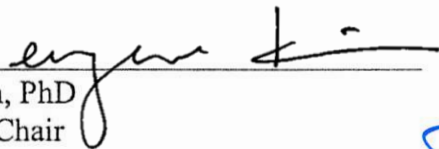ACCEPTANCE

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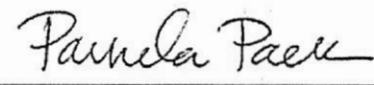
(Signature)

Eugene Kim, PhD
Committee Chair

(Signature)

Conrad Ulpindo, EdD
Committee Member

(Signature)

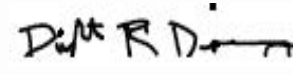Pamela Paek, PhD
Committee Member

The Dissertation Committee, the Dean, and Executive Director of the Doctor of Education Program of the School of Education, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

(Signature)

Kent Schlichtemeier, PhD
Dean

(Signature)

Dwight Doering, PhD
Executive Director

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Malikah R. Nu'Man	*[signature]*
Candidate's Name	Signature of Candidate
1530 Concordia West	5/23/2020
Address	Date
malikah.nu-man@eagles.cui.edu	Irvine, CA 92612
Phone Number or E-mail address	City/State/Zip

<div align="center">

VITA

Malikah R. Nu'Man

</div>

ADDRESS   1530 Concordia West
                     Irvine, CA 92612
                     malikah.nu-man@eagles.cui.edu

EDUCATION
    EdD   2020   Concordia University, Irvine;
                    Educational Leadership
    MA   2015   California State University, Northridge;
                    Special Education
    BA   2003   University of California, Los Angeles;
                    Sociology & Double minor
                    in Education and African American Studies

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
    2018-Present   Restorative Justice Teacher Advisor

                    Los Angeles Unified School District
    2015-2018   Education Specialist
                    Los Angeles Unified School District

TEACHER TRAUMA: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF SELF-
EFFICACY/RELATIONSHIPS/SCHOOL CLIMATE AND THE CORRELATION TO PTSD
AND RETENTION AMONGST K-12 EDUCATORS

by

Malikah R. Nu'Man

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Concordia University Irvine

ABSTRACT

Public school teachers are afflicted with emotional issues that not only impact their mental, physical and emotional health but affect education at large through teacher attrition (Barmby, 2006; Davis & Wilson, 2000; Gold & Roth, 1993). Educators' mental health is an essential contributor to students' academic success, however, remains a neglected topic in education (Pickens, 2015). The current study addresses this scholarly gap by examining teachers' perceptions of primary and secondary trauma through the related personal, professional, and relational impacts they have experienced. The current study also examines the forms of trauma that educators encounter within their school sites. The researcher used a mixed-methods design to answer the research questions for this study. A total of 400 teachers, recruited using a mix of convenience, purposive and snowball sampling participated in this study. An online survey consisting of closed-ended and open-ended questions were administered to participants. Using Pearson's correlations, a negative and statistically significant correlation was found between teacher trauma, student-teacher relationships, teacher self-efficacy, and school climate. An ANOVA revealed that irrespective of the form of trauma experienced by teachers, those who experienced trauma at school where they perceive the school climate to be adverse, had lower self-efficacy, poor relationships with students, and were more likely to leave their profession. Analyses of the open-ended questions brought to the fore the two most common forms of trauma experienced by teachers in the sample: school violence and community violence.

Keywords: trauma, mixed methods, self-efficacy, teacher-student relationships

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

During my time as a teacher in four inner-city, Title I secondary schools, I experienced

trauma. I had students verbally threaten and attack me. I witnessed several colleagues be

physically assaulted. I observed numerous fights amongst students and intervened in verbal and

physical disputes between parents and staff members. I have reported incidents of prostitution,

child neglect, suicide attempts, and drug abuse among teenagers. I have attended six funerals of

my former students.

Before working in urban schools, I taught students with moderate to severe disabilities in

suburban communities. Trauma was present there as well. Nearly sixteen years ago, during my

first teaching assignment, I performed CPR for the first time. A student in my classroom turned

blue in the face from choking on a tater tot during a cooking lesson activity. I panicked,

completely forgot all the CPR training I had recently received and ended up smacking them on

the back as hard as I could until the tater tot flew out. With the best of intentions, my principal

congratulated me on how I handled the situation and sent me home early for the day. I was too

shaken up to drive. Instead, I took three cigarettes from a colleague who offered and sat on the

curb for an hour smoking and crying while my co-teacher comforted me over the phone and

assured me that I had what it took to be a special education teacher.

During the next four years of working in suburban schools, I witnessed a colleague have

a stroke, and shortly after that, pass away. I also had human feces smeared on my face and was

repeatedly slapped, spat on and bitten by students who were having behavioral meltdowns. I

have experienced emotions of anxiety, rage, depression, and regret throughout my career. At no

point have I received training, a referral for counseling, or mentoring conversation from site or

district administrators about the impact of trauma on my well-being, self-efficacy, or ability to remain resilient as a teacher.

I share this with my audience, not to gain sympathy, but to ignite empathy and awareness towards the various forms of trauma educators experience daily. Whether educators work in urban, suburban, or rural environments in a magnet, charter or public school, they experience various forms of trauma. These traumatic experiences matter as they impact the emotional well-being of educators, who are charged with the well-being of their students. However, there is neither much dialogue about the impact of primary, or secondary trauma amongst educators, nor are there conversations surrounding what leadership attributes most effectively contribute to improved well-being, self-efficacy, and retention of teachers dealing with trauma.

I have observed how teachers exposed to primary and secondary trauma handle the realities of their school climate. Whether a novice or veteran teacher, and despite training or experience, the coping techniques used by educators were mostly nonproductive and ineffective (Antoniou et al., 2013). Strategies typically involved isolation, truancy, overeating, drinking large quantities of sugary and caffeinated beverages, yelling at students, smoking, and displaying a pessimistic attitude towards others. These strategies resulted in poor teacher-student relationships, low school morale, a decline in student achievement, minimal teacher involvement or buy-in, and diminished teacher self-esteem. Research also suggests that educators who engage in behaviors listed above are more likely to develop health problems, including and not limited to high blood pressure, obesity, and depression (Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998; Maslach et al., 2001).

Through this study, I seek to understand how educational leaders can prepare teachers to process traumatic situations adequately while maintaining their well-being, retention, and

confidence in their ability to support student success and achievement. This awareness can be transferred to teacher education, policy-making, best practices, and professional development programs, with the goal of ensuring that educators are set-up to thrive in and endure one of the most stressful as well as physically and emotionally draining occupations (Buchanan, 2017).

Personal Interest in the Topic

As a researcher, I am passionate about understanding how K-12 teachers experience trauma within their classrooms and school sites and what supports they receive from educational leaders. The reason for examining this topic is based on seven years of experience working in secondary schools within urban, public school districts. I have worked for 16 years as an education specialist. However, five of those years have been in South Los Angeles as a teacher of students with emotional disturbances, and two years as a Restorative Justice Advisor teacher for students with and without disabilities. Through personal experiences as well as numerous interactions with fellow educators, I have become concerned about the well-being, self-efficacy, and resiliency of teachers. Explicitly, I am concerned about how teachers are personally, professionally, and relationally impacted by trauma and seek to understand how educational leaders can better help remedy the stress they experience. The following vignette is an upsetting experience that occurred to a colleague of mine. This event played an instrumental role in my desire to explore this topic further. The colleague described:

> A seventh-grade student was relocated to our school through an opportunity transfer. Our district defines an opportunity transfer as "…an alternative means of correction for addressing student misconduct". She was removed from her previous school for threatening and verbally attacking a teacher. During her seventh period class, the student got into another verbal dispute with her new teacher. The instructor requested the student

switch seats due to excessive talking. When verbally probed a second time to move, the

student said: "No." When asked a third time, she said: "Bitch, are you deaf? I am not

fucking moving." At this point, the entire class burst into laughter, and the teacher

contacted the front office to have a campus aide remove the student from the

classroom. When adult support arrived, the student began to yell multiple profanities and

refused to move from her seat. She then began to call the adult aide derogatory names,

accompanied by threats such as: "If you touch me bitch, I am gone whoop yo

ass" Additional adult support was requested to remove the student from the classroom,

including the school police, assistant principal, dean and an education specialist. By the

time they arrived, the student was verbally attacking both adults and tossing chairs across

the room. The classroom was evacuated by the officer, and the irate student was left

alone with the dean, assistant principal, and education specialist to de-escalate the

situation.

This interaction made an impression on me for several reasons. It raised the following

questions; (a) What form of professional development or leadership support could prepare

teachers for this form of student interaction?; (b) How can educators teach effectively and

develop a positive relationship with students who demonstrate such volatile behavior?; and (c)

How does this teacher regain confidence in her ability to manage a classroom of students who

have witnessed her being disrespected, threatened, and ultimately humiliated?

I also began to think about other instances of trauma that my peers and I have

experienced since establishing a career in the field of education. These instances include being

called profanities by students, receiving physical threats from students and parents, being pushed

or hit by students, and continually forced to interact with these same individuals due to no

expulsions, minimal suspensions, and ineffective consequences for inappropriate behaviors. These circumstances prompted my inquiry about the perceptions and experiences of teachers who work in school environments where trauma is prevalent, and the lack of support/resources provided by educational leaders.

Statement of the Problem

Public school teachers are afflicted with emotional issues that not only impact their mental, physical and emotional health but broadly affect education through teacher turnover (Barmby, 2006; Davis & Wilson, 2000; Gold & Roth, 1993). According to the National Survey of Children's Health (2011), nearly half of American children enrolled in public schools have experienced trauma through either abuse, violence, or neglect, not only leaving teachers responsible for their academic achievement but for their emotional healing as well. These dire statistics is a responsibility shared with law enforcement, firefighters, nurses and trauma doctors, therapists, case managers, and child welfare workers. Each profession is on the frontlines in supporting and working with individuals impacted by trauma; the difference with teachers is that our battlefields are within our classrooms and school sites.

These types of responsibilities leave teachers susceptible to primary and secondary trauma, whose symptoms are comparable to post-traumatic stress disorder. While there is a growing amount of research that examines the impact of trauma on the professions that involve working with children who have experienced trauma, there is an absence of understanding and acknowledgment of trauma among educators. To retain K-12 qualified teachers in the field of education and support their self-efficacy, well-being, and resilience, it is imperative to recognize and address the realities and impacts of trauma on them.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory study is two-fold. First, it aims to promote understanding of teachers' perception of primary and secondary trauma through the related personal, professional, and relational impacts they have experienced. Second, it aims to examine the forms of trauma that educators encounter within their school sites. Educators' mental health is a neglected topic within education but an essential contributor to students' academic success (Pickens, 2015). If we can define the forms of trauma that are predominantly experienced by teachers, determine approaches to best support their mental health, and become more trauma-sensitive towards the individuals within a classroom (teachers and students), then we may be able to improve teacher well-being and self-efficacy, and support retention amongst K-12 educators. There is substantial research on teacher stress and burnout among K-12 teachers (Antoniou et al., 2013; Farber, 1984; Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998; Kyriacou, 2001; Maslach et al., 2001), but little research explores teacher trauma and the characteristics that help teachers flourish at school sites where trauma is prevalent.

Research Questions

The current study is guided by three main research questions:

1. How does teacher perception of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) impact them at school sites?
   - How does trauma affect teacher self-efficacy?
   - How does trauma affect teacher-student relationships?
   - How does trauma affect teacher retention?
2. How does school climate impact teacher experience of trauma?
3. What forms of trauma are experienced by teachers on school sites?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which began in the 1950s and emphasized human potential while stressing the importance of individual growth and self-actualization (McLeod, 2007). Maslow's theory expanded from his desire to develop a psychology that was based on human growth and development versus people being treated as a subject within a controlled situation.

Maslow (1943) examined how the basic needs of individuals are met and what motivates people. He developed a list (see Figure 1.1) which classified all needs into five general groups:

1. Physiological needs including air, food, shelter, drink, sleep, sex and warmth;

2. Safety needs including security, protection from the elements, law, and order, and freedom from fear;

3. Social needs such as belonging, friendships, love, intimacy, and affection;

4. Esteem needs including mastery, independence, self-respect, respect from others, status and prestige; and

5. Self-actualization needs such as self-fulfillment, the realization of personal potential, and personal growth.
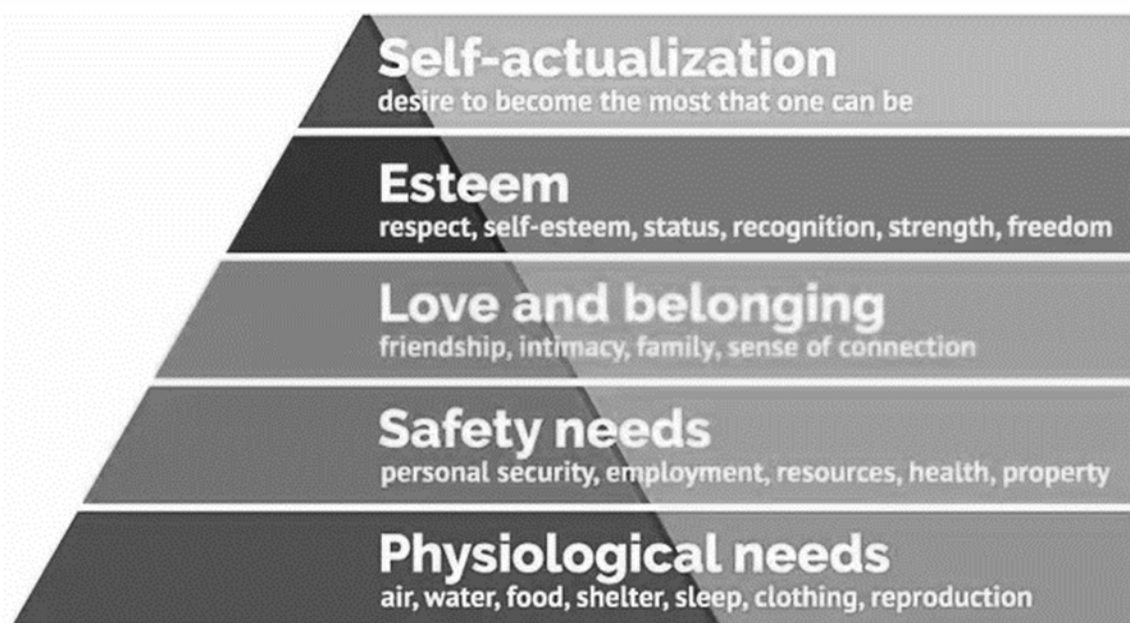
Figure 1. 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow (1943) argued that there is a hierarchy in these five groups of needs based on their importance to human development. Needs at the top of the hierarchy are crucial to the development of personality. However, it is important for the needs to be met incrementally; for example, higher needs such as self-actualization could not be satisfied until lower needs, such as physiological and safety needs are met (McLeod, 2007). Within this theoretical framework, individuals are not able to attain higher levels without satisfying the preceding levels first. As lower needs in the hierarchy are fulfilled, individuals can then focus on higher aspirations rather than basic needs (Maslow, 1954).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs as it relates to individual teachers can be linked to motivation, job satisfaction, and self-efficacy (Kaiser, 1981). These traits are significant as they are developed at the self-actualization level. Also, educators who have reached self-actualization are deemed more aware of student needs (Famer, 2001). Maslow (1971) concluded that if individuals can nurture, care for, and accept themselves, then they can, in turn, nurture, care for,

and accept others. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers reach the level of self-actualization to sufficiently support students academically as well as socially and emotionally (Farmer, 2001). For teachers experiencing trauma, their safety and esteem levels may be negatively impacted, forcing them to expend their energy on those needs at the lower levels of the hierarchy rather than on the highest level where both the teacher and their students can thrive.

Significance of the Study

The hardship experienced by educators in supporting students and communities affected by trauma cannot continue to be overlooked. Teachers not only endure verbal and physical abuse, but they also share the trauma of the students under their care. The presence of shared trauma, discussed by Cohen et al. (2006) and Saakvitne (2002), places teachers in a tough position, requiring them to be attuned to both their mental health needs as well as those of their students (Hagan, 2005; Huggard, 2011; Sullivan & Wong, 2011).

This study is significant as it contributes to the conversation about teacher victimization and trauma and explores how educational leaders can develop and empower teachers within K-12 schools. This study contributes to the body of research in the field by bringing attention to the sources and impact of dual trauma experienced among teachers. Its end goal is to discover effective leadership styles and strategies that support teacher improvement.

Future researchers may use the current study as a basis to develop trauma awareness management programs that aid teachers in being more resilient when faced with adversity. These programs can target the novice educator population who are most likely to leave the field during the first five years of teaching (Berger et al., 2016). The study may also help address issues such as teacher well-being, self-efficacy, and resilience by helping shape adequate policies surrounding trauma, educational leadership approaches, and teacher retention.

Definition of Terms

The definitions below provide clarity about the following terms used throughout the study:

School District Administrator: The chief executive officers of education agencies, such as superintendents, deputies, and assistant superintendents and other persons with district-wide responsibilities. This definition excludes managers of instructional or student support staff (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Teacher Perception: The thoughts and emotions teachers have about their professional responsibilities, students, and school community. These thoughts and emotions are shaped by their prior knowledge and life experiences, which, in turn, influence their professionalism and behavior (Griffiths & Parr, 2001).

Resilience: An aptitude to recuperate from or adapt easily to hardship or change (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

School Site Administrator: Staff whose actions focus on directing and managing a specific school's operation. This classification includes principals, assistant principals, and other assistants; and persons who manage school processes, allocate duties to staff, manage and maintain the school records, and organize school instructional activities with those of the education agency, including department chairpersons (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Teacher Self-Efficacy: A teacher's belief in his ability to organize, plan, and carry out tasks and activities that are needed to attain given educational and professional goals (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010).

Title I: A component of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, Title I, which refers to low-performing schools. This act provided federal funds as financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high percentages of children from low-income families to ensure that all children can meet challenging state academic standards (Turnball, et al., 1997; U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Trauma: Trauma is the response to a profoundly painful or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope, causes a sense of helplessness, and diminishes their sense of self and their ability to feel a full range of emotions and experiences (Onderko, 2018).

Primary Trauma: Primary Trauma produces emotional, physiological, and psychological behaviors that often manifest as intense states of annoyance and anxiety (National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD], 2019).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Post-traumatic stress disorder is a mental disorder that proceeds from primary trauma exposure resulting in initial experiences of helplessness, panic, and apprehension (National Center for PTSD, 2019).

Secondary Traumatic Stress: It is defined as "the natural and consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other [or] the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person" (Figley, 2015, p. 7).

Compassion Fatigue: A condition consisting of a mixture of symptoms from secondary traumatic stress and professional burnout (Adams et al., 2006; Bride et al., 2007; Figley, 2015).

