies to destress an individual (Carton & Eric, 2014).

Parish: A specific community of the Christian faithful within a diocese, having its own church building, under the authority of a pastor who is responsible for providing ministerial service. Most parishes are formed on a geographic basis, but they may be formed along national or ethnic lines. (UCCSB, 2019).

Parochial school: Schools that are associated with a particular parish (U.S. Department of Education, Institute for Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. Private Schools in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1994).

Protective factors: Attributes of the person or environment that will enhance the likelihood of positive outcomes for the person and the system alike (Prilleltensky, et al.,2016).

Religious Congregational: Schools that are associated with specific groups within the Catholic Church, such as the Christian Brothers, Dominican, Jesuit, and Marianist Orders parishes (Private Schools in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1994).

Risk factors: Characteristics of the person or environment that increase the chances of a negative outcome for the person or system (Prilleltensky, et al., 2016).

Baby Boomers: Individuals born between 1944 and 1964.

Generation X: Individuals born between 1965 and 1980

Millennials or Generation Y: Individuals born between 1981 and 1996.

Generation Z: Individuals born between 1997 and 2012.

Generation Alpha: Individuals born between 2013 and 2025.
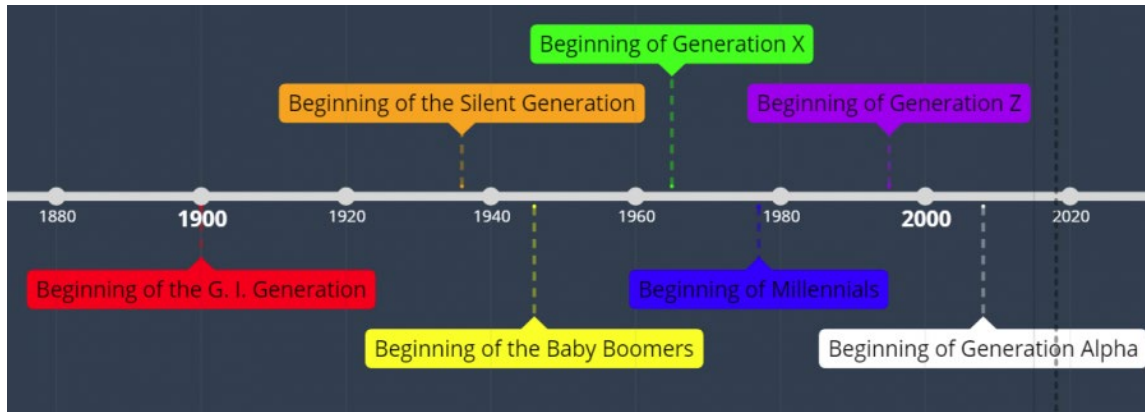
Figure 2. 1. Different Views on Different Generations (Swislow, 2018).

Limitations

The study has the following limitations:

1. The findings of this study are limited to the teachers interviewed within the schools within the Diocese in Southern California and caution should be utilized when generalizing findings to the entire teaching population in the United States.

2. The study was conducted within Catholic parochial schools and may not be comprehensive in addressing the public, charter, or private schools.

3. Due to time constraints and research schedule, the survey was administered in the winter months, mid-school year. Stress levels of teachers, perceptions of stress, and levels of burnout vary throughout the school year as well as their coping skills and strategies for positive de-stressors. This limitation of research may not give an accurate representation of the peaks and valleys of stress over the continuum of an entire school year but instead an isolated mid-school year snapshot picture.

Delimitations

The delimitations utilized by the researcher in this study were determined by the desire to understand changes in education that cause teacher stress and burnout, impact the teacher's social and emotional health, how this stress may be reduced and managed, and what might be implemented to mitigate the departure of teachers from the profession. These delimitations shape the data and create a cohesive representation amongst the southern California Diocesan teachers.

1. The teachers used in this study are all Catholic educators within a Diocese in southern California which did not allow the researcher to gain access to the public, charter, religious, or private school teachers nor teachers from other dioceses across the nation.

2. A second delimitation used by the researcher was that all teachers surveyed instructed students from transitional kindergarten through 12th grade. The research does not include pre-school, alternative, or higher education teachers.

3. The demographics of the schools represent a diverse representation of students as well as the teachers. The teachers vary in their amount of years of teaching experience, subjects, age, and many other factors.

Organization of the Study

This research study is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 provides the introduction to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, establishing a theoretical framework, significance of the study, definitions of terms, limitations, delimitations, and summary. Chapter 2 includes a summary of a broad range of research and a literature review that explores stress, stress and burnout of teachers due to the demands and challenges that are new and evolving daily, personal demand and external or environmental professional stressors,

the indicators of these personal and professional demands, de-stressors for personal and professional demands, research on systemic school improvement strategies and leadership reform. Chapter 3 introduces the methodology and metrics to include the setting and participants, sampling procedures, instrumentation and measures, reliability, validity, data collection and analysis, ethical issues, and summary. Chapter 4 is an exploration of the findings from the research surveys and analysis, to include an introduction, quantitative data analysis and findings of the qualitative research. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the summary of this study, implications for practice, recommendations for further research, conclusions, and summary.

Summary

The transformation of the educational landscape is possible to address the socio-emotional health of teachers and improve retention. When the conditions are set, teachers can feel liberated and empowered to create an environment in their classrooms and schools that are more effective and less stressful (Walker, 2018). They can personally implement strategies that serve as de-stressors and engage in palliative practices to alleviate stress. It is the responsibility of leaders, schools, and systems to act to remedy this epidemic in education today.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Stress was originally defined by Hans Selye in 1936, as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change" (American Institute of Stress, 2019). Stress is complicated and hard to define as the definition has evolved and morphed into different uses, misuses, and scenarios. Selye's original work was rooted in applying persistent stressors to lab animals to correlate stress to the development of diseases that could be mirrored in humans. As a result of his work, stress became a buzzword. Unfortunately, many people attached the meaning of stress to a negative connotation so Selye had to "create a new word, stressor, to distinguish stimulus from response" (American Institute of Stress, 2019). Although stress has received a bad reputation, stress can motivate individuals and operate as a catalyst for success. "Stress can be a galvanizing emotion that gets us moving toward completing our goals" (Sult, 2019).

Stress is commonly defined as "physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension" or another popular definition of stress is, "a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize" (American Institute of Stress, 2019). Stress is unavoidable; every person does experience stress and every workplace can be perceived as stressful at times. Good stress, eustress, is healthy and productive. Eustress typically leads to positive results and healthy physical attributes. Stress can be harmful when individuals transition from eustress over the hump and into distress. The negative consequence of stressors results in fatigue, exhaustion, ill health, and eventually a breakdown as illustrated in the figure of the Human Function Curve from Nixon in 1976 which was later simplified into the Biopsychosocial Model divided into three parts; calm, eustress, and distress (American Institute of Stress, 2019).
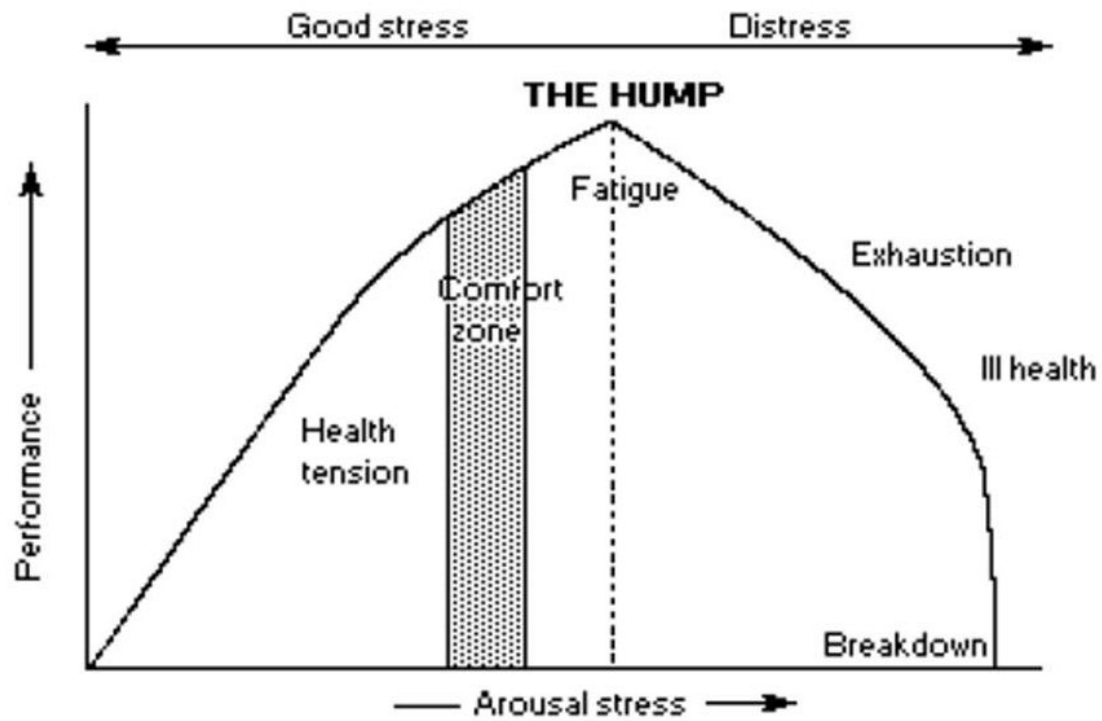
Figure 3. 1. The Human Function Curve (Nixon, 1976)
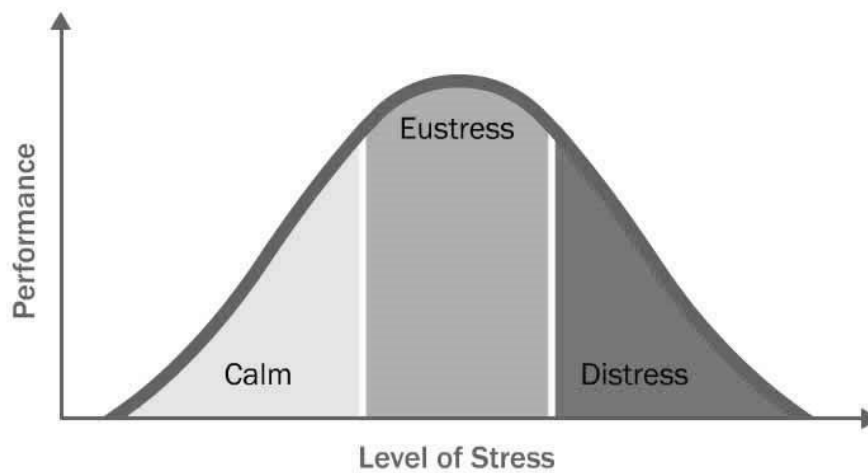
Figure 4. 1. The Biopsychosocial Model (American Institute of Stress, 2019).

As verified by the American Psychological Association (2014), the number one cause of stress in the United States is job pressure related to work overload, co-worker tension, and administration. Teachers are certainly not immune to stress as it is a high-stress profession. Teachers are experiencing more grave emotional complications related to their occupation. Stress is interfering with their quality of work and complicating their quality of life. "Persistent stress can result in professional burnout and burnout is the accumulation of responses to extended stressors caused by one's job" (Herman, Hickmon-Rosa, & Reinke, 2017). This burnout is further defined by Herman et al. as "characteristics of burnout are emotional exhaustion, cynicism (depersonalization), and low levels of self-efficacy as cited in Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001). It is important to find the right balance for stress. "Stress is inevitable in our lives, but by learning to recognize it, and knowing whether it is helping or hurting, we can keep it in balance so it's beneficial" (Sult, 2019).

Stress and burnout of teachers are causing a crisis within the education system. Educators in the 21st-century learning environment are facing stressors (demands) and challenges that are new and evolving daily. Because of the expectations and pressure to perform and succeed, teachers are experiencing stress and burnout. Due to the increased amount of frustration, anxiety, and exhaustion teachers are suffering, they are choosing to leave the profession (Rosales, 2011). Stress and burnout may be traced to an extensive list that can be strategically divided into internal (self-imposed) and external (environmental) origins in education today. These demands contribute to teacher dissatisfaction and demoralization (Walker, 2018). The research over the years evaluates concerns in many generalized groupings of educators and does not examine the role of educators individually. To circumvent the growing crisis in education, understanding the intrapersonal and interpersonal factors in

combination with strategies and systematic solutions to eliminate stress from within the individual and from within the educational organization are extremely relevant. Six themes pertinent to this research study and discussed in this section include: (a) personal demands, (b) external professional demands, (c) indicators of the personal and professional demands, (d) de-stressors for personal demands, (e) de-stressors for professional demands, and (f) site and systemic implications and recommendations.

<div align="center">**Stressors**</div>

Personal Demands

"The phenomenon of occupational stress is becoming increasingly globalized and affects all countries and all professions" (Tahseen, 2010, p.107). Teaching is widely recognized as a stressful occupation. The increasing requirements and expectations in schools across the United States and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) mandate of a "highly qualified teacher" in every classroom mutually increases the demands on teachers. Teachers are exiting the profession in hefty numbers for a large assortment of reasons, some of them are personal but many are external or environmental. There is some accountability reliant on the relationship between the individual and the environment as expanded on within the Person-Environment (P-E) fit methodology that originated with researchers, Lewin and Murray, and their findings concerning the relationship between the person and environment (Yang, Che, & Spector, 2010). Specifically, person and environment work as joint determinants of employees' well-being, with the misfit between the person and the environment. Although in the field of education, professional demands seem to outnumber personal demands. However, the personal ones are just that, personal, and emotionally may be more significant. They may outweigh the environment in importance to the teacher when deciding to choose alternative careers and ultimately leave the

profession.

Personal reasons teachers are listing as their catalyst to change are family issues, health issues, pay and benefits, feelings of inadequacy or isolation, or disillusionment. Family issues range from marriage, parenting, taking care of ill or elderly parents or extended family, and other outside of school responsibilities. When family conflicts with work responsibilities it often creates a stress response within the teacher (Quick et al., 1997). The "conflicts between work expectations and parenting opportunities are common and inevitable" (Hargrove et al., 2011, p. 183). Interpersonal stress is a result of demands that conflict between work and home and does not always originate in the workplace. At home, when a loved one is ill or there is a death, it is an external stressor that often carries over into the work environment. Teachers inevitably bring a large proportion of stress symptoms they experience off the job to the work environment (Hargrove et al., 2011). These stress symptoms often create health symptoms or problems such as anxiety, avoidance, burnout, depression, dependency, exhaustion, sleep and eating disorders, and more which will be explored in the section *Indicators of the Personal and Professional Demands*.

Personality traits such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, perfectionism, coping ability, and resilience have an impact on a teacher's stress level. Some teachers experience a role-based conflict in recognizing that some teacher duties require a restrictive and repetitive task in an isolated working environment, but their personality is highly creative, free-thinking, and extroverted (Hargrove et al., 2011). It does not mean that this personality type cannot find joy in teaching, but it does require reflection and mentorship to assist the teaching in finding success and personal value within their work. Perfectionism has positive and negative effects on an individual. When there are negative reactions to imperfection there is an increased amount of

pressure to be flawless (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). Coping, when maladaptive or avoidant can lead to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, lack of personal accomplishment and/or burnout for an educator (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). "One of the most prevalent risk factors, especially for novice teachers, is a sense of isolation" with feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and inadequacy prevailing (Prilleltensky, et al., 2016, p.105). Schools have very little in place to develop relationships among teachers. As a result, teachers may become cynical and disillusioned causing them to leave their careers as teachers seeking a more fulfilling position elsewhere. Often the educational field utilizes a blame approach to why teachers are leaving teaching in record numbers. The blame is focused on individuals or programs, often a lack of resilience or grit on the part of the teacher or poor levels of pre-service or prior teaching experience and development (Gallant & Riley, 2013). This is a shortsighted view. Many other variables may contain essential information to stemming the outflow. They must be explored to create a plan to intervene and rectify the problem in our schools today.

