

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE STRESSORS AND SUPPORT FROM
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

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By

Anna Cuddington

Director: Dr. Candace Boan-Lenzo
Associate Professor of School Psychology
Psychology Department

Committee Members: Dr. Ellen Sigler, Psychology
Dr. David McCord, Psychology
Dr. Carrie Rogers, School of Teaching

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ABSTRACT

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Anna Cuddington, M.A./S.S.P.

Western Carolina University (March 2025)

Director: Candace Boan-Lenzo

Teacher shortages and vacancies are impacting school districts across the United States. Burnout is one of the challenges teachers face that is influencing their decision to leave the field (Cormier et al., 2021; Pressley et al., 2021). Research indicates that burnout among educators is influenced by a variety of stressors, both within and outside of the workplace. (Chan et al., 2021; Hester et al., 2020; Jentsch et al., 2022; Park & Shin, 2020; Robinson et al., 2019). Due to the shortage of teachers across the nation and abundance of vacancies in many districts, it is necessary to focus on the workplace mechanisms that have the potential to either support or burden teachers in the field. This research examines factors of job satisfaction, including administrative support and workplace stressors, identified by teachers in the United States. Participants completed an anonymous online survey distributed via email. The survey consisted of four sections: (1) presence of workplace stressors, (2) perception of the importance of administrative support, (3) perception frequency of administrative support, and (4) feelings about their current position. Demographic information regarding teachers' years of experience and current grade level taught were also collected. Findings from this study have implications for school administrators as to

the ways in which they can better support teachers' needs on a local level, as well as insight for state and district officials to inform educational policy that better supports the needs of teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher shortages and vacancies are impacting school districts across the United States. There are many factors that may be contributing to problem, such as the recent pandemic, but challenges teachers face that influence their decision to leave the field have existed long before the pandemic (Cormier et al., 2021; Pressley, 2021; Pressley et al., 2021). One of these problems is burnout. Teachers are burdened by the changing demands in education, resulting from the pandemic as well as other factors. Many are feeling a sense of exhaustion related to greater work responsibilities from a shortage of educators, the changing needs of students, and a lack of systemic support (Hester et al., 2020; Shoulders et al. 2021; Robinson et al., 2019).

COVID-19 alone contributed to increased stress, exhaustion, and other mental health concerns among teachers (Cormier et al., 2021; Pressley et al., 2021; Shoulders et al., 2021). During the pandemic, teachers altered their instructional methods and faced communication hurdles, all while navigating a socially distanced lifestyle and potential health concerns due to the virus. Surveys of special education teachers nationwide revealed that COVID-19 had a moderate to high impact on stress (91 percent reporting), depressive symptoms (58 percent reporting), and emotional exhaustion (83 percent reporting) (Cormier et al., 2021). Teachers under high amounts of stress experienced increased fatigue, frustration, forgetfulness, or impatience daily (Shoulders et al., 2021). Teachers also reported elevated anxiety levels while teaching during the pandemic, with stress and communication issues surrounding virtual teaching as reported predictors (Cormier et al., 2021; Pressley et al., 2021).

While the pandemic may have exacerbated mental health concerns among teachers, many of these same concerns existed in the years prior. Stress from administration, legal mandates

(paperwork, testing, curriculum), collaboration responsibilities, the needs of students, a lack of cultural value on teaching, limited availability of resources, and time constraints have all been identified as factors that contributed to teachers' elevated stress and feelings of burnout before the pandemic (Bottiani et al., 2019; Hester et al., 2020; Park & Shin, 2020; Shoulders et al., 2021). Among teachers working in urban settings, job demands such as responding to disruptive student behaviors and working in schools with limited resources contribute to both stress and burnout (Bottiani et al., 2019).

Teachers' satisfaction and well-being impacted by the conditions in which they work has been a concern to the field of education for some time (Friedman, 1991; Pan & Qiwen, 2007; Rosenblatt, 2001). While there are a variety of individual, student, and institutional factors that predict teacher burnout, job satisfaction defined in terms of perceived administrative support has been identified as one of the most influential factors that predicts both burnout and attrition among teachers. Further examining elements of this variable may provide valuable insight into the ways in which schools can better support teachers and those entering the field. (Hester et al., 2020; Jentsch et al., 2022; Richards et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2019).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Burnout Among Educators

Burnout, generally defined as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 99) from chronic workplace stress, is common among helping professionals. Maslach and Jackson (1981) describe this as a model measured using three dimensions, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of others, and a low sense of personal accomplishment. Burnout may be considered a type of stress and is related to aspects of strain, stress coping, and self-efficacy (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Lee & Ashforth, 1991). The overall experience of burnout is conceptualized on a continuum versus a discrete condition (Maslach et al., 2012). The extremes of this continuum are strong symptoms of burnout compared to full engagement in one’s work setting. Strong symptoms of burnout would indicate that one endorses high degrees of emotional exhaustion, cynicism toward others, and lack feelings of accomplishment in their job. An individual with no or low symptoms of burnout would more frequently endorse feeling connected to others in their work environment, being energized by their work, and feel as though they are making a difference through their contributions.