Teacher Well-Being: It is "a construct involving teachers' models of the quality of their personal, professional and relational selves" (Spilt et al., 2011, p. 27).

Limitations

The primary focus of this study is on the perceptions of teachers who have experienced trauma, the impact of trauma on them, and the supports they receive from the school site and district administrators to mitigate the impact. Teachers affected by trauma are a topic that has been rarely discussed in the academic literature, which created numerous obstacles for the researcher. There was limited empirical evidence about the consequences of primary trauma on educators due to teacher victimization. In particular, it was challenging to gather information about the effects of school shootings, verbal and physical assaults, or administrative harassment towards educators. Due to this limitation, the researcher was left to refer to personal accounts of trauma or experiences of colleagues, news media, articles, films, and videos on social media to capture the various forms of teacher victimization occurring within U.S. schools rather than studies previously conducted in academia. A closer look at the literature on trauma revealed gaps and shortcomings in the research related to teacher trauma. Historically, the focus has been on adverse childhood experiences, adverse community experiences, and trauma-informed schools (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019; Ellis & Dietz, 2017; Pinderhughes et al., 2015).

Delimitations

The study had some delimitation. Firstly, the study included teachers who worked in traditional public, charter, and magnet schools. In contrast, teachers who worked at virtual online, boarding, alternative, home school, and traditional private schools or special education centers were excluded. These delimitations were based on convenience, specifically, on the researcher's ability to access participants. The researcher intentionally excluded from the research students and adults at school sites with other types of trauma and focused solely on

teachers. Due to the nature of this study, existing lawsuits, and workers' compensation cases, the researcher did not mention the current district and school to maintain anonymity. Consideration of exposure to trauma and its impact was limited to school sites and excluded experiences beyond the work environment.

Assumptions

The researcher anticipated that trauma, personal well-being, and self-efficacy would be difficult materials for teachers to think about and discuss with parties with whom they were unfamiliar. Therefore, the researcher used effective interpersonal communication skills to facilitate a meaningful discussion with educators participating in the study (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010).

Summary

The issue of teacher trauma in schools is detrimental as it affects teachers' mental states, which can lead to teacher attrition or affect students' academic success. However, this area of research has been, to date, given minimal scholarly attention. The current study addresses this scholarly gap by examining teachers' perceptions of primary and secondary trauma through the related personal, professional, and relational impacts they have experienced from teachers' perspectives. The theoretical framework used for this study is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which began in the 1950s. The study was delimited to teachers who worked in traditional public, charter, and magnet schools that had previous experiences of trauma. The next chapter will provide a comprehensive review of the literature on this topic.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"We repeat what we don't repair" (Langley-Obaugh, 2017). The purpose of this exploratory study is to understand teachers' perceptions of primary and secondary trauma by examining their personal, professional, and relational impact. It also aims to examine the forms of trauma that educators encounter within their school sites. Trauma has systemic effects on our schools and communities, which are transmitted physically, verbally, nonverbally, emotionally, and mentally (Walkley & Cox, 2013). Organizations and leadership that lack resilience often perpetuate the trauma cycle (Thompson et al., 2011). Thus, identifying organizational and leadership qualities that promote resilience in schools and educators while improving well-being and self-efficacy, may improve teacher retention within K-12 education significantly.

To date, the bulk of existing studies about trauma in education have been centered on trauma-informed practices or trauma-sensitive schools and their impact on student learning, achievement, and social-emotional development. Minimal research has been conducted on the impact of primary and secondary trauma on teachers. Galand et al. (2007) conducted a quantitative study, focusing on 487 French-speaking secondary school teachers from Belgium, randomly selected from 24 secondary Belgium schools and their viewpoints on relationships with colleagues, school leadership, students' misbehavior, verbal victimization, depression, somatization, perceived violence, anxiety, and professional disengagement. Based on their findings, they argued that negative emotional interactions with students impacted teacher well-being and aided professional disengagement (Galand et al., 2007). Similarly, Ruff et al. (2004) focused on workplace violence against K-12 teachers, who are the most common victims of nonfatal workplace attacks, after law enforcement, health care professionals, and individuals

employed in retail. Ruff noted that one in five teachers leave the profession due to a dangerous teaching environment.

Hoffman et al. (2007) led a qualitative study specifically focusing on the first and second year, middle school special education teachers, their experience at school sites, job demands, and how these factors influence their choice to leave the education field at startling rates. The authors claimed that compassion fatigue, a form of secondary trauma that can deplete one's ability to function at an optimum level, could also be associated with K-12 educators (Hoffman et al., 2007). Researchers found that teachers directly affected by trauma or who experienced trauma primarily through the lives of the students in their classroom required awareness and support regarding their exposure to trauma and the potential impact it may have on their work performance, well-being, and self-efficacy.

To understand the phenomenon of primary and secondary trauma on educators and to determine how teacher well-being, self-efficacy, and retention are impacted, this chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature on current research related to (a) school violence; (b) teacher trauma; (c) teacher burnout; and (d) organizational and leadership support for victims of trauma. This study examines the attitudes and perceptions of teachers who have experienced primary and secondary trauma within their school environment and identified common patterns in leadership styles and organizational structures which support their retention, well-being, and self-efficacy.

School Violence

Violence in schools remains a major problem in the U.S., not only in metropolitan or urban districts but suburban and rural districts as well (Booren et al., 2011). Within the 21st century, school attacks have received considerable attention due to highly publicized shootings at

Columbine High School in April 1999 and New Town, Connecticut. According to data from the

NBC news affiliate in Miami, Florida (Zegers, 2019), since the tragic massacre at Columbine

High School, there have been a total of 46 school shootings in U.S. schools, excluding colleges

or universities. In 2018 alone, there was a total of 113 school shootings, the highest number

since 1999.

While the Colorado shooting at Columbine High School is an example of an extreme

level of school violence (Altheide, 2009), the trend of shootings and other forms of brutality

continue to occur within our schools, creating a nationwide fear of school assault which result in

an expansion of school-based behavior interventions and zero-tolerance policies (Fowler, 2011).

These policies continue to increase despite abundant research reporting that school violence is

rare and, on the decline (Astor et al., 2005).

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2013) of the U.S.

Department of Education, school violence includes trespassing, acts of vandalism, emotional and

physical taunting (bullying), gang activity, assaults, threats, and sexual offenses. The NCES

(2013) noted that "school violence can make students fearful and affect their readiness and

ability to learn" (p. 74) and the threat of violence "detracts from a positive school environment"

(p. 74). Violence in educational institutions "leads to a disruptive and threatening environment,

physical injury, and emotional stress" (NCES, 2007, p. 1).

School Violence and Adverse Community Experiences

Adverse community experiences are the impact of chronic adversity across a

community. The community trauma is so prevalent that it stifles the individuals who reside there

from creating and implementing practical solutions to promote safety, well-being, and

health. Community trauma manifests itself physically (structurally), economically, and socio-

culturally (Pinderhughe, et al., 2015). The fundamental cause of community trauma is violence, particularly, structural violence. Examples of structural violence include gentrification and displacement, redlining, concentrated poverty, and inadequate food systems. Violence is defined as the intentional use of power or physical force, threatened or actual, against another person, oneself, or a group or community that results in the likelihood of emotional or psychological harm, mal-development, death, deprivation or injury (Pinderhughes et al., 2015). Figure 2.1 represents the links between adverse community environments (ACEs) or "soil," and some children's lives to the "branches" of their family environment, which bloom adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

The leaves illustrated on the tree represent symptoms of ACEs that are recognized in the educational, medical, and social service settings (Ellis & Dietz, 2017). ACEs may increase a child's exposure to stress or lead to poor coping skills, ultimately producing lifelong illnesses such as substance abuse, depression, heart disease, and obesity (Ellis & Dietz, 2017). The Pair of ACEs Tree is cultivated in soil that is saturated in systemic dysfunction and injustice, stripping it of nutrients necessary to support a thriving community. Adverse Community Experiences, such as poverty, discrimination, and violence, contribute to and compound the hardships experienced by children and their families (Ellis & Dietz, 2017).

The Pair of ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Maternal
Depression

Physical &
Emotional Neglect

Emotional &
Sexual Abuse

Divorce

Mental Illness

Substance
Abuse

Incarceration

Domestic Violence

Homelessness

Adverse Community Environments

Poverty

Violence

Discrimination

Poor Housing
Quality &
Affordability

Community
Disruption

Lack of Opportunity, Economic
Mobility & Social Capital

Figure 2. 1. The Pair of Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Adverse community experiences have a direct correlation with school violence and safety (Walling, et al., 2011). Communities impacted by the above difficulties foster neighborhoods that are unsafe for children and community members to walk through (Walling et al., 2011). Police presence within these communities are often minimal or nonexistent and typically made prevalent when tragic events such as murder, drug bust, or racial profiling occur within the area (Weisburd & Telep, 2014).

Neighborhoods suffering from adverse community experiences are often desolate (Shane, 2012). They are overrun by empty lots, unfit housing, and chronic unemployment. This leaves the youth, particularly young men, with limited options for engagement, aside from hanging on street corners (Shane, 2012). Desolate communities often lead youth to participate in illegal activities such as drug use and selling, assault, car theft, and robbery, based on boredom and the influence of gang culture (Shane, 2012). According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2010b), these illegal activities represent risk factors that are associated with youth violence.

The tension created by adverse community experiences spills over into the schools that students attend (Kelley, 2013). Evidence of this comes to the surface when students initiate fights with one another based on disputes that occurred outside of school or when students from rival gangs who attend the same school site compete for turf or engage in varying altercations from crossing paths with one another throughout the day (Kelley). Indication of adverse community experiences also impacts school communities through chronic absenteeism (Barnum, 2017) and adverse childhood experiences that are directly linked to a student's home life and environment (Walling et al., 2011).

School Violence and Adverse Childhood Experiences

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2019), "adverse childhood experiences" (ACEs) is an expression used to illustrate any form of neglect, abuse, or potentially traumatic event that transpires with individuals under the age of 18. As seen in Figure 3.1, as youths' exposure to ACEs increases, so does the opportunities for chronic health conditions, early death, risky health behaviors, and low life potential (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). Figure 3.1 represents the various health risks individuals with ACEs typically experience within their lifespan.
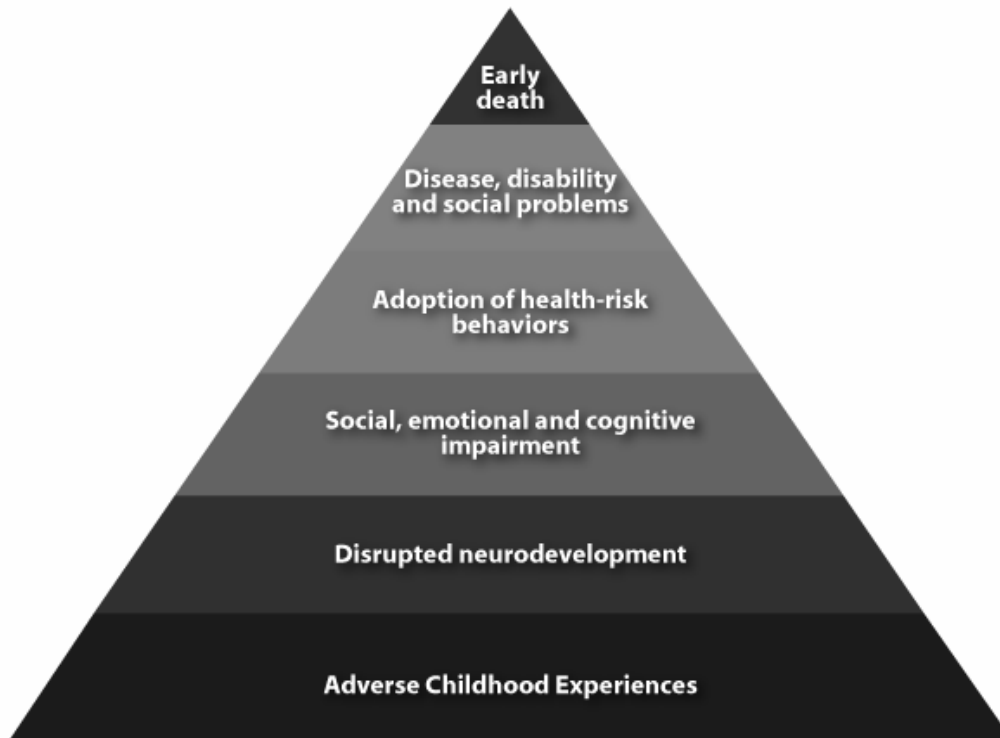
Figure 3. 1. Long-term Trauma Impact-ACE Pyramid.

As human beings, our brains develop according to our environments (Anda et al.,

2006). As individuals grow up in stable environments with safe and nurturing relationships, they

learn how to demonstrate impulse control, anger management, empathy, and problem-solving

skills (Colman & Widom, 2004; Eshel, et al., 2006; Evans & Wachs, 2010; Mersky & Reynolds,

2007; Topitzes, et al., 2012). Each of these skills and behaviors is a competency that protects

against violence (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

However, as children grow up in environments that are unsafe, their brain cells form

distinct relationships that support their ability to recognize and respond to threats (Fox &

Shonkoff, 2012; Middlebrooks & Audage, 2008). For example, youth in these environments

may misinterpret indifferent facial expression as anger, or varying situations they encounter may

trigger a fight-or-flight response (Pollak, 2008). Thus, students consistently exposed to

threatening environments are more likely to respond with violence (fight) or resistance (flight) than their peers who grew up in nurturing environments. Ultimately, survival skills like fight-or-flight generally override skills that foster non-violent conflict resolution such as empathy, anger management, impulse control, and problem-solving skills (Fox & Shonkoff, 2012; Gunnar, 1998; Karr-Morse & Wiley, 1997; Kotulak, 1997).

Causes of School Violence

The causes of school violence are diverse and complex. This form of violence is typically made up of combative acts carried out by and coming from members of the educational community such as teachers, students, parents/caregivers, support staff, among other community stakeholders. The attacks can be demonstrated in different ways: physically, verbally, or psychologically. What alters is the person giving the abuse, the aggressor, or the person receiving the abuse, the victim (Galand, et al., 2007).

Practitioners, educators, and educational researchers agree that school violence arises from multiple risk factors and causes. Exposure to media violence, cyber abuse, environmental factors such as family and community, and access to weapons impact the trend of violence observed in schools (Henry, 2009; Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Kimmel & Mahler, 2003).

Access to Weapons. According to a recent study, 42% of secondary school students in Boston and Milwaukee claim that they can get access to a gun if they desire. In comparison, 28% state that they have held a gun without adult supervision or knowledge, and 17% report that, they have carried a concealed weapon (Bergstein et al., 1996). Similarly, another report by the University of Southern California's School of Medicine, states that approximately 35% of U.S. homes consist of children under the age of 18. Each home report at least one firearm, implying nearly 11million adolescents live in homes with loaded weapons (Gobor, 2016).

Media Violence. According to Lefkowitz et al. (2013), by the time an American child has reached seventh grade, he or she will have witnessed 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on television. Many researchers believe that this extensive exposure to violence on television aids the American society in being more violent (Gobor, 2016; Lefkowitz et al., 2013; Straus, 2017). Hanson (2009) asserted that increased violence in the media leads to the increased likelihood of physically and verbally aggressive behavior, thoughts, and emotions among children and adults.

Cyber Abuse. This form of school violence has been on the rise since the 1990s. As the popularity of the internet, blogging, social media, and cell-phone texting has amplified, the erosion of school safety has been magnified. Specifically, social media such as Facebook and Instagram, along with cell phone text messaging, provide a platform for additional forms of violence, known as cyberbullying (Wang, et al., 2009). Cyberbullying occurs when children or students use electronic devices and the media to insult, threaten, humiliate, or taunt their peers.

Environmental Factors. Communities play a role in the neglect of children, just as schools and families do (Pinderhughes et al., 2015). According to Pinderhughes, when communities are not responsive to the needs of families, or children, the oversight can evolve into school violence. Similarly, the transformation of communities has also been linked to school violence (Cohen et al., 2016). As communities undergo a transition in racial and ethnic mixing, economic growth or changes in size, there is a shift in school demographics, which directly impacts school climate, culture, and violence (Cohen et al., 2016).

Family background also plays a significant role in environmental factors. Ideally, parents foster positive behaviors in their children; however, when they fail to do so, violent and harmful behavior patterns may arise. Studies surrounding adverse childhood experiences highlight that

neglectful and abusive home life can hinder the student's ability to communicate effectively and diminish their self-esteem (Felitti et al., 2019).

Summary

To understand the effects of primary and secondary trauma on educators, it is vital to grasp how school violence impacts their daily interactions with students and all stakeholders. School violence not only heightens teacher stress (Galand et al., 2007) but also contributes to student dropout rates and suicide/homicide within educational sites (Bossarte et al., 2008). Understanding of the nature of school violence provides a greater awareness of how educators are adversely affected, which impacts their ability to effectively support their students' learning.

Teacher Trauma

Teacher trauma can take different forms, including teacher victimization and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Irrespective of the type of trauma, the consequences on teachers' well-being are cause for concern.

Teacher Victimization

Threats of violence and direct violence, both verbal and physical, are crucial problems for educators. Around 390,000 elementary and secondary school teachers are vulnerable to acts of violence by students each year (Moon et al., 2019). This statistic depicts 9% of U.S. teachers, which is roughly equal to 87 out of every 1000 educators who are threatened with violent injury in our nation's schools each year (Roberts, 2019). Furthermore, the latest report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Musu, Zhang, et al., 2018) stated that the percentage of public school teachers who reported that students physically attacked them within their schools during the 2015-2016 school years, was 6% higher than all previous years

reported. These attacks included sexual assault, robbery, rape, as well as simple and aggravated assault (Moon et al., 2019). Galand et al. (2007) stated that most research surrounding school violence is focused on the impact of student-against-student violence. This finding indicates that the effect of student violence against teachers has been comparatively neglected despite the negative outcomes that have been identified, such as teacher burnout, physical injuries, and impaired teacher-student relationships.

Teachers and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

The American Society for Ethics in Education released numerous links on their site to information that supports the opinion that PTSD impacts a significant number of teachers within U.S. schools. Taylor Dupuy (2016, p. 3) described the challenges teachers face in his article "The Five Most Regrettable Jobs":

> Would-be teachers often don't fully understand what the job involves until after they have started...Teachers starting out—often naïve idealists who think they're going to make a big difference—have no idea of the paperwork required of an educator...as well as the unending parent interventions and the reluctance of students to do the work. [They don't] realize the politics of working in a secondary school system. The education profession is often marred by a lack of resources, dwindling support, and modest salaries. Teachers must simultaneously parent and counsel all while navigating the stressful terrain often found in the bureaucracy of school districts.