Professional Demands

"Overwhelmed, hectic, isolation, beaten down, unsupported, scared, humiliated, afraid, stressed, and drowning" are words used by elementary teachers to describe their first year of teaching (Anhorn, 2008). Being a new teacher is daunting but even seasoned teachers are experiencing high levels of stress and that is taking a toll on all teachers in the 21st-century educational setting. These feelings are leading many teachers to make a mass exodus for a long list of reasons. Many sources of stress compound the growing problem but students, specifically their behavior, generational traits, and increasing special needs, rise to the top. Teachers are citing students, in one way or another, are the primary reason for leaving the profession (Prilleltensky, et al., 2016). They are relating this to their perception that they are unable to meet

the demands made upon them. Student behavior is paramount among the challenges of teachers. The student population of the 21st century, the millennials typically born between 1982 and 2004, are generally defined as confident and connected. They have "multiple modes of self-expression, a good relationship with their parental figures, and are poised to be the most educated generation in American history" (Mazer & Hess, 2016, p. 257). Unfortunately, they also suffer from "academic entitlement as the expectation of academic success and inflated self-esteem" (Mazer & Hess, 2016, p. 366). Millennials often apply their "everyone's a winner" mentality but can be overwhelmingly fragile and anxious (Zemke, 2001). Millennial students are digital natives and the newer Generation Z, born between 1996 and 2015, are even more technologically advanced. They have never known a world without a smartphone or internet. They prefer communication through technology and are exposed to a great number of perspectives and a plethora of information. They are visually driven, independent, and confident. They are not necessarily relying on their parents as the millennial generation. Generation Z's characteristics also include shortened attention spans and proficiency at multitasking (Robertson, 2018). These are all challenges that teachers are facing in the classroom, how to adjust the instructional model to engage this diverse learning population and challenge the status quo of the education system.

Within this population of Millennials and Generation Z, there are a growing number of students with special needs. Many teachers express they are completely unprepared to teach in today's inclusive classrooms (Anhorn, 2008). Many new teachers lack the preparation and understanding of writing and implementing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or in parochial schools, Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs). These are critical to student success but can be stressful for teachers to adhere to, often creating an enormous amount of additional preparation and work. Students are coming into the mainstream classrooms with a growing

number of low incidence disabilities as well as high achieving or gifted students. This diverse group of students left teachers unqualified to plan the curriculum and meet the academic and behavior needs of all their students.

Classroom management and student conflicts are a close second to student concerns but are similar in manner. The literature results indicate that classroom characteristics, such as management, and the average number of disciplinary incidents are playing a greater part in determining teacher attrition (Feng, 2010). The concerns are across the board in public and parochial schools and middle-class to affluent is a "newly identified at-risk group" (Barkin, Miller, & Luthar, 2015, p. 845). This population has seen a growth in aggressive behavior, academic dishonesty, antisocial behaviors, depression, and anxiety. Implementing a faith-based or spiritually infused curriculum shows "associations with better mental health, life satisfaction, and decreased antisocial behaviors" (Barkin, et al., 2015, p. 856). Teachers are called to be counselors, investigators, and mediators that teach life skills, values, and coping mechanisms. Teachers need more targeted, specific, and ongoing training in classroom management and diffusing student conflicts if they are to be successful in this complicated and stressful endeavor.

Listed high in the research on high levels of stress also includes relationships and unrealistic or unclear expectations that impact health and job satisfaction. Stressful relationships include those mostly between teachers with their colleagues, parents, and principals (Nagel & Brown, 2003). Teachers are expected to be able to have effective communication and positive connections with students, parents, colleagues, and supervisors. However, interpersonal relationships such as these can be an area of risk and can create a great amount of stress (Prilleltensky et al., 2016). Lack of collegial support greatly impacts teachers and interpersonal stress often occurs because of personality clashes, different leadership styles, and diversity

(Hargrove et al., 2011). This specific conflict can result in tremendous strain, exhaustion, and isolation. Social isolation is also relationship-oriented. Teachers state this isolation as another catalyst to their leaving. Classrooms by their physical nature isolate teachers with their students for long periods. New teachers specifically feel isolated as they learn about their new school site, policies, expectations, and assimilate to the culture. They fear to ask questions for fear that it will appear they are unprepared or do not have the appropriate knowledge to do their job well (Anhorn, 2008). Often more experienced teachers wear their time served as a badge of honor and often believe new teachers must "figure it out" or "make it" on their own". This also contributes to the feeling of overwhelming isolation. Teachers want to work in an environment where they belong and are part of a team.

Parents are another challenging set of variables that create stress for a variety of reasons. Generations such as the Millennials which include the newer generation of teachers and parents are challenging as a result of their "different attitudes, expectations, preparation, strengths, and shortcomings" (Morreale & Staley, 2016, p. 370). Millennials need a strong rapport and need to make personal connections. Millennials are teaching students that are Millennials, Generation Z, and the newest entering generation, Alpha (Dimmock, 2019). Another theme of discontent comes from the Millennial or "helicopter parents" and their inability to let their students fail and their sense of entitlement (Morreale & Staley, 2016). Their desire to connect with teachers also leaves teachers in a quandary of appropriate relationships and boundaries. Teachers stated in comparing relationships with students, colleagues, and parents that their greatest perception of stress came from parents' expectations for them to be perfect and contributed to higher levels of physical and mental burnout and cynical feelings associated with a lack of personal achievement (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). Teachers need preparation and training to learn how to establish

professional boundaries, conduct meetings and interact appropriately with parents. Parents are sometimes perceived as the bully and the harassing parent is becoming more common in schools often demanding information, meetings, and results within an unreasonable timeframe, inappropriate location, or in an overbearing manner.

Relationships with supervisors or principals also have an enormous effect on the teacher and their emotions, morale, self-efficacy, stress, and ultimately, commitment (Lambersky, 2016). Their perception of not being valued, heard, understood, and undermined greatly reduces their job satisfaction.   Along with relationships, a clear understanding of expectations in all aspects of teaching is significantly valued and when it is not present, teachers become lost, confused, and often feel emotionally unsupported. New teachers are often placed in grade levels or subjects they are unqualified to teach with students in their classes that have high needs in areas that new teachers lack experience in with little regard to the person-environment fit (Gallant & Riley, 2013). Role ambiguity also relates to many aspects to the teaching profession outside the actual instruction of students with an abundance of overburdened additional responsibilities such as substituting, serving on committees, additional meetings, endless paperwork, supervision, and a variety of other duties (Lambersky, 2016). Teachers need to have a clear understanding of their role and expectations, so they can meet the demands placed on them daily in their profession (Nagel & Brown, 2003). Often role expectations are confusing, ambiguous, or conflicting (Hargrove et al., 2011).

Throughout the literature, there is a recurring theme of "a lack of." This includes a lack of administrative support, lack of resources, lack of professional development, lack of time, lack of mentorship, lack of autonomy, and lack of parental support. This exhaustive list may lead some to question, "what are we doing right in education?" but it is through thoroughly examining

the stressors, a plan may be created to improve our teacher's experience and ultimately encourage them to stay in the profession. The lack of administrative support quickly rises to the top of the list when comparing literature on teacher stress and coping. In many studies, teachers attributed their leaving teaching due to a lack of emotional support from school leadership. This can be attributed to frequent leadership changes at school sites, lack of trust, conditions for success, awareness, and/or empathy (Gallant & Riley, 2014). A poor administrative climate reflects a poor teacher climate. Yarrow (2009) reports teachers responded to a survey that 40% of them are disheartened by the support they receive from their school administration. The data links that feeling of disheartenment specifically to their school site principals. The poor rating is reflective of their principal's lack of support and working conditions or climate. The survey also reports student behavior as a credible reason as well as high stakes testing under the direct control of the school administration (Fullan, 2010). Teachers report low morale and job satisfaction with a direct link to the influence a principal has over their day-to-day and overall school work experience. They express feelings of being unknown, unheard, unacknowledged, and unappreciated by their principal. Ultimately, teachers are looking for professional respect from their principals.

The lack of resources is a broad and evolving area as it covers physical materials, people, technology, training, and much more. Many schools are suffering from dwindling resources and it is a source of frustration for many teachers that they do not have the appropriate materials for instruction. The opposite situation creates an equal amount of concern, an overwhelming amount of resources. With many resources, there is severely insufficient time and training on how to use these resources such as curriculum, technology, initiatives, and new programs. Fullan and Quinn (2016) refer to this as "initiativitis" and it is exhausting teachers. Professional

development is critical to the quality of teaching and instruction and builds collective capacity (Fullan, 2010). Many teachers struggle with the ongoing duties of planning differentiated and engaging lessons, pacing guides and building rubrics, grading endless papers, projects, and tests, preparing to teach on multiple subjects and levels, managing special student needs, and keeping up with paperwork, recording and reporting of grades, and email communication (Nagel & Brown, 2003). The workload can be daunting for new teachers and veteran teachers alike. Lack of mentorship appears to relate to the stress many teachers are feeling which creates an unhealthy and counterproductive working environment. Teachers need adequate support in their jobs, structure, consistency, and the freedom to make mistakes (Anhorn, 2008). New teachers need mentorship to help them acclimate, seek solutions to challenges, promote positive teaching strategies, and continue to develop them as professionals. New teachers need support networks that include "mentoring, orientation, ongoing induction programs, and real-life teacher education preparation" (Anhorn, 2008, p. 19).

Rounding out the "a lack of" list is a lack of autonomy and parental support. Autonomy is not only important to new teachers; all teachers desire autonomy, no matter how long they have been in the profession. The lack of autonomy and professional courtesy is found in many schools and is disheartening to professionals that desire to be treated as such. Parents can be positive in a teacher's professional life, but they can also be stressors as discussed earlier regarding their high and sometimes unreasonable expectations. Unfortunately, the pendulum swings the other way as well. Parents can often be unsupportive and absent in the education process. Often teachers are the ones expected to deliver concerning news to parents such as an awareness of learning difficulties, peer relationship concerns, behavioral problems, psychological misgivings, and other observations. Parents are often confrontational and often

"side" with their students. Many students have two working parents that are unavailable to help students with homework, extra academic instruction, attend school conferences, volunteer in the classroom, and much more. While it is many times the circumstances that prevent parents from being involved, there are many cases in which parents are neglectful or their child's academic, social, and emotional growth and is not a priority.

Technology adoption and innovation has changed the face of education and is greatly impacting the daily lives of teachers. They are asked to not only utilize technology for instruction and innovation but for record-keeping, testing, and measuring diverse standards with. Learning the many different platforms required for teaching may be overwhelming. The online curriculum often needs a great deal of frontloading and ongoing assigning and maintenance. Teachers are also often required to keep webpages, digital portfolios, and blogs current. Students of the 21st century are immersed daily in the digital world and will require us to "reconceive how learners interact with information" (Hosek & Titsworth, 2016, p. 258). Technology does not necessarily indicate progressive education but is an essential tool for the teacher and student. This challenge will keep educators continually trying to embrace today's students while navigating the challenges of balancing the needed "recast" of technology in the education system (Fullen & Quinn, 2016).

Class size is a hot topic among all in the education field: teachers, administrators, district personnel, parents, and lawmakers. Everyone seems to have an opinion and teachers are at the top of the list. While research shows there "virtually no evidence that it (class size) has a positive impact on student learning" but has an enormous impact on budgets, there is teacher perception and stress that must also weigh in on the discussion (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). As class sizes are increasing, teachers are noticing that supports and resources for teachers are being cut

(Walker, 2016). Not only are class sizes increasing, but there are also more and more mainstreamed students in the classrooms today. Classes are comprised of many students with additional special needs to include many allergies and other modern diagnoses. Teachers are being asked to serve populations of students in which they may not have experience or familiarity with little or no training. Work and teaching loads are growing, and their days are over-programmed.

High stakes testing, standards-based reporting, and data have created a great deal of angst within the education world. In a professional school culture that promotes high expectations for all constituents, educators are called to be ethically accountable for a classroom environment conducive to effective learning and measurable student achievement and growth. This does not begin with the student; it begins with the teacher and their qualifications. Teacher credentialing is a requirement with guidelines set forth by the United States Department of Education which requires a bachelor's degree, possession of state certification, and demonstration of subject matter competence. Each state can further determine their requirements and level of rigor individual to their state's needs and expectations. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act helps to provide and ensure that all students in the United States of America's education system would be equally served by highly qualified teachers. The NCLB Act of 2001 "reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and expands on major reforms, particularly in the areas of state academic standards, assessment, accountability, and school improvement" (CDE, 2014, p. 1). There is an unprecedented shortage of teachers and administrators nationwide (Webb & Norton, 2013). With an increasing number of students, new ratio requirement, and the number of teachers prepared versus leaving the profession, it becomes imperative to find quality teachers that possess the training and credentials to fill open positions.

The state and federal regulations on certification impact the number of available teachers in a time when the nation needs more teachers than ever before. It is predicted that the supply of teachers may increase with the "growth of alternative certification programs" (Webb & Norton, 2013, p. 195). Competency testing has also had an impact on the educational system and the teachers. The NCLB Act mandates all teachers are highly qualified, meaning in most states, they must pass rigorous testing regarding curriculum and instructional skills. Teachers must stay current and certified which can be a drain on already limited time and finances. These unending requirements cause further stress and the questioning if it "is all worth it?"

Testing of students and reporting on testing has changed the landscape of education and greatly impacts day-to-day planning and instruction. Standardized tests are leaving teachers and students stressed; both feel the pressure to perform (Walker, 2016). Accountability is important and can be part of a strengthening process, but many teachers see the process as punitive "designed to punish for lack of performance" whether by local, state, or federal requirements (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 11). "The history of the teaching profession is laced with assumptions of and conditions for isolated, individual responsibility (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 113). Changes in education policy, varied assessments of student performance, and increased school accountability leave teachers in a position of continually adapting. This ongoing transformation results in a continually moving mark for success. Even with this understanding, teachers are being held responsible for students achieving "targets" on standardized tests (Lambersky, 2016). Schools and teachers are being measured by this data. The reporting and comparing test scores publicly leave teachers feeling vulnerable, judged, and pitted against their colleagues. There is great stress to perform well as individuals and schools even though there are many factors at play that can impede even the best of teachers and schools. It is a source of great stress that student

achievement test results will play a role in a teacher's professional value, appraisal, or evaluation. "In the end, it is the education system that blames the teacher for students who fail, placing responsibility on the teacher for the choices that others, such as parents, prior teachers, and students make" (Rosales, 2011).

Finally, organizational change, although inevitable, causes anxiety and tension for teachers. Successful schools hinge on a learning organization that promotes people working together well as they pursue building collective capacity (Sharratt, 2018). Trust is an essential ingredient in achieving this environment. A revolving door of leaders and teachers makes this trust and commitment difficult to achieve. Research states that "teachers perceived for themselves and the school climate, particularly their relationship with administrators, may be extremely important in predicting job stress" (Tahseen, 2010, p. 108). School organization and administration are categories linked to stress and are greatly impacted by transition and instability.

Indicators of the Personal and Professional Demands

The result of personal and professional demands or stressors can have both positive and negative impacts. For this research study where improving retention is being investigated, the negative aspects of stress will be the focus. There are many indicators of the demands that manifest themselves physically and/or internally. The negative outcomes of distress can be separated into three categories per Hargrove et al. (2011). They include behavioral consequences, psychological consequences, and medical consequences. Interpersonal demands may include a host of negative coping mechanisms such as alcohol, eating disorders, interpersonal conflict amongst colleagues, or workplace bullying. A psychological consequence is often burnout. "Empirical evidence suggests a strong negative relationship between social

support and burnout" (Hargrove et al., 2011).   The number one indicator of teacher attrition according to research is burnout, a term coined by Freudenberfer in 1974 (Lambersky, 2016). "The personal, societal, and financial costs associated with burnout are too high to ignore" (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus & Davidson, 2013, p. 182). Burnout is having a negative effect and is impacting professionals in the educational setting (Przygocki, 2004). Zhang and Zeller (2016) state, "one-half of all educators are leaving the field of education within the first five years" (p. 74). They contribute that this high statistic is a result of this rampant burnout. Teachers are extremely vulnerable to burnout when the professional demands are imbalanced with their personal and professional resources and the pressures exceed one's ability to cope or succeed (Reiser & McCarthy, 2018). Other psychological consequences include sleep and anxiety disorders.

Medical consequences of distress are usually a direct result of behavioral and/or psychological concerns compounded with the physical effects of stress on the body. The hypothalamus, a "tiny control tower in the brain" releases stress hormones (American Institute of Stress, 2019). These hormones produce the "fight or flight" response in the body that makes the heart race, breathe accelerate, and muscles react. This is a natural response to protect the body and enacting the ability to react. When this occurrence happens frequently, it can pose a risk to an individual's health creating symptoms of chronic stress. Symptoms of chronic stress include irritability, anxiety, depression, insomnia, and can cause physical responses such as nervous, respiratory, cardiovascular, digestive, muscular, immune, and other diseases (American Institute of Stress, 2019). Other medical consequences associated with distress are cancer, back pain, headaches, and gastrointestinal conditions (Quick et al., 1997).