Emotional exhaustion is characterized by a depletion of emotional resources (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). For teachers, emotional exhaustion can present as physical and mental fatigue, feelings of being overburdened by work demands, having low energy, and physical deterioration, such as getting sick often or experiencing sleep deprivation (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Robinson et al, 2019). Teachers with various levels of experience equate emotional exhaustion to a sense of feeling drained, ineffective as a teacher, defeated, worthless, and even helpless (Hester et al., 2020).

Depersonalization, the development of negative attitudes about others, or cynicism, is another symptom of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Teachers who experience depersonalization may feel distant from their students and professional relationships or have a difficult time maintaining a positive attitude toward their students, colleagues, and profession overall. The depersonalization of others may lead teachers to seem callous or uncaring toward others and is often an extension of emotional exhaustion (Hester et al., 2020; Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

The last dimension of burnout, low feelings of personal accomplishment, is identified as the tendency to evaluate oneself negatively in terms of work, leading to feelings of incompetence in the workplace (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Teachers who feel a lack of personal accomplishment may feel unqualified in their work or as though they are not helping their students grow. Across many studies, self-efficacy has been linked to personal accomplishment. The more capable teachers feel in managing their classrooms, teaching curriculum, and improving student outcomes, the more accomplished they feel in their work (Bottiani et al., 2019; Huk et al., 2018; Pressley & Ha, 2022; Pressley & Rangel, 2023). Feelings of personal accomplishment may also be related to the level of support educators feel from their school systems and their ability to succeed within those structures (Richards et al., 2017).

Under this continuum, educators may vary in the degree to which they experience feelings of burnout (Maslach et al., 2012). While some teachers may feel as though their emotional resources are depleted, others may feel less accomplished in their work, that they are not making a difference among their students, or hold more negative perceptions of their colleagues, students, or parents. Viewing burnout from this framework allows researchers to identify risk and protective factors in schools that influence where educators may fall on this

continuum. Identifying these factors may encourage school administrators and other personnel to implement strategies to target some of these symptoms for teachers.

Sources of Stress: Burnout Predictors

Across research literature, sources of stress for teachers that often contribute to burnout can be divided into three main categories: stress from workplace factors, student-related variables, and individual factors.

Workplace Stressors

Teacher stress arises from a variety of sources, including task stress, legal mandates regarding curriculum and testing, time, and the needs of students (Chan et al., 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2017; Hester et al., 2020). A mixed-methods study of teachers in Texas revealed that high-stakes testing, or standardized, state-mandated testing, negatively impacted teacher's job-related stress levels (Gonzalez et al., 2017). Teachers in this study reported feeling stressed from a lack of time due to the pressures of high stakes testing. Due to the timeline of testing, teachers felt pressure to cover all necessary material and to follow curriculum, all while ensuring that students are achieving mastery in these academic skills (Gonzalez et al.). Stress from an overload of daily tasks, or job demand, also significantly contributes to teachers' feelings of emotional exhaustion (Chan et al., 2021). When job demand and teacher abilities to manage demands do not match, the potential for burnout may exist (Hughes, 2001).

These types of stressors impact special education teachers as well. Among special education teachers, caseloads, the responsibility of managing state and federal legal requirements, such as testing procedures and Individualized Education Plans, and the paperwork that coincides, contributes to increased stress levels (Hester et al., 2020). The pressure of special education testing and legal requirements is felt by general education teachers as well, especially

those working in inclusion classrooms and with students who are in the process of determining whether they are eligible to receive special education services (Gonzalez et al., 2017).

Teachers identify professional and other relationships as sources of stress as well (Fox et al., 2020; Hester et al., 2020). Collaborating with other professionals, parents, and students fall into this category, as the demands of communicating with others, managing time, and navigating sometimes challenging relationships with other teachers is straining (Hester et al.).