A blog post by Lofthouse (2014) outlines a study by Teresa McIntrye, a psychology research professor at the University of Houston, who describes the cumulative chronic daily stress that teachers experience succinctly as comparable to high-risk occupations. In her practice, McIntrye has found that one in three teachers in the Houston area is significantly stressed with PTSD

symptoms ranging from sleep deprivation, fatigue, and difficulty with concentration (Lofthouse, 2014). In other words, 33% of teachers in Houston school districts are affected by PTSD, compared to a national average of 7.8% (National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, n.d.).

Summary

These statistics confirm that violence and PTSD among teachers is a real and growing crisis in schools today. Historically, educational institutions have been considered as being safe learning and working environments. However, with school shootings occurring across the country, the increase in student-to-teacher violence, and the increasing trend in vicarious trauma amidst educators, it is clear that teacher trauma has become a significant national problem. Teacher trauma should be viewed as equally important as other challenges of mental and emotional health among students which are considered as significant problems in public schools. If unaddressed, the physical, emotional, and psychological effects of the injury that teachers experience will not only diminish teachers' quality of life but potentially devastate the emotional growth and development of students. To avoid educators taking their frustrations or hurt out on students, it is imperative that teachers are provided resources and tools to work through perceived experiences of trauma.

An Overview of Trauma

Owens (2014) described trauma as an extraordinary experience that is of frequent occurrence. Trauma is not limited to or identical to an unhealthy event (Sar & Ozturk, 2006). Trauma is an experience related to both subjective and objective factors of a situation. According to Sar and Ozturk (2006), trauma is the experience of significant differences between threatening elements in a situation and individual coping skills. Furthermore, trauma is not

solely a situational phenomenon, but a longitudinal socio-psychological process that develops over time and follows a course.

Connolly (2011) expanded on the concept of trauma by explaining real events result in a "breach in the protective shield of the psyche," which, in turn, disrupts the psychic structure and an individual's sense of self (p. 607). Furthermore, the American Psychological Association (2019) defined trauma as an emotional response to a terrible event. Symptoms can be immediate, manifesting as shock or denial. Symptoms can also present in prolonged reactions such as flashbacks, tense relationships, and erratic emotions, along with multiple physical symptoms such as nausea, headaches, and stress, which can lead to further health complications.

Primary Trauma

Primary trauma is widespread and can occur at any time and with anyone (Connolly, 2011; Levine & Frederick, 1997). There is ample research that has highlighted its destructive impact (Connolly, 2011). Primary trauma produces emotional, physiological, and psychological behaviors that often manifest as intense states of annoyance and anxiety. These direct reactions are identified as posttraumatic because they arise after traumatic events and typically range in severity (National Center for PTSD, n.d.).

The most severe form of psychological trauma is called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a mental disorder that proceeds from primary trauma exposure resulting in initial experiences of helplessness, panic, and apprehension. Regrettably, PTSD leaves individuals with a constant re-experiencing of suffering that develops into avoidance, numbness, and hyperarousal that lasts months at a time and causes occupational and social dysfunction (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Stephens & Miller, 1998; Moore, 2018).

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (n.d.), some factors that increase the risk of developing PTSD include:

- Experiencing a dangerous event or traumatic experience;

- Being physically harmed;

- Witnessing another person being harmed, or viewing a dead body;

- Living through childhood trauma;

- Experiencing extreme fear, helplessness, or horror;

- Receiving little or no social support after a traumatic event.

- Being burdened with additional stress after a traumatic event, such as the death of a loved one, the loss of a job or home, or pain and injury

- A history of substance abuse or mental illness

These risk factors are relevant to K-12 educators. A brief study by the American Psychological Association (2016), reported that 80% of teachers surveyed were victimized through physical harm and experienced extreme fear and helplessness at their school sites at least once in the current school year or prior. The brief went on to identify teacher victimization as a silent national crisis. In 2015, the U.S Department of Education reported that students verbally abused approximately 20% of teachers in public schools, while 10% of teachers reported being physically threatened, and 5% admitted to being physically attacked at their school site. The report *Indicators of School Crime and Safety* (Robers et al., 2014) stated that during the 2009-2010 school year, 9% of students displayed disrespectful acts other than verbal abuse towards teachers on a daily or weekly basis. It further stated that 5% of students verbally abused teachers on a daily or weekly basis, and that an estimated 6% of K-12 teachers were physically attacked at their school sites. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that 1.3 million nonfatal

crimes (473,000 violent crimes) had been committed against U.S. teachers from 1997-2001 (Roberts et al., 2013). This data illustrates that all educators are at risk of teacher trauma within their professional careers and thus at risk for developing PTSD.

Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) is an additional mental disorder that involves severe disengagement, intrusion, restraint, and hyperarousal symptoms that can result in social and occupational dysfunction in the first weeks following a primary traumatic event. ASD can also be correlated to a heightened risk of progressing into PTSD (Koopman, et al., 1994). Additional posttraumatic symptoms include flashbacks, exaggerated startle responses, increased anger, psychic numbing, sleep disturbance, and isolation (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Moore, 2018).

Miller (2007) reported that trauma resulting from violence warrants a need for innovative research, implementation of interventions, and prevention strategies during the traumatic period of change. He also observed that traumatic responses from school violence, workplace stress, continued threats of conflict, as well as the domestic and international reactions to cultural, religious, and climatic changes, were noticeable. According to the psychological community, "traumatic events and experiences profoundly affect physical and mental well-being, which can predispose an individual to either greater resilience or vulnerability to life stresses" (Miller, 2007, p. 896).

Secondary Trauma

To date, secondary traumatic stress (STS) has been studied among the following professionals: social workers, hotline and crisis workers, therapists, counselors, law enforcement officers, nurses, paramedics, firefighters, disaster relief workers, and emergency medical technicians (Hill, 2011). Educators are also susceptible to STS based on potential interactions

with students who have experienced trauma, crisis, violence, or disasters (Hydon, et al., 2015).

STS is defined as "the natural and consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing

about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other [or] the stress resulting from

helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person" (Figley, 2015, p. 7). STS can be

further defined as "the natural, predictable, treatable, and preventable, unwanted consequence of

working with suffering people" (Figley, 1999, p. 4). Cicognani et al. (2009) found that the

adverse effects of working with trauma victims include a reduced sense of personal capability

and emotional exhaustion, compassion fatigue, avoidance, nightmares, withdrawal and PTSD

(Figley, 1999; Figley, 2015; Hydon et al., 2015).

Figley (2015) argued that secondary traumatic stress (STS) is a natural outcome of

developing an empathic and caring relationship. Researchers proposed that STS is prevalent and

should be expected when supporting individuals who have experienced trauma (Bride, 2007;

Figley, 2015; Yassen, 1995). Yassen added that "STS in itself cannot be prevented since it is a

normal and universal response to abnormal (violence induced) or unusual events (disasters)" (p.

178). Yassen also suggested that if professionals are unaware of how to prepare, plan, and attend

to the consequences of STS; they can bring harm to themselves, family members, friends,

colleagues, or the individuals they are entrusted to support and service.

Two additional terms, vicarious traumatization (VT) and compassion fatigue (CF), cited

in the research literature, describe the adverse psychological reactions social work professionals

and educators may experience when working with traumatized clients or students (Newsome et

al., 2012). Although each condition is distinct from one another, they are often used

interchangeably in the literature. Vicarious traumatization is defined as "a process of [cognitive]

change resulting from [chronic] empathic engagement with trauma survivors" (Pearlman, 1999,

p. 52). VT represents the cognitive shifts in beliefs and thinking that occur in public servants (i.e., teachers, social workers, nurses) in direct service of victims of trauma. Examples of changes in cognition include revisions in one's sense of self, changes in perspectives regarding issues surrounding safety, trust, and control, and shifts in spiritual beliefs (Pearlman, 1997; Pearlman & McCann, 1995; Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995).

Vicarious traumatization and secondary traumatic stress have similar defining characteristics. VT is a cognitive change process stemming from regular direct interactions with trauma populations, in which one's thoughts and beliefs regarding safety, trust, and control are altered (McCann & Pearlman, 1990; Pearlman, 1997; Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). In contrast, STS emphasizes outward behavioral symptoms rather than fundamental cognitive changes (Figley, 2015). Both conditions arise based on direct practice with or exposure to victims of trauma.

Compassion fatigue (CF) is a condition consisting of a mixture of symptoms from secondary traumatic stress and professional burnout (Adams et al., 2006; Bride et al., 2007; Figley, 2015). Compassion fatigue is a general term used to describe the overall experience of emotional and physical fatigue that public servants encounter due to the constant use of empathy when supporting clients who are suffering in some form (Figley, 2015; Newell & MacNeil, 2010). The continuous use of empathy compounded with the day-to-day bureaucratic hurdles that many social workers experience, such as billing difficulties, balancing clinical work with administrative work, and agency stress, generate the experience of compassion fatigue (Figley, 2015). This phenomenon of compassion fatigue is also seen amongst teachers who practice empathy with students and stakeholders while combating work climate, job dissatisfaction and alienation, school violence, student behavior, inadequate salaries, class size, collective

bargaining issues, lack of administrative support, and budgeting (El Helou et al., 2016). CF is typically cumulative and occurs over time, while vicarious trauma and secondary traumatic stress have an immediate impact.

Summary

Trauma affects each person differently because of how one perceives his experience (Sar & Ozturk, 2006). Understanding how trauma affects educators requires a close look at the frequency and intensity of the traumatic events, exposure to primary or secondary trauma, and individual coping skills. Teachers need to know the types, sources, and stages of trauma so that their performance (self-efficacy) and learning (well-being) are not hindered. Teachers' ability to inform and prepare themselves for the realities of traumatic exposure at the workplace may help us to relieve stress and other negative health symptoms while improving coping strategies that increase overall resiliency.

Manifestations of Teacher Trauma

Teacher trauma can lead to various physical and emotional manifestations. The type, frequency, and degree of manifestation of trauma vary based on various factors. Some manifestations such as harm to teacher well-being can be less noticeable, while others such as burnout and attrition, are more obvious.

Teacher Stress

When examining teacher trauma, both primary and secondary stress is a common factor. There is a vast amount of literature that now provides evidence for what many educators have known for years: Teaching is a tremendously stressful occupation. Teachers globally deal with a considerable amount of ongoing occupational stress (Borg, 1990; Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978; Pithers & Soden, 1998). Kyriacou (2001) identified teacher

stress as "the experience by a teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher" (p. 28). Within the education field, it is understood that high levels of stress and teaching do not mix. Occupational stress impacts an educator's ability to give their best on the job. It has a severe impact on the healthy functioning of individual teachers and schools, along with entire school systems.

Teacher Burnout

Teacher trauma not only leads to stress, but it may also contribute to teacher burnout. Van Dick and Wagner (2001) explained in their study that "the more teachers suffered from stress, the more they showed symptoms of burnout" (p. 256). Hargreaves (2001) argued that teachers' emotional involvement and professional responsibilities increase burnout and can lead to compassion fatigue. According to Maslach (1982), there are three integral parts of burnout due to chronic work stress: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a lack of personal achievement, which are typical consequences of primary and secondary trauma. Emotional exhaustion is defined as having minimal energy and lack of motivation to complete one's work to the best of one's ability, such as collaborating with peers or creating an innovative unit, as seen in project-based learning. The reason for this is that teachers may be experiencing fatigue and, thus, find it more comfortable to lecture or work alone rather than provide hands-on activities or expend the energy to interact with others.

Depersonalization refers to reclusiveness or disengagement from social situations. Behaviors of a teacher may include keeping to oneself, demonstrating an adverse or cynical attitude, and displaying little to no empathy towards others (Farber, 1984; Iacovides et al., 2003). Teachers may, for example, show insensitivity in the classroom during their interactions with

students, such as lacking concern around how their comments or behaviors affect students'

emotional well-being. Yong and Yue (2007) expanded the range of burnout behaviors that

teachers can demonstrate to include problems with self-control and self-respect, overreacting to

small problems, and difficulty concentrating. Teachers may also lack zeal for their work and

have minimal creativity, which negatively impacts the learning environment and what students

experience.

Lack of personal accomplishment refers to an educator's belief that he or she is not

capable of performing his job well. Teachers who think this way tend to view their performance

negatively and often judge themselves harshly (Maslach et al., 2001). Antoniou et al. (2013)

surveyed elementary and secondary teachers in numerous public schools and concluded that

female elementary teachers were more stressed and had rated themselves with a lower personal

accomplishment than male teachers. The study indicates that female teachers reached a burnout

stage due to a change in their belief about their work performance.

Research indicates that burnout is a consequence of teachers' lack of effective coping

strategies (Chan & Hui, 1995; McCarthy et al., 2009). Most teachers who reach this level of

burnout leave the profession, while a small percentage choose to remain in their current position.

Maslach et al. (2001) found that teachers who are overstressed are not as productive as others

who are not stressed. They concluded that educators who experience substantial stress yet

choose to stay in the profession might not be able to implement quality instruction for students

(Schaufeli et al., 2009; Yong & Yue, 2007). This may look like teacher retention but results in

an ineffective teacher remaining in and leading a classroom.

Teacher Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as a pleasant emotional state that arises from an individual's assessment of his job experiences (Reilly et al., 2014). According to Qamar et al., (2015), job satisfaction is essential for all professions; if educators are not satisfied with their position, it is challenging and nearly impossible to carry out their duties effectively. Teacher job satisfaction not only has a significant impact on student success, but it can also make or break an organization's progression (Knox & Anfara, 2013).

Educators have reported stressors such as time constraints, classroom management, student misbehavior, and unreasonable workload expectations as detrimental to their sense of job satisfaction (Mazzola et al., 2011). When stressors are unaddressed, job dissatisfaction increases and lead to teacher burnout (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Although every teacher will experience stress at some point in their careers, it is the amount of stress, the supports provided, and the individual perceptions of job satisfaction that dictates whether an educator can resist teacher stress and burnout (Mulder, 2016).

Teacher Attrition/turnover

Teacher trauma, which manifests as stress, causes educators to leave the field of education before their retirement period for several reasons. Billingsley, whose work focused mainly on the experiences of special education teachers, created a model in 1993 that examined three factors (external, employment, and personal) that potentially influenced a teacher's decision to stay or leave the teaching profession early. This model is presented in Figure 4.1. External factors include economic, societal, and institutional considerations, which can directly and indirectly, influence a teacher's career choice. Employment factors include professional qualifications, work conditions, and rewards, commitment, and employability.

Personal factors include demographics, family, and cognitive/affective factors in terms of the teacher feeling satisfied with his/her work. Billingsley (1993) wrote when "professional qualifications and work conditions are not as favorable; teachers are likely to experience fewer rewards and, thus, reduced commitment. Whether teachers leave depends on a host of personal, social, and economic factors" (p. 147). The model suggests that these factors impact whether the teacher stays, moves, or leaves the profession.
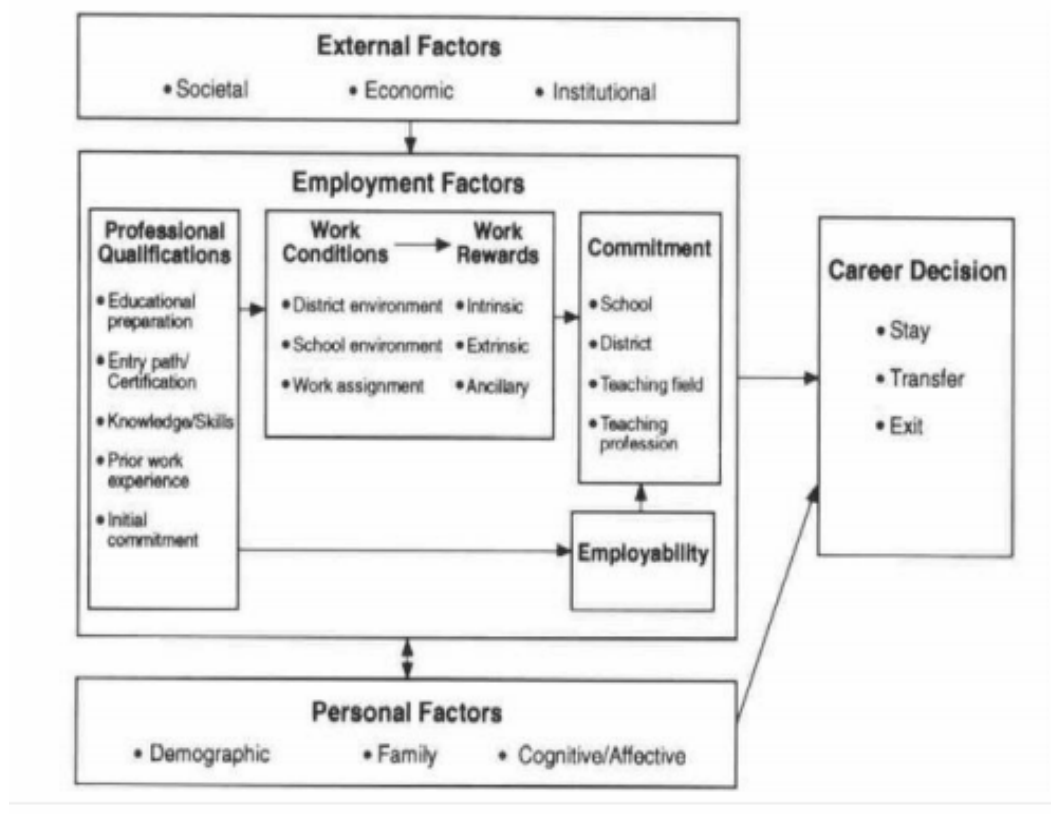
Figure 4. 1. Billingsley's (1993) Teacher Attrition Model

Teaching is identified as one of the most stressful occupations (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). According to Borg (1990, as cited in Brown & Nagel, 2004), multiple studies examined stress levels among English middle school teachers and found that 25-33% of the educators viewed their job as taxing (pp. 34-35). Miller, Brownell, and Smith (1999) conducted surveys with over 1,500 elementary and secondary teachers to track factors that encourage their decision to leave the profession or move to another educational setting such as another school or district. Researchers found that stress was the main factor that influenced the teachers' decisions.

Stress derived from hostile school climates, insufficient training, and minimal experience is effectively increasing challenges at school sites. Countless studies have suggested the idea that stress is related to a teacher's choice to leave the field of education (Billingsley & Cross,

1992; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Gersten et al., 2001; Morvant, et al., 1995; Schnorr, 1995; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). For example, 80% of the teachers in Morvant et al.'s (1995) study reported leaving the profession due to "stress on a weekly or daily basis" (p. 68).