Indicators of the demands are also exhibited in teacher anxiety, avoidance, depression, sleep disorders, exhaustion, dependency, and other mental and physical manifestations of stress. There has been a substantial link between the socio-emotional health of teachers that directly influences their "confidence and enthusiasm" for the field of education (Carton & Fruchart, 2014). Understanding the reasons teachers' exhibit these indicators of stress and how to actively engage to alleviate them is critical to the survival of the teaching force. Research states that teachers can help manage their stress through their coping mechanisms or de-stressors. Outcomes of stress can be either positive or negative. The positive can bring about heightened alertness, improved performance, and coping stimuli. Negative consequences may include medical, psychological, and behavioral distress (Hargrove et al., 2011).
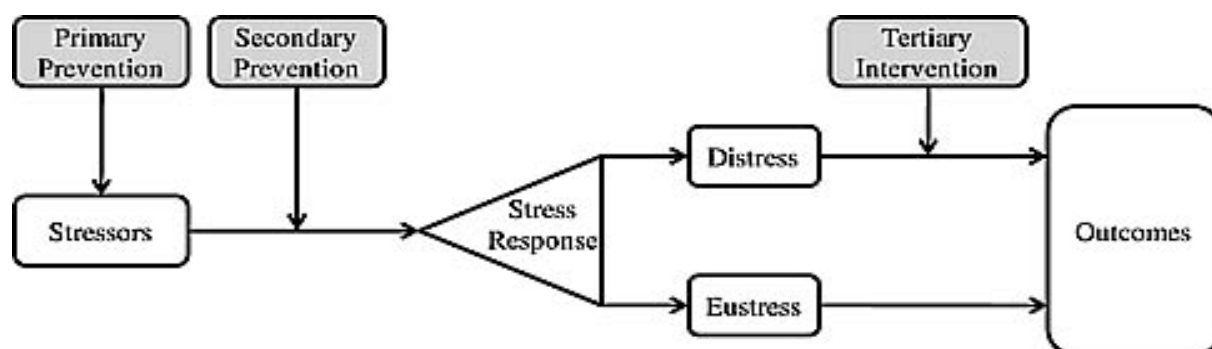
Figure 5. 1. Preventative Stress Management Model (Hargrove et al., 2011)

When indicators of stress become apparent and the stress response is initiated, some strategies or de-stressors can assist in maintaining a healthy socio-emotional balance. The Preventative Stress Management Model helps move personal stress outcomes into the positive range by implementing positive and preventative interventions to manage stress (Hargrove et al., 2011). Strategies or de-stressors offer the opportunity for prevention and mitigation to ultimately impact outcomes as mediated by the response of the individual to the stressor.

While helping improve teacher stress is paramount, it is also critical to investigate the

indicators, interventions, and outcomes of the organizational health of schools and school systems. An important consideration is the "effects of stress on individuals within an organization and the organization as a whole" (Hargrove et al., 2011). When indicators are signaling high-stress consequences, organizational leaders must act and implement change strategies or de-stressors to promote healthy teachers and schools. When leaders take on a proactive approach to understanding preventative stress management practices and implementing emotional support and regulation opportunities for teachers, it will yield a happier and more productive work and learning environment for all.

<div align="center">**De-stressors**</div>

Personal Demands

Individuals are unique and so are strategies for personal de-stressors. The research displays some de-stressors consistently work for a large majority and when applied with judiciousness, may be effective at lowering stress to a healthy and productive level. Top strategies for positive de-stressors are interconnected with meditation or prayer, mindfulness, gratitude, wellness, self-efficacy, and consistently applied positive coping skills. Also, pay and benefits contribute to personal satisfaction and help maintain a healthier socio-emotional balance for teachers.

Teacher socio-emotional health can be boosted by reducing stressors but also by increasing de-stressors. Research supports actively engaging in the pursuit of socioemotional health by cultivating meaningful work relationships, celebrating achievement and success, and "cultivation of gratitude and positive emotions" (Prilleltensky, et al., 2016, p.107). The investment of time in spiritual renewal such as gratitude, prayer, mindfulness, and reflection distinguish themselves as the most prevalent category for mitigating stress as a means of

reducing distress and promoting eustress according to research. Having its roots in Latin *gratia,* meaning grace, gratitude or thankful appreciation ranks high on the list of considerations for happiness according to psychology research (Harvard Medical School, 2019). There is an association between gratitude and an individual's well-being. Employees that have supervisors that thank them report being more motivated to work harder. Gratitude may be expressed by writing a thank you note, mentally giving praise for another person or gift, keeping a gratitude journal, focus on blessings, pray, and/or meditate.

Techniques for directly managing and changing the stressor or one's perception of the stressor (Hargrove et al., 2011) are de-stressors or personal strategies. Through self-reflection, teachers may identify and acknowledge what intensifies their stress levels. Awareness often gives life to prayer and meditation which is often associated with better mental health, life satisfaction, and decreased antisocial behavior (Barkin, Miller, & Luthar, 2015). Self-compassion, acceptance, mindfulness, and active coping directly stem from meditation and or prayer for those that are religious. Meditation allows the mind to focus on being present in the moment without judgment combined with diaphragmatic breathing strategies that help create emotional balance (Nagel & Brown, 2003). This is often an opportunity to focus on a word or phrase that brings peace or on something that the person is grateful for to bring about awareness and refocus on what is important (Harvard Medical School, 2019). "Mindfulness is a practice rooted in Buddhist philosophy that centers in paying attention to the present moment with intention and awareness, while suspending judgmental attitudes toward the self" (Reiser et al., 2016) and might be a tool enacted for teacher self-care. The mindfulness-based practice offers potential as a means to heighten teacher awareness of stress and prevention (Flook et al., 2013) and promote healthier teachers and classrooms. A growth mindset is another psychological

strategy aimed at coping with negative feelings and emotions (Prilleltensky, et al., 2016). These de-stressors help to promote feelings of acceptance and control. They produce a mindset in which challenges are not seen as a negative or reflection of incompetence or inadequacy but instead as opportunities for learning, growth, and success. Gratitude journals offer opportunities to reflect on specific events or special gifts received each day. When challenges arrive, this is a tangible resource to refer to and remember encouraging sensations, feelings, and affirmations to continue to cultivate gratitude and a healthier outlook.

Wellness is a comprehensive category that encompasses de-stressors such as exercise, proper nutrition, sleep, and self-care. Good exercise routines include cardiovascular, muscular, and flexibility training combined with a healthy diet help reduce distress among teachers (Hargrove et al., 2011). Exercise builds resiliency to stress while burning stress hormones and research advocates the long-term benefit of exercise suggests that the "secretion of stress hormones decreases in the physically fit individual" (Nagel & Brown, 2003, p. 256). Proper nutrition promotes overall health, well-being, and energy level. A REM-filled regular sleep schedule is also critical for better moods and energy levels. Sleep-deprived individuals take longer to complete tasks and make more errors (Stuart, 2017).

Self-efficacy and coping skills can be divided into two different categories; active and palliative. Active strategies attempt to target and eliminate the stress while palliative attempts to mitigate the effects of the stress (Carton & Fruchart, 2014). Teacher efficacy varies on their ability to apply active and palliative strategies further impacted by their feelings of self-efficacy. Studies have presented that active strategies have a higher success rate over time, but palliative coping could "prove effective in reducing the intensity of stress and protecting self-esteem" (Carton & Fruchart, 2014, p.248) over the short term. There have been hundreds of studies

across many nations, across a variety of subjects, that have overwhelmingly established the importance of self-efficacy among teachers and collective teacher efficacy is the most salient (Lambersky, 2016).

Professional Demands

The list of identified de-stressors by research presents a wide-variety of strategies and experiences of educators. Administrative support rises quickly to the top of the list when comparing a large number of articles and experts on the subject. Following closely behind, there is evidence that effective collaboration, peer and social support, mentoring, induction programs, strong preparation, and ongoing professional development play a critical role in teacher satisfaction and retention. Other areas that seem to work as de-stressors but are not as prevalently mentioned in literature are effective communication, improved relationships, manageability, safe environments, and shared decision making.

The administration of the school plays a vital role in positively or negatively impacting teacher stress, it is the top-rated de-stressors among literature articles on teacher retention, efficacy, and satisfaction. Gallant and Riley (2014) research among the factors studied, they have focused on the role of the principal and the administration in general. Their research provides evidence of mentoring, counseling, encouragement, and promoting teacher ideas, collegiality, and positive attitudes that are related to teacher retention. Teachers desire authentic leadership that promotes a healthy environment with the present, positive, and actively engaged principals. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) state that teachers crave "accessible and respectful leadership" (p. 23). In the research study conducted by Lambersky (2016) to understand the principal's impact on teacher morale, self-efficacy, stress, and commitment, he states is findings strongly support the "centrality of emotions to the working lives of teachers" (p. 400). Principal

behaviors are also "more likely to lead teachers feeling more supported, more encouraged, and more committed" (p. 401).   Principals have the ability and means to assist in the destressing of teachers and supporting their socio-emotional health.

Lamberskey's (2016) study found the following:

Professional respect for teacher capability, providing appropriate acknowledgment for teacher commitment, competence, and sacrifice, and protecting teachers from damaging experiences like harassment; maintaining a visible presence in the school; allowing teachers' voices to be heard; and communication a satisfying vision for their school. (p. 401).

Abbey and Esposito (1985) report "teachers who perceive greater social support from their principals report less stress than those who do not" (as cited in Nagel & Brown, 2003, p. 255).

There is a great amount of pressure on administrators to create an environment that acts as de-stressors for their teaching team and staff.

 An effective collaboration that is supported by the time allotted regularly strongly desired by surveyed teachers and even ranks with supportive leadership as more important than higher salaries (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Teachers that are in quality preparation programs that combine pedagogical training with collaborative supervised field experience are more likely to produce teachers that will be committed to their profession and satisfied. The retention rates are higher when collaboration for professional opportunities to continue to grow and learn is present and prioritized. Meaningful collaboration allows individuals to work interdependently "to benefit from common goals that are immediately applicable in the classroom (Dufour & Fullan, 2013) and serves as a de-stressor reducing feelings of isolation and lack of support. Within

collaboration opportunities, teachers enjoy and benefit from peer and social support such as increased engagement and less exhaustion. Research shows a positive impact resulting in improved retention when teachers feel they are in school cultures that are growing. Retention is "building the cultural and intellectual capital of the profession" (Gallant & Riley, 2014, p. 563).

Professional and social supports help promote positive psychological and emotional corrections. Teachers need support networks that begin with an orientation that promotes belonging, role clarity, and expectations. Formal and informal mentoring is a de-stressor and strategy that is growing in importance in our school system today due to research that promotes its effectiveness. The definition of mentoring is "the action a person takes to provide support and assistance to another" (Prilleltensky et al., 2016, p. 106). When teachers have mentors, research is mounting that it improves a teacher's efficacy, job satisfaction, retention, feelings of competence, motivation, and increases their potential for staying 30% after their first year (Prilleltensky et al., 2016). A mentor program has regularly scheduled agendas, benchmarks, and objectives. Many induction programs have mentoring build within the structure of the program. Inductions are poised to promote retention when they include preparation meetings, offer a continuum of instruction over two to three years, provide networking and support, incorporate administrative support, including a mentoring component, and a structure for modeling effective practices and education (Breaux & Wong, 2003). Induction programs are often a component of pre-service programs for teachers. Strong pre-service programs have a significant impact on increasing the odds of a teacher staying the past five years with developed pedagogy, classroom practical experience, and a commitment to the profession.

Ongoing appropriate systematic professional development plays a critical role in teacher confidence, self-efficacy, satisfaction, and retention. A culture of growth and capacity building

results in contented teachers. Professional development that promotes retention is embedded in the daily work, engages people, is a collective process, aligns with system goals, and evaluated on results (Dufour & Fullan, 2013). Professional development leads to a positive school culture which leads to positive and happy teachers. Fullan (2010) provides a list of incentives that work for teachers in his book, *All Systems Go.* The list relates to "working conditions that enable groups to accomplish impressive results that have high moral value" (p.88) and correlates to the motivation of individuals. Fullan list includes good salaries, decent surroundings, positive climate, strong induction, extensive professional development, opportunity to work with and learn from others, supportive and assertive leadership, helpful feedback, reasonable class size, work agreements, and realizable moral purpose. The benefit is for all, but teachers are individually committed, experiencing success, and momentum.

The Site and Systemic Implications and Recommendations

Leaders in education must not forget "the human side of school leadership" (Lambersky, 2016). Schools are extremely aware of the importance of students' emotional and social health. Schools and districts are investing a large amount of revenue and time into implementing such programs. There is an abundance of newly designed programs available for and directed towards students but certainly fewer efforts to address teacher stress and burnout are readily available. Fortunately, there is growing recognition for the need for such programs and professional development. They are slowly being implemented in schools across the nation. The limited number of programs available has been narrow and varied meeting little success. The program is often a "one and done" professional development session that lacks traction as an initiative. There is a significant need for a well-designed program to create healthier employees that are systemically implemented and monitored for a healthier organization. The education would be

helpful as a part of pre-service teacher training, induction, and ongoing professional development (Flook et al., 2013). Also, based on Lamberskey's study (2016), there are recommendations to "include better preparation of principal candidates" and "providing appropriate training for principals currently in the role and placing savvy school leadership practices on the agenda for district and system leaders" (Lamberskey, p. 401). "Understanding the patterns of teacher stress and coping may help guide efforts to provide systems of support needed to reduce teacher burnout and attrition" and allow for successful attrition and ultimately teachers that enjoy socio-emotional health (Herman, Hickmon-Rosa, & Reinke, 2017).

Summary

In Chapter 2, the review of the literature was presented. Educators will always feel some stress as with any profession. It is also clear that teaching will continuously involve some stress (Nagel & Brown, 2003). There are many positive aspects to stress. It can "motivate teachers to try new instructional strategies, adopt innovative approaches to increasing student motivations, and reflect on their teaching" (Nagel & Brown, 2003, p. 257). It is the negative outcomes of stress that administrators and school district personnel need to be acutely aware of and create a plan for mitigation of the conditions for the health and retention of their teaching staff. The decision for teachers to leave is often protracted and cumulative. It is not evoked by one single event or issue (Gallant & Riley, 2013). Burnout is a risk for those in the teaching profession but is prevalent in many helping occupations. The same is true "for any workers who are highly invested or committed to such work" (Hargrove et al., 2011, p. 186). Two essential elements surface within the literature as the key to helping teachers be successful. These elements are emotional and professional support and strategies and a school culture that supports personal and professional growth. "If the most precious product developed in education is the student, then

our most prized commodity should be the classroom teacher" (Shaw & Newton, 2014, p. 101).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Through this study, the researcher intended to answer two primary research questions and three sub-questions. The questions encompass the sources of professional and personal stress and de-stressors for educators and the relationship to teacher stress and retention. Data gathered throughout the study helped identify strategies to positively employ strategies to reduce and manage stress at the personal and school environment level to result in a healthier education work atmosphere.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

Primary Question #1

What is the relationship between professional and personal stressors and de-stressors and the stress of TK-12 educators in Catholic schools?

Sub-Questions:

1. What circumstances within the context of parochial education are related to increasing stress?

2. What strategies can teachers employ to personally reduce and manage stress?

3. What strategies can be employed in the school environment to reduce stress for teachers?

Primary Question #2

What is the relationship between stress and retention for TK-12 educators in Catholic schools?

This study addresses research gaps in the area of (a) the role of educators individually, understanding their intrapersonal and interpersonal stressors and de-stressors and (b) a thorough investigation of the cause of attrition and a plan based on sound educational research to keep

highly qualified teachers in education. To address the research questions developed in this study, two hypotheses were identified. Support for these hypotheses was corroborated by the literature examined and the theoretical viewpoint utilized throughout this research.

1. Professional and personal stressors and de-stressors are associated with the stress of educators.

2. There is a relationship between the stress of educators and retention.

Setting and Participants

Teachers, transitional kindergarten (TK) through 12th grade (12), from 41 (TK-12) schools within a Catholic diocese from southern California were asked to partake in this research. California has 12 dioceses which include 569 Catholic elementary schools which enroll 165,282 students (California Catholic Conference, 2017). The southern diocese utilized within this research study has 34 elementary schools, 7 high schools, and approximately 1,900 teachers. Although the diocese is considered one district, it is made up of many diverse ethnic and socio-economic communities of students.

Table 1. 1

Racial and Ethnic Groups within the Diocese

	Total Population in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2016	% Catholic
White	1,300,135	254,000	20%
Hispanic	1,086,132	617,000	57%
Black	65,432	3,100	5%
Asian/Other	721,205	128,000	18%
Total	3,172,904	1,003,000	32%

Within a diocese there are typically four types of schools: Single Parish, Inter-Parish, Diocesan, and Religious Congregation or Private. The schools utilized represent these four types of schools within the diocese; it is possible to be more than one category. For example, a school may be a single parish school, a school supported by one parish and is diocesan, owned and operated by the Bishop of the diocese or an inter-parish school, more than one parish supports the school and diocesan. A school may also be a single parish school but governed by a Religious Congregation or a privately owned and governed school and recognized but not owned by the Bishop. The schools reflect the diverse cultural and socioeconomic variety seen within the southern California diocese. The schools surveyed represent diverse locations and socio-economic status within the diocese. The schools are in the inner-city, suburban, and urban and represent economically challenged areas as well as middle to upper-class communities. Many of the schools have a broad range of families from diverse socioeconomic groups. All the schools within the diocese pull from a general hiring pool of credentialed teachers desiring to teach within the diocese. The survey was offered to all teachers at each school.