In addition to stress from relational demands, teachers also feel pressure from a lack of value placed on teaching, society's diminished respect for the profession, and heavy workloads that must be balanced with personal responsibilities (Fox et al., 2020; Pines & Keinan, 2005; Shoulders et al., 2021; Rosenblatt, 2001). Despite the importance of teaching as a career, cultural and institutional value placed on teaching in the United States has diminished, impacting their job satisfaction and the quality of education (Dennin et al., 2017; Kraft & Lyon, 2024). These workplace stressors often carry over into teachers' personal lives and can negatively impact those relationships as well. Under high levels of stress and burnout, teachers may feel too exhausted to engage meaningfully in significant relationships in their personal lives (Robinson et al., 2019).

Student-Related Stressors

Student-related variables appear in the research literature as factors that contribute to teachers' feelings of stress and burnout. Specifically, student behaviors, needs, and age have been identified as factors that can exacerbate burnout symptoms for general and special education teachers alike (Collie et al., 2012; Hester et al., 2020; Huk et al., 2018; Park & Shin, 2020).

Park and Shin's (2020) meta-analysis of burnout among special education teachers identified significant associations between some variables and certain dimensions of burnout. Student age was significantly related to depersonalization, where teachers of older students held more negative attitudes about their students than teachers of younger students. Among high school teachers, student misbehavior, such as disrespect and lack of attentiveness, contribute to greater feelings of emotional exhaustion and detachment from students (Huk et al., 2018).

For special education teachers, student disability type was also significantly related to depersonalization in multiple studies (Collie et al., 2012; Park & Shin, 2020). Problem behaviors and emotional disorders among students were strongly related to dimensions of burnout and were identified as sources of stress for both special and general education teachers. Classroom discipline, especially for special educators who teach disability types with high frequencies of problem behaviors, may be challenging, and therefore straining. Collie and colleagues (2012) suggest that teachers who experience stress from classroom management challenges or students with problem behaviors may have lower perceived personal accomplishment, as they may feel their efforts are unsuccessful. However, some teachers' descriptions of stress from student behaviors arises from their inability to meet the student's needs and not the behaviors themselves. In a multi-method, self-report study of teachers across the southern United States, it was found that overall, teachers experienced more stress from unmet student needs and not their behaviors or disabilities (Hester et al., 2020). Additionally, these teachers reported feeling a sense of "hopelessness" regarding students' home lives and identified this as another stressor.

Individual Factors: Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, described as feelings of adequacy and confidence in one's ability to achieve goals, has been found to negatively correlate with burnout (Bottiani et al., 2019; Huk et

al., 2018; Maslach et al., 2012; Park & Shin, 2020; Pressley & Ha, 2022). Across many studies, teacher self-efficacy is often defined by their confidence in their classroom management abilities, instructional quality, and engaging their students in classroom tasks.

In a meta-analysis of 28 peer-reviewed articles and 13 dissertations, teachers who possessed high levels of self-efficacy were far less likely to experience symptoms of burnout (Park & Shin, 2020). Teachers who were high in self-efficacy were less likely to feel emotionally exhausted, cynical toward others in their schools, and felt more capable of personal accomplishments. In this way, high self-efficacy serves as a protective factor for burnout dimensions and has been identified by Maslach and colleagues as existing on the opposite end of the burnout-engagement continuum (Maslach et al., 2012).

Another study examining teacher self-efficacy found that specific types of self-efficacy relate to dimensions of burnout. For teachers low in self-efficacy related to student engagement, feelings of exhaustion, cynicism, and low personal accomplishment were more common. Among those low in classroom management self-efficacy, feelings of cynicism and emotional exhaustion were more likely (Huk et al., 2018) Low instructional self-efficacy was also found to relate to increased feelings of stress and low personal accomplishment (Huk et al., 2018; Pressley & Ha, 2022). While these findings indicate that teacher self-efficacy is largely related to one's personal perception of their abilities, self-efficacy can be impacted by components of job satisfaction, such as the environment in which teachers work and opportunities for professional development (Bottiani et al., 2019; Huk et al., 2018; Pressley & Ha, 2022; Rosenblatt, 2001).

Job Satisfaction and Administrative Support

While many variables, such as stress (Herman et al., 2018; Shoulders et al., 2021), self-efficacy (Herman et al., 2018; Maslach et al., 2012; Park & Shin, 2020), and workload (Chan et

al., 2021; Hester et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2019; Shoulders et al., 2021) contribute to teachers' feelings of burnout, job satisfaction has consistently predicted a negative relationship to burnout among teachers across the literature (Chan et al., 2021; Hester et al., 2020; Richards et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2019; Shoulders et al., 2021). Generally, the more satisfied teachers are in their jobs, the less burned out they feel, and the more symptoms of burnout they experience, the less likely they are to feel satisfied in their jobs.