Teacher Well-Being

There is strong evidence that when teachers experience joyfulness and enjoyment within their job and work environment, student achievement increases (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2015). Teacher well-being is "a construct involving teachers' models of the quality of their personal, professional and relational selves" (Spilt et al., 2011, p. 27). Current research reveals that teacher well-being has a critical impact on student academic success and performance (Paterson & Grantham, 2016). Teacher burnout not only impacts the quality of life of educators but has also been linked to the reduction of student motivation (Shen et al., 2015). Hence, student development and advancement are directly linked to and are dependent on the sound psychological and physical well-being of educators (Hinds et al., 2015).

Furthermore, improved teacher well-being supports positive teacher-student relationships (Thapa et al., 2013). Supportive teacher-student relationships increase student self-esteem, grade point averages, engagement, behavior, and decreases signs of student depression (Thapa et al., 2013). On the other hand, teachers who do not manage their well-being exhibit traits of burnout and demonstrate minimal patience with students, which leads to devastating effects on student confidence and achievement (Jacobson, 2016). Research has shown a significant correlation between teacher well-being, students' academic performance, and the quality of student-teacher relationships (Gastaldi et al., 2014).

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Bandura and Walters (1977) defined self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their ability to attain a goal. The personal efficacy of educators plays an instrumental role in their ability to function within the educational setting (Bandura, 1997). Klassen (2010) pointed out that teacher self-efficacy has been linked to improving student achievement, increasing student motivation, strengthening educator's job commitment, and increasing job satisfaction. As educators' assurance in their ability to perform their occupational responsibilities increases, there is a shift in motivation that enhances their capacity to complete professional tasks and overcome obstacles (O'Neill & Stephenson, 2012). Also, teachers with heightened self-efficacy have a longer and more fulfilling career due to reduced stress (Klassen et al., 2010). Research has suggested that the factors that influence teacher self-efficacy negatively include overcrowded classes, minimal authority over decision-making, standardized testing, limited time for lesson planning, absence of administrative support, behavior problems, self-doubt, the pressure of work accountability, and professional isolation (Richards, 2012).

Teacher Resiliency

Resiliency is the confidence an individual has in their innate ability to overcome adverse situations (Richardson, 2002). Resilience is an essential quality for educators to possess due to schools being a stressful environment in which to work (Mazzola et al., 2011). Whether teachers work at well-sourced private schools, urban, suburban, rural, or public or charter schools, teaching is emotionally taxing and stressful (Kyriacou, 2001).

Toxic stress plagues our schools and teachers through unreasonable demands, poor work conditions, unrealistic job performance expectations, and minimal supports or resources, which ultimately outpace teachers' ability to cope and perform (Yong & Yue, 2007). This ongoing

stress reveals itself as decreased productivity for students, teachers, and school communities, which escalates into symptoms of ongoing trauma such as high levels of frustration, anxiety, dissociation, and eventually burnout (American Psychological Association, 2019). With roughly half a million U.S. educators leaving the teaching profession each year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014), increased resiliency of educators is crucial to help reduce this turnover rate of 20%.

Attrition of first-year teachers has increased by 40% in the last two decades (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Factors causing attrition range from low morale; low salaries; increased accountability and expectations; classroom management; and student behavior to overall stress (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). The rate of physical and emotional fatigue is higher in urban secondary classrooms, in content areas of math, science, foreign languages, and special education (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2014), estimated that teacher attrition costs school districts roughly $2.2 billion per year.

Therefore, the lack of teacher resilience presents a substantial financial burden for districts and contributes to the instability of staff, which, in turn, adversely impacts student learning, performance, and success (Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001). High teacher turnover also interrupts the successful implementation of school programs and hinders school morale and culture (Thapa et al., 2013).

Summary

Unresolved stress due to teacher trauma increases the likelihood of educators leaving the profession. As large percentages of teachers continue to leave the field, our educational system is undermined. We are leaving disastrous financial effects on school districts and schools. Identifying methods for increasing teacher well-being, self-efficacy, and resilience is essential,

especially when establishing how leadership and organizational structure influence these attributes. The following section will examine procedures and coping strategies used to combat the effects of primary and secondary trauma amongst educators.

Hopeful Solutions to Mitigate Teacher Trauma

There is no panacea for teacher trauma. Researchers have reported some of the strategies that have supported teachers experiencing trauma, including peer support and trauma-sensitive schools and programs. There are also currently several organizations that support individuals that have been through traumatic experiences.

Power of Peer Support

Teaching best practices support the notion that when teachers are provided dedicated time to collaborate together, share lesson plans and ideas, create curriculum, and strategize on effective approaches, the academic success and the performance of students increase (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Algozzine & Anderson, 2007; Graziano & Navarrete, 2012). Peer support and networking can be just as efficient when addressing trauma amongst educators. Micere Keels, an associate professor at the University of Chicago and the founder of the Trauma Responsive Educational Practices (TREP) Project, a trauma-informed curriculum for urban teachers stated (Minero, 2017),

> Reducing professional isolation is critical. It allows educators to see that others are struggling with the same issues, prevents the feeling that one's struggles are due to incompetence, and makes one aware of alternative strategies for working with students exhibiting challenging behavior. (p. 1)

Wellness and accountability partners, specifically peers who commit to supporting their colleagues in attaining personal wellness goals, are also effective in aiding teachers' mental

health and well-being (Minero, 2017). Alex Shevrin, a former educational leader and teacher of Centerpoint School, a trauma-informed high school in Vermont, addressed the positive impact of monthly wellness meetings (Minero, 2017). During meetings, teachers, administrators, and social workers, came together to share and support one another with progress towards personal wellness goals such as: implementing strategies to balance work with home life, exercise routines and coping skills for stress, which were embedded into the professional development schedule (Minero, 2017). Staff also utilized professional development time to build staff morale and community by taking hikes, biking, going to the gym or learning to knit together (Minero, 2017). As reported in Minero (2017), Shevrin shared,

> If I had one wish for every school in the country, it would be that they made time for teachers to really sit down and talk about how they're feeling in the work...It doesn't serve anybody to pretend that we're teacher-bots with no emotions, which I think sometimes teachers feel like they have to be. (p. 3)

Trauma-Sensitive Schools and Programs

Trauma-sensitive and trauma-informed schools are institutions where administrators, teachers, and stakeholders receive ongoing training that educates all parties on the impact of trauma on student academic performance and behavior (Walkley & Cox, 2013). Students receive increased access to mental health and behavioral services. Culturally responsive discipline practices and policies are implemented school-wide, school connectedness is evident in teacher, student, parent/guardian, and community collaboration, and students have an increased feeling of social, emotional, and physical safety (Walkley & Cox, 2013).

According to the Dr. Mollie Marti (2017), six factors can help any school become trauma-sensitive (see Figure 7.1). The factor, education, ensures that all stakeholders within a

school are informed and trained on trauma and its impact on the learning, relationships, and behavior of an entire school community. The factor, safety, creates a sense of physical, emotional, and academic safety for students and adults by continually accessing their needs. The factor, holistic, encompasses many elements. These include the continual observation of and the structure implemented to support teacher and student relationships, individuals' capacity to self-regulate their behaviors, attention, and emotions effectively, as well as, their non-academic and academic achievement. Community fosters a culture of tolerance, respect, and acceptance, where all stakeholders feel welcomed. Also, policies and support services are provided to ensure that students are full members of their school community and classrooms. The accountability element for trauma-sensitive schools involves the shift away from the traditional paradigm of teachers taking primary responsibility for their respective students to one where responsibility is shared, effective communication is priority and teamwork is ongoing. Including the component of adaptability allows administrators, educators, and support staff members to educate themselves about the needs and concerns of the surrounding community and to anticipate upcoming or new challenges before potential problems arise (Marti, 2017).

Figure 5. 1. Six Ways to Become a Trauma-Informed School

Restorative Justice.

Throughout the country, schools have made efforts to utilize restorative justice practices to reform long-established disciplinary policies. Restorative justice is an innovative approach to challenging offensive behaviors that harm people or relationships. It aims to repair these infractions through meaningful interactions rather than assigning blame and dispensing punishment (Wright, 2008). Restoring relationships helps to promote resilience and healing throughout the broader school community, not only for students but also for adults.

For example, restorative circles are a practice that examines troublesome thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that victims and perpetrators experience during and after an incident and explores how the harm can be repaired (Hopkins, 2002). Restorative circles emphasize improving interactions and conduct rather than rules and consequences and emphasize the belief that all individuals' feelings matter (Hopkins, 2002).

Breathe for Change.

Breathe for Change is an organization that offers educators an internationally recognized, 200-hour Yoga Alliance certification. The program is specifically designed for educators and integrates practices such as meditation, mindfulness, yoga, community-building exercises, and communication techniques into a tailored curriculum for school communities and classrooms (Yoga Journal, 2017). The goal of this program is to save schools, one teacher at a time, by reducing educator burnout through improved well-being, mindfulness, and yoga training (Yoga Journal, 2017).

Sam Levine, a former teacher in the Washington D.C. area and current Director of Partnerships of Breathe for Change, suggested teacher burnout is a tremendous problem in our schools. He stated (YJ Editors, 2017),

Seventy-three percent of teachers report feeling extreme levels of physical, mental, and emotional stress, yet our current education system is not prioritizing their well-being. As a result, teachers are leaving the profession in droves, with some studies estimating that 50 percent leave in the first five years. Many who do stay in the profession become burned out, which research shows have a significant negative impact on student learning. If we want to sustainably improve our education system, we need to focus on the health and well-being of our teachers. (p. 1)

The Breathe for Change Model has five key transformative components, intention and reflection, community building, wellness practices, holistic pedagogies, and systemic teacher support (Breathe for Change, 2019).

The first component, intention, and reflection are intended for educators to examine and expand their perspectives of the world and attain a deeper understanding of themselves, their students, and school communities. The idea of intention-setting and self-reflection forms an essential part of teachers' ability to create a healthy future and vision for themselves, their classrooms, and their world (Breathe for Change, 2019). The second component, community building, addresses the critical need for educators to foster support and camaraderie amongst themselves, which, according to Wenger (2010), provides optimal opportunities for engagement and learning. The third component involves the incorporation of evidence-based wellness practices such as yoga, mindfulness, creative expression, emotional release, breathwork, and authentic communication into teachers' lives (Grossman et al., 2004; Parshad, 2004; Collie et al., 2006). These tools serve to help teachers manage daily stress effectively. They support teachers in easing their minds, opening their hearts, and tapping into the inner creativity and strength needed to build closer relationships with themselves, students, and other stakeholders (Breathe for Change, 2019). The next component of holistic pedagogical practices involves the integration of social-emotional and mind-body practices into instruction. Dr. Ilana Nankin, founder and CEO of Breathe for Change (2019), found from her doctoral research that this process of integration could foster a positive classroom environment, enhance student social-emotional skills, and improve overall academic performance. The final component, systematic teacher support, involves the transformation of schools and districts on a national level through the work of educational and political leaders who revise programs, policies, and practices not

only to support students but also teachers in cultivating mental, emotional, and physical well-being (Breathe for Change, 2019). Figure 6.1 visually depicts the key transformative components of this program, and the connection to teacher well-being, the classroom learning environment, and positive school culture.
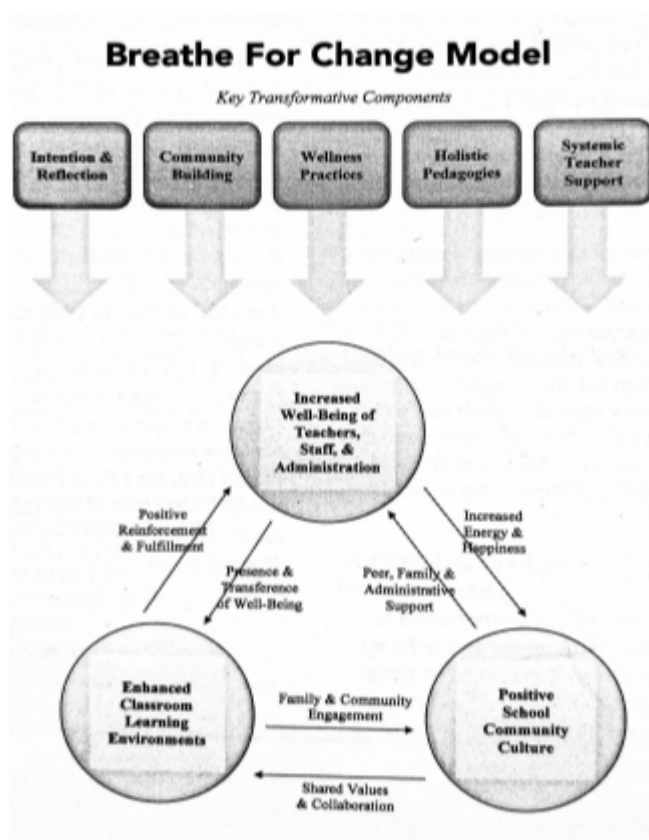
Figure 6. 1. Breathe for Change Model

As of 2018, Breathe for Change has certified 1,700 teachers across 11 cities throughout the United States. Certifications include receiving a certified yoga teacher certification through Yoga Alliance, which is the internationally recognized yoga teacher association and the Breathe for Change wellness champion certification, which qualifies educators to lead social-emotional learning and wellness programs in their schools and classrooms (Breathe for Change, 2019).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This dissertation is a mixed methods exploratory study. It investigated the lived experiences of K-12 teachers whose self-efficacy, well-being, or relationships have been impacted by a traumatic experience at their school site. The main data source used during this study was teachers. A self-reporting survey consisting of Likert scale and open-ended questions was primarily used to gather quantitative and qualitative data about the participants' perspectives on the trauma they experienced, the supports they were provided, and the impact these traumatic experiences have had on their self-efficacy, well-being, and relationships. This chapter is organized into six main sections: (a) the setting and participants; (b) the sampling procedures; (c) instrumentation and measures; (d) procedures; (e) validity and reliability; and (f) ethical issues

Setting and Participants

A mix of convenience sampling, purposive and snowball sampling were used to recruit participants for this study. Teachers from a Southern California school district were invited electronically to participate in the survey and requested to share it with their colleagues and acquaintances who are also educators. The participants were K-12 educators from rural and urban communities who had the primary responsibility of teaching four to six classes during the school day. Participants worked in a range of schools, including public, charter, or magnet schools. They all had at least one full semester of teaching experience, combined with experience in providing support to youth who have had traumatic experiences. The survey included a question asking participants whether they had experience in supporting youth with trauma, which allowed the researcher to identify the surveys to be retained for the study. For this study, students with trauma are defined broadly as students who have witnessed domestic or community violence; have been in foster care, have experienced homelessness, or have

developed grief and loss issues due to family problems such as not knowing their parents, having a parent or more who is incarcerated or deceased, or parents who are divorced. Students with trauma also include those who have experienced or were exposed to one or more types of abuse, including parental substance abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse.

This study aimed to recruit at least 400 teachers from school districts throughout the United States. The researcher then selected a subsample of teachers to participate in follow-up interviews.

Sampling Procedures

The selection of the sample had to be purposeful to ensure variation. At the same time, the researcher also used snowball sampling to recruit as many participants as possible. A minimum sample size of 400 was set to ensure enough statistical influence for noticeable effect sizes in the quantitative data analyses. There was one criterion for participation: educators should work in K-12 public, magnet and charter schools with students who had experienced trauma.

Since qualitative research aims to expound on data rather than to generalize (Creswell & Poth, 2017), the breadth of the qualitative data subsample was limited. However, it affords a more in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences of trauma. Chosen participants were those who, based on preliminary analyses of the survey, exhibited an increased level of well-being, resilience, and self-efficacy based on organizational structure or educational leadership and support.

Instrumentation and Measures

The instrument used in this research was an online survey created on Google Forms. The researcher selected an online survey based on its efficiency. A sample of the survey used is

shown in Appendix A. A pilot study was conducted with 11 associates of the researcher to

support the reliability and validity of the instrument used in this study. The researcher provided

participants with a draft of the survey to complete, asking them to submit feedback on the clarity

of the questions, the length of the survey, the amount of time for completion, and to report any

other concerns or difficulties encountered in completing the questionnaire. Piloting the survey

allowed the researcher to identify errors and changes needed to increase the effectiveness of the

instrument in capturing data for the current study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

The researcher employed Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, the Ohio State Teacher

Efficacy Scale (OSTES), the Bowling Green State University survey for teacher motivation, and

the SIP SCALE, a posttraumatic stress disorder survey from Duke University, when developing

the questions for the survey.

Table 1. 1

The Concepts and Constructs Included in the Survey and their Source.

Concepts	Constructs	Implementation
Demographics	Educators' backgrounds, Teaching experience, Well-being, resilience, and self-efficacy	In a survey administered electronically through Google Forms.
Teachers' perceptions of trauma and supports provided.	Educators' view of primary and secondary trauma experiences, impact on job performance and satisfaction. Organizational and leadership support provided to mitigate trauma.	In a survey administered electronically through Google Forms.
Barriers and resources that educators confront when dealing with traumatic experiences at worksite/s.	Support from administrator Training / Professional development Educational program Policies	In a survey administered electronically through Google Forms.
Maslow's hierarchy of needs	Five basic needs: Physiological Safety Social Esteem Self-actualization	In a survey administered electronically through Google Forms.

Survey

Survey Items 1 to 15 were used to obtain background information from the participants. Twenty-seven Likert style and multiple-choice questions were developed to answer Research Question 1, which asked how trauma affected teachers at the school sites. Also, seven survey items were created to address Research Question 2, which sought to promote an understanding of how school climate and administrative support can mitigate the impact of trauma on teachers. The final question of the survey was used to identify the common forms of trauma that occur within school sites. It was an open-ended question that allowed for qualitative data to be collected about participants' unique experiences (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). It centered on educators' descriptions of their most traumatic experiences within a school setting. Responses were limited to fifty words or less.

Questions were collected from various surveys used in previous research and were adapted to fit the current study. The questions included in this survey were developed to obtain teacher perspectives on the following themes associated with Maslow's hierarchy of needs; teacher well-being, resilience and self-efficacy, teacher job satisfaction, and teacher perception of primary, and secondary trauma experienced at school sites (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005).

Procedures

The researcher administered the survey to teachers who were within her network by sending the link to the Google Form through email. She also used social media outlets such as Twitter to seek more participation. This allowed the researcher to reach out to a greater number of potential participants, which increased the likelihood of having an adequate sample size.

To ensure confidentiality, participants' names were not used. Instead, pseudonyms were used. Participants' information and the data collected were secured and saved in an external hard

drive. Information regarding participation, confidentiality, the duration, and risks of taking the survey were listed on the consent form which was on the first page of the online survey. On the front page of the survey, participants were also notified that their participation was voluntary and that they had the choice to exit the survey at any time without penalty, and the right to decline from answering any question.

Data Analysis

Different types of statistical analyses were carried out to answer each research question. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as Pearson correlations and used to address Research Questions 1 and 2. The qualitative data were used to address Research Question 3.