The researcher submitted a letter of request to the Superintendent of Catholic Schools to present the research study to the principals within the diocese at a Diocesan Principal's Association meeting. At the meeting, the researcher extended an invitation to the principals to

include their teachers in the study. The assistant to the Superintendent then distributed the survey to the principals to disseminate to their teachers. The invitation was extended to the teachers and the survey was administered by the site administrator at the school sites. The completion of the survey took place during a faculty meeting to help ensure all participants were included and to increase the participation rate. Each teacher was allowed to participate voluntarily without fear of negative consequences should they abstain from participating in the research. The surveys were completed through Google Forms utilizing the technology available on-site or provided by the researcher.

Table 2. 1

NCEA Report 2018-2019 School Year: Elementary and Middle Schools in the Diocese

	Single Parish	Inter- Parish	Diocesan	Religious Congregation or Private	Total
Urban	10	2	9	2	23
Inner City	0	0	1	0	1
Suburban	7	0	2	1	10
Total	17	2	12	3	34

Table 3. 1

NCEA Report 2018-2019 School Year: Secondary Schools in the Diocese

	Single Parish	Inter- Parish	Diocesan	Religious Congregation or Private	Total
Urban	0	0	1	2	3
Inner City	0	0	0	0	0
Suburban	0	0	2	1	1
Rural	0	0	0	1	1
Total	0	0	3	4	7

Sampling Procedures

Sampling procedures can affect the credibility of a study and generalizability of the results (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). For this study, the initial convenience sampling group consisted of 1400 teachers from 41 TK-12 schools using population density to maintain a sample consistent with the overall makeup of Catholic schools. This study uses convenience and probability sampling. It is convenient as the researcher works within the diocese and has access to the participants. It is probability sampling in the fact that it infers that the small number of participants represent the larger population of teachers within the Catholic education system. It is important to identify and use a larger sample size to increase accuracy and statistical significance. Dividing the population into subgroups allows the researchers to analyze data to compare subgroup results.

In collecting the data from the teachers, it is critical to analyze to identify the difference in effect based on the different factors and to create concurrent validity within the sample to the extent in which the results correspond. There were ten questions to identify the demographics of this research group. The questions gathered information on gender, age income, and ethnicity, years teaching, years at their current school, current school name, grades they teach, highest degree earned, and the university attended for teacher preparation. The demographics gathered will be utilized when analyzing the data.

Table 4. 1

NCEA Report 2018-2019 Elementary and Middle School Staff by Ethnicity

	Catholic	Non-Catholic	Unknown	Total
Hispanic or Latino	315	7	0	322
Not Hispanic or Latino	988	144	10	1142
Total	1303	15	10	1464

Table 5. 1

NCEA Report 2018-2019 Elementary and Middle School Staff by Race and Religion

	Catholic	Non-Catholic	Unknown	Total
Native American	1			1
Asian	116	4	1	121
Black	4	3		7
Native Hawaii/PacIsl	16	1		17
White	1083	140	5	1228
Two or more races	35	4		39
Unknown	46		5	51
Total	1301	152	11	1464

Table 6. 1

NCEA Report 2018-2019 Secondary School Staff by Ethnicity

	Catholic	Non-Catholic	Unknown	Total
Hispanic or Latino	76	10	13	99
Not Hispanic or Latino	213	100	277	590
Total	289	110	290	689

Table 7. 1

NCEA Report 2018-2019 Secondary Staff by Race and Religion

	Catholic	Non-Catholic	Unknown	Total
Native American	2	0	0	2
Asian	19	12	5	36
Black	0	2	1	3
Native Hawaii/PacIsl	2	1	0	3
White	240	82	47	369
Two or more races	14	8	0	22
Unknown	13	4	237	254
Total	290	109	290	689

These questions were based on other research demographic criteria found in established research studies and in conjunction with looking at confounding variables outside the samples. Concurrent validity is a matter of degree. The "response processes used by participants and internal structure analyses can be used for evidence for validity" along with traits measures as similar and dissimilar (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 185). It is important to guard against bias and select samples that provide varied responses.

Instrumentation and Measures

The researcher utilized an explanatory mixed methods research design. The explanatory research method was selected to investigate relating stressors and de-stressors to socio-emotional health and retention in a detailed manner not thoroughly investigated in current research. The instrument created used to collect data for this study was a survey designed and deployed with Google Forms. This is an anonymous survey. In conducting educational research, demographic variables are required to control for confounding effects, but the researcher will not be identifying the teachers within the study. The research survey consisted of thirty-two closed-ended questions that include ten demographic questions and twenty-two Likert scale questions

and three open-ended questions with one open-ended question asking for a percentage to allow

for interval data for supplementary analysis (Sneyers, Jacobs, & Struyf, 2016). The quantitative

survey instrument consisted of a Likert-style questionnaire used to record each teacher's

experience with personal and environmental professional demands, indicators, and de-stressors.

The twenty-two Likert scale questions included ten stress health questions adapted from the

Perceived Stress Scale and twelve questions that were focused on the stressors and de-stressors

of teachers (Cohen, 1983). Surveyed teachers were asked to rate their beliefs based on a five-

point Likert scale of 1 = completely disagree to 5 = completely agree. The three open-ended

questions focused on the teacher's beliefs about their current school sites, the diocese, and their

future employment plans and allowed for qualitative data to be gleaned, initially analyzed, and

coded to identify themes and interpret the findings. The third open-ended question requested a

percentage that represents the likelihood the respondent will be teaching two years from now

using 1-100. This information will allow for interval data that can be analyzed to further

understand the intentions of the teacher and retention.

       Within the survey, there are questions designed to measure the dependent variable, the

stress of teachers. These questions were piloted with teachers in a K-8 Catholic school in a

diocese in southern California. The first ten questions are based on the Perceived Stress Scale

which evaluates their stress level and social-emotional health (Cohen, 1994). The Perceived

Stress Scale (PSS) is a very widely known psychological instrument for measuring the

perception of stress. It is a measure of one's perception of stress in life. The questions

(Questions11-20) were adapted to survey teachers and utilized the Likert Scale of 1 = completely

agree to 5 = completely disagree. Additionally, when measuring the independent variables,

professional and personal stressors and de-stressors, the Likert Scale of 1 = completely agree to 5

= completely disagree was designed to gather feedback. These twelve questions were based on questions found in the Workplace Stress Survey from The American Institute of Stress (AIS) in combination with the Teacher Concerns Inventory. Questions were used for guidance but were modified to meet the needs of the researcher for this study. Confounding variables such as teacher skill, interactions with peers, students and the parents, school culture and location, confidence in the administration, and other variables were measured (Questions 20-32). Finally, three open-ended questions were used to collect qualitative data on stressors, de-stressors, and retention with an interval percentage question requesting additional data regarding retention (Questions 33-36).

The first pilot survey was created and completed by twelve individuals. The teachers in the pilot study were asked to complete an additional feedback Google form that included questions such as how long it took you to complete the survey, provide any feedback you feel would be helpful to improve or clarify the survey questions, and any additional comments following the initial survey. Based on the feedback and analysis of the data that was returned, six of the ten independent variable questions were rewritten. Two questions were replaced, and four questions were reworked to improve the question quality and clarity. The Likert Scales were changed to align the questions in each category. One of the open-ended questions was rephrased.

A second pilot survey was then sent and completed by twelve individuals. The teachers again were asked to complete a feedback Google form that included questions such as how long it took you to complete the survey, provide any feedback you feel would be helpful to improve or clarify the survey questions, and any additional comments. Based on the feedback provided and analyzing the data that was returned, five of the ten independent variable questions needed the

questions rephrased to align the Likert Scales to avoid confusion on the part of the teacher participant and additional perceived stress questions were added.

A third and final pilot survey was sent to 36 teachers with 28 responses. The teachers again were asked to complete a feedback Google form. This data was formally analyzed to ascertain the strength of each question. Four Likert-scale questions were rewritten, and an additional part was added to one of the open-ended questions to gather more specific interval data. This final revised survey was sent to six trusted colleagues for verification that the survey was ready to release to the research participants.

Validity and Reliability

Reliability and validity are both critical for consistent and accurate data. "Reliability is consistency and validity is strength" (Personal Communication). Reliability is the degree to which a research instrument or survey produces consistent results (Flipp, 2014) and provides research results that are repeated (Gibbs, 2012). Validity speaks to the quality of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and its accuracy. To establish credibility within the body of work, the triangulation of sources, investigators, and methods must work together (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Within the researcher's work, it was essential to deploy strategies that create both validity and reliability. Employing strategies that emphasize qualitative terms will assist in the validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is also very important to mindful of the many threats that impede validity (Gibbs, 2012). The researcher displayed a need to be cognizant of not create a testing or bias threat. The researcher needed to investigate internal and external factors of stress on teachers and how to mitigate these stressors. Working within the educational field, the researcher has witnessed the credibility and importance of this study. It was important to formulate questions in a fashion that when questions raise the issues, they do not bias the

answers. Three pilot surveys were launched where each question, response, and feedback were considered to further establish the reliability and validity of the questions used in the final research survey.

In creating reliability, the researcher used Catholic elementary (TK-12) schools across a southern diocese in California. Although the schools are within the same diocese, they are very different in demographics. It was intentional to establish this cross representation of teachers, but they need to look for the "bulls-eye" for reliability was identified (Gibbs, 2012). Careful plans were established to avoid conclusions with the answers that varied significantly without consistency across all participants. The use of coding assisted significantly in evaluating results. There were many opportunities to code both research findings as well as the data received through surveys and open-ended questions to support and inform results. The importance of internal consistency is paramount when items or questions were comparing the same consistent content. The researcher utilized a survey that included a combination of Likert-scale and open-ended questions. In addition to the survey, the informed consent included language, which fully guaranteed confidentiality, informed the duration of the study, and a clause informing participants that participation was voluntary was included.

Increased validity was a direct result of utilizing the Perceived Stress Test as a guide for creating questions to assess the social-emotional health of educators (Cohen, 1983). This instrument is a widely used psychological measurement for the perception of stress. The questions are easy to understand and are general. There is high evidence for validity (Cohen, 1983).   Content validity also provided for a range of meanings of stress and de-stressors to be included within the construct of the instrument with inter-item or average item correlation. With internal validity proven within the study, generalizability is applied to K-8 Catholic school

teachers across the Diocese of Southern California as well as the surrounding area creating

external validity.

Table 8. 1

Variables, Concepts, and Constructs

Variable	Concept	Construct	Source
Independent	Professional and personal stressors and de-stressors	The Likert-style scale of 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). Questions 21-32)	Teachers' questionnaires
Dependent	Personal perception of stress level	Perceived Stress Scale (Questions 11-20)	Teachers' questionnaires
Demographics	Teachers in TK-12 diverse Catholic schools	Teacher Questionnaire (Questions 1-10)	Teachers' questionnaires
Confounding variables	Personal stressors and de-stressors such as teacher skill, grade-level, subject, students, parents, colleagues, location, the administration that affect retention	Three open-ended questions (Questions 31-33) with a % question for interval data.	Teachers' questionnaires

Plan for Data Collection

An introduction email and survey were distributed to over 1,900 teachers from schools in

the southern diocese of California. The survey was offered to all teachers at all the diocesan

elementary schools except for the school where the researcher was employed as the principal.

The teachers from the researcher's school participated in the pilot studies. They are not good

candidates for the study as there is the concern of bias. The researcher submitted a letter of

invitation to the teachers at the participating schools and the survey was facilitated by the site

administrator at each of the school sites. Whenever possible, the completion of the survey took

place during faculty meetings to help ensure all participants were included and to increase the

participation rate. Each teacher was allowed to participate voluntarily without fear of negative

consequences should they abstain from participating in the research. The surveys were

completed through Google Forms utilizing the technology available on-site or provided by the

researcher.
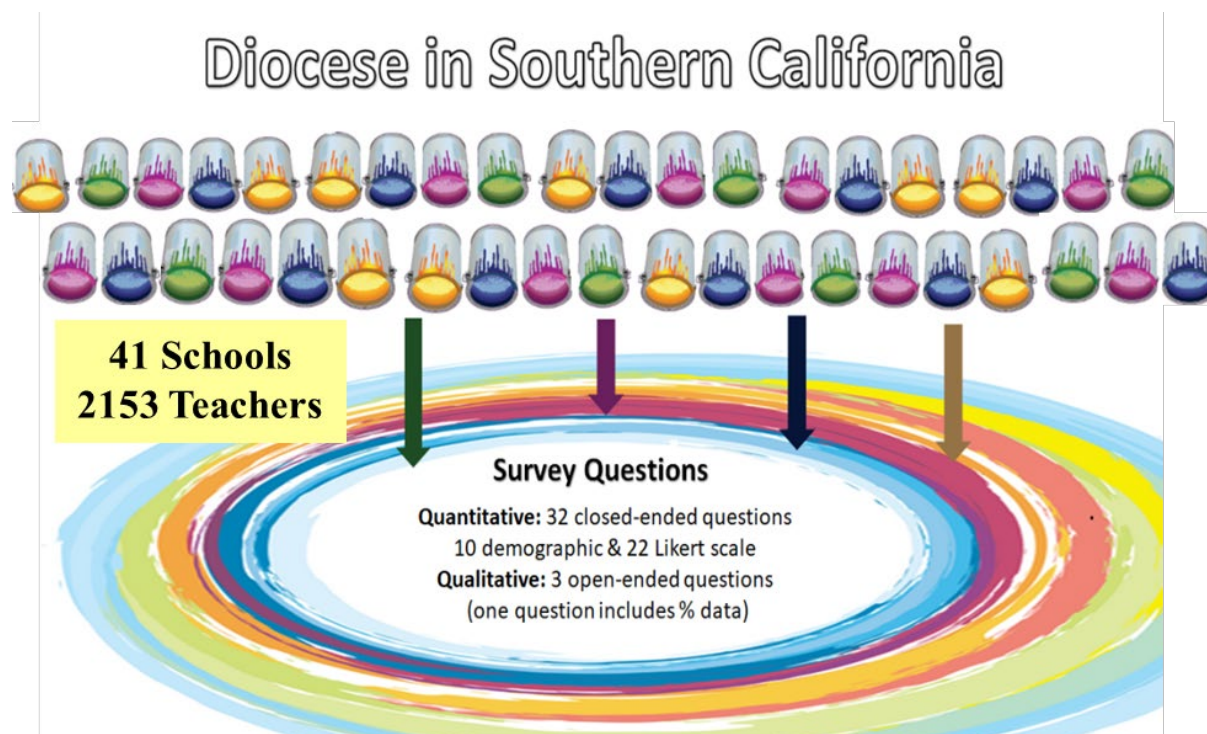
Figure 6. 1. Data Collection Flow (Tipton, 2019)

Data Analysis

The first ten questions were dedicated to collecting demographic information from the

participants. The next 22 Likert scale closed-ended questions included 10 questions focused on

identifying perceived stress in teachers utilizing the Perceived Stress Scale and an additional ten

questions were focused on stressors and de-stressors (Cohen, 1983). The first 10 questions were

analyzed to categorize high and low-stress groups within the participant sampling. These

questions were aimed at evaluating the participant's feelings and thoughts concerning stress. The

next 12 questions addressed teacher personal and environmental stressors and de-stressors.

Teachers were asked to rank their beliefs based on a five-point Likert scale of 1 = completely disagree to 5 = completely agree. Data was collected comparing the low and high perceived stress groups against the stressors and de-stressors scores.

The 32 closed-ended questions about demographics, perceived stress, stressors, and de-stressors were designed to collect quantitative data. Data analysis requires organizing the collected data into figures and/or tables.   The data from the first ten questions were analyzed by organizing the data into pie charts and tables using a descriptive approach for reporting demographics of the participating teachers. The survey gathered individual responses of gender, age income, ethnicity, years teaching, years at their current school, current school name, grades they teach, highest degree earned, and the university attended for teacher preparation.

The next 22 closed-ended questions were organized into charts and/or tables for analyzing and reporting. This provided an opportunity to analyze the data comparatively using four different correlations. The linear correlation is teacher personal and professional stressors and de-stressors relation to stress and ultimately to retention.