For general and special education teachers alike, support from administrators, other staff, and school systems are important aspects of their perceived job satisfaction (Hester et al., 2020; Richards et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2019). In a mixed-method study of special education teacher's reported stressors, open-ended responses indicated that many experience frustration with school administrators and school systems and identify this as a major source of stress (Hester et al., 2020). Feelings of support are influenced by the resources teachers receive (classroom materials, salary, time, assistive technology), the amount of appreciation or value they feel from school administration personnel, and the type of work environment the administration encourages. A school environment that supports teachers should ideally have an administrative team that assists with challenging student behaviors, is knowledgeable about general and special education laws, procedures, service delivery, and paperwork, and provides meaningful professional development opportunities (Hester et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2019).

Teachers may also feel more satisfied in environments where flexibility in teaching methods is encouraged, where open communication among staff is practiced, and in environments that are "welcoming" with a strong sense of community (Chan et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2019). These school environments are characterized by positive interpersonal and professional relationships among teachers and other school personnel that prioritize peer

collaboration and autonomy (Chan et al., 2021; Jentsch et al., 2022; Park & Shin, 2020). Schools that promote autonomy among teachers positively impact their sense of self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and may help to decrease stress levels (Jentsch et al.).

PRESENT STUDY

Research indicates that burnout among educators is influenced by a variety of stressors, both within and outside of the workplace. Due to the shortage of teachers across the nation and abundance of vacancies in many districts, it is crucial to focus on the workplace mechanisms that have the potential to either support or burden teachers in the field. This research will examine the factors of job satisfaction, including administrative support and workplace stressors, identified by teachers based on their responses to survey items. Focusing on workplace factors may provide valuable insight for school administrators as to the ways in which they can better support teachers' needs throughout their careers, foster a more satisfying school climate, and improving retention among teachers.

Research Questions

1. How do teachers perceive support from their school administrators?
2. To what extent do teachers report workplace stressors?
3. How do workplace stressors impact teachers' feelings about their school?
4. How does support from school administrators impact teachers' feelings about their school?

Method

Participants

Teachers were recruited online through a public Facebook group, Teachers Supporting Teachers (4,100 members), and a public Reddit community, Elementary Teachers (13,000 members), from November through February of the 2024-2025 school year. All participants are active teachers in the United States who teach at the kindergarten through twelfth grade level. Teachers may work at various types of schools, including public, private, and charter, and may be in their first year of teaching or longer. Teacher candidates were not included in this study.

Instruments

Participants completed an online survey via Qualtrics. The survey contained items under three sections: perceptions of workplace stressors, perceptions of administrative support, and retention. Survey items evaluating perceptions of workplace stressors were derived from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS, 2018). The TALIS, created by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCED), is an international survey collecting input from teachers and principals on educational analysis and policy development. Eleven items from the School Climate and Job Satisfaction section of this measure were modified for this study population. Teachers were asked to reflect on the extent to which they experience stressors such as *Having too much lesson preparation*, *Having too much grading*, or *Maintaining classroom discipline*. Items are presented in a Likert scale format with response ratings including *Not at all*, *to some extent*, *quite a bit*, and *a lot*. See the *Appendix A* for additional survey items.

Survey items evaluating perceptions of administrative support were derived from the *North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey* (NCTWC) (North Carolina Department of

Public Instruction, 2024). The NCTWC Survey was created by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission (NCPTSC) in 2000 and has been maintained by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (Academic Development Institute, 2024). Every 2 years, teachers across school districts in North Carolina complete the survey to provide information to school, district, and state levels on retention, school and teacher leadership, student conduct management, school safety and wellbeing, quality of facilities and resources, and other supports relevant to school functioning and teacher satisfaction. The School Leadership section of the NCWTC Survey was modified for this study. Teachers were asked to rate both the importance of various aspects of administrative support and the frequency at which they experience these supports. Items for importance and frequency ratings are the same and include items such as *Sets clear expectations for instruction*, *Communicates a clear vision*, and *Knows what's going on in my classroom*. Response options for importance ratings include *Not at all*, *slightly*, *moderately*, and *extremely*. Response options for frequency ratings include *Never*, *rarely*, *often*, and *always*. See *Appendix A* for additional survey items.