1. How does teacher perception of (PTSD) impact them at school sites?

Cross-tabulations, Pearson linear correlations, a one-way ANOVA and descriptive analyses, were conducted to answer Research Question 1. The correlations allowed the researcher to explore potential relationships between teacher trauma and other variables such as teacher retention, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher-student relationships.

2. How does the school climate impact teacher experience of trauma?

Cross-tabulations, Pearson linear correlations, a one-way ANOVA and descriptive analysis were carried out to answer Research Question 2.

3. What forms of trauma are experienced by teachers on school sites?

A descriptive analysis was conducted to answer Research Question 3 and identify the most common forms of trauma experienced by teachers at school sites.

Reliability

To increase the consistency of the survey used in this study, questions were designed to

elicit the same information from each participant and administered in the same order each time. To improve reliability, the researcher wrote questions in a simple format, so they were easily understood by participants. The researcher also used other strategies to increase the reliability of the survey such as asking only necessary and direct questions, avoiding leading or biased questions, utilizing a Likert scale, and test piloting the survey before administering it to participants. An external check was also completed by a peer reviewer to promote the credibility of the research process and the data collection procedures. Detailed descriptions of the research process were included in this doctoral dissertation to increase transferability.

Validity

Prior research suggests that using a variety of resources to obtain data authenticates the evidence collected (Creswell & Poth, 2017). With the use of multiple resources, the researcher can support findings and claims. To reduce the validity threat of researcher bias, the researcher addressed her positionality, personal experiences, beliefs, values, and views about the research topic in the first chapter of this dissertation. The researcher also provided the reader with an explanation about why the study was conducted in a specific manner.

Ethical Issues

Personal bias and prior experiences with trauma within school sites are ethical issues that the researcher is accountable for in the current study. Teacher participants support students who have similarly experienced trauma. Witnessing these experiences of trauma from specific groups of people such as minority students who live in impoverished communities can cause teachers to make assumptions and generalizations about them (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher also provided full disclosure to all participants about the purpose and usage of this study, so they were clear about the details if they chose to participate (McMillian & Schumacher,

2010). The researcher incorporated the use of informed consent forms, which provided the participants with a clear explanation of the study and offered them the opportunity to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or fault if they wished to do so (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010).

Summary

The overall objective of this study was to examine the effects of primary and secondary trauma amongst educators and determine what resources and structures were most beneficial in improving teacher relationships, well-being, and self-efficacy. The researcher was also interested in eliciting the personal accounts of teachers about their experiences with primary or secondary trauma in their school communities. The principal focus of this dissertation was on the experiences of K-12 teachers because students of all grade levels can exhibit egregious behaviors towards educators, regardless of size, strength, and age, prompting a traumatic experience. Secondly, teachers within high traumatic environments play an important role in providing students with social and emotional support. They are often provoked by vicarious trauma, specifically in situations where a parent or primary caregiver is unable to provide the appropriate supports necessary for a child's social-emotional and cognitive development. Finally, the study aimed to examine teachers' perspectives on trauma and the supports provided by school sites and district administrators to mitigate trauma experienced.

A mix of various types of sampling methods was used in the current study, including, convenience, purposive, and snowball sampling to recruit teachers from districts around the United States. The researcher adapted several research instruments to devise the online survey used in the current study, which was the primary form of data collection. Validity and reliability were promoted by using a range of strategies including, pilot testing the survey, stating

researcher biases, and using peer review.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The first purpose of this mixed methods exploratory study was to understand teachers' perception of primary and secondary trauma through the emotional, professional, and relational impacts of the trauma they have experienced. The second purpose of the study was to examine the forms of trauma educators encounter within their school sites and to shed light on how the school climate influences their experiences of trauma. The research study includes teachers with a wide range of work experience within K-12 education.

The data collection for the current study was conducted with the use of online surveys. Convenience and snowball sampling were used to recruit educators throughout the United States. The researcher utilized email and various social media outlets to distribute the survey through Google Forms, 521 teachers responded and completed the survey. The study specifically addressed the following research questions and sub-questions:

1. How does teacher perception of (PTSD) impact them at school sites?

   ● How does trauma affect teacher self-efficacy?

   ● How does trauma affect teacher/student relationships?

   ● How does trauma affect teacher retention?

2. How does the school climate impact teacher experience of trauma?

3. What forms of trauma are experienced by teachers on school sites?

Various types of analyses, such as Pearson's correlations and ANOVAs, were performed on the raw data to answer the research questions. This chapter presents the quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Participants

The research includes teachers with varying levels of experience within K-12 education. Convenience and snowball sampling were used to recruit educators throughout the United States for participation in the current study. A total of 521 participants responded to the online survey designed on Google Forms. Of that total, 238 participants (49%) reported that they work within the state of California, the initial location for the distribution of surveys. The remaining 252 (51%) participants worked outside of California.

Although 521 participants responded to the survey, only 400 completed surveys were utilized because those individuals met the following criterion: Full-time K-12 educators working at the public, magnet, or charter schools with students who have experienced trauma. Participants ranged from 22 to 67 years old, with the mode age being 39 years. The number of years of teaching experience ranged from 0.5 to 40. Teachers reported teaching a range of subjects including English, history, science, math, multiple subjects, special education, and various elective courses. Grades taught ranged from kindergarten to Grade 12, with high school educators responding most frequently to surveys. As illustrated in Figure 7.1, the majority of participants, 350 (88%), were female, 47 (12%) participants were male, and two participants identified as other (< 1%). One participant identified as queer and one participant identified as non-binary femme.

■ Female ■ Male ■ Other
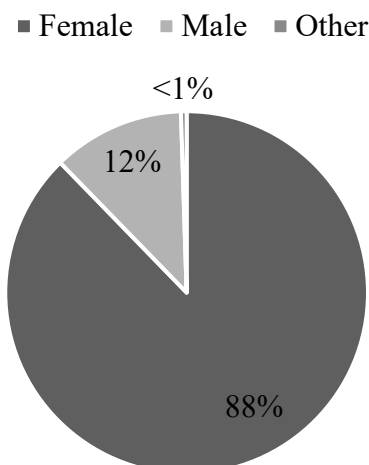
Figure 7. 1. Bar Chart Showing the Distribution of Participants by Gender

Figure 8.1 reports the distribution of participants by teaching credentials. A total of 324 (81%) participants attained their credential from a traditional teaching program, 28 (7%) attained their credential from an online teaching program, and 12 (3%) from their district. Four (1%) participants are currently in a teaching credentialing program, three (1%) participants hold no teaching credential and 28 (7%) participants reported they attained their credentials from alternative programs.
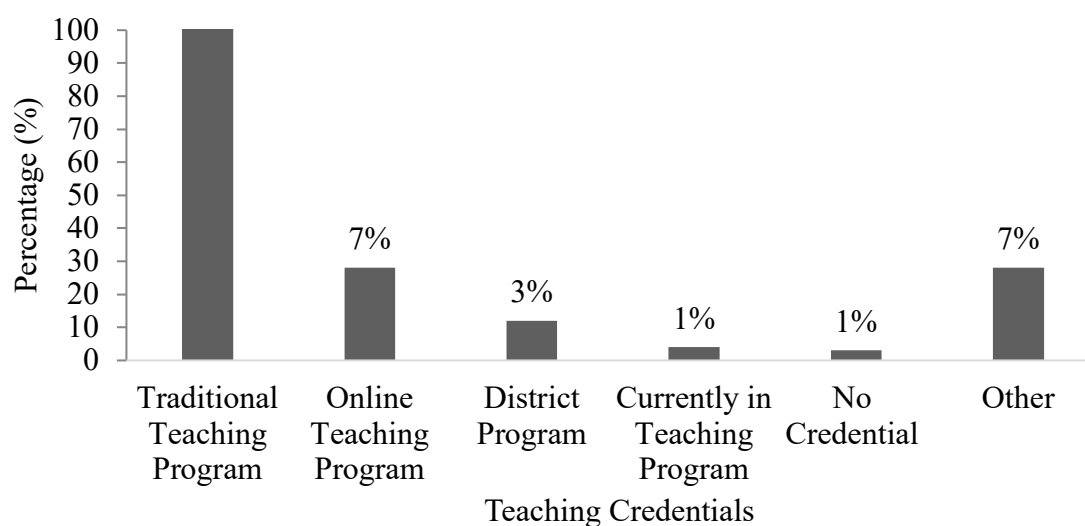
Figure 8. 1. Bar Chart Showing the Distribution of Participants by Teaching Credentials

As seen in Figure 9.1, 274 (68%) participants identified as European American (White), 44 (11%) identified as Latino or Hispanic, 55 (14%) as African American (Black), 15 (4%) as Asian American and 11 (3%) as other.
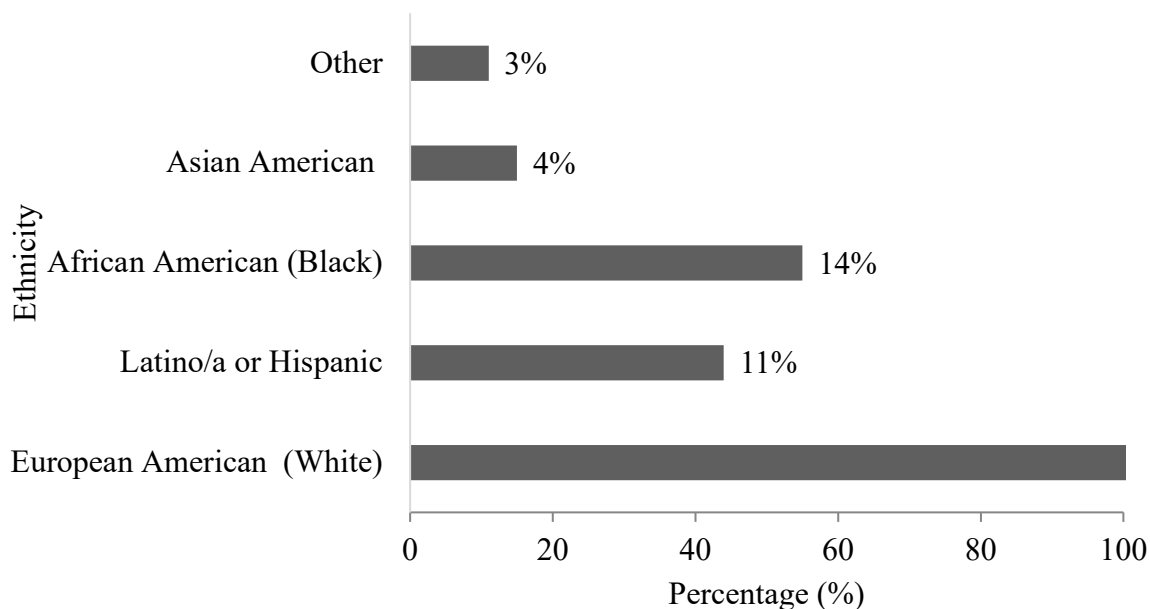
Figure 9. 1. Bar Chart Showing Distribution of Participants by Ethnicity

Figure 10.1 reports the distribution of school level/s taught by participants. Two participants (< 1%) did not specify grade level/s taught. There were 175 participants (44%) who taught at the high school level, while 91 (23%) worked at the middle school level, and 131 (33%) participants at the elementary level.
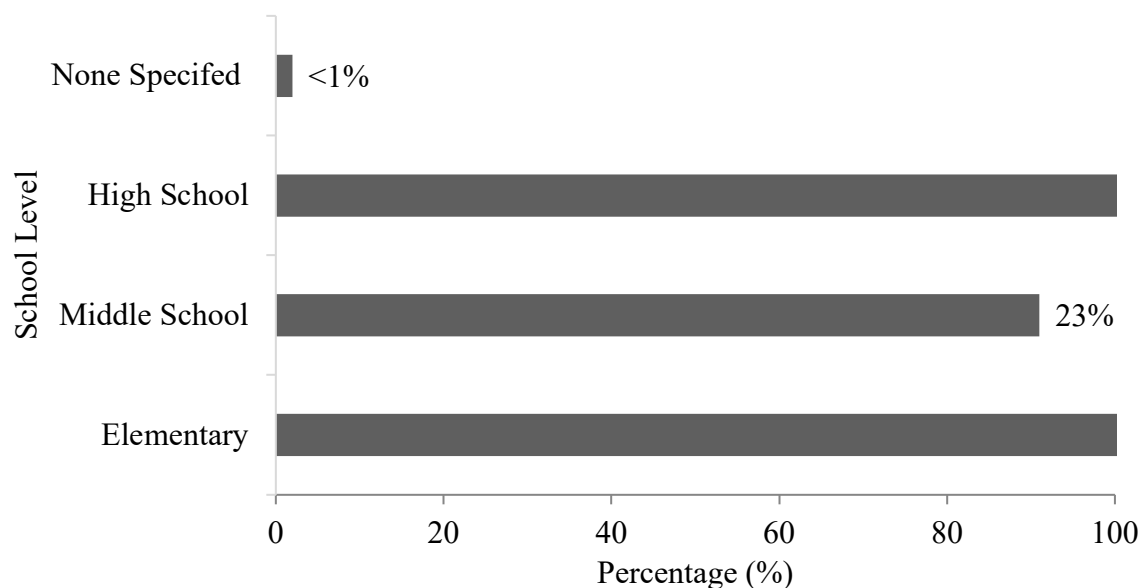
Figure 10. 1. Bar Chart Showing the Distribution of School Levels Taught by Participants

As reported in Figure 11.1, 358 participants (90%) work in traditional public schools, 32 (8%) work in charter schools, five participants (1%) work in magnet schools, and four (1%) work in alternative public institutions.
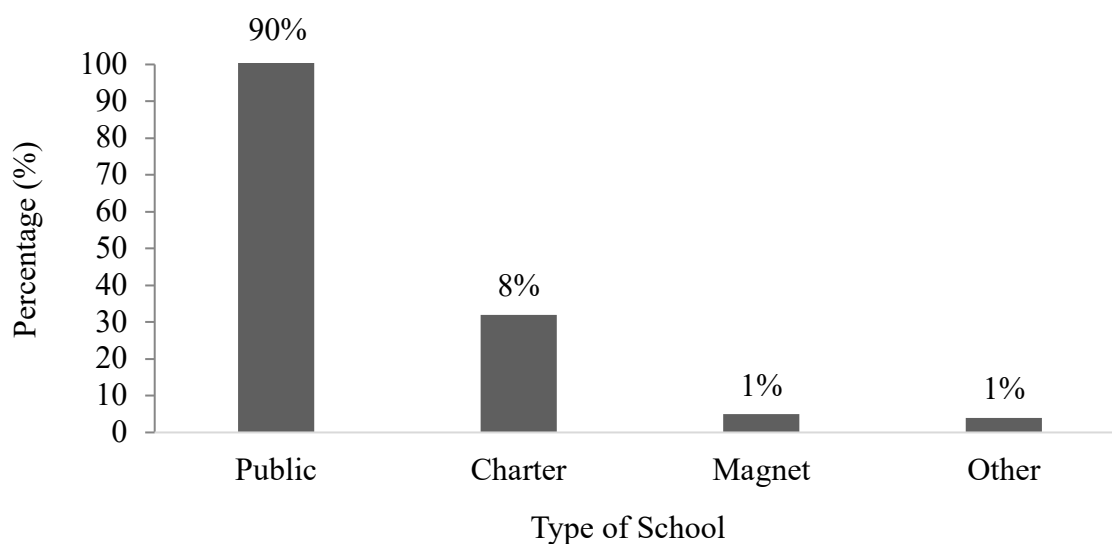
Figure 11. 1. Bar Chart Showing the Distribution of Participants by School Type

As seen in Figure 12.1, 257 (65%) participants work in urban areas, 80 (20%) participants work in rural areas, and 61 (15%) participants chose the option "working in other areas" (suburban and coastal).
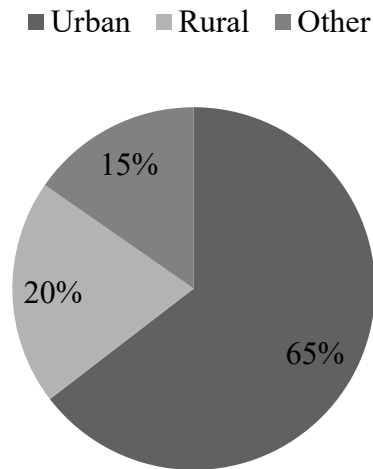
Figure 12. 1. Pie Chart Showing the Distribution of Participants by School Context

      Figure 13.1 reports the distribution of participants based on the approximate percentage of students who received free and reduced lunches at their school. This variable served as a key indicator of Title 1 funding because schools with large concentrations of low-income students receive supplemental funds to assist in meeting the educational goals of students. The majority of participants, 164 (41%), came from school sites that had a student composition of 81% to 100% of students on free and reduced lunch.
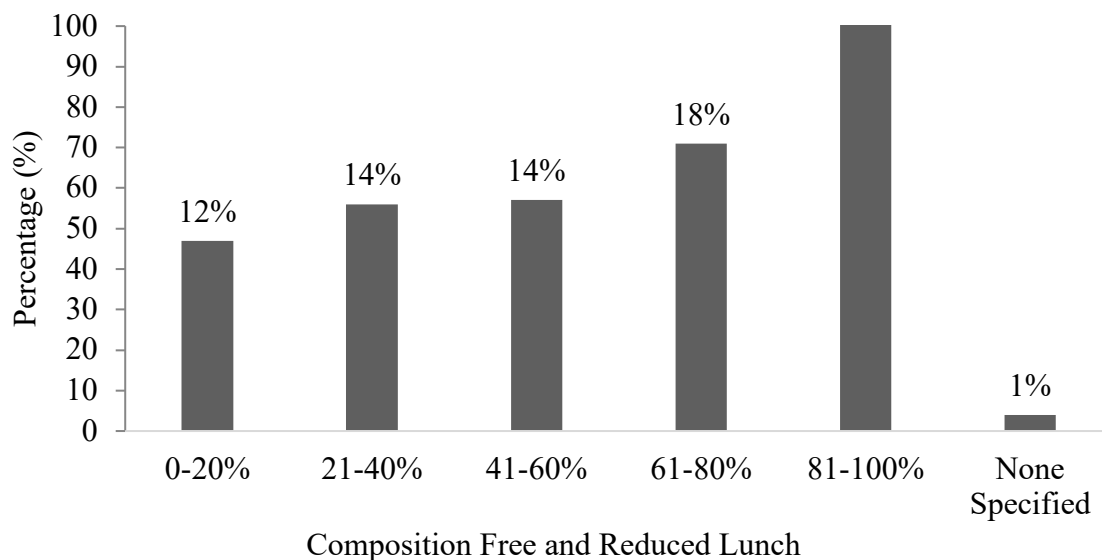
Figure 13. 1. Bar Chart Showing the Distribution of Participants by Schools with Different Percentages of Students on Free and Reduced Lunch

As seen in Figure 14.1, 96% ($n = 385$), participants support students experiencing trauma while 4% ($n = 14$) of the participants were unsure if they worked with students who had experienced trauma.
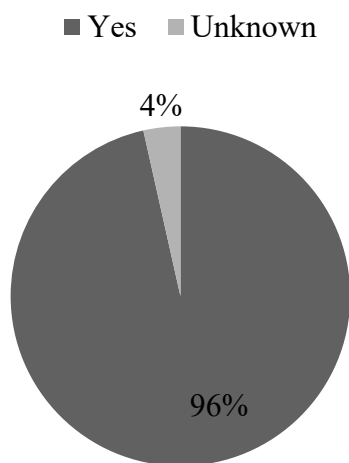
Figure 14. 1. Pie Chart Showing the Distribution of Participants who Support Students Experiencing Trauma

Figure 15.1 shows that 19 (5%) participants reported experiencing primary trauma, 117 (29%) reported experiencing secondary trauma, while the greatest number of participants, 225 (56%) participants, stated experiencing both types of trauma. A small number of participants, 38 (5%) had experienced no trauma at all.
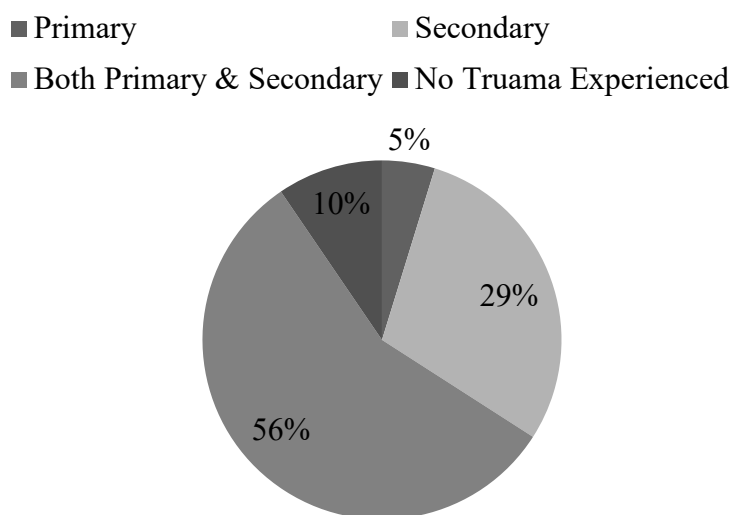
Figure 15. 1. Pie Chart Showing the Distribution of Participants by Trauma Experienced

Independent Variables

This study had three independent variables: teacher self-efficacy, teacher-student relationships, and school climate. The researcher ran a Pearson linear correlation between the specific survey items which were combined to make each of these constructs. This helped the researcher determine if survey questions compiled for each construct (independent variable) were significantly inter-correlated, which would provide some evidence of reliability.