The three qualitative open-ended questions focused on the reasons for the teacher's stress, their response to stress, and their future employment plans for the next one to five years. This last open-ended question was intentionally added to address retention and a percentage question additionally to ascertain the likelihood, using percentage (1-100%), they would be teaching in two years from completion of the survey. The results of the open-ended questions collected created quantitative data for coding and ongoing analysis of trends and one interval data for further quantitative data. The three open-ended questions focused on the teacher's beliefs about their current stress, their response to stress, and their future employment plans for the next one to five years to ascertain future employment plans were analyzed and coded, noting specific

themes. Coding is creating chunks of data for a researcher to represent similar phenomenon and analyze data (Gibbs, 2010). Coding is not necessarily a counting method, but it can work that way in some instances. Coding might be connected to the famous quote "seeing is believing" to clarify the value and use of coding. When thoughts are visually represented, it makes them easier to sort and make sense of by finding similarities, themes, anomalies, and groupings. The four stages represented by Gibbs help clarify the importance of reading the research for understanding, reading again for detail, breaking apart the details for analysis, then interpreting and connecting to a research question. There are many strategies of coding and assessing interpretations as communicated by Creswell and Poth (2018), but it is essential to find the best analysis process to accurately address and answer the research questions. Phenomenological analysis and representation suggest a certain order to include the researcher's personal experiences, finding significant statements within the interviews, group the statements into broad units creating themes, describe the "what" and the "how" of the experiences both texturally and structurally, and finally create an essence or summary of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Using codes and memos to illustrate how the categories are related to one another fit naturally into many areas of this study helping to "prove" the core phenomenon of teacher attrition that links the demand on educator themes and assist in answering the proposed research questions (B. Karge, personal communication, March 2019). Specifically, the researcher used data from literature and created a spreadsheet that identifies the demands on educators into two categories. They are personal demands and external environmental demands. Within the spreadsheets, the recurring subtopics are coded by keywords which over time displayed common and recurring themes and isolating some areas out as infrequent (Gibbs, 2010). For example, as

noted on the environmental demands sorting sheet, the researcher tagged topics such as a changing assessment, class size, classroom management, colleagues, deadlines, and discipline. There are many additional tags, so the researcher sorted them alphabetically and then color-coded items that repeated themselves three, four, five, six, or more times. From the color coding, it was easy to indicate themes, eliminate outliers, and analyze the data (Gibbs, 2010). Interpreting which themes and their significance will help create connections and establish questions to use in the qualitative questionnaire to be used at the school sites for collecting research data.
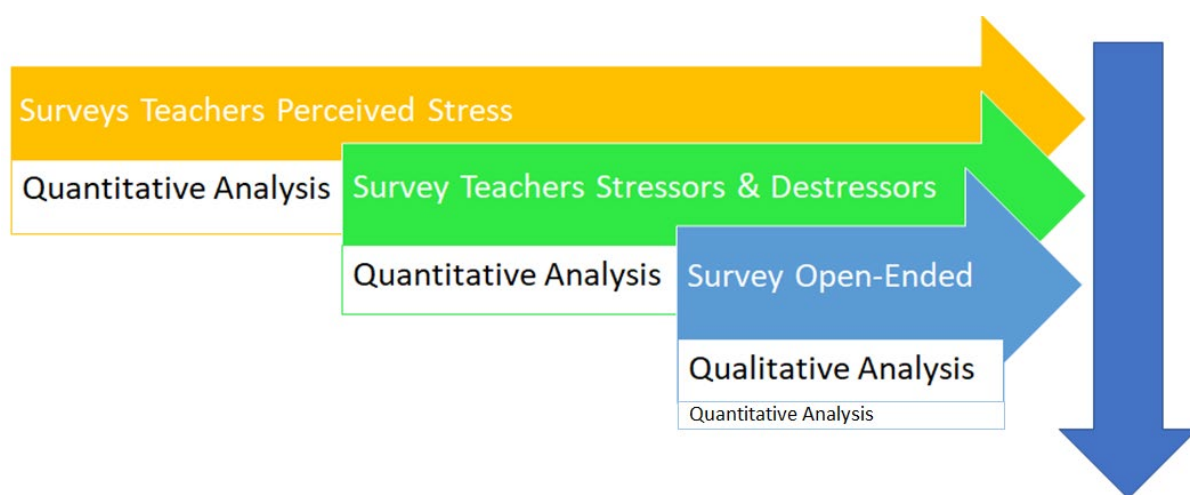
Figure 7. 1. Sequential Explanatory Model (Tipton, 2019)

Ethical Issues

There were procedures put into place throughout the collection of data to reduce ethical issues with the participants of this study. It is anticipated there are likely ethical issues that will come into play because of proximity and passionate belief on the part of the researcher and the participants employed within the same Diocese. Consent forms were used to communicate the overall purpose of this study. All participants/teachers included in the study agreed to a digital consent form provided by the researcher in the prelude of the research survey. After the consent

information, the participants had the opportunity to answer yes or no to the following statement:

I have read the information above and agree to participate in this study. The consent form did

not require a signature as the collection of data is anonymous.

Although demographic information will be collected, the information gathered through

Google Forms will be stored on a personal Google Drive as well as the disaggregation and

analysis of that data. All data will be analyzed through Google Sheets and Microsoft Excel on a

personal computer. This information will be backed up on a personal web-based storage cloud.

Only the researcher and the researcher's Dissertation Chair will have access to the information

gathered. The potential of risks was considered as a minimum to none as the questionnaire and

interviews were used to gain the perspective of the teachers only and analyzed as such. The

strict adherence to the confidentiality of the participants was paramount throughout the study

process. The teachers that participant at the schools did not identify themselves and remained

anonymous. The surveys were completed during a pre-arranged staff meeting. The data in this

study was collected, analyzed, and reported as ethically as possible. The risk of the loss of

privacy will be reduced by the anonymous study and all information gathered will be secured.

Summary

This chapter summarizes the methodology for the study and identifies the convenience

sample of teachers selected within the diocese in which the researcher works. The research

questions, two primary research questions, and three sub-questions were established along with

the process for collecting quantitative and qualitative data. The data reflects the sources of

professional and personal stress and de-stressors for educators and the correlation to teacher

stress and retention. Results from the analysis of the data are presented in Chapter 4. It is

intended that the data synthesized in Chapter 4 will assist in identifying knowledge and strategies

to employ to reduce and manage stress. The data is applicable to stress personally and

professionally. The critical action is to apply the data to promote healthier teachers and better

retention in schools.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

The study was intended to explore the reasons for the staggering amount of teachers leaving the teaching profession by focusing on personal and professional job-related stress and the effects of stressors and de-stressors. The data and analysis include determining the levels of personal perceived stress of the teachers surveyed. The perceived personal stress averages were then utilized to compare the overall perceived stress to stressors and de-stressors (factors) related to the professional environment (external) and personal (internal) circumstances. The sample represented TK- high school teachers in Catholic schools. While the data collected and presented is unique to the sample group, there are comparisons and assumptions that may be applied for teachers in different schools, different dioceses/districts, and different geographical locations. The purpose of the study was to bring light and understanding to the factors that cause teacher stress and explore tangible ways to reduce stress to ultimately impact and increase retention. The study and survey were created in the spirit of offering a voice to teachers and providing an opportunity to express their feelings and experiences of personal and professional stress. This chapter presents descriptive statistics for the sample of teachers within a southern diocese in California to include demographics, perceived stress of the sample, and responses to stressors and de-stressors. Quantitative and qualitative results directly support that TK-12 Catholic school teachers from the sample are stressed due to personal and professional factors. Teacher stress impacts retention negatively.

Descriptive Statistics

Demographic information was compiled from the teachers in the sample and is presented to give details of those involved in the study. Table 9.1 displays the percentage of teachers by

gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, the level they teach, and their total years of

teaching. The sample is predominately female (79.1%) to male (20.9%). The sample is also

predominately white (67.9%) versus those identifying as Hispanic/Latino (18.5%), Asian/Pacific

Islander (8.3%), other (4.8%), or Black (0.5%). Approximately 2/3 of the sample is from

teachers employed in an elementary/middle school (69%) versus high school (31%). Finally,

more than half of the sampled teachers hold an advanced degree / master's degree (51.3%) or

doctorate (2.4%). Their socio-economic groups vary greatly with the largest sample from the

range $51,000-$100,000 (42.3%) then $100,000-$200,000 (30.8%), under $50,000 (15.5%) and

finally, over $200,000 (11.5%).

Table 9. 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=374)

Characteristic	Percent
Gender	
Female	79.1
Male	20.9
Age	
20-30	17.4
31-40	24
41-50	25.1
51-60	20.9
61-70	11
71+	1.6
Total Household Yearly Income	
$200,000+	11.5
$100,000-$200,000	30.8
$51,000-$100,000	42.3
Under $50,000	15.5
Teaching School Level	
High School	31
TK-8	69
Degree	
Bachelors	46.3
Masters	51.3
Doctorate	2.4
Total Years Teaching	
1 year - 5	20.9
6 years - 10	19.3
11 years - 20	28.3
21 years - 30	18.2
31+ years	13.4
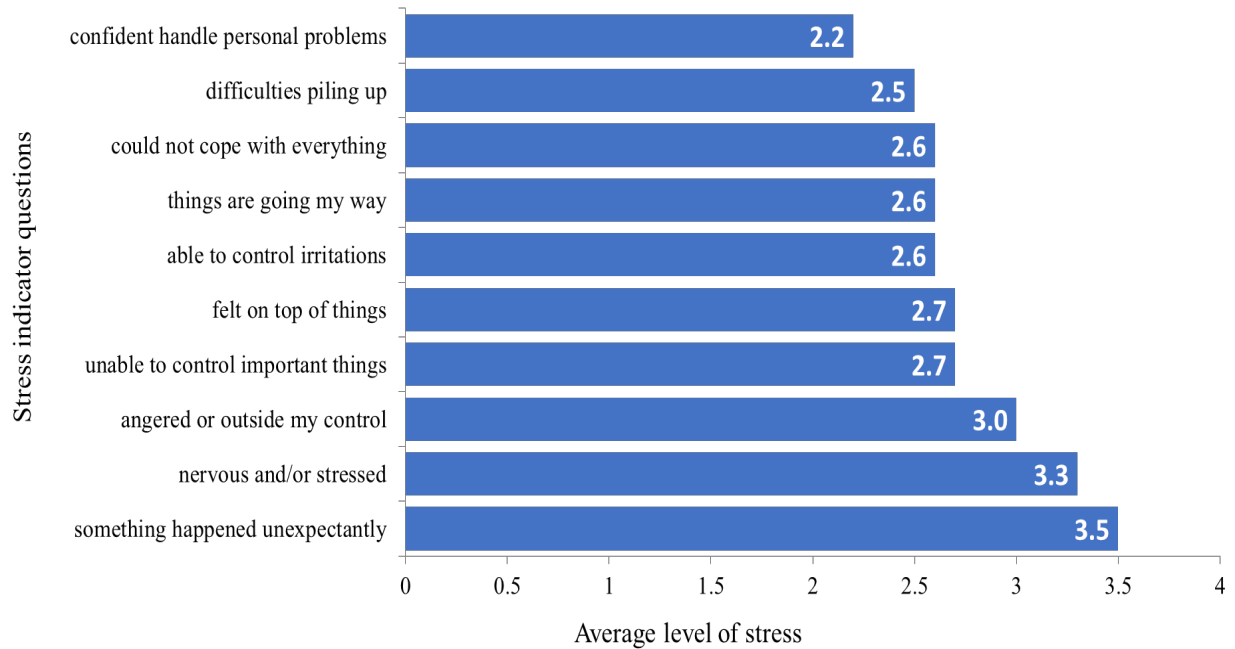
Figure 8. 1. Average of the Questions Used to Determine Stress Level (*N*=374).

As seen in Figure 8.1, the range of answers is an average of questions to determine perceived individual stress levels for the sample (*N* = 374). Likert-style scale questions were used with scores of 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree), with mean scores that range from 2.2 to 3.5. The ability to handle personal problems created the least amount of stress versus the ability to identify nerves and stress and unexpected events.

The 12-factor questions that were related to stressors or de-stressors further illustrate the specific influences on increasing or decreasing stress and the average of responses from the sample.
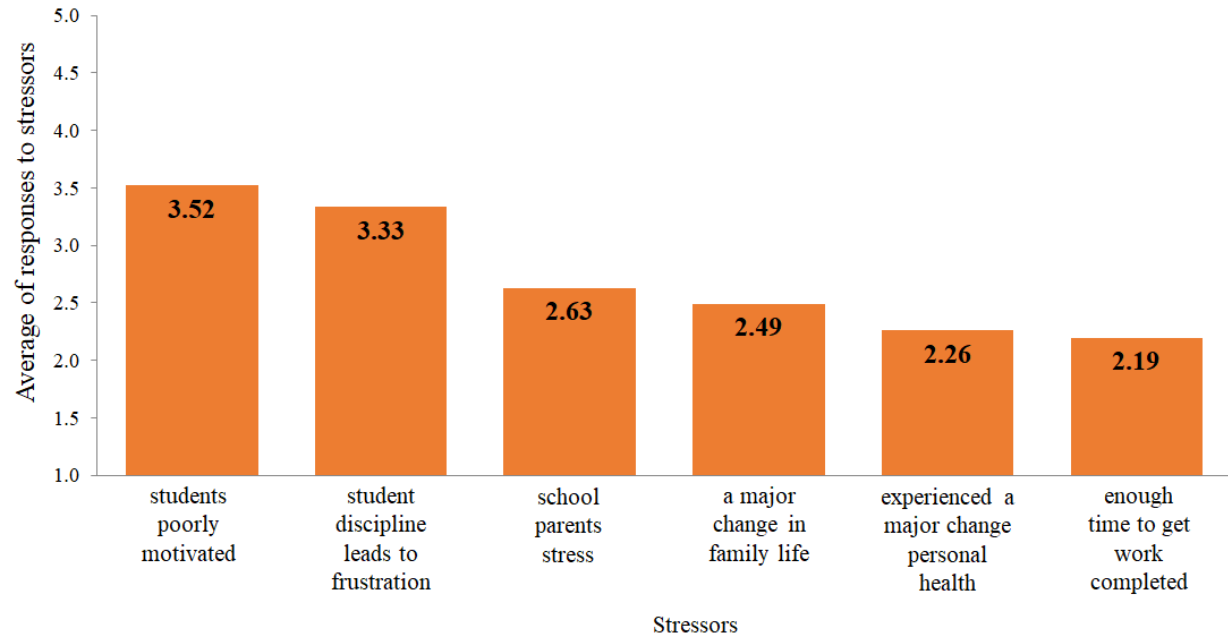
Figure 9. 1. Average of the Stressor Questions (*N* = 374).
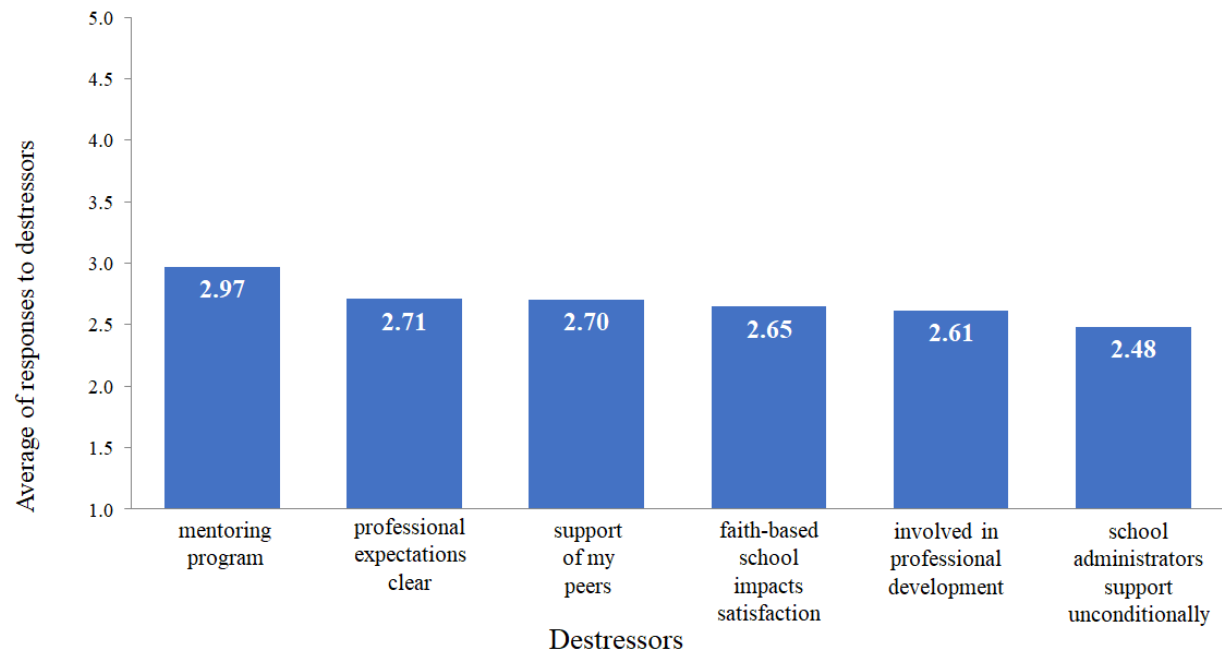
Figure 10. 1. Average of the De-stressor Questions (*N* = 374).