The Retention section of the NCTWC Survey was also used in this study. Teachers were asked to rate how strongly they agree with statements related to retention, including *I wouldn't want to work in any other school*, *I feel loyal to my school*, and *I am an important part of my school*. Items were presented in a Likert scale format with response options including *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Agree*, and *Strongly Agree*. See *Appendix A* for additional survey items.

Procedure

Information about this study and a link to the anonymous survey via Qualtrics was posted to both the Facebook group and Reddit community with permission from the group administrators to recruit participants. The survey contained a consent portion that outlines in

detail the purpose, risks, and benefits of participating in this research. Participants were notified of their role as a participant, that they were asked to complete an online survey with three sections, and that identifying information would not be collected. The risks of participating were discussed and links to mental health resources were provided to participants should they experience discomfort or need additional support. Participants were notified that their involvement is voluntary and that they could withdraw their consent and exit the survey at any time without penalty. Information regarding data storage was also provided and explained to participants. Data will remain anonymized and is stored in the Qualtrics secured cloud. See *Appendix B* for the full informed consent document.

Analysis

Items in each section of the survey were summed to create four variable scales: *Stress*, *Frequency of Support*, *Importance of Support*, and *Retention*. Scores on the TALIS provide a total *Stress* score, scores on the NCTWC Survey – School Leadership section provide *Frequency of Support* and *Importance of Support* scores, and the NCTWC Survey – Retention section provide a *Retention* score. Given the Likert-scale style of the survey items and the research aim to gather teacher perceptions related to each variable, totaling scores from each section was deemed appropriate for analyzing findings (Bishop & Herron, 2015; Joshi et al., 2015). This method of analysis was supported as legitimate in the research literature given that an acceptable or strong internal consistency on each scale (values greater than 0.7) and consistent coding of items were present (Bishop & Herron, 2015; Joshi et al., 2015).

Across all variable scales, items were coded so that high scores equal high endorsement of the variable. For example, a high score on the *Frequency of Support* scale would indicate that teachers report receiving support from their administrators more often. Items comprising the

Stress scale were reverse coded from their original format to match the coding of the other scales so that high scores equal high level of stress (e.g., items originally coded as 1 were recoded as a 4) (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to determine internal consistency, or reliability, of each scale. Reliability statistics are depicted in Table 1. Based on this analysis, all scales were determined to have strong internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha > .70$) (Tavakol & Dennis, 2011).

Table 1.

Reliability Statistics for Variable Scales

	<u>Cronbach’s α</u>	<u>Number of Items per Scale</u>
Stress	.770	11
Importance of Support	.868	12
Frequency of Support	.907	12
Retention	.908	8

These four variable scales were correlated with each other and the demographic variables collected to analyze the relationship between each set of variables independently. Demographic information collected includes the stage teachers are in their career (early, middle, or late) and the grade level range they teach (elementary, middle/intermediate, or high). These demographic variables were included in the survey given research literature on the relationship between student age level taught and burnout and length of time in teaching and components of job satisfaction (Huk et al., 2018; Park & Shin, 2020).

Results

Demographic Statistics

The sample collected for this study was comprised of 52 participants, however, only 29 completed all survey items and met participation requirements. Demographic percentages are presented in Table 2. Of the 29 participants, approximately 42 percent reported being in the

middle or late stages of their career, while only 16 percent reported being in their early career. Additionally, the majority of participants report teaching at elementary schools (90.3 percent) while less than 10 percent report working with other grade levels of students (6.5 percent in middle/intermediate; 3.2 percent in high schools).

Table 2.

Teacher Demographics

<u>Career Stage</u>		<u>Current Grade-Level Taught</u>	
Early (1-3 years)	16.1%	Elementary (K-5 th)	90.3%
Middle (4-10 years)	41.9%	Middle/Intermediate (6-8 th)	6.5%
Late (>10 years)	41.9%	High (9-12 th)	3.2%

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated to determine the mean, standard deviation, and range of responses for each variable scale. Results are presented in Table 3. The possible ranges of scores for each scale (minimum and maximum values) are provided in addition to the mean, standard deviation, and actual range of responses. Overall, teachers report at least some level of job-related stress and indicate that support from school administration holds fairly high importance. They also report receiving an average amount of support from school administrators and at least some positive feelings toward in their current positions.

Table 3.