Table 2.1 reports the results of the Pearson correlation carried out between survey items, which represent teacher perception of their self-efficacy. Items included "teachers' ability to control disruptive behaviors," "teachers' ability to have students follow classroom rules," "teachers' ability to support student academic success," "their ability to reach the most

challenging students," and "educators' power to motivate students who illustrate low interest in schoolwork."

Table 2. 1

Pearson Statistics for Items Relevant to Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Self-Efficacy

Items	r	Behavior	Rules	Family support	Difficult	Motivate
Behavior	r	1.000				
Rules	r	.762**	1.000			
Family support	r	.247**	.257**	1.000		
Difficult	r	.444**	.403**	.421**	1.000	
Motivate	r	.402**	.407**	.396**	.614**	1.000

** $p < .01$

There was a weak positive correlation between the items "providing family support," "controlling student behavior" and "having students follow classroom rules," with a correlation coefficient, *r*, ranging from .247 - .257, $n = 399$, $p < .01$. There was a moderate correlation between "teachers having the ability to support difficult students" with "controlling their behavior," as well as between "following classroom rules," and "supporting their families with student's academic success." There was also a moderate positive correlation between "teacher's ability to motivate students," "control disruptive behavior," "have students follow rules," "support families with student academic success" and "teacher ability to reach difficult students," with *r* ranging from .396 - .614, $n = 399$ and $p < .01$. There was a strong correlation between the "teacher's ability to have students follow classroom rules" and "control disruptive student behavior," with $r = .762$, $n = 399$, $p < .01$.

Table 3.1 reports the Pearson correlation coefficients for the survey items, which were used to gauge perceptions of teacher-student relationships. The items included whether "teachers get along with their students," "believe they are respected by students," "like their students," "believe that they know their students," and "have positive relationships with their students."

Table 3. 1

Pearson Statistics for Items Relevant to Teacher Perceptions of Teacher-Student Relationships

Items	r	Get along	respect	Like students	Know students	Relationship
Get along	r	1.000				
Respect	r	.588**	1.000			
Like students	r	.561**	.559**	1.000		
Know students	r	.253**	.223**	.315**	1.000	
Relationship	r	.516**	.506**	.510**	.600**	1.000

** $p < .01$

There was a weak positive correlation between "knowing students," "getting along with them," "earning student respect," and "liking students" with r ranging from .223 - .315, $n = 399$, and $p < .01$. There was a moderate positive correlation where teachers identified having a "relationship with students" with r ranging from .504 - .589, $n = 399$, $p < .01$.

Table 4.1 reports the Pearson correlations for the survey items relevant to the teachers' perceptions of the school climate construct, including "teachers believe they are supported by their supervisors," "believe their supervisors convey policies clearly, income," "work conditions," "school safety" and if they receive "recognition from their supervisors."

Table 4. 1

Pearson Statistics for Items Relevant to Teacher Perceptions of School Climate

Items	*r*	Supervisor support	Policies	Income	Work conditions	Recognition	Safety
Supervisor support	*r*	1.000					
Policies	*r*	.666**	1.000				
Income	*r*	.234**	.293**	1.000			
Work conditions	*r*	.500**	.536**	.374**	1.000		
Recognitio n	*r*	.691**	.549**	.282**	.475**	1.000	
Safety	*r*	.420**	.441**	.231**	.552**	.462**	1.000

** *p* < .01

There was a weak positive correlation between "teacher income" and "supervisor support," "policies being clearly defined," "school safety" and "supervisor recognition," with *r* ranging from .231to .293, *n* = 399 and *p* < .01. There was a moderate correlation between all remaining variables with *r* ranging from .374 to .692, *n* = 399, *p* < .01.

Dependent Variables

The research questions for this study included two dependent variables: teacher trauma (well-being) and teacher retention. The researcher ran a Pearson linear correlation between specific survey items to determine if there was an interrelationship between them, and they could be used for the two constructs, teacher trauma, and retention.

Table 5.1 reports the Pearson correlation coefficients for the construct perceptions of teacher PTSD/Trauma, using survey items "experience painful images/thoughts/memories," "avoid thoughts or feeling related to trauma," "avoid places/people/conversations or activities

that remind them of trauma," "are irritable," and "fearful or easily startled due to work-related trauma."

Table 5. 1

Pearson Statistics for Items Relevant to Teacher Perceptions of Teacher PTSD/Trauma

Items		Painful	Avoidance	Avoidance 2	Irritable	Fearful	Startled
Painful	r	1.000					
Avoidance	r	.645**	1.000				
Avoidance 2	r	.586**	.694**	1.000			
Irritable	r	.608**	.545**	.525**	1.000		
Fearful	r	.584**	.558**	.582**	.639**	1.000	
Startled	r	.559**	.512**	.493**	.602**	.757**	1.000

** *p* < .01

There was a strong correlation between "teachers' being startled" and "fearful due to work related trauma," with *r* = .757, *n* = 399 and *p* < .01. There was a moderate correlation between all remaining variables with *r* ranging from .493 to .694, *n* = 399, *p* < .01.

Table 6.1 reports the Pearson correlation coefficients for the items relevant to the perception of teacher retention construct. Items included "career choice," "having the perfect job," "having a secure future," "career advancement," and "work being pleasant."

Table 6. 1

Pearson Correlations Between Items Relevant to the Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Retention

Construct

Items	r	Career choice	Perfect job	Secure future	Advancement	Work pleasant
Career choice	r	1.000				
Perfect job	r	.623**	1.000			
Secure future	r	.432**	.513**	1.000		
Advancement	r	.475**	.514**	.564**	1.000	
Work pleasant	r	.478**	.509**	.426**	.537**	1.000

** *p* < .01

There was a moderate correlation between all variables with *r* ranging from .426 to .623, *n* = 399, *p* < .01.

Survey Findings for Research Questions 1 and 2

Research Question 1 asked, how does teacher perception of (PTSD) impact them at school sites? A specific focus was placed on the impact on teacher retention, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher-student relationships. Research Question 2 asked, how does the school climate impact teacher experience of trauma?

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare mean perceptions of teacher trauma based on participant gender. As illustrated in Figure 16.1, there was a significant effect of gender on teacher trauma at the .05 alpha level, $F (2, 396) = 5.91$, $p < .05$, with a more positive mean perception (+.39) for females than males.
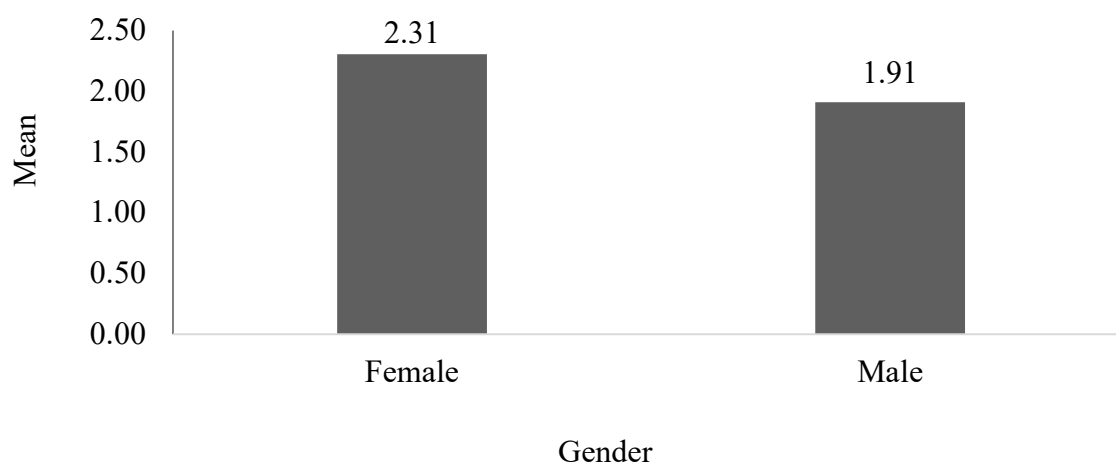
Gender

Figure 16. 1. Bar Chart Showing Means of Trauma Perceptions by Gender

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the mean teacher trauma perceptions by teacher credentials. As shown in Figure 17.1, there was a significant effect of teacher credentials on teacher trauma at .05 alpha level, $F(3, 395) = 3.94$, $p < .05$.

Teacher Credentials
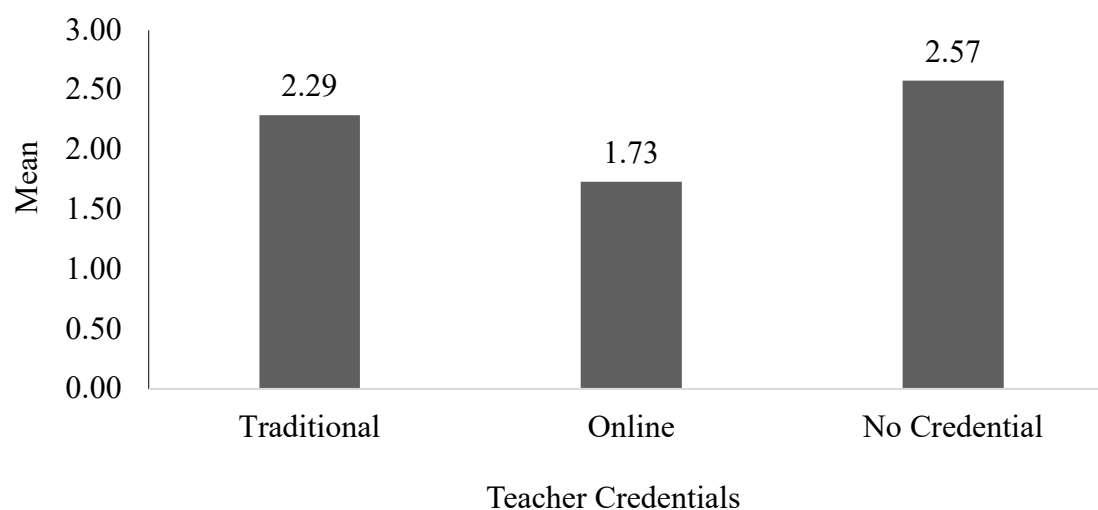
Figure 17. 1. Bar Chart Showing the Means of Trauma Perceptions by Teacher Credentials

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare mean perceptions of teacher retention based on teacher credentials. As seen in Figure 18.1, there was a significant effect of teacher credentials on teacher retention at the .05 alpha level, $F(3, 395) = 4.04$, $p < .05$.
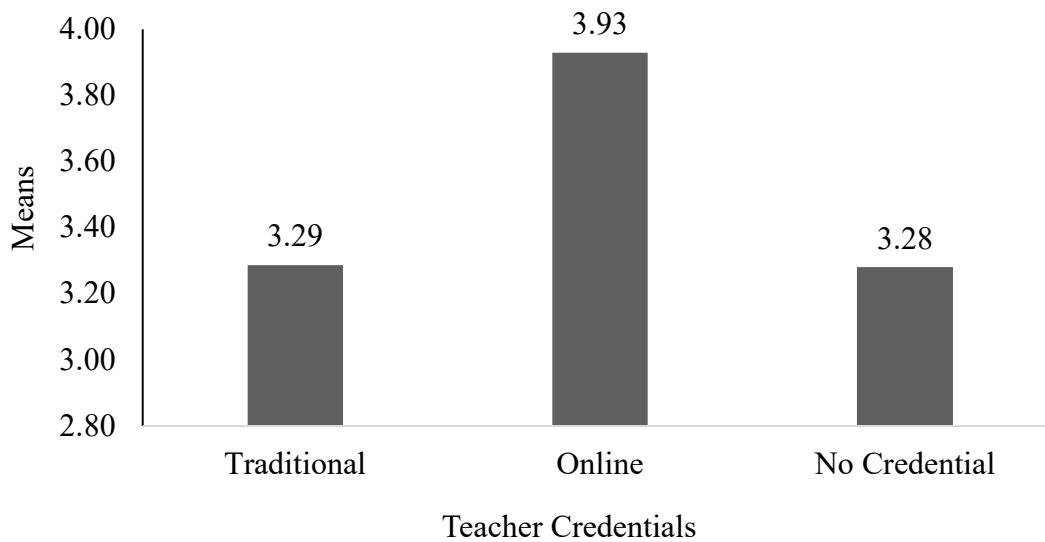
Figure 18. 1. Bar Chart Showing Means of Teacher Retention by Teacher Credentials

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the mean perceptions of teacher trauma and retention (DV) by participant age, socio-economic status (SES), ethnicity, and location (IV). There was no significant effect of any of the independent variables on the dependent variables at an alpha level of .05.

Table 7.1 reports the Pearson correlational analysis completed to find the relationship between teacher self-efficacy, teacher-student relationships, school climate, and trauma.

Table 7. 1

Pearson Correlations for Teacher Self-Efficacy, Student Relationships, Environment and Trauma

Mean of constructs	r	Self-Efficacy	Relationships	School Climate	Trauma
Trauma	r	-.299**	-.219**	-.451**	1.000

** $p < .01$

There was a weak negative correlation between trauma and relationships, $r = -.2189$, $n = 399$, $p < .01$. There was a moderate negative correlation between trauma and school climate, $r = -.451$, $n = 399$, $p < .01$. There was also a moderate correlation between trauma and self-efficacy $r = -.2988$, $n = 399$, $p < .01$.

Table 8.1 reports the Pearson correlation carried out to examine the relationship between teacher self-efficacy, teacher-student relationships, school climate and retention.

Table 8. 1

Pearson Correlations Between Teacher Self-efficacy, Teacher-Student Relationships,

Environment, and Retention

Mean of constructs		Self-Efficacy	Relationships	School climate	Trauma	Retention
Retention	r	.406**	.353**	.566**	-.482**	1.000

** $p < .01$

There was a moderate negative correlation between retention and relationships, $r = -.353$, $n = 399$, $p = < 0.5$ and between retention and self-efficacy, $r = -.4055$, $n = 399$, $p = < 0.5$. A moderate correlation was also found between retention and trauma $r = -.482$, $n = 399$, $p = < 0.5$. There was a strong correlation between retention and school climate, $r = -0.566$, $n = 399$, $p = < .05$.

Findings for Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked: What forms of trauma are experienced by teachers on school sites? Qualitative data was collected through the online survey in the form of an open-ended question. Participants were asked to describe their most traumatic event (primary or secondary) in a school setting. The researcher, along with a second coder, analyzed the qualitative data. A codebook was created identifying trauma types and their definitions from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network ([NCTSN], 2020). Both coders independently coded the qualitative responses and held an open dialogue to reach an agreement on each assigned trauma types. Trauma types identified within the qualitative data were complex trauma, bullying, physical abuse, sexual abuse, school and community violence, disaster, medical trauma, early childhood trauma, and traumatic grief (see Figure 19.1).
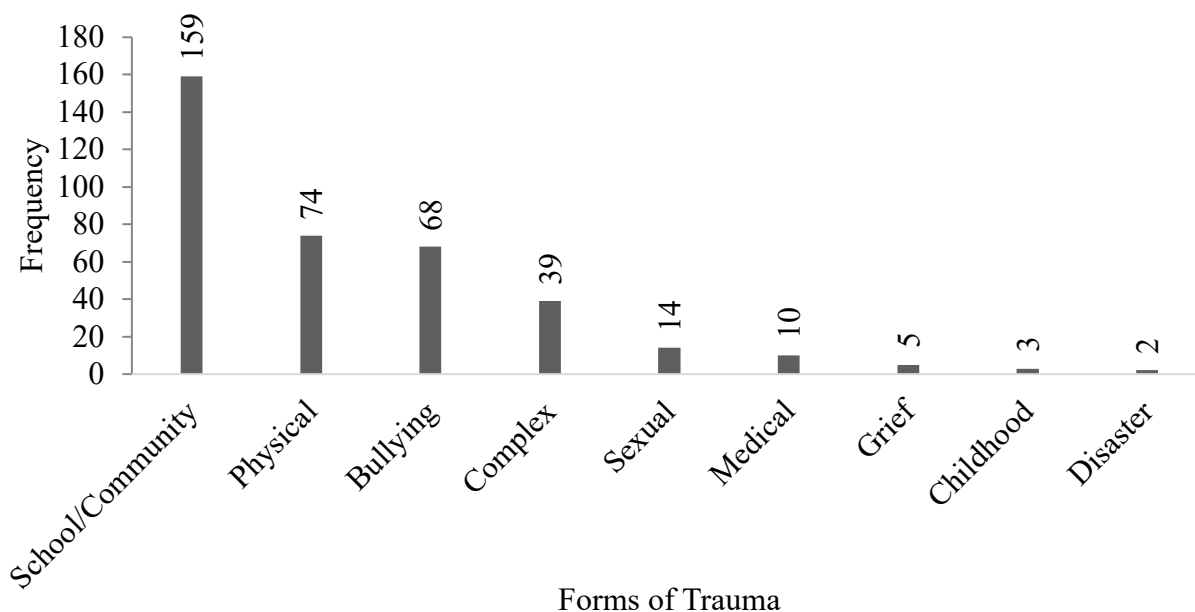
Figure 19. 1. Most Common Forms of Trauma Experienced by Teachers at School Sites

Figure 19.1 reports the most common forms of trauma experienced by teachers at school sites. A total of 159 participants reported trauma through their experiences of school and community violence, 68 through bullying, and 14 through sexual abuse. Ten participants

described the type of trauma as medical, while 39 described it as complex. The majority of participants, 74, associated trauma with physical abuse. Three participants described the type of trauma they experienced as early childhood trauma, five of them referred to their trauma as traumatic grief while the least number of participants, two, associated trauma with disasters.