As seen in Figure 9.1 and 10.1, the results of the average of the responses from questions pertaining to stressors and de-stressors for the sample (*N*=374). There was an average score ranging from the highest 3.52 to the lowest 2.21 out of twelve Likert-style scale questions of 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). There is a greater range in stressors to de-stressors.
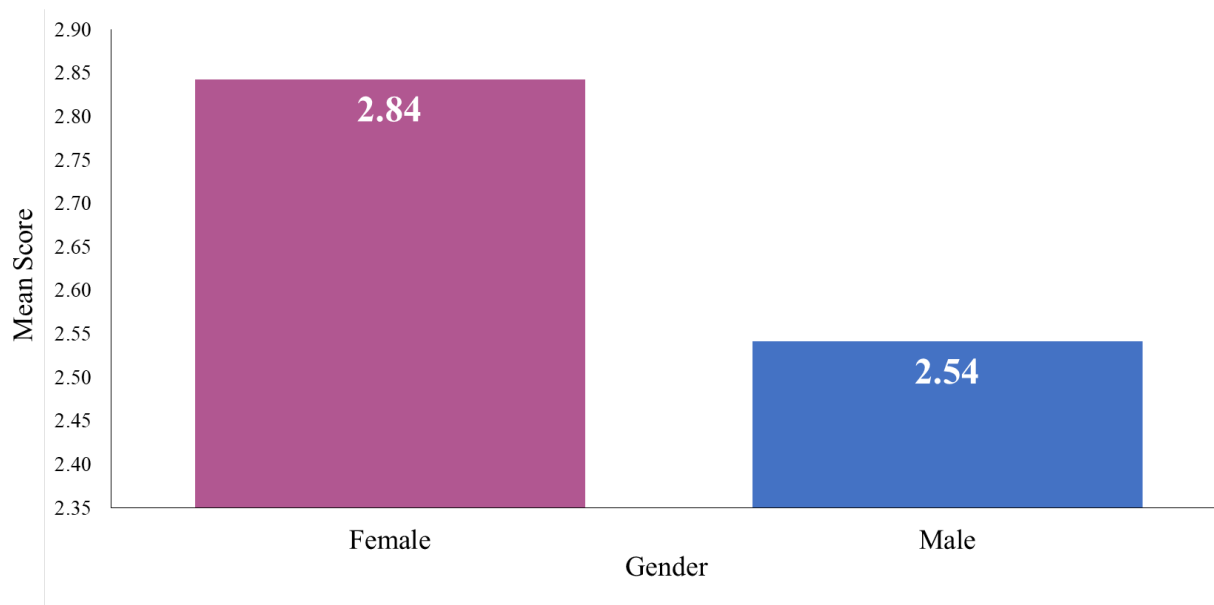
Figure 11. 1. Column Graph Showing the Relationship between Stress and Gender (*N* = 374).

A one-way ANOVA was performed to compare stress and gender (*N* = 374). As seen in Figure 11.1, there was a statistically significant difference in stress between males (2.84) and females (2.54), $F(4, 195) = 7.02$, $p = 0.003$.

In the qualitative data, female teachers indicated stress was often the result of factors such as "At school, I feel stressed when it is difficult to arrive early due to family obligations", "When I have other things going in my personal life that I cannot control," "more and more is asked of me as a teacher", and "There is not enough time in the day; bringing work home but still

always feeling behind unless I work for like seven hours on the weekend". Often women are affected by work-home conflict described as "when work role stressors interfere with an individual's ability to fulfill home and family obligations, work-home conflict occurs" (Nelson & Burke, 2000, p.113). The male teachers surveyed responded to factors of stress by indicating they were "not feeling stressed", "feeling unsupported", and other areas such as "time", "last-minute schedule changes", "shortened periods" and "long commute".
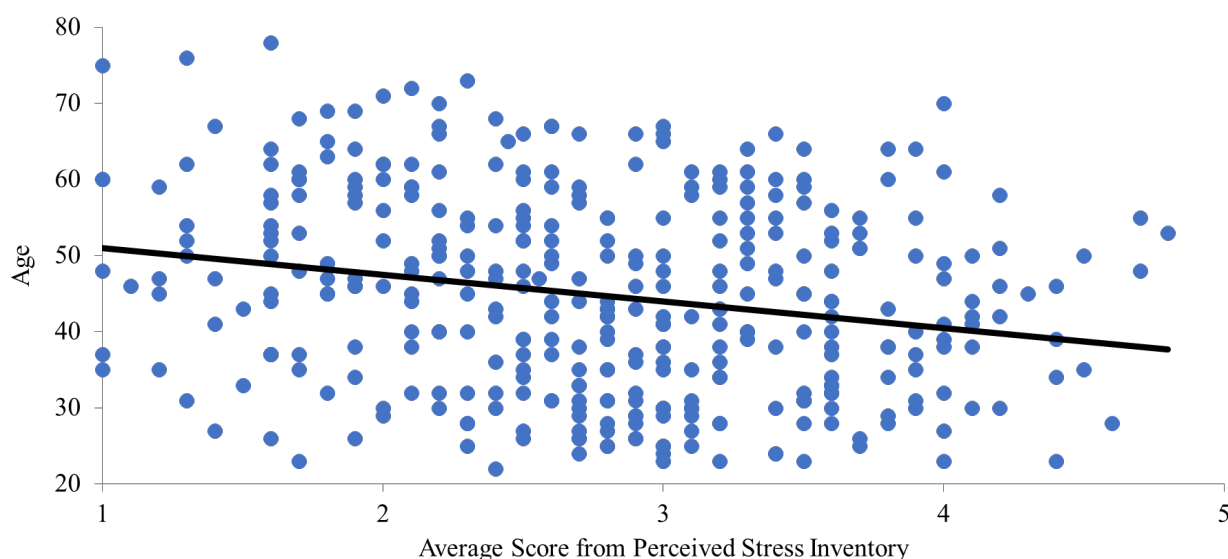
Figure 12. 1. Scatterplot Graph showing the Correlation between Stress and Age ($N = 374$).

A Pearson Correlation was performed to compare stress and age. As seen in Figure 12.1, there is a correlation between age and stress ($R = .224$, $p < .03$). Results indicated as the younger teachers have more stress and as their age increased, their stress level decreased. In the qualitative responses, younger teachers (under the age of 26) stated they are stressed due to "I have a lot of work to do (i.e. preparation work, grading, meetings, etc.) and minimal time to complete it", "I feel I could be doing better, or I lack the resources or expertise needed", "My

students aren't performing despite all my planning", and "My grading piles up, feeling lost while planning, and when I cannot get my students to behave in/out of class". Teachers 65 years of age and older sited factors such as "parents want me to change the rules", "there is a disconnection between reality and stated goals", "parents are not supportive of the school", and "technology dominates" as stressors. The perspectives of the opposing age groups differ and illustrate younger teachers struggle with more with pedagogy and time management where older teachers tend to struggle with factors outside themselves, their experience, and their skill level.
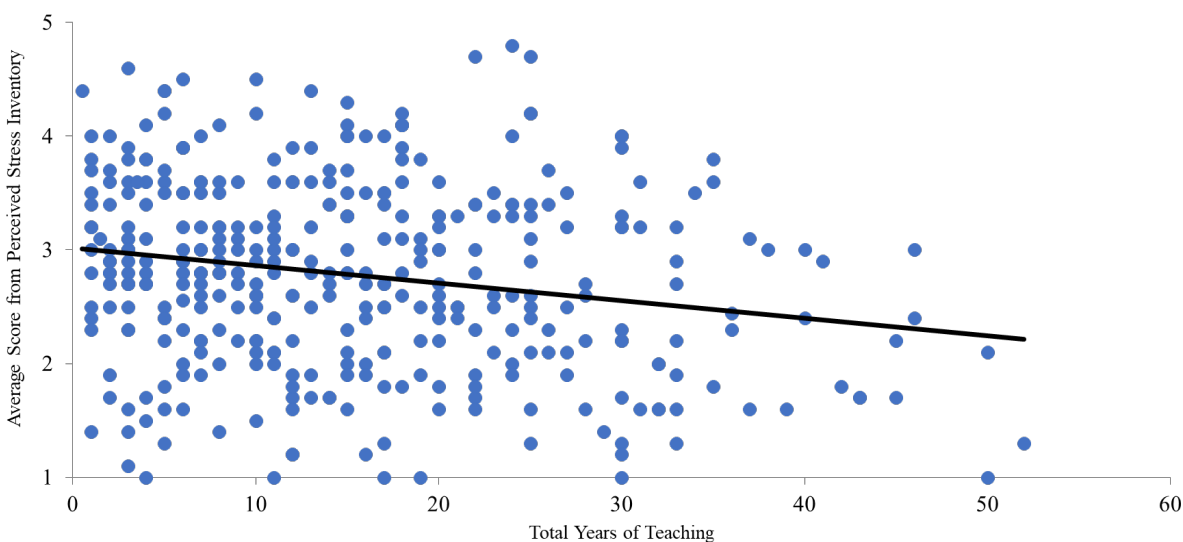
Figure 13. 1. Scatterplot Graph showing the Correlation between Stress and Total Years of Teaching ($N = 374$).

A Pearson Correlation was performed to compare years of teaching and stress. As seen in Figure 13.1, there is a correlation between years of teaching and stress (R=.732, $p < .03$). Results indicated as the teachers with less experience have more stress and as their experience increased, their stress level decreased. While teachers across the spectrum of experience report stress due to lack of time and being overwhelmed with grading, parents, emails, and other day-to-day requirements and responsibilities, there are some common trends among experience groups. Newer teachers, under five years of experience, report stress is a result of statements such as "I

feel that I do not have enough time to prepare lessons to my standards. I feel overwhelmed by the amount of work I have to do and never feel satisfied with the product I am delivering though I am trying my best", "I am not fully prepared", and "parents email concerning grades, moving from classroom to classroom with only five minutes in between periods, not having enough time to eat a proper meal, and having to catch up absent students". Teachers with a great deal of experience, thirty + years, as a group have lower stress levels but still express that parents are a cause of stress. They summarize in statements such as "parents criticize", "encountering aggressive, privileged parents", "parents are not supportive", "parents have unrealistic expectations", and "there are conflicts with parents without administrative support".
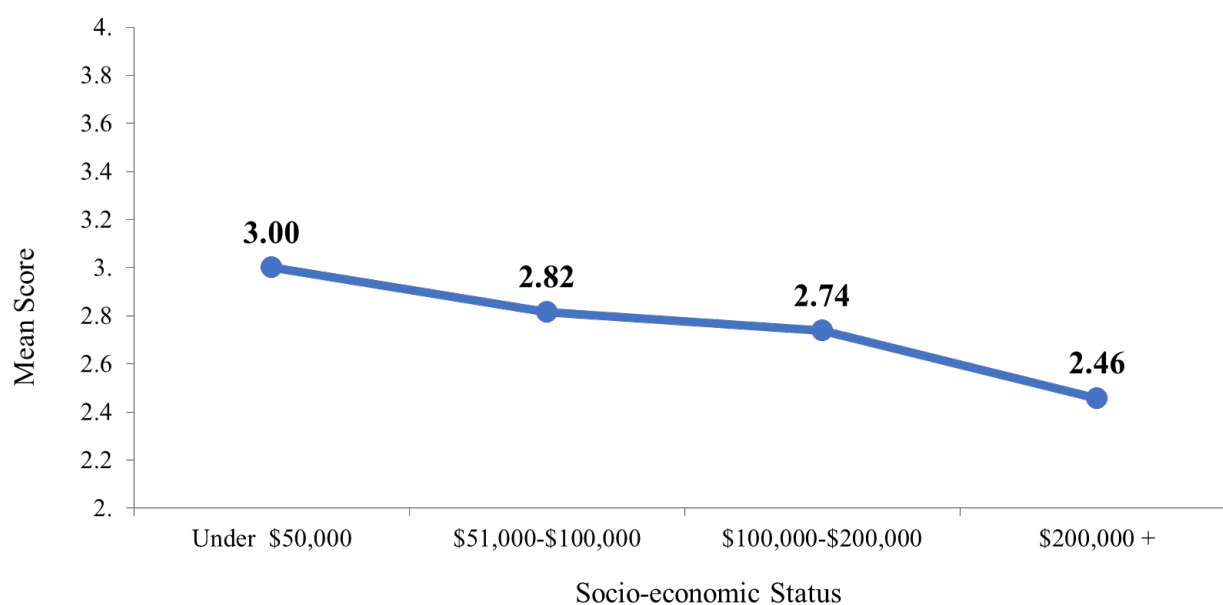
Figure 14. 1. Relationship between Stress and Socio-Economic Status ($N = 374$).

A one-way ANOVA was performed to compare stress and socioeconomic status ($N = 373$). As seen in Figure 14.1, individuals that made over $200,000 have a mean stress level of 2.6 as compared to teachers making below $50,000 has a stress level of 2.46. There is a statistically

significant effect of socioeconomic status on stress and $F(3, 370) = 3.87$, $p = 0.01$. The results indicated the higher the socioeconomic status, the lower the stress level, and the lower the socio-economic status, the higher the stress level. Teachers that fall in the below $50,000 group indicate stress due to a wide variety of factors. Individuals from this low SES group indicate they do not plan to be teaching after two years because "The parent and administration demands are more than I expected", "Money is not the best", and "Although I have an immense amount of love for teaching my students and the happiness it brings me when I see them learn something new, the income I receive does not begin to cover the expenses I have. Additionally, I feel that we receive more and more extra work every year on top of our job description". This is a concern for the teaching profession, especially catholic schools that are no longer competitive with the salary scale of neighboring public school systems and other private institutions. A couple of teachers expanded by stating, "The diocesan salary scale makes it impossible to pay off student loan debt. The diocese requires many years of education and does not value the time and money teachers have spent on education that we have" and "At the Diocese, teachers make approximately 60% what they make at the local public schools. The previous benefit of the pay difference was the quality of students attending the schools, but now for fear of losing tuition money students and parents aren't required to abide by school standards, which put the burden on the teacher".

Figure 15. 1. Bar Graph Showing the Relationship between Stressors and Average of Perceived Stress (*N* = 374).

As seen in Figure 15.1, the range of the impact of stressors on stress for the sample (*N*=374) was strongly correlated using the Pearson Correlation. Out of the five stressor factors that impacted stress, the factor with the greatest influence impacting satisfaction both personally and professionally was school parents are a source of stress (*R*=0.359, *p* <.03). The second greatest impact was student redirection and discipline as a source of my professional frustration (*R*=0.302, *p* <.03). Following those was my students are personally poorly motivated in the classroom (*R*=0.280, *p* <.03) and I recently experienced a major change in my family life (e.g. death in the family, divorce, move, etc.) (*R* = 0.215, *p* <.03). The factor that had the least impact but still showed a correlation was I recently experienced a major change in my health (e.g. illness, injury, weight gain, etc.) (*R*=0.181, *p* <.03).

In the qualitative responses, the sample was asked the open-ended question, "At school, I feel stress when…". The answers were sorted by categories represented in the table provided along with their frequency in responses. As indicated, school parents were the greatest source of

stress overall, and the teachers surveyed listed more comprehensive explanations as to why parents are casing so much stress in the 21st-century school environment. Teachers feel that parents are unsupportive, lack follow-through, have unrealistic expectations, send angry and frequent emails, increase pressure and expectations, are overinvolved and consume a large quantity of time, and are often demanding and entitled.

Table 10. 1

Qualitative Response Categories for "At School I Feel Stress When…" by Frequency (N=374)

Category	Frequency
Students	80
Administration	70
Parents	55
Communication	36
Grading	26
Co-Workers	20
Schedules	15
Technology	9
Personal	9
Life	9

The answers that were categorized by topics were then further divided into subtopics. Although in the quantitative data, parents were the highest source of stress, based on the qualitative responses, the relationships with students and school administration seemed to bring amount of stress in teachers. Teachers explained stress-related factors with students as "lacking "motivation and discipline", "inconsistent, disrespectful, or entitled", "apathetic", and even "Students' discipline issues rise to a level that impedes instruction and progress in the curriculum". The lack of support, trust, and clarity were the most cited reasons for discourse with the administration. The subtopics are represented in the word cloud graphic displaying words used more frequently in a larger font versus words used less frequently in smaller text.