Mean, Standard Deviations, and Range of Scores for Scaled Variables

	<u>Range of Scale</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Range of Responses</u>
Stress	11-44	27.77	5.54	15-40
Importance of Support	12-48	38.19	6.22	18-48
Frequency of Support	12-48	29.48	6.20	15-41
Retention	8-32	20.48	4.53	9-27

All teachers in the sample report at least some level of job-related stress ($M = 27.77$, $SD = 5.54$). To better understand the job-related factors teachers reported as stressors, an item analysis of the *Stress* scale was completed. Frequency of responses for each item on the scale are represented as percentages in Table 4. On items 3 (*Having too much grading*), 8 (*Being intimidated or verbally abused by students*), and 5 (*Having extra duties due to absent teachers*), greater than 75 percent of teachers report at least *quite a bit* of stress from these situations or job responsibilities. Conversely, over 90 percent of teachers report stress only *to some extent* for student achievement, while 77 percent report stress only *to some extent* in maintaining classroom discipline.

Table 4.

Item Response Frequencies for Stress Scale

	<u>1) Not at all</u>	<u>2) To some extent</u>	<u>3) Quite a bit</u>	<u>4) A lot</u>
1. Having too much lesson preparation	6.5%	29.0%	19.4%	45.2%
2. Having too many lessons to teach	16.1%	29.0%	41.9%	12.9%
3. Having too much grading	6.5%	16.1%	58.1%	19.4%
4. Having too much administrative work to do	16.1%	22.6%	45.2%	16.1%
5. Having extra duties due to absent teachers	9.7%	9.7%	32.3%	48.4%
6. Being held responsible for students' achievement	51.6%	41.9%	3.2%	3.2%
7. Maintaining classroom discipline	41.9%	35.5%	12.9%	9.7%
8. Being intimidated or verbally abused by students	12.9%	6.5%	22.6%	58.1%
9. Keeping up with changing requirements from local school district or state education authorities	19.4%	32.3%	41.9%	6.5%
10. Addressing parent or guardian concerns	22.6%	22.6%	51.6%	0%
11. Modifying lessons for students with special needs	25.8%	41.9%	29.0%	3.2%

Correlations

To analyze the relationship between variables, each scale was correlated with other scales and demographics. Correlation coefficients are provided in Table 5. Results show a significant correlation ($r = 0.76, p < 0.01$) between *Frequency of Support* and *Retention*, supporting a strong positive relationship between the amount of support provided to teachers by school administrators and their desire to continue teaching at their current school. A significant correlation between *Career Stage* and *Retention* was found ($r = 0.38, p < 0.5$), suggesting a positive relationship between the number of years in the teaching profession and desire to continue teaching in teachers' current school. A significant relationship between *Stress* and *Frequency of Support* was also found ($r = 0.37, p < 0.5$), suggesting that teachers report greater stress when supported more often by school administrators, however, this finding may not accurately represent teachers' experiences.

Table 5.

Correlations Among Variable Scales and Demographics

	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
1. Career Stage	-0.32	0.08	0.14	0.08	0.38*
2. Current Grade-Level Taught	-	-0.26	0.003	0.24	0.17
3. Stress	-	-	0.13	0.37*	0.29
4. Importance of Support	-	-	-	0.33	0.32
5. Frequency of Support	-	-	-	-	0.76**
6. Retention	-	-	-	-	-

* *Correlation is significant at the 0.5 level*

** *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level*

Discussion

This research aimed to examine factors of teachers' job satisfaction by investigating the role of perceived administrative support and reported workplace stressors, while also determining how these variables contribute to teachers' feelings toward their schools. These

variables have been found in previous research to relate to symptoms of burnout among teachers and their intent to stay in their current positions (Herman et al., 2018; Hester et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2019; Richards et al., 2017; Shoulders et al., 2021). Findings related to the four key research questions are explained.

Findings suggest there is a relationship between administrator support and teachers' perceptions of job-related stress. While this finding is statistically supported, it may better serve as an example of how variables may be statistically related but not practically aligned. Instead, this finding may suggest that even when administrators provide frequent support to teachers, teachers still experience and report stress related to many other job factors to a high degree regardless of their efforts (Aloe et al., 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Teachers in the present study report high levels of stress from factors outside of administrators' control, including feeling intimidated by students, handling verbal abuse from students, taking on extra duties due to teacher absences, and grading. While teachers report stress from a number of job-related factors, they also report lower levels of stress from factors that school administrators may work to support, including managing classroom discipline and teachers' responsibility in ensuring student achievement. In essence, teachers are found to report job-related stress regardless of the level of support provided by their administrators (Kelly, 2024). This finding may relate to the limited of cultural and institutional value placed on teaching and the stressors that teachers face as a consequence (Dennin et al., 2017; Kraft & Lyon, 2024).