School/Community Violence

School and community violence are defined as exposure to intentional acts of violence committed in public areas by individuals not intimately related to victims. Examples include fights among gangs and other groups, shootings in schools or the community, terrorist or spontaneous attacks, "war-like" conditions in U.S. cities, or civil wars in foreign countries (NCTSN, 2020).

Teachers experienced community and school violence in a variety of ways. A teacher described a traumatic experience witnessing a hostage situation: "A teacher at my school was held hostage by a parent who had a mental break. We were put in lockdown with no communication for hours. Swat teams had to evacuate our school to a nearby park." Another teacher highlighted the trauma linked to a shooting: "Being in lockdown during the Saugus HS shooting." Another teacher described violence between students: "Two students were fighting, and one grabbed the other and repeatedly slammed his head on a desk."

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is defined as an act that results in physical injuries, such as red marks, welts, cuts, muscle strains, bruises, and broken bones, even if the injury was not intentional (NCTSN, 2020). Teachers experienced physical abuse to different extents and in different forms. A teacher stated, "Being verbally threatened to be stabbed with an object and physically being attacked by students." Another teacher provided details of an incident of verbal and

physical abuse. He states, "A student threw a personal whiteboard at me, cutting my hand, I then used my body to separate him from the rest of my class while they cleared the classroom and the student." Another teacher described his experience of severe physical violence. He stated that "A student pushed me to the ground, and I fell into a table. He then stepped on my stomach and flicked me off and said, "get the fuck out of my way, you bitch."

Bullying

Bullying is defined as unsolicited and deliberate actions that occur with the intent of administering emotional, physical, social, and/or psychological harm to an individual who is often perceived as being less powerful. Bullying repeatedly occurs and in the form of aggression or harassment, that prevents someone from experiencing a learning or work environment that is safe and stress-free (NCTSN, 2020).

Teachers experienced bullying from a variety of sources, including school leadership, peers, and students. One teacher stated

Being called into a meeting conducted via speakerphone by a principal who had not even bothered to appear in person, hearing outrageous fabrications as to my character, and being non-re-elected after three years of stellar teaching observations and service as a department chair.

Another teacher described her experience of bullying from another teacher:

I was bullied by a fellow teacher who hated me. One day, I had written a hall pass for two boys to go back to her class. She stomps into my classroom, crumbles my pass, and yells, 'nothing from you is ever acceptable.' They are NOT excused. She did this all in front of my students.

Another teacher reported:

A verbal threat toward me escalated to physical threats. Family repeatedly made threats towards me. The student did physically assault me, leaving me with bruises and bleeding wounds. My car was vandalized and my safety in my community (I live in the neighborhood in which I teach was threatened).

Complex Trauma

Complex trauma is defined as exposure to multiple traumatic events. Often invasive or of an interpersonal nature, the effects are wide-ranging and long term (NCTSN, 2020). Teachers experienced complex trauma through their students' narratives. A teacher wrote, "Student recounted her experience being drugged, brutally raped and dumped at her home and the subsequent hospital and police investigation." Another teacher discussed the experiences of the student population at the school site:

Thirty percent of our student population lives in foster care, and many others come from severe poverty and abusive families. Many of our kids have experienced sexual or physical violence, even sex trafficking. The trauma that affects me is their broken hearts and spirits when they share their stories.

Another teacher recounted a tragedy. He wrote, "One of my students committed suicide last school year."

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is defined as abuse or assault of sexual activity that a person does not consent to, including inappropriate touching, rape, sexual intercourse that a person says no to, attempted rape, child molestation and vaginal, anal, or oral penetration (NCTSN, 2020).

Teachers experienced sexual abuse from students of different ages, which stirred a range of feelings. A teacher narrated, "An 8-year-old girl in my classroom was being sexually molested by men with her mother's consent. I found out after she fondled an older female student tutor." Another teacher said: "I was sexually assaulted (touched inappropriately) by a student, and nothing was done because the student had an IEP for ADHD, and the assault was deemed to be a manifestation of his disability."

Another teacher expressed a strong emotional response to sexual assault:

> Last year I was touched in a sexual way by one of my K students several times, all intentional. The student would not stop when asked to. This happened in front of other children, who had big feelings about it. I had big feelings about what/why a six-year-old would do this. And I felt violated.

Medical Trauma

Medical trauma is defined as the physiological and psychological responses of individuals and their families' pain, injury, medical procedure, serious illness, and invasive or frightening treatment experience (NCTSN, 2020). Teachers have experienced medical trauma as their students had different medical conditions, which indirectly affected them. A teacher wrote: "I have experienced a student having a seizure, which was frightening to see." Another teacher talked about "Having a student pass unexpectedly." A teacher described his experience of witnessing a student's medical emergency in the classroom: "Two years ago, during a circle, paramedics were called to my classroom because one of my students had taken an unknown substance. He would only tell me what he took as he struggled to even stay awake."

Summary

The purpose of this mixed methods exploratory study was to understand teachers' perception of primary and secondary trauma through the emotional, professional, and relational impacts of the trauma they have experienced. The second purpose was to examine the forms of trauma teachers experience and how the school climate influences these experiences of trauma. This study was conducted with the use of online surveys. Participants were recruited using a mix of convenience, purposive, and snowball sampling throughout the United States. The researcher distributed the survey designed on Google Forms to participants using email and various social media outlets. There was a total of 521 teachers who responded and completed the survey.

Pearson correlations were carried out to answer Research Question 1, which stated How does teacher perception of (PTSD) impact them at school sites? There was a direct connection between trauma, student-teacher relationships, self-efficacy, and the school climate. Findings show that teachers who experience both primary and secondary trauma also report a low sense of self-efficacy, have unpleasant interactions with students, and are dissatisfied with their overall school climate.

ANOVAs were used to answer Research Question 2, which asked, "How does the school climate impact teacher experience of trauma"? Findings show that, irrespective of the form of trauma experienced, teachers who experience trauma at a school site where they perceive the school climate is adverse, have lower self-efficacy, poor relationships with students, and are more likely to leave their profession. However, teachers who experience trauma, and perceive their school climate as positive, have a higher self-efficacy, a better connection with students and are more likely to continue with teaching students at their respective school sites.

Research Question 3 asked, "What forms of trauma are experienced by teachers on school sites?" This question was answered by qualitative analysis of the open-ended question included in the online survey. School and community violence are most frequently experienced. Next, physical abuse, bullying, complex trauma, sexual abuse, and medical trauma were also experienced in decreasing order of frequency. The least common forms of trauma experienced were grief, childhood, and disaster trauma.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

As a researcher, when I initially began my dissertation, I set out to shed light on teacher victimization. As I viewed news broadcastings and YouTube clippings of teachers verbally attacking students or engaging in physical altercations with students, I was curious about the context, which means, what took place before the verbal or physical outburst? What was driving these adults to behave in a manner that was frightening, unprofessional, and out of character compared to what society and I expect educators, as curators of student achievement and development, to behave?

I assumed I already knew the answers. I sought to prove that what was driving teachers over the edge had to do with the communities they served. I was convinced that students' values had changed over the last few decades. I also thought that, unlike my upbringing and the upbringing of my elders, the youth of today were not being taught the same values as mine. They were no longer expected to show respect to adults simply because we are adults. Instead, they had been trained by their surroundings to demand respect first, and only reciprocate it if they deemed the adults supporting them worthy. I assumed that the parents and guardians of students who were combative with educators had their history of disliking school and authority. Therefore, they condoned the increasing disrespect and disregard of educators because of their trauma and disappointment of their educational experience.

I also assumed that the trauma from teacher victimization would not be apparent in suburban areas because there is a reduced spread of poverty and generational trauma, which are typically the burden of people of color, specifically Black, Brown, and indigenous youth who traditionally occupy urban and rural communities. However, through this study, I learned that my personal biases and beliefs were driving my desire to be right rather than be informed about

the systemic structures that decrease teacher self-efficacy, affect student relationships adversely, and increase teacher trauma and attrition rates.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand teachers' perceptions of primary and secondary trauma based on their emotional, professional, and relational impacts. It also aimed to examine what forms of trauma educators encounter within their school sites. The design used in this study was a mixed methods study. Data was collected using an online survey comprised of multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and open-ended questions. The research sample focused on teachers who are currently in the classroom and are supporting students who have experienced trauma.

The study examined the following research questions:

1. How does teacher perception of (PTSD) impact them at school sites? The focus was explicitly placed on teacher self-efficacy, teacher-student relationships, and retention.

2. How does the school climate impact teacher experience of trauma?

3. What forms of trauma are experienced by teachers on school sites?

Figure 20.1 summarizes the overall research findings of this study. There is a direct connection between teacher perceptions of school climate, trauma or PTSD experienced and educator self-efficacy, relationships with students and retention.
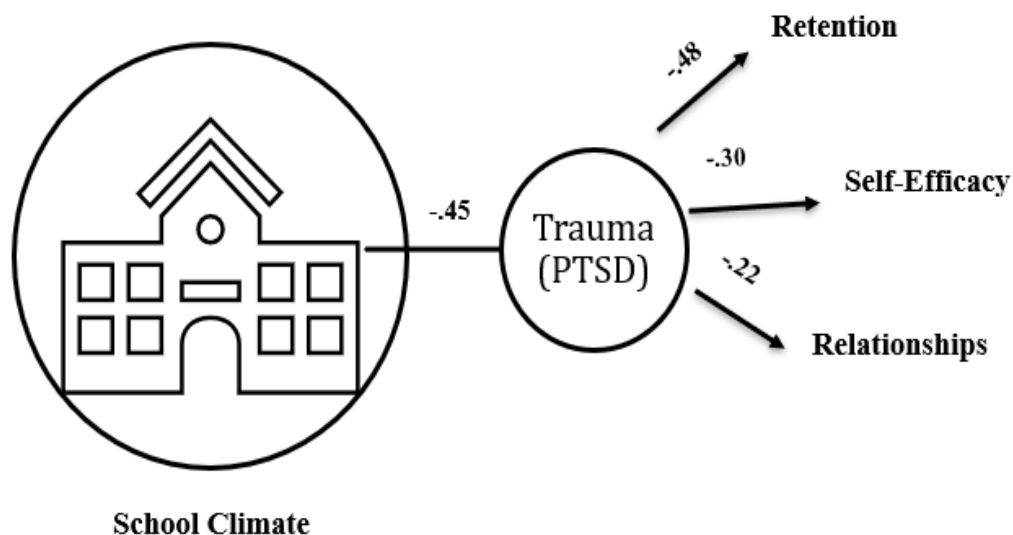
Figure 20. 1. School Climate and the Impact on Teacher PTSD/Retention/Self-Efficacy and Relationships

      This graphic illustrates that the school climate (environment) has a strong correlation to educators' response to and ability to cope with trauma. The *r* value -.45 represents the association or relationship between two constructs, the teachers' perceptions of school climate and trauma. In this study, the school climate construct consists of combined factors including administrative support, perceptions of safety at school sites, and recognition from educational leaders for job performance. These factors directly impact teachers' ability to reduce or overcome fear, irritability, or painful experiences due to work-related trauma. Trauma is the emotional response to a disturbing event, coupled with an individual's ability to apply coping skills and strategies (Sar & Ozturk, 2006). Traumatic events and experiences profoundly affect the physical and mental well-being of educators, which can predispose them to either greater resilience or increased vulnerability of life stresses (Miller, 2007). This is an essential concept for administrators to understand so they can mitigate trauma by providing interventions and prevention strategies during the traumatic period (Miller, 2007).

The figure above also depicts the positive relationship between teacher trauma or experience of PTSD and retention ($r = -.48$), self-efficacy ($r = -.30$), and teacher-student relationships ($r = -.22$). This implies that there is a strong connection between trauma experienced and teacher attrition and a moderate connection between trauma and self-efficacy and teacher-student relationships. Job satisfaction considerations, such as opportunities for career advancement, or work being a pleasant experience for educators, were utilized as a way to assess retention. Self-efficacy was measured using teachers' ability to control disruptive student behavior or motivate students who show low interest in school. Teacher-student relationships were measured using educators' capacity to create strong interactions with students, their knowledge of students' lives outside the classroom, or their liking for their students.

Findings suggest that teachers who felt supported within their school sites experienced less trauma, higher job satisfaction, thus a higher retention rate. They also illustrated a higher self-efficacy or belief in their ability to carry out their jobs successfully and had a positive relationship with their students. In comparison, their peers harbored a negative perception of school climate, expressing more considerable trauma and decreased job satisfaction, which implies a lower retention rate, reduced self-efficacy, and antagonistic relationships with students.

Factors such as administrative support and clarity from educational leaders surrounding school and district policies are the top two indicators of whether or not a teacher has the ability to navigate through his experiences of work-related trauma successfully, regardless of age, ethnicity, school context, years of teaching experience, subject matter, or the social-economic status of their surrounding community. Their perception of connection and communication with superiors unanimously supports teachers' self-efficacy, capacity to repair and maintain relationships with students, and willingness to remain in education.

Interpretations of Findings

The researcher employed Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES), the Bowling Green State University survey for teacher motivation/job satisfaction and the SIP SCALE, a post-traumatic stress disorder survey from Duke University, when developing the questions for the survey used in this study.

Research Question 1

Questions that addressed PTSD or trauma assessed teachers' experience with painful images, thoughts, or memories related to work-related trauma and how often they attempted to avoid feelings about traumatic work-related events. These events include how often teachers avoid people, places, conversations, or activities that remind them of events and how frequently they experience irritability, fear, or alarm due to work-related traumatic events.

Retention was measured using teacher feedback about their job satisfaction. Teachers were surveyed on whether they would choose teaching as their job occupation in the present day. Educators were also asked if they believed their present position was the perfect job for them. In particular, the researcher sought to understand if the teachers believed teaching afforded a secure future, the opportunity for professional advancement, or if their work provided a pleasant experience for them.

The current study found that there is a relationship between teacher PTSD and retention. A moderately negative, statistically significant correlation was found between the two variables, $r = -.48$. This implies that the more trauma teachers experience, the more likely they are to leave the profession of teaching. Similar findings are echoed in countless studies regarding teacher stress. Stress derived from hostile school environments impacts teachers' choice to leave the

field of education (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Gersten et al., 2001; Morvant et al., 1995; Schnorr, 1995; Singh & Billingsley, 1996).

Within this study, self-efficacy was assessed by examining teachers' belief in their ability to control disruptive behaviors in their classroom, their capacity to get students to follow classroom rules, their capability to help families support students' academic success. Lastly, it relates to teachers' beliefs in their capability to reach the most challenging students and their ability to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork. A statistically significant negative relationship was found between teacher PTSD and self-efficacy. This suggests that a small portion of educators who reported work-related experiences of trauma also have a decrease in self-efficacy. This data supports research from Richards (2012), who found that student behavior problems and self-doubt negatively influence teacher self-efficacy.

Teachers provided information on the quality of their relationships with students by responding to survey questions, which focused on whether they got along with students, liked their students, knew about their students' lives outside of school, or had a strong relationship with their students. There was a weak, statistically significant negative relationship between teacher PTSD and teacher-student relationships. This suggests that a small portion of educators who reported work-related experiences of trauma also have a poor relationship with students. Despite the modest correlation, this finding is significant as research shows teachers who do not manage their well-being demonstrate minimal patience with students, which have devastating effects on student confidence and achievement (Jacobson, 2016). Prior research has also shown a significant correlation between teacher well-being, students' academic performance, and the quality of student-teacher relationships (Gastaldi et al., 2014).

Research Question 2

This research question sought to explore the impact of school climate on teacher experience of PTSD/trauma. School climate was assessed through the teachers' perception of their current school environment. Educators were asked a series of questions that allowed them to express their perceptions of support. They were asked if they felt supported by their immediate supervisor, if their administration team clearly defined school and district policies and if they believed the average teacher income was adequate. Other questions were included, which asked about the working conditions at their school sites, about the recognition received from their immediate supervisor, and about their feelings of safety. There was a statistically significant correlation between school climate and teacher PTSD/trauma. The correlation coefficient indicated a moderate negative correlation between the two variables. This shows that teachers working at school sites with a negative school climate also had greater perceptions of having experienced PTSD/trauma. This finding supports the work of Yong and Yue (2007), who found that teachers lacked the ability to cope and perform when faced with toxic stress such as poor work conditions and minimal support or resources. Ongoing stress among teachers decreases productivity for students, teachers, and school communities, which leads to symptoms of ongoing trauma such as high levels of frustration, anxiety, dissociation, and, eventually burnout (American Psychological Association, 2019).