Figure 16. 1.Frequency by the Sample in Response to "At school, I feel stress when…" (*N* = 374).

As seen in Figure 16.1, the graphic brings about a strong awareness through visual data of dominating words in the language of teacher stress and the 21st-century school environment. The words "Too Much" stand out among the other words. "Too Much" can be a precursor into many categories such as too much work, too much time, too much expected, too much in regards to student and parent needs, and much more. "Too much" summarizes the leading anguish felt amongst teachers regarding expectations of today. The job and expectations are continually growing although the salary and supports are not. Also, strongly present is the word "Lack". A lack of support, a lack of time, a lack of behavior, and a lack of trust all further illustrate the immense challenges of our teachers today.
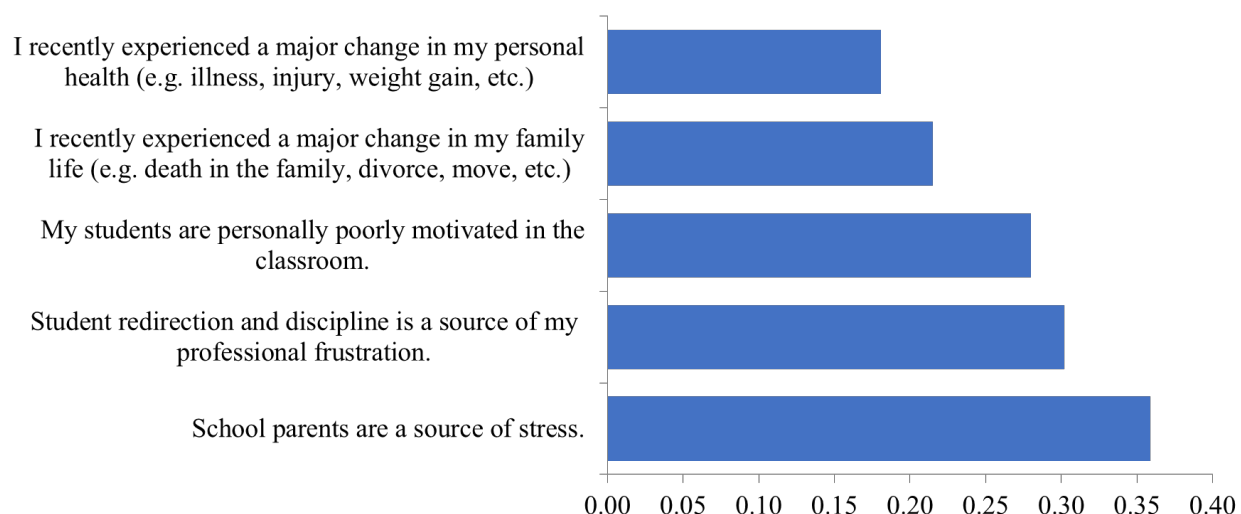
Figure 17. 1. Bar Graph showing the Relationship between De-stressors and Average of Perceived Stress (*N* = 374).

As seen in Figure 17.1, the range of the impact of de-stressors on stress for the sample (*N*=374) was strongly correlated when running a Pearson Correlation. Out of the six de-stressor factors that impacted stress, the factor with the greatest influence impacting satisfaction both personally and professionally was their professional role and expectations are clearly defined (*R*=-0.396, *p* <.03). The second greatest impact was trusting that my school administrators will support me unconditionally (*R*= -0.331, *p* <.03). Following in order of impact was time to get work completed (*R*=-0.313, *p* <.03), then having the support of peers (*R*=-0.216, *p* <.03), and second to least, being in a faith-based school (*R*=-0.188, *p* = <.03). A formal or informal mentoring program had the least amount of effect (*R*=-0.153, *p*= <.03).

The leading de-stressor among the sample was that their professional role and expectations were clearly defined. This is important for any individual trying to complete a task,

when the objective and standards are clear, the individual is more likely to accomplish the task. Dufour and Fullan (2013) summarize that "Leaders must translate those lofty aspirations into specific, actionable steps people can take today to bring about desired change" (p. 26). When teachers feel successful and their efficacy is positively impacted, they tend to feel less stressed and more contented. Furthermore, in a study by Yarrow (2009) it stated that teachers who "believe they have been efficacious in helping students learn" fall into the contented group within their profession.

In the qualitative responses, the sample was asked the open-ended question, "At school, I feel stress when…" and then followed up with an additional qualitative question "I respond to that stress by…". This allowed the sample the opportunity to note the de-stressors they currently utilize in their daily lives as teachers. The responses were sorted by categories that are represented in the table provided along with their frequency in responses.

Table 11. 1

Qualitative Response Categories for "I Respond to Stress by…" by Frequency (N=374)

Category	Frequency
Talking/Seeking Others	106
Organization/Time	61
Mind Body	47
Physical/Hobbies	45
Spiritual	38
Healthy Habits	30
Work Ethic	27
Avoidance	24
Emotional Response	23
Mind Over Matter Attitude	11
Mental Health Services	5

The de-stressors that had the greatest frequency in the open-ended response was talking to and/or seeking help from others. The individuals noted those others most commonly were colleagues, administrators, spouses, family, friends, and mentors. A supportive network is important in reducing stress. In the article, *Stress and Distress in Clinical Practice: A Mind-Body Approach,* it states that "perhaps one of the most important aspects of behavioral medicine interventions is the building of social-support systems" (Selhub, 2002 p. 187).

The de-stressors that were categorized by topics were then further divided into subtopics. The subtopics are represented in the word cloud graphic displaying words used more frequently in a larger text versus words used less frequently in smaller text.

Figure 18. 1. Frequency by the Sample in Response to "I respond to that stress by…" (*N* = 374*).*

The visual representation of de-stressors emphasizes the word talking which strongly corresponds to the frequency Table 10.1. Peers are also prevalent as the recipient of the destressor talking. Collaboration is important in the school environment. Breaking down the

"traditional walls of educator isolation" (Dufour & Fullan, 2013, p. 74) and building trust, value, and collaboration allows teachers to depend on their peers. Healthy relationships not only help the stress level of the individual teacher but allows for, what Fullan (2010) refers to as, social glue in the book *All Systems Go*. Notable in the graphic is the word prayer. The sample of largely Catholic teachers in Catholic schools markedly illustrates the importance of prayer not only in the school setting but in their personal lives to help cope with the stress and challenges in their professional role as teachers.
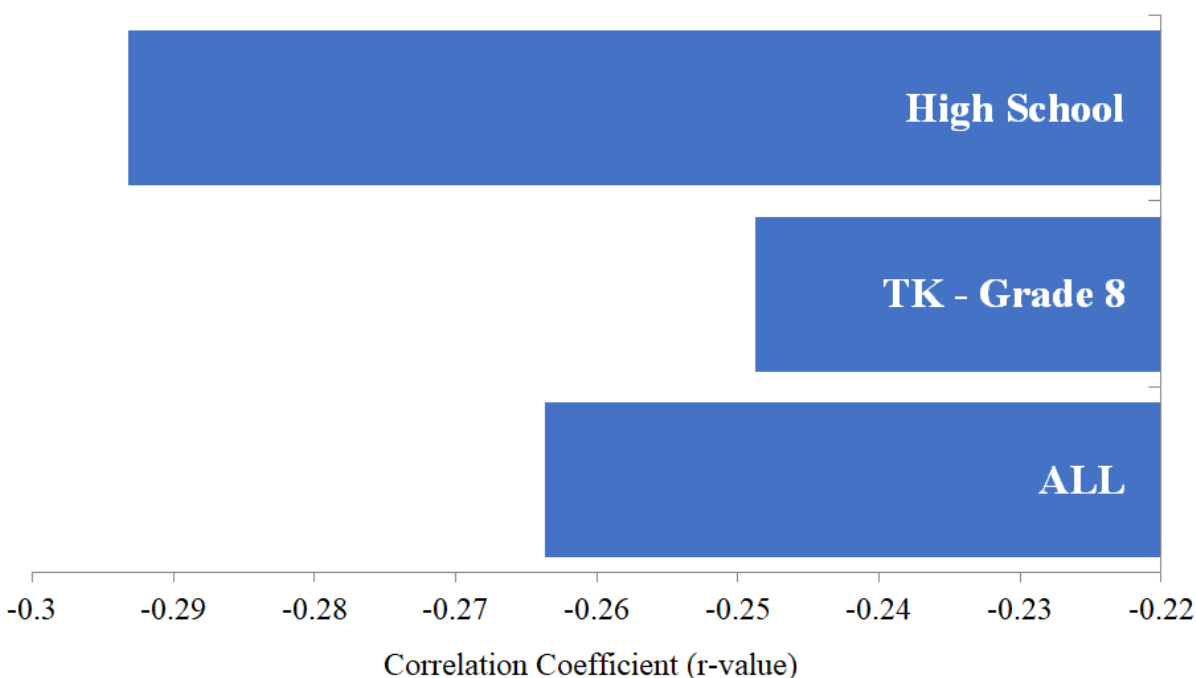
Figure 19. 1. Bar Graph showing the Relationship between Stress and Retention (*N* = 374).

As seen in Figure 19.1, the range of the impact of stress on retention for the sample (*I*=374) was strongly correlated using the Pearson Correlation. High school teachers displayed the strongest impact on retention (*R* = -0.268, *p* <.03) as compared to teachers of transitional kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers (*R* = -0.249, *p* <.03). When looking at the entire sample, the impact of stress on retention was significant (*R* = 0.264, *p* <.03).

Each teacher surveyed answered a question to qualify what percentage, 1%-100%, they envisioned they would be teaching two years from the time the survey was administered. A qualitative question followed that asked them to expand on that percentage with an open-ended answer. Of those that answered in the fewer than 5% range were mostly of retirement age. In the 5%-25% range, there were answers such as "I feel burnt out and discouraged", "this job is not worth the stress and ill-effects it has on my physical and mental well-being", "not worth the stress", "The constant barrage of parent demands is incredibly stressful", and "the stress level and how it is affecting my health". These are very concerning and may not be salvageable but there is hope for the 30%-50% group. To improve retention, leadership must effectively address the group concerns which range from low pay to feeling overwhelmed and unhappy. The following vignettes from the sample help illustrate the profound stressors creating issues in education today.

> Teacher 1: I need this job because we're barely making ends meet with two kids at home and two teaching jobs between us. Therefore, I will keep teaching until I probably die. Based on my stress levels though, I would leave at the end of the year for a better option if I could.

> Low Pay, High Stress, and Low Retention: This quotation illustrates the complex

relationships between stress and retention.

> Teacher 2: I am not sure if teaching is the direction for me and my family for my future and theirs. The stress is taking a toll on me and my family. I may continue in a different direction with my career. I have been discerning a lot lately and rethinking my career and other ventures I may want to pursue that I have been thinking about for many years now. I don't feel I have enough support. The substitute teachers and new teachers have shared

with me how unsupported they feel and lost in teaching because of a lack of support and proper training and mentoring. I completely agree, because this is what I see happening in teaching and at our schools over the last so many years.

Teacher 3: I can see myself teaching for perhaps one or two more years, but not as a long-term career. This is scary because I spent over four years of my life substituting, tutoring, and completing the teaching credential program. The idea of investing so much time only to realize this is not a career I'd like to continue is very daunting as now I do not know what to do next to earn my stable livelihood. Truly the other fear is to see such a passion I had for teaching be turned so quickly into fear, insecurity, and lack of confidence to stand in front of my class to teach and to teach well. This 30% is due to the experiences I've faced this year as a first-year teacher. The mental energy and the big well of love I need to have to meet the needs of all my students are absolutely overwhelming. It becomes extra overwhelming to learn that I need to juggle on my weaknesses while at the same time still maintain strength and leadership before my students when I do not feel in the slightest confident in what I can bring to the table as a teacher. Maybe those emotions change with time and maybe what I share right now be only the thoughts of a novice teacher and in ten years from now I can look back and be proud of my accomplishments rather than be bogged down by them.

Teacher 4: I am not enjoying teaching (the work, discipline problems, the colleagues who are being hired, etc.) as much as I once did. I used to feel really passionate about my subject matter and inspiring my students to love it too, but there is an overwhelming lack of interest coming from my students regarding learning for the sake of learning the last five years. This simply depresses me. If I quit teaching, I do not believe that I will return

to the profession. This is confusing and stressful for me because teaching is all that I know. I need my paycheck, so maybe I will rejuvenate and get my love of teaching back sometime in the near future.

Summary

It is abundantly clear that this study supports prior research in the education field that teachers are stressed and that stress is threatening retention. This study further illustrates there are stressors that are identified as harmful and there are destressing practices that can be deployed systematically to lower those stress levels. Finally, it is proven that stress is impacting retention for 374 teachers that participated in the survey. The reality is that given the rapidly changing field and increased expectations coupled with low financial compensation and ineffective leadership is leading the education field into a problematic future. Those who make decisions about education and its leadership must stop and evaluate the current situation. A need to devise a plan to stem the outflow is essential. To respond inadequately sacrifices the future of quality and passionate individuals to educate our children of tomorrow.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The United States Department of Education (USDE) has recognized a shortage of teachers. In California, the USDE recognizes specifically in the Teacher Shortage Areas (TSA) in 2020 the majority of all subjects - language arts, math, science, special education, and core subjects for elementary schools as compared to science, math, world languages, and special education in 2010 and none in 2000 (2020). While the need for teachers with credentials is consistently rising significantly over the past ten years, the same cannot be said for their salaries. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reports that regular full-time teachers in public schools, where teachers are paid measurably higher than in catholic schools, the average base salary for full-time public school teachers was lower in 2017–2018 ($59,100) than in 1999–2000 ($59,700). "Regular full-time teachers in public schools had a higher average base salary ($57,900) than regular full-time teachers in private schools ($45,300) in the 2017–18 school year" (Taie & Goldring, 2020). Despite the growing need for teachers and the low paying salary, there are still individuals who feel called to serve as teachers and are investing in college preparation and other credentialing programs to be qualified to teach. Unfortunately, there are a significant number of credentialed teachers leaving the profession every year further increasing the challenges in education. There is currently a shortage of teachers. More and more teachers are leaving the profession each year. One of the most prevalent reasons they are leaving is due to high levels of personal and professional stress. Through research within this study, I have concretely identified the reasons for the high levels of stress in our teachers today. I have also identified that teacher stress can be meaningfully decreased through two approaches: specific applied conditions that affect the professional environment and personal strategies that are effective for reducing teacher stress. The problem is evident and the factors are identified; now

it is imperative that leaders recognize destructive practices and systemically address teacher stress in our schools and districts.

Summary of the Study

Primary Question #1

What is the relationship between professional and personal stressors and de-stressors and the stress of TK-12 educators in Catholic schools?

Sub-Questions:

1. What circumstances within the context of parochial education are related to increasing stress?

2. What strategies can teachers employ to personally reduce and manage stress?

3. What strategies can be employed in the school environment to reduce stress for teachers?

Primary Question #2

What is the relationship between stress and retention for TK-12 educators in Catholic schools?