Teachers in this sample report lower stress related to managing classroom discipline, however, this was not supported in the research literature (Collie et al., 2012; Huk et al., 2018; Park & Shin, 2020). The sample of teachers collected who primarily serve in elementary general education classrooms differs from the population of teachers (e.g., special education teachers)

who report frequent stress from classroom management and student discipline challenges, suggesting a potential self-selection bias that is common among research using online surveys (Bethlehem, 2010). That is, the individuals who choose to take this survey, might just happen to be those who have positive relationships with their administrators. There might also be some aspect of social desirability in play. For example, teachers might not want to reveal in a survey that they are not managing the classroom well, possibly indicating that they are lacking training or expertise. These differences in findings may also relate to the length of time teachers have spent in their career, as the majority of participants in the present study report having at least four years of experience. These teachers may have more developed skills related to classroom management given their years of experience and therefore perceive it to be a less stressful part of their job. Teachers in the present study did not report a significant relationship between workplace stressors and feelings toward their school related to retention.

One of the most significant findings of this research indicates a strong relationship between the frequency at which administrators provide support to teachers and teachers' feelings toward their school related to retention. While support from school administrators may not serve as a protective factor for workplace stress among teachers, findings of the present study suggest that it may help to improve teachers' positive feelings toward their place within their schools (e.g., feeling respected, sense of loyalty, feeling important to the school team, comfort level).

Overall, no significant relationships were found among how important administrative support is to teachers, their reported stressors, and feelings toward their current schools. The grade level of students in which teachers teach also had no impact on their reported stress, feelings toward their school, or perception of administrative support. This finding contradicts previous research reporting that the age of students contributes to stress among teachers (Huk et

al., 2018; Park & Shin, 2020) but may be due to the limited sample size of the study and participant characteristics. Additionally, a statistically significant relationship between teachers' career stage and feelings about their current school was found, implying that the longer teachers are in the field, the less likely they are to want to leave their current position.

Limitations and Future Research

The limited size (n=29) and diversity of the present study may have impacted findings. While using online public platforms, like Facebook and Reddit, has the potential to expand the diversity and number of participants, recruiting from only two groups/communities, with one primarily focused on elementary teachers, may have posed limitations. Participants recruited from these pools may have similar characteristics, motivations for completing the survey, or similar experiences within the schools they work. Demographic statistics indicated that 90 percent of participants are currently working in elementary schools and over 80 percent of participants report being in their mid- to late career. These two demographics comprise an overwhelming majority of participants.

The type of classroom in which participants work and the experiences related to those settings may have also posed limitations to the present study. Participants were not asked to provide whether they teach within the general education or special education classroom. This may have impacted findings given that the experiences and responsibilities of teacher in these settings differ to some degree. Having teachers indicate whether they serve the general education or special education population may have provided richer data to speak to the differences or similarities between factors of teacher stress and job satisfaction across both settings.

Despite limitations of the present study, a larger scale study with a greater number of participants may provide richer information regarding teachers' well-being and job satisfaction.

Findings from such a study may be useful to local school districts to inform how to best support teachers' needs. Findings from a larger study with a more diverse population of teachers may also help to shape educational leadership programs, providing insight for future principals on the skills needed to support their staff effectively. Future research in this area may also inform educational policy at the local and state levels in strategies to boost retention among teachers.

CONCLUSION

The present study highlights the complexities of teacher job satisfaction as it relates to stressors within the teaching profession and the support provided to teachers from school administrators. Teachers in this study are found to report job-related stress regardless of the level of support provided by their administrators. This key finding displays the variety of stressors teachers face due to the nature of the job and point to the ways in which administrators can work to mitigate these. Survey items examining administrative support touch on aspects of leadership, including coaching new practices, creating a culture of trust, and valuing staff wellbeing, that support teachers. However, for the teachers in this study, these practices alone are not enough to limit the impact of job-related stress. Instead, school administrators should work to protect the mental health of their staff by facilitating discussion and coordinating resources for teachers that supports their wellbeing through the school district or community. Working with teachers to create a school community that promotes discussion of wellbeing and colleague support would also be within the scope of school administrators. School administrators should also work to model self-reflection and stress management strategies for their staff, as many school administrators experience similar stress as teachers.