Research Question 3

The most common forms of primary and secondary trauma identified by teachers at school sites are listed in Figure 21.1. Forms of trauma experienced have been listed from those that occur most frequently to least frequently.
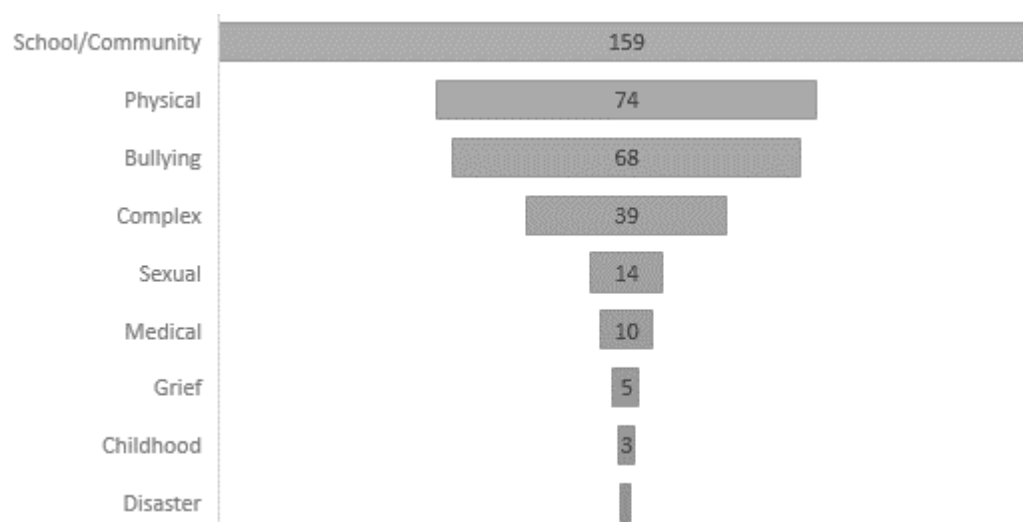
Figure 21. 1. Most Common Forms of Trauma Experienced by Teachers at School Sites

Types of trauma were explored through the online survey. The survey provided participants an opportunity to describe the most traumatic event they experienced in the school setting in 50 words or less. The top two most frequently mentioned traumas denoted by the survey data were school/community violence (159 participants) and physical abuse (74 participants). Common examples of school or community violence were school shootings, lockdowns, and students being caught with a weapon on them or campus. The most prevalent forms of physical abuse were of teachers having objects like computers or scissors thrown at them, as well as being hit, kicked, and spat on by students. In addition, physical abuse included the experience of witnessing brutal fights among students within classrooms or on school grounds.

Bullying came in as the third most frequently mentioned trauma, with 68 participants. Bullying included the repercussions for not following the immediate orders of administrators and threats coming from both parents and students due to students' poor performance on tests. Teachers also mentioned cyberbullying, which led to their reputation being defamed on the internet and ostracization by other teachers.

The fourth-ranked trauma experienced by teachers was complex trauma, with 39 participants. Educators overwhelmingly spoke of student suicide. In a few cases, teachers discovered students' bodies on school grounds. In most cases, teachers mentioned student suicides at home. Teachers explained that they were cognizant of students' suicidal tendencies, of which they had informed the school administration and counselors without any action taken. Sexual abuse was ranked as the fifth most common form of trauma at school sites, being mentioned by 14 participants. Educators described being touched inappropriately and being sexually assaulted in various ways, including verbally, privately, and in front of crowds.

The next most frequently mentioned trauma was medical trauma with 10 participants. This category of trauma included experiences such as witnessing students having violent seizures, overdosing from unknown substances, and dying suddenly within the classroom. Grief trauma, with five participants, encompassed responses centering on the support teachers provided to students who experienced a family tragedy such as supporting students who either witnessed the murder of their parents or came home to discover their guardians slain. Early childhood trauma, mentioned by three participants, included teachers' work with students who were abused by adults as early as one year of age. Lastly, disaster as trauma was brought up by two participants. For example, one teacher spoke of living in a community where a tornado destroyed the homes of all school stakeholders.

Implications for Practice

Social-emotional initiatives and programs focus on improving educational outcomes for all students. Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills include teaching students to achieve and set proactive goals, to establish and maintain positive relationships, to make responsible choices, to understand and manage their emotions and show and feel empathy for others (Walkley & Cox,

2013). Research also shows that SEL competence is needed by teachers to ensure the transference of skills by students into classrooms, the community, and eventually, colleges and careers (Minero, 2017). The problem is that our educational system assumes the emotional competence of its educators. Teachers are expected to know how to teach these skills to students instinctively and to be inherently aware of how to maintain their emotional well-being despite the trauma they may have experienced without any or with minimal support, and resources. This implies that educational systems need to promote and provide training, counseling, and instructional support in the area of social-emotional learning not only to students but also to educators to ensure that they are well-equipped to guide the development of their students and manage their well-being.

The findings of this study also suggest a relationship between school climate, a teacher's perceptions of trauma, and retention. Educators identified administrative support and clearly defined policies as being the most crucial aspects of school climate. These two factors came before stellar work conditions, safety at school sites, recognition, and teacher salaries, which implies that teachers understand the current pitfalls of education. Teachers have experienced or witnessed a lack of resources, educational supports, and supplies. Educators choose to work in challenging environments despite the prevalence of violence in the school and the community. Teachers also understand that their efforts may go unrecognized and that their income may not be adequate to meet their needs. However, these factors did not impact the attrition rate of educators any more than feelings of support from school leadership and clarity on policies, guidelines, responsibilities, tasks, and expectations. This underscores a need for educational leaders to communicate protocols and policies to teachers effectively, so they feel safe and confident in how to protect themselves from being violated or how to react after being violated.

Districts must also ensure programs and guidelines are in place to address teacher trauma, along with training for administrators on how to correspond with their staff, mentor effectively, and guide educators through work-related traumas.

Irrespective of the type of trauma experienced by teachers, whether primary or secondary, and regardless of location, the social-economic status of the community served, years of teaching experience, or subjects taught, the educator's ability to cope with trauma, to create or enhance their relationships with students and their self-efficacy beliefs were directly correlated with the clear definition of administrative support and policies. While mainstream media often associates teacher retention with an increase in teacher recognition and better pay, results from the current study reports that those factors have a small impact on teacher choice to remain in education. However, relationship building, communication, and collaboration amongst administrators and teachers are essential to mitigating trauma among educators and, hence, teacher attrition.

The research findings also suggest there are common forms of trauma occurring on school campuses that span across rural, urban, and suburban environments. The top five trauma types are school/community violence, physical abuse, bullying, complex trauma, and sexual abuse. These results imply that traumatic work-related events are frequently happening within our schools. Therefore, teachers would benefit from training that would support their ability to care for themselves emotionally, mentally, and physically under such circumstances. Increasing opportunities for collaboration and partnerships with administrators, teachers, and mental health care providers can help address the need for building capacity. Regular monthly to bi-monthly training, along with the inclusion of support groups during professional development that centers on trauma-sensitive care for educators (Walkley & Cox, 2013), may aid in alleviating teacher and administrative tension and teacher trauma.

Recommendations for Further Research

Research findings reported a higher percentage of trauma among female teachers. It would be interesting for future research to focus on female teachers' perspectives of primary and secondary trauma. Findings also showed a higher retention rate and a greater ability to cope with trauma among educators who attained their teaching credentials from an online program or university. It is recommended that further research be conducted to examine how online programs build educators' ability to cope with trauma.

One limitation of this study was the sample size. Only educators working in public, charter, and magnet schools were included. Also, only teachers working 80% of the day or more were included in this study. The researcher suggests that a broader study be conducted with a larger sample to boost statistical power. A study conducted with a larger sample could lead to a better understanding of how trauma is being experienced within schools and provide insight on how to mitigate that trauma among educators.

While collecting data from the online survey, the researcher had to eliminate responses from 121 participants because they did not meet the selection criteria for this study. Participants' data not included came from principals, counselors, university professors, paraprofessionals, retired educators, and teachers who left the field due to overwhelming stress and trauma. It is recommended that studies be conducted with these various groups. As each stakeholder has a direct relationship with students, and their well-being is instrumental in the success and academic achievement of the individuals they support (Thapa et al., 2013). A longitudinal study could be carried out to study retention among teachers more effectively.

Conclusions

The teachers in this doctoral research study contributed to a much-needed conversation about teacher trauma. Their survey responses allowed for; a linkage to be established between school climate, teacher trauma, and retention. Educators must have ongoing knowledge of how primary and secondary trauma affects them. They should be instituting and planning meetings, professional development, and collaboration, alongside administrators, which would support their self-efficacy, relationships with students, and job satisfaction. By informing teachers about and preparing them for various forms of work-related trauma, training them on the topic and, putting in place structures to help them address self-care, they are better equipped to increase the academic achievement of students who experience trauma effectively without diminishing or neglecting care for themselves.

The findings from this research reinforce the need to address teacher victimization and trauma within schools and provide justification for more professional development programs. Results suggest that teachers need additional training on how to care for themselves while supporting students with increasing academic, social, and emotional needs. Moreover, this study highlighted that the increased psychological, mental, and emotional challenges of teaching, coupled with the lack of administrative support, impact educators' ability to maintain high standards of academic achievement for students and hinders their capacity to provide appropriate services to students who have experienced trauma. This study focuses on the importance of protecting the emotional well-being of K-12 teachers, which, in turn, supports educators in doing their jobs more effectively.

Summary

The framework utilized by the researcher to establish the importance of teacher self-efficacy, relationships, well-being, and retention was Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow emphasizes what is fundamentally required for teachers to feel motivated, satisfied within their profession, and capable of reaching their fullest potential (Kaiser, 1981). The framework assumes that teachers who reach self-actualization will have a greater awareness of student needs (Famer, 2001). Maslow concluded that if individuals can nurture, care for, and accept themselves, then they can, in turn, nurture, care for, and accept others (Maslow, 1971). Thus, teachers who accomplish this level of acceptance are also more likely to support students academically as well as socially and emotionally (Farmer, 2001).

Figure 22. 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The current study findings suggest that Maslow's hierarchy of needs continues to impact educator development. Participants in this study identified external factors such as safety, love/belonging, and esteem as restrictions in their ability to increase self-efficacy, maintain positive student-teacher relationships, function within their respective school environments,

manage trauma experienced, and attain job satisfaction. This outcome suggests that teachers experiencing trauma are consumed with their safety, belonging, and esteem levels, which is negatively impacting their relationships with administration and students. This is an interesting finding that should be considered when assessing the trauma of teachers within school sites. This research study suggests a minor deviation from Maslow's model. As findings show, when addressing work-related teacher trauma/PTSD, safety trumps physiological needs. Educators are not hindered by necessities such as water, food, shelter, clothing, and so on. Safety, which is currently at Level 2 of Maslow's pyramid, is found, in this study, to be the core need that affects both love and belonging found at Level 3, self-efficacy, or esteem found at Level 4 and self-actualization located at Level 5 of the hierarchy of needs. A revised model is thus presented to educators which illustrate the needs of teachers experiencing trauma due to work-related events (see Figure 23.1).
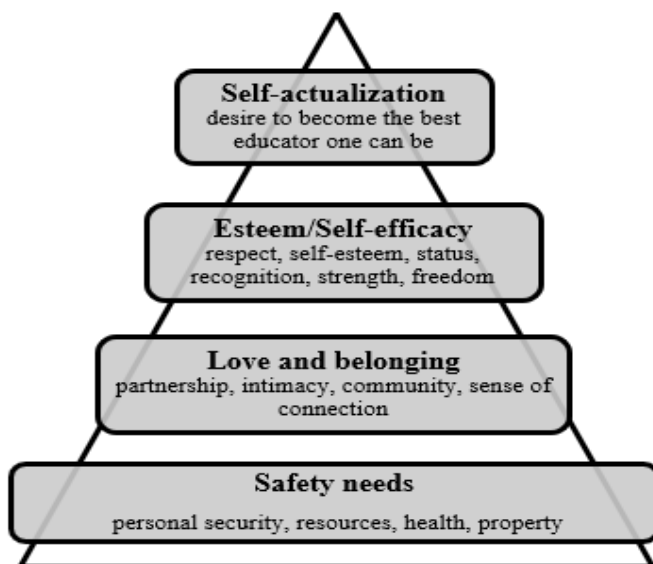
Figure 23. 1. Teacher-Trauma Foundation Theory

Hence, teacher vitality can be reached when the lower areas of the pyramid are fulfilled. It is important to create a learning environment where both the educator and their students can thrive. Educational systems need to provide a platform for teachers to communicate their needs to leadership without fear, judgment or the experience of abandonment and they should set policies to protect educators against teacher victimization.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Teacher Trauma Survey

My name is Malikah Nu-Man. I am a Restorative Justice Teacher Advisor as well as a Doctoral Candidate at Concordia University, Irvine. I am requesting you complete the following survey for my doctoral research. The study in which you are being asked to participate is approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Concordia University, Irvine, in Irvine, CA.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this dissertation will be to study K-12 educators experiences with primary and secondary trauma at school sites; the impact of trauma on teacher self-efficacy, well-being and resilience and how organizations or educational leaders help to mitigate teacher trauma. The general topics in this study will pertain to teacher perception of trauma, the impact of trauma on teacher performance and job satisfaction, and the support offered by educational leadership to alleviate the effect of trauma on teachers.

PARTICIPATION: Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The adult participants for this study are given anonymity.

DURATION: Survey will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

RISKS: Researcher will provide participants with anonymous surveys that will ensure anonymity. Surveys will not collect any identifying information such as names, school site, or email address from the survey participants.

CONTACT: If you have questions about this study or the procedures, you may contact the Researcher, Malikah Nu-Man via email at Malikah.nu-man@eagles.cui.edu.

CONSENT: Although I would like to ask you to complete the following survey in its entirety, participation is voluntary. If you agree to complete the survey and change your mind, you may stop at any time. Your responses, answers, and comments will be kept anonymous and confidential. I will be using the results of this survey in writing my doctoral dissertation without including any information that will make it possible to

identify you. The information gathered in this study will be useful to other educators and administrators interested in addressing teacher trauma and mitigating its impact on teacher well-being, self-efficacy, and resilience within their districts.

Electronic Consent: Please select your choice below. Clicking on the "Agree" button indicates that you have read the above information.

- o   Yes, I agree
- o   No

Demographic

The following questions are background information.

1. What is your gender?

- o   Female
- o   Male
- o   Other

2. What is your ethnicity?

- o   European American (White)
- o   Latino/a or Hispanic
- o   African American (Black)
- o   Asian American
- o   Other

3. What is your age?

4. What state do you currently work in?

5. How did you attain your teaching credential?

- o   Traditional credentialing program

- District Program

- Online program

- Other

6. Do you have an advanced degree?

- Yes

- No

7. What subject matter do you teach?

List all that apply

- English

- Math

- History

- Science

- Physical Education

- Other

8. What grade levels do you currently teach?

List all that apply

- K

- 1ST

- 2nd

- 3rd

- 4th

- 5th

- 6th

- 7th
- 8th
- 9th
- 10th
- 11th
- 12th

9. What other grades have you taught in your teaching career?

List all that apply

- K
- 1ST
- 2nd
- 3rd
- 4th
- 5th
- 6th
- 7th
- 8th
- 9th
- 10th
- 11th
- 12th

10. How many years have you taught?

11. Are you a special education teacher?

- o Yes

- o No

12. What type of school do you work at?

- o Public

- o Charter

- o Magnet

- o Other

13. What is the context of your school?

- o Urban (City)

- o Rural (Countryside)

- o Other

14. What is the approximate proportion of students who receive free and reduced lunches at your school?

- o 0-20%

- o 21-40%

- o 41-60%

- o 61-80%

- o 81-100%

15. To the best of your knowledge, do you currently work with students who have or currently experience trauma?

For example, witnessed domestic or community violence; experienced foster care or homelessness; experienced

parental substance, sexual, or physical abuse; have grief or loss issues such as deceased or incarcerated parents,

not knowing their parents or parents that are divorced.

- o Yes

- o No

- o I don't know

16. Have you received training to address the needs of students or adults who have been traumatized?

- o Yes

- o No

- o I'm not sure

17. What form of trauma have you experienced?

- o Primary: repetitive harm, caused to you directly (i.e., verbal or physical attack).

- o Secondary: emotions experienced from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by others or stress from helping or wanting to help a traumatized person.

- o Both Primary & Secondary

- o I have not experienced any form of trauma.

Teacher Self-efficacy

Please indicate your opinion about each statement below by marking one of 5 responses in the column. The scale of responses range from 1 completely disagree to 5 completely agree.

18. I have the power to control disruptive behaviors in the classroom.

      "I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

19. I have the power to get students to follow classroom rules.

       "I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

20. I have the power to help families support their student's academic success.

       "I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

School Environment (Climate)

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

21. My immediate supervisor backs me up or supports me.

       "I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

22. The administration in my school clearly defines policies.

       "I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○   ○   ○   ○

23. My students treat me with respect.

       "I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

24. Average teacher income is adequate.

      "I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

25. The working conditions at my school site are the best.

      "I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

26. I receive recognition from my immediate supervisor.

      "I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

27. I feel safe at my school.

      "I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

28. I get along well with my students.

      "I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

PTSD/Trauma

Reflect on your teaching experience this year (2019-2020) and last year (2018-2019) to complete the following questions.

29. I often experience painful images, thoughts or memories of a traumatic event that I cannot get out of my mind, due to a work-related incident.

      "I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

30. I often try to avoid thoughts or feelings about a traumatic event, that is work-related.

"I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

31. I often avoid places, people, conversations or activities that remind me of a traumatic event, that was work-related.

"I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

32. I am often irritable due to work-related trauma.

"I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

33. I am fearful due to work-related trauma.

"I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

34. I am easily startled due to work-related trauma.

"I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Teacher Job Satisfaction

Please indicate your opinion about each statement below by marking one of 5 responses in the column. The scale of responses range from 1 completely disagree to 5 completely agree.

35. If I had the opportunity to choose my career again, I would choose to become a teacher.

"I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

◯   ◯   ◯   ◯   ◯

36. My current teaching position is the perfect job for me.

"I completely disagree"   1   2   3   4   5   "I completely agree"

◯   ◯   ◯   ◯   ◯

Final Question

37. Please describe your most traumatic event in a school setting (in 50 words or less).

End of survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. If you would like to participate in the interview portion of the research, please provide your email.

Appendix B

IRB approval

TICKET ID:**#5470**

Date: **Dec 19, 2019 @ 08:20 pm**
Creator: **malikah.nu-man@eagles.cui.edu**
Summary: **EdD - IRB Application - Expedited- Nu-Man**

If you have any additional information regarding this case respond to this email. Please
remember to keep "**[Ticket #5470]**" in email topic.

On Feb 06, 2020 @ 04:20 pm Reviewer 205970 wrote:

Ticket closed: Congratulations Malikah,
Your study titled: An Exploratory Study of K-12 Teacher Trauma: Teacher
Efficacy/Retention/Demographics and Institutional Support/Training/Resources
has been approved by CUI's IRB. Please see the letter attached for documentation. 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.
Please reference Ticket #5470 and reply to this email if you have any questions.
Kind Regards,
IRB Reviewer 205970

On Feb 06, 2020 @ 04:20 pm your ticket was marked as closed,

This means your request was considered resolved. If it has not been resolved to your satisfaction,
simply reply to this message to automatically reopen your ticket.

Please do not reply to this email unless your issue has not been resolved to your satisfaction.
Any reply to this message will automatically reopen your ticket.