Stressors and Destressors	ALL	TK-8	HS
My students are personally poorly motivated in the classroom.	0.280	0.269	0.314
My professional role and expectations are clearly defined.	-0.396	-0.337	-0.517
Student redirection and discipline is a source of my professional frustration.	0.302	0.292	0.310
Professionally, there is always enough time to get the work completed.	-0.312	-0.317	-0.293
School parents are a source of stress.	0.359	0.346	0.382
I am regularly involved in professional development as a practitioner.	X	X	X
Being in a faith-based school impacts my personal and professional satisfaction.	-0.188	-0.169	-0.228
I have the support of my peers at work.	-0.216	-0.206	-0.243
A formal or informal mentoring program is present at my school site.	-0.153	-0.156	X
I trust that my school administrators will support me unconditionally.	-0.331	-0.275	-0.452
I recently experienced a major change in my family life.	0.215	0.185	0.278
I recently experienced a major change in my personal health.	0.815	0.185	0.226

STRESS

RETENTION

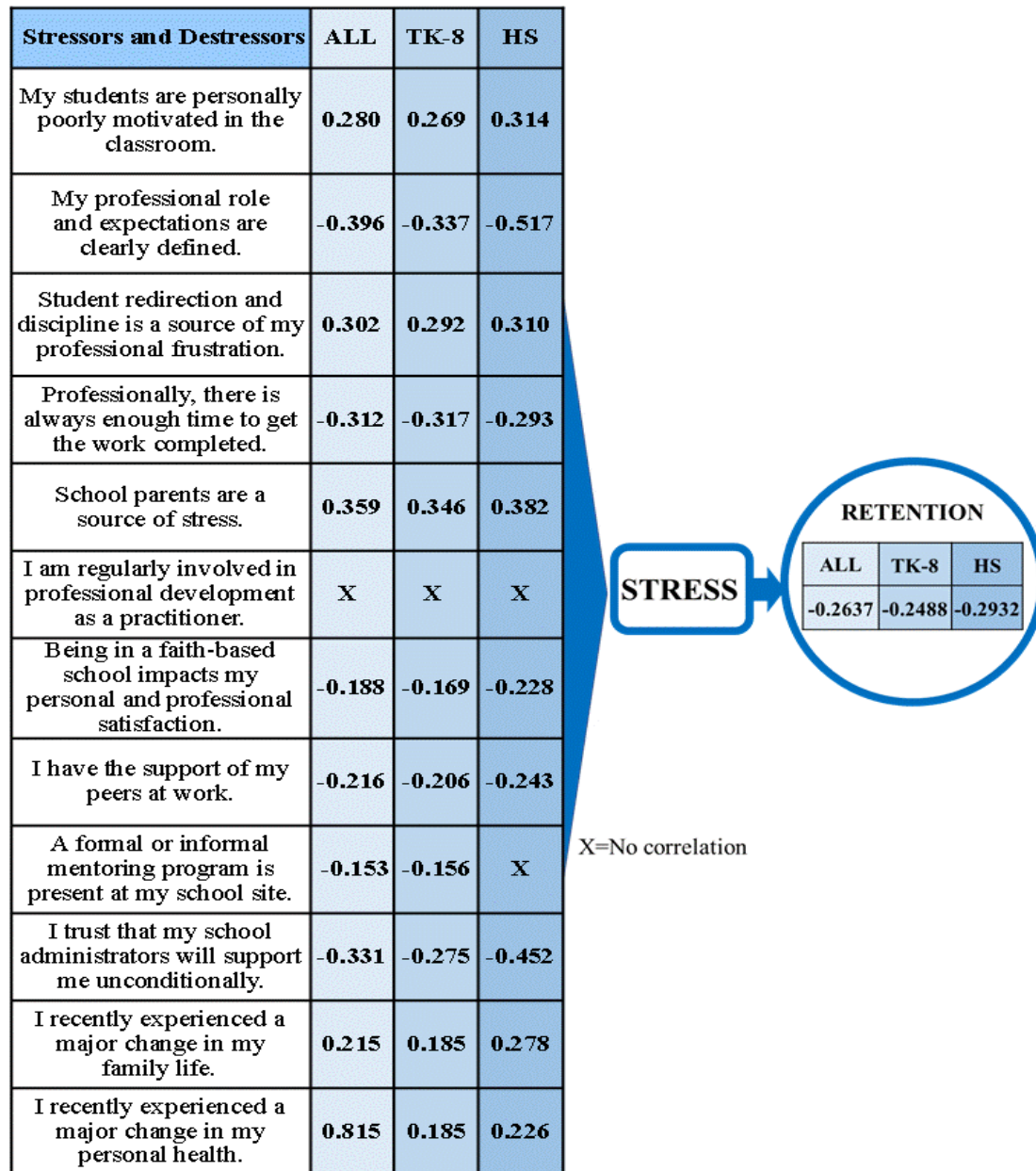| ALL	TK-8	HS
-0.2637	-0.2488	-0.2932

X=No correlation

Figure 20. 1. Relationship between Stressors / De-stressors and Retention (*N* = 374).

A Pearson Correlation was performed to compare stressors and de-stressors impact on stress and then stress on retention. Figure 20.1 displays the stressors and de-stressors impact on stress displayed by the entire sample, as well as separated by TK-8 and high school teachers.

Results indicated the strong impact of stress on retention noting a significant correlation for all teachers, notably highest for high school teachers.

The following section of this chapter utilizes analysis and findings to answer the study's primary research question #1: *What is the relationship between professional and personal stressors and de-stressors and the stress of TK-12 educators in Catholic schools?* Stressors and de-stressors influence the stress level of educators. According to the qualitative data collected, stressors that significantly raise the stress of teachers include the following areas listed by frequency from highest to the least.

The largest stressor was not enough time to complete the work. This can be subdivided into keeping up with grading, planning, meetings, deadlines, helping students, additional professional responsibilities, and much more. Poor student behavior and disrespect followed the concern of time. Teachers indicated that behavior is declining; students have greater needs, less work ethic, and lack focus and motivation. Lack of and unclear communication was another catalyst to stress. Unhappy unrealistic, and overinvolved parents of students created a notable amount of stress in teachers with a lack of support. Also noted in high frequency were dealings with administration, stating the number one concern with the administration was a lack of support and trust. Also related was distress over not having a voice and feeling under-compensated financially, and undervalued.

The three sub-questions further clarify the relationship between stressors and de-stressors to educators. The first sub-question: *What circumstances within the context of parochial education are related to increasing stress?* The sample group identified poor student motivation, student redirection and discipline, and parents as factors that increase their stress in the parochial setting.

The second sub-question: *What strategies can teachers employ to personally reduce and manage stress?* Teachers shared they employ successful strategies to combat stress personally by adopting healthy habits such as eating healthy, physical exercising, reading for pleasure, listening to music, and engaging in positive mind/body exercises. Mind/body exercises included meditation, yoga, breathing, and reflection. Spiritual awareness and engagement such as prayer and worship were also effective.

Finally, the third sub-question: *What strategies can be employed in the school environment to reduce stress for teachers?* Strategies identified as being successful de-stressors in their school environment among the teachers surveyed were having clear expectations, more time, mentoring, and the support of their peers. It was also noted that when they felt their administration was trustworthy and supportive, their stress decreased. Many also noted that being in a faith-based school lowered their stress. Organizational strategies were noted frequently to help lessen the effects of stress. These strategies include prioritization, creating lists, scheduling, and setting time limits. Finally, just talking or venting to someone else ranked among the very top of the list whether it was their spouse, family member, friend, colleague, administrator, mentor, student, or parent of the student.

The study's primary question #2 is also clearly answered by the data collected: *What is the relationship between stress and retention for TK-12 educators in Catholic schools?* Stress does impact retention negatively, especially for the high school teachers surveyed.

Both hypotheses presented were proven by correlation that professional and personal stressors and de-stressors are associated with the stress of educators and there is a relationship between the stress of educators and retention.

Implications for Practice

A strategic and systematic plan is essential at the school, local, and national levels to address the level of stress in educators in our 21st-century schools and retention. Without a comprehensive and cohesive plan, the pool of qualified and dedicated teachers will continue to dwindle and the cost is too great, our children. For a people strategy to be effective, it must be both strategic and systematic. "The strategic side is more the creative, subjective, and focuses on the big picture, whereas the systemic side is more logical, objective, and emphasizes the parts or the details" (Sarvadi, 2019). The plan should respond to the survey emphasizing the areas identified to lower stress and diminishing those practices and environments to escalating stress. Practice can be immediate at the school level when the administration creates a responsive environment for the awareness of stress and the impact on retention. School districts or dioceses also need to respond in kind. Reform in the education field needs to take place at the national, college, and practicum level for developing teachers with the 21st-century skills needed to not only survive but thrive and reform schools.

Recommendations for Further Research

When beginning this study, I desired to understand teacher stress and the impact of that stress on a teacher's social and emotional health. In today's school environment, it is important to address how this stress may be reduced, managed, and mitigated through intentional programming to stem the departure of teachers from the profession. The study was limited to TK-12 Catholic educators within a diocese in southern California. Further research would be beneficial in public, charter, other religious, and/or private school teachers with different demographics. This research could also be expanded across the nation. Data from other countries would be interesting to compare to the United States and what strategies and programs

are showing the impact on lowering stress and improving retention. Further research might also include pre-school, alternative, or higher education teachers.

During the conclusion of this study in the spring of 2020, Coronavirus Pandemic became an alarming factor in the education system around the world. "Teachers are adapting to a host of exhausting new challenges during the coronavirus" states author, Nora Fleming (2020) in her article about teacher wellness. This study unmistakably supports that teachers are stressed and that stress is threatening retention given the incredible growing expectations and now coronavirus has exponentially increased the demands on teachers. Further research on the effects of the teaching in the coronavirus era will be beneficial to helping support teachers through these uncharted waters.

Conclusions

I am passionate about our teachers, their well-being, and the important difference they make every day in the lives of our children. Our schools need to be a place of support and encouragement not only for our students, but for the dedicated professionals that serve those children. This study has been affirming in my beliefs that teachers are being asked to do too much, too often, with too little. Fortunately, the study has also reinforced within me a zealous resolve that there is a viable solution to allay teacher stress and increase retention.

From the sample, when asked if they would continue teaching and why the answers ranged from frustration and resignation to satisfaction. One teacher stated, "As Catholic school educators, we are highly undervalued and underpaid. We are here to make a difference in the world and children's lives. We are so often asked to do things that are not in our "job description" and wear so many different "hats" but we do not get compensated for those tasks or our time" while another, "I believe this is what God is calling me to do. I changed careers to

learn to teach. I love teaching. The likelihood I will be teaching in a Catholic school is slim because I need to find a job that pays better". These are not insurmountable obstacles. While there will be some stressors and challenges with every profession, with small intentional changes such as strong ethical leadership, clear and reasonable expectations, and fair wages, teacher distress can be minimized. Many teachers stated their love of teaching with statements such as, "Even with the stress and challenges, I absolutely LOVE what I do. I believe this is God's plan for me", "Teaching is a ministry. It's about forming the hearts and minds of children", and "I love teaching". A very significant figure in the lives of Catholics is Saint Mother Teresa. While famous for her love and service to others, she is upheld for her concrete actions and ability to create positive change. Mother Teresa is quoted as saying, "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples" (Roach, 2019). This study intends to create ripples amongst the leaders in education so they start asking themselves, "What stones can I cast to make a difference?" The time is now. Leaders in education can influence our teacher's experiences, stress, and retention. A teacher from the sample shared that she would return in two years 100% and explained her answer with, "I love my job. I love the subjects and the students I work with. I have a passion for these young people and want to be a positive force in their lives. My administrators are supportive and work hard to get our staff anything we need to do our jobs. Our parents are also supportive (for the most part :). Our staff cares about each other and we respect each other. This is not an "easy" job by any measure and those that stay do so because it's a calling". All teachers should have the opportunity to enjoy this level of support, camaraderie, and satisfaction.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Survey

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL STRESSORS AND DE-STRESSORS IMPACT ON TK-

12 CATHOLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AND THEIR RETENTION.

Dear Teacher,

It is my pleasure to invite you to participate in the study titled "PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL STRESSORS AND DE-STRESSORS IMPACT ON TK-12 CATHOLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AND THEIR RETENTION". Participation is voluntary and anonymous. The purpose of the study is to examine personal and environmental stressors and personal and environmental de-stressors in Catholic School teachers grades TK-12.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. Your participation will hopefully help teachers to reduce their stress and improve their socio-emotional health while impacting overall teacher retention in our Catholic schools. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study or participation, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Julie Tipton
(540) 479-7755
julie.tipton@eagles.cui.edu

CONSENT FORM
PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL STRESSORS AND DE-STRESSORS IMPACT ON TK-12 CATHOLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AND THEIR RETENTION

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate the impact of stress and de-stressors on teachers in TK-12 catholic education and retention. This study is being conducted by Julie Tipton under the supervision of Dr. Eugene Kim, Concordia University Irvine, Educational Leadership. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, Concordia University Irvine, in Irvine, CA.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this phenomenological study is to identify the stressors and de-stressors for teachers in TK-12 Catholic schools that affect retention. A result of this research will help to clarify and investigate stressors and de-stressors of educators, generate connections to understanding retention, and assist in creating a plan or program for implementation to increase teacher satisfaction and improve retention.

DESCRIPTION: Participation in the survey will allow the researcher to gather data for the study.

PARTICIPATION: Participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty, and you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY: Please note that the research anonymous. All data will be stored on the researcher's personal password-protected computer.

DURATION: The survey will take between 5-10 minutes to complete.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks for participating.

BENEFITS: The research may contribute to the acquisition of generalizable knowledge to help decrease the amount of negative stress in teachers and promote de-stressors strategies that will improve the socio-emotional health of teachers and improve retention in Catholic schools.

CONTACT: Please contact Dr. Eugene Kim for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights. Eugene Kim, Executive Director, Master of Arts in International Studies Degree Program Associate Professor of International Studies, Concordia University Irvine, 949-214-3367, Eugene.Kim@cui.edu

RESULTS: The results will be made available at the completion of the study for all participants.

I have read the information above and agree to participate in this study. *
Yes

No

Demographics
This is an anonymous survey. In conducting educational research, demographic variables are required in order to control for confounding effects.

Gender *
Female

Male

Age *

Your answer

Total Household Yearly Income *
Under $50,000

$51,000-$100,000

$100,000-$200,000

$200,000 +

Ethnicity *
White

Black/African American

Hispanic/Latino

Asian/Pacific Islander

Other

Years of Teaching (TOTAL) *

Your answer

Years of Teaching at Current School *

Your answer

Current School Name *

Your answer

Current Grade Levels Teaching (Click all that apply) *
TK

K

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

Highest Degree Earned *
Bachelors

Masters

Doctorate

Institution of Teacher Preparation Program *

Your answer

Perceived Stress
These questions ask about your feelings and thoughts holistically.

1. In the last month, I have been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly. *
Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

2. In the last month, I have felt unable to control the important things in my life. *
Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

3. In the last month, I have felt extremely nervous and/or stressed. *
Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

4. In the last month, I have felt confident about my ability to handle personal problems. *
Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

5. In the last month, I have felt like things are going my way. *
Completely Disagree
1
2

3
4
5
Completely Agree

6. In the last month, I have found I could not cope with all the things I have to do. *
Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

7. In the last month, I have been able to control the irritations in my life. *
Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

8. In the last month, I have felt on top of things. *
Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

9. In the last month, I have felt angered because of things outside my control. *
Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

10. In the last month, I have felt difficulties were piling up so high that I could not overcome them. *

Completely Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Completely Agree

Stressors and De-stressors

1. My students are personally poorly motivated in the classroom. *

Completely Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Completely Agree

2. My professional role and expectations are clearly defined. *

Completely Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Completely Agree

3. Student redirection and discipline is a source of my professional frustration. *

Completely Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Completely Agree

4. Professionally, there is always enough time to get the work completed. *

Completely Disagree

1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

5. School parents are a source of stress. *
Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

6. I am regularly involved in professional development as a practitioner. *
Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

7. Being in a faith-based school impacts my personal and professional satisfaction. *
Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

8. I have the support of my peers at work. *
Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5

Completely Agree

9. A formal or informal mentoring program is present at my school site. *
Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

10. I trust that my school administrators will support me unconditionally. *
Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

11. I recently experienced a major change in my family life (e.g. death in the family, divorce, move, etc.) *
Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

12. I recently experienced a major change in my personal health (e.g. illness, injury, weight gain, etc.) *
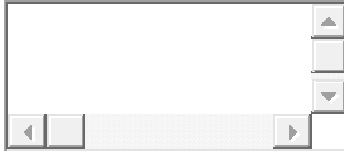Completely Disagree
1
2
3
4
5
Completely Agree

Open-Ended Questions

At school, I feel stress when *

Your answer

I respond to that professional stress by *

Your answer

What percentage represents the likelihood you will be teaching two years from now? (1-100%) *

Your answer

Why? Please explain the percentage. *

Your answer

Appendix B: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Decision Form

Review Date   January 7, 2021

Reviewer ID#   205970

Category   ☐ Expedited Review 45 CFR 46.110

                   ☐ Full Board Review 45 CFR 46

IRB Application #	**5490**
Title of Project	**Professional and Personal Stressors and Destressors on K-8 Catholic School Teaches and Their Retention**
Principal Investigator Name (PI)	**Julie Tipton**
PI Email (use CUI email, if applicable)	**julie.tipton@eagles.cui.edu**

DECISION

☒   **Approved**

        Effective duration of the IRB Approval: 02/06/2020 to 02/06/2020

        For Expedited and Full Board Approved, Please Note:
        a.   *The IRB's approval is only for the project protocol named above. Any changes are subject to review and approval by the IRB.*
        b.   *Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB.*
        c.   *An annual report or report upon completion is required for each project. If the project is to continue beyond the twelve month period, a request for continuation of approval should be made in writing. Any deviations from the approved protocol should be noted.*

☐   **Needs revision and resubmission**

☐   **Not approved**

COMMENTS