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APPENDIX A

Demographics

1. What stage are you in your career?
 - a. Early career (1-3 years)
 - b. Mid-career (4-10 years)
 - c. Late career (More than 10 years)
2. What grade do you teach?
 - a. Elementary (K-5th grade)
 - b. Middle/Intermediate (6-8th grade)
 - c. High (9-12th grade)

Workplace Stress

Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS, 2018)

To what extent do you experience the following sources of stress in your workplace?

1 – *Not at all*, 2 – *to some extent*, 3 – *quite a bit*, 4 – *a lot*

- a. Having too much lesson preparation
- b. Having too many lessons to teach
- c. Having too much grading
- d. Having too much administrative work to do (e.g., filling out forms)
- e. Having extra duties due to absent teachers
- f. Being held responsible for students' achievement
- g. Maintaining classroom discipline
- h. Being intimidated or verbally abused by students

- i. Keeping up with changing requirements from local school district or state education authorities
- j. Addressing parent or guardian concerns
- k. Modifying lessons for students with special needs

Perception of Administrative Support

North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey – School Leadership Section

How important is it that school administrators give teachers this type of support?

1 – not at all, 2 – slightly, 3 – moderately, 4 – extremely

How frequently do school administrators give this type of support in your school?

1 – never, 2 – rarely, 3 – often, 4 – always

Each item is rated in terms of both importance and frequency.

1. Sets clear expectations for instruction.
2. Communicates a clear vision.
3. Knows what's going on in my classroom.
4. Encourages teachers to use new knowledge and skills obtained through professional development.
5. Helps teachers improve instruction.
6. Helps teachers set clear and actionable goals for improving student learning.
7. Ensures that teachers receive coaching and support to implement new practices.
8. Creates a culture of trust in the building.
9. Makes decisions based on the best interests of their students.
10. Looks out for the wellbeing of faculty members.
11. Effectively manages daily operations at the school.

12. Makes decisions that are reasonable and justified.

Retention

North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey – Retention Section

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1 - *Strongly disagree*, 2 - *Disagree*, 3 - *Agree*, 4 - *Strongly agree*

1. Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn.
2. There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in my school.
3. I feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to me.
4. I usually look forward to each working day at my school.
5. I wouldn't want to work in any other school.
6. I feel loyal to my school.
7. I am an important part of my school.
8. I am proud to work at my school.

APPENDIX B

Western Carolina University

Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: Teacher Perceptions of Workplace Stressors and Support from School Administration

This study is being conducted by: Anna Cuddington, a graduate student at Western Carolina University, and Principal Investigator Dr. Ellen Sigler.

Description and Purpose of the Research: You are invited to participate in a research study about teachers' experiences of workplace stressors and perceived support from school administrators. By conducting this study we hope to learn how teachers perceive support from school administrators and the extent to which they report workplace stressors. Additionally, we hope to learn how administrative support and workplace stress are related for teachers and whether these have an impact on retention.

What you will be asked to do: You will be asked to fill out a survey that asks about the workplace stressors you experience, your perceptions of support from your school administrators, and questions related to your overall feelings toward your school. It will take approximately 30 minutes. No identifying information will be collected and participation in this survey will not impact your reputation or future employability.

Risks and Discomforts: Some of the questions we will ask you as a part of this study may make you feel uncomfortable. You may refuse to answer the questions, take a break, or stop participation in this study at any time. Mental health resources are also provided at the end of the study if you feel that you need extra support.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help us better understand the impact of workplace stress and support from school administrators for teachers.

Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security: The data collected in this study are anonymous. This means that not even the research team can match you to your data. We will collect your information through a survey, using the Qualtrics platform. This information will be stored in the Qualtrics secured cloud. The research team will work to protect your data to the extent permitted by technology. It is possible, although unlikely, that an unauthorized individual could gain access to your responses because you are responding online. This risk is similar to your everyday use of the internet.

Voluntary Participation: Participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If you choose not to participate or decide to withdraw, there will be no impact on your grades/academic standing. If you wish to end the survey at any time, simply close your browser. Incomplete surveys will not be used.

Contact Information: For questions about this study, please contact Anna Cuddington at acuddington1@catamount.wcu.edu. You may also contact Dr. Sigler, the principal investigator and faculty advisor for this project, at esigler@email.wcu.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your treatment as a participant in this study, you may contact the Western Carolina University Institutional Review Board through the Office of Research Administration by calling 828-227-7212 or emailing irb@wcu.edu. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential to the extent possible.